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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COMER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 13, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JAMES COMER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

AMERICAN SOLDIERS KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, sadly, I come to the floor to remind the Members of the House, as well as the American people, that three Americans were killed last week in Afghanistan: Corporal Dillon Baldrige, Sergeant William Bays, Sergeant Eric Houck. They were killed by the Afghans they were training.

Afghanistan is the biggest waste of life and money I have ever seen in my life. I have beside me two little girls who, at the time, lived in my district: Eden Baldrige and Stephanie Baldrige. Their daddy, Kevin, was sent from Camp Lejeune, which is in my district, along with Colonel Benjamin Palmer, who serves at Cherry Point, which is also in my district. They were sent to Afghanistan 3 years ago to train Afghanists how to be policemen.

Well, the tragedy of this story is that Corporal Baldrige emailed his wife, Amy, and said: "Amy, I don't trust them. I don't trust any of them." And the very next day, he was shot, along with Colonel Palmer, and killed.

Yet we in the Congress have never had a debate since 2001 on the future of America's involvement in Afghanistan. That is why JOHN GARAMENDI and some on my side and his side—he is a Democrat—have put in a bill, H.R. 1668. All we are asking is that we have a debate. You can be for the bill that Mr. GARAMENDI and I have put in or you can be against it, but give us a chance to have a debate.

In 16 years, we have spent over \$850 billion, over 2,000 Americans have been killed and 20,000 severely wounded, yet it seems like the leadership in Congress does not understand that we have a constitutional responsibility, and that responsibility is to debate, especially when we are asking our young men and women to go overseas and give their life for this country.

Yet again, we have not had a debate since 2001. There are 300 members of Congress sitting on the floor today from both parties who were not here in 2001 and who have never been part of a debate on Afghanistan. I don't know what else we can do. We have written the Speaker of the House individually, myself included, and as a group, Republican and Democrat, asking the Speaker to permit a new AUMF to get to the

floor of the House to have that kind of debate on Afghanistan.

Again, it is almost like it doesn't exist, but it does exist when we bring bills to the floor to continue to spend billions of dollars over there. And John Sopko, the inspector general for Afghan reconstruction, has testified that waste, fraud, and abuse is worse in Afghanistan today than it was 16 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to say to the families of the three servicemen who I read their names—I will one more time—Corporal Dillon Baldrige, Sergeant William Bays, Sergeant Eric Houck: God be with you. We in the House of Representatives, both parties, send to you our sincere condolences.

I thank the good Lord that they were willing to give their life for this country. It is just a matter of why in the world do we continue to be in a country known as the empire of graveyards, since so many countries have been there and failed? And that is all we are doing, is failing, too, by wasting life and money.

THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HAS OVERSIGHT OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIÉRREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, the saga continues, and there seems to be no end in sight for the Trump administration's growing legal and ethical problems. Every day another shoe drops, or at least another foot is inserted into the administration's mouth.

The testimony of James Comey before the Senate Intelligence Committee last week showed us that this is no longer just a matter of foreign intelligence and the Russian meddling in American elections. While that is very important and we need to address the

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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foreign intelligence and security aspects of that matter, the very important question of how we keep Russia from hacking our elections in the future, what is clear is that the investigations into the Trump administration are now matters for the Judiciary Committee.

The gentlewoman from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, and I were on CNN this weekend, and we made the point that the Judiciary Committee has the oversight responsibility for the Justice Department, therefore, it is time for the committee to do its job.

That was the theme of my speech here last week, and nothing has happened. It is also the reason I wrote to Judiciary Chairman BOB GOODLATTE last week to request that he take action, hold hearings, begin preparations for the hearings that will come—and they will come—because the silence of the Judiciary Committee has been deafening so far.

As soon as President Trump said on Friday he was willing to testify under oath 100 percent, I wrote Judiciary Chairman GOODLATTE to say the committee should schedule a hearing and take the President at his word.

Now, I don't think the chairman will invite the President, a man he campaigned for, because the role of the House Judiciary Committee right now is to protect the President at all costs, shielding the President from tough questions instead of representing the people's interest.

In doing so, Judiciary Republicans and House Republicans in general are getting deeper and deeper into bed with this President. You see, they have a whole agenda, and they are counting on this President to help them cut taxes for people with trust funds while cutting healthcare, education, child care, civil rights and voting rights for people who work for a living.

Mr. Speaker, the House Judiciary Committee ought to be in the middle of congressional examinations of the Trump administration, and so far they have been on the sidelines.

Is it no longer the practice of the House of Representatives to hold oversight hearings? Is it no longer the practice of this body to hold the executive branch and the White House accountable?

I have never seen an administration more in need of congressional oversight than this one, yet the Congress does not dare do anything that might cause the President to call someone out in one of his dawn Twitter rants.

We know that the administration has a policy now—this administration—not cooperating with congressional oversight, instructing agencies not to comply with inquiries from members of Congress unless they are a committee chairman, all of whom happen to be Republican.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but the President and his administration are accountable to over 320 million Americans, all 435 Members of this body and

100 Senators as well, regardless of their party affiliation.

At least one senior senator called this policy opposing congressional oversight nonsense. To his credit, the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Senate, Mr. GRASSLEY of Iowa, is not impacted by the Trump administration policy because he is a chairman, but he spoke out forcefully against the Presidential obstruction. See, my friends, that is how you do it, the way Mr. GRASSLEY did it. Follow his example.

And then there is our old friend, the former Speaker and an adviser to the President, Mr. Gingrich, who is now advising the President to terminate Mr. Mueller, the former FBI Director investigating the President and his subordinates, including the family members of the President. Mr. Gingrich said Mueller was a superb choice with an impeccable reputation for fairness just a couple of weeks ago, but now he says there is no way Mueller can be fair. He wants the President to fire Mueller and he wants a political fight against the very idea of special prosecutors.

Now, Mr. Gingrich has been joined in this chorus by a Trump confidante and golf buddy, the president of Newsmax, who says the President is contemplating firing Mueller.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to see the President on a fast track to impeachment, then he should take this advice and fire Mueller. If you want to see this President in the express lane to impeachment, no ifs, ands, or buts, then go for it. We dare you.

Even the Judiciary Committee, which has shown no interest in doing anything other than rubber stamping this administration's agenda, would be forced to take action.

VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment and recognize an important piece of legislation that is scheduled for a vote on the House floor today, the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act.

This bipartisan legislation will reform the VA by allowing the Secretary to fire underperforming employees, ensure appropriate protections for whistleblowers, and authorize the Secretary to directly appoint folks to critically important positions that need filled quickly. This legislation has already passed the Senate, and I look forward to its passage in the House, and to send it to the President for his signature this week.

Those that serve our Nation are honored heroes. Unfortunately, the VA bureaucracy hasn't always provided the care, respect, and honor they deserve. I look forward to this vote and to bring-

ing our valued veterans one step closer to the care they deserve.

KINSLEY, KANSAS, SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, last weekend I was honored to join the Kinsley, Kansas, Summer Food Service Program at the Kinsley-Offerle Junior-Senior High School. It always makes my day when I walk into a room filled with children I delivered in the past decade and their moms.

Like those programs in communities in my district and around the country, these folks serve free breakfast and lunch, and the program is sponsored by the school district. It is great to see this local partnership, this community coalition coming together to help their children.

We live in the most prosperous country in the world, where we have annually produced a tremendous abundance of food, yet it continues to amaze me that we have the level of hunger that we do, especially among our own children.

Good nutrition is too important for the development of these young minds not to ensure, through the communities and programs like these, that they are well fed. Whether you are in the largest ag-producing district in the country, like mine in Kansas, or a city on the coast, we have no excuses.

I thank programs like these for their role in raising a healthy generation.

NATIONAL TEACHERS HALL OF FAME

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, in the last 2½ centuries, 119 of our Nation's educators have tragically lost their lives while serving both their students and their communities, a terrible sacrifice they didn't expect when they followed their calling to help our young people.

The National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia State University, in my district, built a memorial honoring those who have lost their lives while pursuing their educational calling. Founded in 2014, the memorial was built to honor those who had taught students, ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade, and has now been expanded to honor fallen educators at all academic levels.

While the National Teachers Hall of Fame is regionally recognized, our country still lacks a national memorial for those that have lost their lives while serving our students. By recognizing this memorial, we don't have to spend a dime of Federal funding, but we have a place to remember these men and women.

I have introduced a bill, H.R. 2711, that will do just that. I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

COVFEFE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the President tweeted the

word “covfefe.” We still don’t know what it means, why the President tweeted it, or if it was simply an innocent typo, something we are all guilty of making. But what is more important than the creation of a random, now infamous, word in a tweet is that the President deleted the post less than 12 hours later. This is just 1 of 18 tweets the President has deleted since his inauguration, and, each time, the question is raised whether or not he can legally do that, because when the President deletes a tweet, it is equivalent to him destroying a record.

That is why I have introduced the COVFEFE Act, Communications Over Various Feeds Electronically for Engagement. It is a silly name, but a serious issue. By expanding the Presidential Records Act to include social media, it would ensure that all tweets posted by the President from his personal account are archived and preserved and would finally answer the question on whether or not the President can delete tweets.

Although the bill’s name is a little tongue-in-cheek, the focus of the legislation is more important now than ever. If the President is going to take to social media to make sudden public policy proclamations, we must ensure that these statements are documented and preserved for future reference. As Sean Spicer has said, each @realDonaldTrump tweet should be taken as an official White House statement.

□ 1015

Tweets are powerful, and the President must be held accountable for every post, from commenting on NATO, to the Paris Agreement, to his Muslim travel ban, and his response to the devastating terror attack in London. And on Monday, we learned that the appellate court cited the President’s tweet in ruling against the travel ban.

The President’s frequent unfiltered use of his personal Twitter account as a means of official communication is unprecedented, and we must respond accordingly. Sometimes it takes a creative acronym to drive attention to a much larger issue.

This is the second bill I have introduced this Congress to address the lack of transparency in the administration. Back in March, I introduced the aptly named “Mar-a-Lago Act” to require the White House visitor logs, or visitor logs from any other location where the President conducts official business, to be made public to the American people.

Unlike the Obama administration, the current administration stated they are unwilling to do so. For these reasons, it is critical that we push commonsense policy that promotes government accountability and transparency, because in order to maintain public trust in government, elected officials must answer for what they do and say. That includes 140-character tweets and records of who has the President’s ear

at the White House, Trump Tower, or his southern Florida home. If regaining the public’s trust is the first step, then taking action to maintain that trust for the long term is the next.

Standalone transparency legislation is absolutely necessary, but it is not enough. We must stop treating transparency and accountability as peripheral issues and proactively incorporate them into everything we do.

Going forward, I will continue to promote efforts to increase public access to the Federal Government and ensure that all elected officials are being held accountable for their words and their actions.

THE PARIS CLIMATE ACCORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. McCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, President Trump’s most important mandate is to revive America’s struggling economy. This simply cannot be done under the terms of the Paris climate accord.

According to The Heritage Foundation, adhering to that agreement would have destroyed 400,000 American jobs and forfeit \$2.5 trillion in lost productivity by 2035. That is about \$20,000 in lower annual earnings for a family of four.

There is a reason we suffered the slowest economic growth of the post-war era under Barack Obama: bad deals and bad policies like this.

President Obama bound America to the Paris accord by executive fiat. He committed billions of dollars of taxes paid by American families to an international slush fund for developing countries, and then he set his agencies loose to suppress American industry, regardless of the costs imposed on working Americans.

And for what exactly? The EPA’s own modeling predicts that if the accord were fully implemented by 2030, it would reduce global temperature increases by 17/100ths of 1 degree by 2100.

Its advocates have recently dismissed this inconvenient truth by explaining: Well, it would at least send a powerful signal.

Well, we can already see the cost to average families of sending this powerful signal. European energy prices are more than twice as high as the United States, and their economies lag far behind even the anemic growth under Obama.

California has adopted many of these policies and now bears one of the highest energy costs in the country, along with the highest poverty rate. Without the high-tech wealth of the bay area, California’s economy would trail well behind the national growth rate.

Paris apologists promise a new era of green energy jobs. Well, as long as consumers are coerced into buying overpriced green products and struggling families are forced to fork over billions

of dollars through higher utility bills and taxes, well, of course, politically connected green energy companies will do very well, but at enormous expense to the overall economy.

Those 374,000 solar jobs we hear about generate just 1 percent of our electricity. The 187,000 coal, oil, and gas jobs remaining in this country generate 65 percent of our electricity.

The wide historical fluctuations in both carbon dioxide and global temperature suggest that natural influences vastly outweigh human causes. Paleoclimatologists tell us that atmospheric CO₂ levels were five times higher during the Jurassic Period, and global temperatures were 13 degrees higher during the Pleistocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum. That is long before humans or SUVs.

In 2016, President Obama came to Yosemite Valley to warn that the last of Yosemite’s surrounding glaciers would soon disappear. Ironically, if he stood on the same spot 20,000 years earlier, he would have been buried under about 2,000 feet of glacial ice.

The first IPCC report in 1990, sounding the alarm over global warming, gives us some practical experience with its climate modeling. Actual global temperatures are now well below the lowest of the forecasts that the IPCC made 27 years ago. And 20 years before that, the scientific consensus warned that pollution was about to trigger another Ice Age.

The fact is the current state of science is a long way from understanding the intricate natural forces and interrelationships in global climatology, let alone being able to accurately predict temperature changes over hundreds of years within fractions of a degree. That is perhaps why many prominent and respected climatologists continue to challenge and debate the question, despite claims that 97 percent of the scientists agree and despite calls to silence them as heretics.

As the fable of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” illustrates, nothing is more menacing to a flawed consensus than a single dissenter. Thanks to our politically incorrect President, the United States has just stepped forward from the crowd and pointed out the obvious.

The Paris accord points the way to a future of skyrocketing energy prices, lower productivity and wages, a massive wealth transfer from America to nations like China and India, and a permanently declining quality of life for our children.

Fortunately, President Trump has a different vision, a future in which families can enjoy the prosperity that abundant energy provides and the quality of life that comes from that prosperity. We can’t get there from Paris.

But whichever course we take, one thing is certain, the Earth will continue to warm and cool as it has for billions of years.

FREE NABEEL RAJAB

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Nabeel Rajab, the prominent Bahraini human rights defender who remains in custody in Bahrain after being arrested a year ago. He is currently being detained in a hospital.

Nabeel is a leading human rights activist known across the region and beyond for this peaceful views. His work is internationally recognized, and he has won several major human rights awards.

Nabeel has been unjustly imprisoned several times since 2011, when he participated in protests against the Government of Bahrain and joined calls for democratic reform.

In April 2015, he was arrested following tweets criticizing the Saudi-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen and the treatment of detainees in Bahrain's Juw Prison. He was released after 3 months, but prosecutors ordered his rearrest in June of 2016. He is being held on numerous charges and is on trial in two separate cases for his human rights work. If convicted on all charges, he would face up to 18 years in jail.

So what kinds of charges are we talking about? He is accused of insulting national institutions, spreading tendentious rumors, and offending a foreign country. In other words, he is accused of exercising his right to freedom of speech.

Last December, a court ordered Nabeel's release on bail, but he was immediately rearrested for making "false or malicious" statements in TV interviews where he criticized Bahrain's refusal to allow journalists and human rights groups access to their country.

I have experienced that, by the way. In August of 2014, I was denied permission to visit Bahrain with Brian Dooley, who works with Human Rights First.

Since his arrest last year, Nabeel has undergone two operations, suffered heart palpitations, required emergency medical care, and developed other medical conditions. After the first operation, he was returned to prison with an open wound and had to be rushed back to the hospital 3 days later to treat the resulting infection.

His trials have been postponed more than a dozen times since his arrest last year, most recently yesterday. Nabeel has spent most of the last 10 months in solitary confinement after The New York Times published an op-ed by him last September. In that piece, Nabeel urged the Obama administration to use its leverage to resolve the conflict in Yemen instead of fanning the flames by supplying arms to the Saudi coalition.

A second New York Times piece by Nabeel appeared just last month on May 17, where he urged the Trump ad-

ministration to review its relations with authoritarian regimes like Bahrain.

I include in the RECORD these two articles so this House can see for itself the kinds of opinions that the Bahraini Government considers so dangerous.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 4, 2016]

LETTER FROM A BAHRAINI JAIL

(By Nabeel Rajab)

RIFFA, BAHRAIN.—I write this from a Bahraini jail cell where I have been detained, largely in isolation, since the beginning of summer. This is not new to me: I have been here before, from 2012 to 2014, in 2015, and now again, all because of my work as a human rights defender.

Nor am I alone: There are some 4,000 political prisoners in Bahrain, which has the highest prison population per capita in the Middle East. This is a country that has subjected its people to imprisonment, torture and even death for daring to desire democracy. My close colleague Abdulhadi al-Khawaja was tortured and sentenced to life in prison in 2011 for his human rights work.

No one has been properly held to account for systematic abuses that have affected thousands. In 2015, I was arrested on new charges of "insulting a statutory body" and "spreading rumors during a time of war" for posts on Twitter. The police held me from April to July last year. I was released only after the king of Bahrain issued a pardon in an earlier case, also related to views I had expressed.

Despite the pardon, the 2015 charges and a travel ban remained in place, and I was threatened with further action. The head of the cybercrimes unit at the Criminal Investigation Directorate in Bahrain summoned me and my family to a meeting, where—in front of my children—he warned me that if I didn't stop my advocacy work, I would face up to 15 years in prison.

That threat became reality when I was arrested in June. The warrant came from the same cybercrimes unit chief who threatened me last year, and I now face prosecution for my work exposing human rights abuses. The authorities even added a third charge of "insulting a neighboring country," meaning Saudi Arabia. They have also laid a new charge against me of spreading "false news," in relation to interviews I've given to the news media. It's quite the rap sheet.

My supposed "insult" to Saudi Arabia relates to tweets I posted calling for an end to the war in Yemen, a war escalated by the Saudi-led coalition to which Bahrain belongs and for which the United States provides support. The United States has authorized multibillion-dollar arms sales to the Saudis since the war began last year.

From the beginning, I was against the war. The civilian death toll was immediate and catastrophic, and I spoke out against the unfolding humanitarian crisis, calling for peace. Now, I am paying the price.

I met Secretary of State John Kerry on his visit to Bahrain earlier this year and was glad to talk with him about our difficult situation. Mr. Kerry criticized the boycott of the 2014 election by opposition parties, although the opposition's demand was simply for a constitutional monarchy in place of Bahrain's autocratic system. Since that election, the leader of the largest opposition group, the Wafaq National Islamic Society, was sentenced to nine years for "promoting violence," and the society was suspended and its assets frozen.

I would like to ask Mr. Kerry now: Is this the kind of ally America wants? The kind that punishes its people for thinking, that prevents its citizens from exercising their basic rights?

The government has gone after me not only for my comments on Yemen, but also for my domestic activism. One of my charges, "insulting a statutory body," concerns my work shedding light on the torture of hundreds of prisoners in Jaw Prison in March 2015. The State Department has highlighted the same problem, but last year lifted the arms embargo it had placed on Bahrain since the repressions that followed the 2011 Arab Spring protests, citing "meaningful progress on human rights reforms." Really?

After I met Mr. Kerry, I was interrogated at the Interior Ministry by the chief of the cybercrimes unit, the one who later ordered my arrest. He wanted to know everything about my conversation with the secretary of state. That official interrogated me again in April after I signed an open letter, with 25 other activists, calling on President Obama to discuss human rights and the plight of activists in the Middle East when he visited Saudi Arabia earlier this year.

The Bahraini government tried to pressure me into publicly disavowing the letter. I refused.

Recent American statements on Bahrain's human rights problems have been strong, and that is good. But unless the United States is willing to use its leverage, fine words have little effect. America's actions, on the other hand, have emboldened the government to detain me and other rights advocates: Its unconditional support for Saudi Arabia and its lifting of the arms ban on Bahrain have direct consequences for the activists struggling for dignity in these countries.

Instead of fanning the flames in Yemen by supplying arms to the Saudi coalition, Mr. Obama's administration should use its leverage to resolve the conflict. Working to secure the release of people who call for peace, and are trying to build democracy in the region, would serve that aim.

Update: After this Op-Ed essay was published, Nabeel Rajab was charged with publishing "false news and statements and malicious rumors that undermine the prestige of the kingdom."

Nabeel Rajab is the president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and an advisory committee member for Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division.

[From the New York Times, May 17, 2017]

DON'T PROFIT FROM ABUSES BY BAHRAIN

(By Nabeel Rajab)

Yemen has entered its third year of war, and war crimes are being committed at an escalating rate. For Yemen's children, facing a man-made famine, this conflict between Houthi rebels and a coalition led by Saudi Arabia has begun a new phase of horrors.

Despite that, President Trump is planning to make Saudi Arabia the destination of his first state visit this week. Meanwhile, his administration already decided to lift all human rights restrictions on arms sales to my country, Bahrain, which is a partner in the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen. This reckless pursuit of profit without any strings attached—including a lucrative deal for 19 F-16 fighter jets worth \$2.8 billion—will aid and abet the destruction of Yemen, intensifying the country's humanitarian disaster.

It fills me with shame that my country, Bahrain, is bombing Yemen, with United States support. And while the Saudi-led coalition continues its air assault on Yemen, Bahrain is also trying to crush civil society back home. This other, domestic campaign is aimed at people who, like me, cannot abide injustice and are willing to speak out.

Even so, we look to our friends in United States for strength and a united vision for a better future. Americans expect to have a government that is accountable, and that respects and protects its people's rights. That is our great ambition, also, in the Gulf.

We know we risk much in calling for this. Some of my fellow activists have been tortured, sentenced to life imprisonment, even killed. But I believe that respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms is the way to attain peace, stability and prosperity in any nation; I have devoted my life to that ideal.

Criticizing war crimes and torture on Twitter, speaking to journalists about our dire situation in Bahrain and the Gulf, and writing this newspaper: For these actions, I now face a total of 18 years' imprisonment. I've already spent more than 10 months in jail, mostly in solitary confinement. One of the charges against me derives from my taking a stand against the war in Yemen—not only because it causes misery and tragic loss of life, but also because it fosters violence and terrorism across the region.

Does the Trump administration know that former Bahraini soldiers have left the country to join the Islamic State? Does Washington know that Bahrain allows no Shiite citizens in its military even though Shiites are a majority of the population? Does the White House know that the Bahraini Army is a sectarian force that publishes books endorsing the murder of Shiites who do not "repent"?

When I criticized the fostering of extremism in the Bahraini Army, I was tossed into prison for six months. Bahrain's king, Hamad bin Isaal-Khalifa, has just approved a constitutional amendment allowing military courts to try civilians on unspecified charges of "terrorism." It is a law so vague and sweeping that my act of criticism could now result in a military prosecution.

This same Bahraini military, newly empowered, will soon be awarded its new American-made jets to fly over Yemen.

Bahraini citizens recognize that the United States is a superpower, but that status should not depend solely on its military capacity. American power should also be built on respect for justice, equality and human rights—the core principles upon which the United States was founded. It is these values that should dictate American foreign policy, not the profit margin of Lockheed Martin, maker of those F-16s destined for Bahrain.

The Trump administration must review its relations with authoritarian regimes like Bahrain's. These problematic alliances cost the United States far more in the long term than any gain it makes from arms deals. Human rights and justice should be a consistent priority in American foreign policy, not applied in one case, ignored in another.

All our destinies are tied together. What will happen to Bahrain if everyone who supports peace, democracy and the rule of law is in jail? To whom will Bahrain's disenfranchised youth turn to for support and guidance? These are the questions the Trump administration must ask itself before it sends my jailers another batch of fighter jets.

I am realistic about what to expect. After all, President Trump recently played host in Washington to Saudi Arabia's deputy crown prince and Egypt's president for life without bringing up human rights. But I have faith in the American people and civil society, as well as the lawmakers who continue to challenge these shortsighted, morally unsound policies.

Meanwhile, my trial date kept being moved. First, it was set for April 16. But this was the day of Bahrain's Formula One Grand Prix, the biggest sports event in the country,

so that was embarrassing for the government. Then, my trial was rescheduled for May 3. But that happened to be World Press Freedom Day, so the authorities pushed the date back again, to this week.

My detention has entered its 11th month. My health has declined. I'm recovering from a painful surgical procedure, yet the authorities have made every part of my detention as difficult as possible. My lawyers have been obstructed from providing me the best possible defense. But what I have endured is a small fraction of what the people of Yemen have suffered, largely because of the military intervention of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and their allies.

For my part, I will not stand idly by. I urge Americans not to do so, either. They must all call for an end to the Trump administration's unconditional support for my country's misdeeds at home and abroad.

Nabeel Rajab is the president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and an advisory committee member for Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Under Obama, the State Department repeatedly called on Bahrain to release Nabeel and drop the charges against him. It also tied the sale of F-16s to Bahrain to improvements in human rights.

In contrast, the new administration has lifted the hold on the F-16 sales and failed to call for Nabeel's release. When President Trump met with the King of Bahrain on May 21, he told him: We are going to have a very, very long-term relationship. I look forward to it very much—many of the same things common.

It was Trump's quote.

I am not sure what the President had in mind, but let's review what has happened in Bahrain this year. On January 5, the government restored arrest and investigation powers to its national security agency notorious for torturing detainees in 2011. This reverses one of the few security sector reforms outlined in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry that the government carried out.

On January 15, Bahrain carried out its first execution since 2010, killing three men who were allegedly tortured into making false confessions.

On February 21, Bahrain's constitution was amended to allow military courts to try civilians.

On May 31, the government dissolved the secular opposition political party Wa'ad, and it was the last major opposition party still operating in the country after the al-Wefaq party was dissolved last summer.

On June 4, the government ordered al-Wasat, the country's only independent newspaper, to be suspended indefinitely.

Mr. Speaker, Bahrain is headed down an increasingly authoritarian path. It is closing off all avenues for peaceful dissent.

But the President of the United States does not get it. Could that have to do with the income he earned when the Bahraini Government held its National Day celebration at Trump International Hotel last December?

What I know is that appearances matter, and Bahrain is an increasingly

volatile dangerous place for our military personnel. We should not enable the Bahraini Government's repression. I call for the immediate and unconditional release of Nabeel Rajab and others jailed for their peaceful political views, and I urge the Trump administration to join me. I thank my colleagues for listening.

APPLAUDING THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last week, I met with members of the National Young Farmers Coalition. This nonprofit was founded just 8 years ago by three farmers in upstate New York. They gathered around a farmhouse table to talk about the challenges facing them and their peers: difficulty securing loans, access to affordable farmland, and student loan debt.

They decided that they and other young farmers needed to step up and fight for the future of farming as a united front. Across the country, other young farmers were also coming to the same realization, and the coalition was born.

It works in conjunction with farmers, consumers, organizations, and government to tackle the many challenges that young, independent, and sustainable farmers face in their first years of operating a farm business.

Young farmers include all people who are kicking off a career in agriculture. Typically, in their first 10 years of growing, this includes anyone from a first-year farm apprentice to someone pursuing a midlife career change to agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, rural America is struggling. But rural areas offer unique contributions to our Nation, often in the form of agriculture, raw materials, and naturally occurring commodities.

As more and more young people pursue fast-paced careers in cities and urban centers, the size and composition of populations in rural America is rapidly changing. American agriculture, in particular, is facing a crisis of attrition.

Two-thirds of our farmland is on the cusp of transition as farmers grow older and retire, and there are fewer young farmers positioned to manage this resource.

□ 1030

Farmers over the age of 65 outnumber farmers under the age of 35 by a margin of 6 to 1. The number of farmers under the age of 35 grew by only 1 percent from 2007 to 2012. In order to fix this problem, we must help incentivize more young people to pursue careers in agriculture.

That is why, together with Representatives JOE COURTNEY of Connecticut and JOHN FASO of New York, I

introduced the Young Farmers Success Act, which aims to accomplish this by adding farmers to the existing Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

After making 10 years of income-based student loan payments, a young farmer would see the balance of his or her student loans forgiven, just as other public servants who utilize this program currently do. It is my hope that the enactment of this legislation will lead to the continued enhancement of our Nation's farms.

Agriculture is the number one industry in Pennsylvania, Mr. Speaker, and as such, many of the rural communities in the State depend on agriculture in some form. Unfortunately, USDA released its first farm income forecast for 2017 and predicted that net farm income is expected to decline for the fourth consecutive year.

Declining farm income coupled with low commodity prices over the past few years have adversely impacted farmers and rural communities across the Nation. I have met with farmers in and outside my district who are facing tough decisions about the future of their farms.

As vice chair of the Agriculture Committee and chairman of the Nutrition Subcommittee, I know our Nation needs a robust agriculture sector so that we can continue to provide our Nation and nations across the world with nutritious food and fiber. In order to do so, we need to find ways to cultivate the next generation of farmers. Now, I believe that the Young Farmers Success Act does just that by taking away one of the barriers that can deter young and beginner farmers from entering into agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, our farmers feed this Nation. Farmers are stewards of the land and cornerstones of our rural communities. They provide the country with a safe and affordable food supply. But we need to do more to cultivate the future generation of farmers. They face tough odds by the very nature of the business, and this legislation will provide incentives for those who would like to pursue a future in the agriculture industry, which aids our national security and the long-term sustainability of our country.

Investing in our Nation's ability to put food on the table for our neighbors is not a partisan issue. I encourage every Member of this House to cosponsor this important legislation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ST. CLOUD AREA ADAPTED SOFTBALL TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the St. Cloud Area adapted softball team for winning the State championship earlier this month.

Coach Mike Bakken led the team to victory with the help of Tyrell Franck-

Ross, Dayton Wienjes, and Jordan Williams, who all played exceptionally well. While the individual accomplishments were important, it was a team effort, with all 16 players giving it their all and leaving everything they had on the field.

The tournament was intense, with St. Cloud coming from behind to win the first game. St. Cloud scored five runs in the top of the seventh to beat Chaska 17-14.

We are proud of all the players from around the State for their effort in the tournament, and we are especially proud of our St. Cloud Area team for their success and their hard work over this past season.

YOUNG LEADERS IN STEM

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two high school students from my district for being chosen to represent the great State of Minnesota in two prestigious science, technology, engineering, and math, more commonly called STEM-based, programs.

Alex Nutt, of Princeton High School, has been selected to participate in the Congress of Future Medical Leaders; and Michael Dehmer, of Buffalo High School, has been selected to participate in the Congress of Future Science and Technology Leaders.

These programs were specifically designed to inspire high school students who are at the top of their class and hope to pursue a science-based career. Once they have successfully completed their congress, Alex and Michael will continue to receive mentoring to help them successfully pursue their chosen careers.

The career paths that Alex Nutt and Michael Dehmer have chosen to pursue are not easy, but they are incredibly important to our country. In order for our Nation to remain both competitive and successful, it is vital that today's students take an active interest in STEM fields. That is why I am proud to honor both Alex and Michael and to thank the National Academy of Future Physicians and Medical Scientists and the National Academy of Future Scientists and Technologists for working to ensure that the future of our Nation is bright.

MINNESOTA'S FUTURE

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate all the recent high school graduates in Minnesota's Sixth Congressional District on completing a major milestone in their young lives.

This milestone represents the beginning of the rest of your lives. And while we celebrate your achievement, we are also excited for your future, and there is so much to be excited about.

Many of you will go on to further your careers in education, travel and see the world. Some of you might go to medical school, and one of you might actually cure a disease. Some of you might run for public office, and one of you might even become the President of the United States.

You will be active in your communities. You will build families and be incredible assets to the great State of Minnesota. Your possibilities are limitless, and I hope you will always think big and never give up on your dreams.

We wish you the best of luck as you take the next step in your journey, and we look forward to watching you succeed and thrive.

I also want to thank your parents and the teachers of these wonderful scholars for guiding them along and helping them achieve this great goal. An education is the key that opens all of life's doors, and we thank you for handing these students the key.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF MARK J. SIZER

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank Stearns County Human Services Administrator Mark Sizer for his dedicated service to our community. After 40 years of public service and 23 years dedicated to Stearns County, Mark is heading into retirement.

Since he was appointed to the human services administrator position in 2011, Mark has dedicated himself to the many programs and employees in his department and to the cities of Stearns County. Under Mark's leadership, Stearns County has offered some of the best services and programs in Minnesota.

Stearns County is one of the largest and most densely populated counties in Minnesota's Sixth Congressional District, and we are fortunate to have had such a dedicated public servant and strong leadership at the helm of this incredibly important department.

Thank you for your service, Mark. I wish you a happy and relaxing retirement with those you love. You certainly deserve it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF EDWARD PLATH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, the motto of the United States Coast Guard is *Semper Paratus*—"Always Ready"—and throughout its history, the members of our Coast Guard have stood ready to protect our homeland from all threats. I rise today to recognize the important work of our Coast Guard as well as its members throughout history, including those like Edward Plath.

Edward, like so many Americans of his day, answered the call to service at the onset of World War II. Despite being turned down by the Army over medical concerns, he soon joined the Coast Guard and served honorably in New Jersey, protecting the region's coastline and its vital ports from the ever-present danger of Nazi attack.

But for Edward, the Coast Guard during the war meant more than just duty

to country. It was on a blind date with a fellow sailor that he met the woman he said he would marry. A year later, they married, and for over six decades Edward and his wife lived as a loving couple and raised three daughters, including my constituent, Elizabeth Donaldson.

Mr. Plath passed away in 2010, just a couple months after his wife. But on May 17 of this year, he was buried at sea with full military honors off the coast where he served in New Jersey.

I am grateful for Mr. Plath's service to our Nation, and I am proud our team in Bucks County could assist his daughter in honoring his final wish.

Mr. Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to Edward Plath and to all those who serve and continue to serve, and we must always be ready to support them in any way we can, consistent with the motto of the U.S. Coast Guard.

DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR IN THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important when we have an opportunity to discuss issues in a more deliberative manner to rise to the floor to remind Americans, who every day get up and work and provide the engine to this economy, of the destructive behavior that is about to begin in the United States Congress.

The Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, took 3 years-plus to engage with every health professional, Americans across the Nation, tens upon tens upon tens of hearings, and individual engagement with people who were sick and families who had lost loved ones because of lack of insurance.

I remember hearing from parents whose children had died because they had no insurance, one mother of a young professional lawyer who had, unfortunately, steered toward drugs but had gotten himself rehabilitated but had developed hepatitis. Because he had no insurance, he wound up dying in the emergency room. There were endless stories like that.

But the Affordable Care Act came in and provided dollars for preexisting conditions. It set a table of essentials that no health insurance could deny you the right to be covered, whether you were pregnant, whether or not you had a preexisting condition. They couldn't deny you hospital coverage.

I don't know if Americans are realizing or our colleagues know that in days past, before the Affordable Care Act, you could be sold an insurance boondoggle that, when you got to the emergency room or the hospital and had to be admitted, they would say you have no coverage. That is the life-saving aspect of the Affordable Care Act.

I don't want anyone to be disabused of the fact that, after the House passed

this heinous, terrible, dangerous, devastating bill, it would go away. The Senate now is going to pick up the same TrumpCare bill that will provide higher costs with less coverage; that will include 23 million people losing their coverage; and as well, that will gut the priorities and the protections for preexisting conditions. If you have asthma, if you are pregnant, you won't be covered. And then, of course, there is a crushing age tax where those who are 50 and older may be paying \$12,000 or more for their coverage in healthcare; and as well, it steals from Medicare and jeopardizes the Medicare trust fund.

Let it be very clear: that is the same pathway of the Senate bill, which is then going to come back to the House. The Republicans continue to undermine the very needs of the American people.

Now, let me explain why insurance companies are closing in various States like Ohio.

It is not ObamaCare. It is the Republicans refuse to come together with Democrats and fix it. It is the devastating, destructive executive order from the administration that refuses to pay subsidies. The subsidies allowed working and middle class Americans to have insurance. And the insurance industry, the health insurance industry said, it is too unstable a market—not because of Americans, not because of people who are buying insurance, but because, directly from the White House, they have undermined it by stopping the payment of subsidies between the White House and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

What kind of mercy is that? Where is the kindness and the love and the honoring of the pact we make with the American people that we will stand as their protectors? Where is the basis for how we fought so hard under President Obama and finally got what had not been secured in a century: health insurance for Americans?

Yet we also face a devastating, unstable government. The firing of Director Comey, the testimony under oath that says, by Director Comey, that he felt directed to end the Flynn investigation. I know that doesn't put food on the plates of Americans or their children, but it is the integrity of government.

Where are the investigations in this House? Where are the fact-finding investigations in this House?

The rumor that is now proliferating that a distinguished professional like Mr. Mueller, a former Director of the FBI who served Republican and Democratic Presidents, there is a rumor that the special counsel will be fired.

We are always told in our neck of the woods in Texas that where there is smoke, there is fire. Mr. President, are you going to begin Watergate all over again? The Saturday Night Massacre?

This House needs to begin its investigation now, and this is a need to begin to move on directing the Judici-

ary Committee to begin an investigation of the facts. It warrants it because we have to clear the air before we can sit down at the table and do the work that needs to be done.

In the midst of all of this, a destructive bill is being prepared in the Senate that is going to kill the healthcare of all Americans. It is time for all of us to wake up and take our government back.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

□ 1045

PASS VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Mrs. ROBY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, today we have an opportunity to send to the President's desk legislation bringing unprecedented accountability to the VA and badly needed protections for whistleblowers who expose wrongdoing.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has worked with whistleblowers to shed light on negligence, abuse, and even criminal activity within the Central Alabama VA, I can tell you that this reform legislation is long overdue. When it comes to the VA scandal that erupted a few years ago, most Americans probably remember Phoenix, Arizona, and the horrendous activity that happened there. Phoenix became the epitome of a nationwide VA accountability problem, and rightly so.

However, in many ways, the Central Alabama VA could also be considered a poster child for the need of reform of the Department of Veterans Affairs from top to bottom. It might not have garnered as many headlines as Phoenix, but the nature and extent of the abuse inside the Central Alabama VA was every bit as bad, if not worse.

My staff and I worked with courageous whistleblowers and dedicated journalists to pull back the curtain there. Here are just a handful of examples of what we found:

More than 900 X-ray cancer screenings, some showing malignancies, were lost and unread for years. When alerted to the problem, top administrators tried to cover it up.

A VA pulmonologist manipulated more than 1,200 patient records, but even after being caught twice, was still give an satisfactory review.

Perhaps the most disturbing is a Central Alabama VA employee took a recovering veteran to a crack house and bought him drugs and provided him prostitutes in order to extort his VA payments. And even when caught, this employee was not fired, not until 1½ years later, when we exposed it in the newspaper.

The crack incident stands out in my mind for many reasons. First, it still haunts me to my core just how callous

and uncaring a person could be to do such a thing to a veteran patient. Second, it illustrates just how complacent the bureaucracy had become to let that behavior slide. And third, it is chilling to think that we would never have even known about it if not for a brave VA employee who walked into my Montgomery office and handed us a copy of the police report.

Thankfully, under the 2014 reform law, the director of the Central Alabama VA was fired in the wake of these exposures. That law took an important step toward speeding up the termination process for top officials. But did you know that he remains the only senior official fired as a result of the VA scandal?

Mr. Speaker, we all know that law did not go far enough. For one thing, it did not extend the strict accountability standards to rank-and-file employees. Senior managers aren't the only ones responsible for the failures at the VA. There has been a culture of complacency up and down the chain of command for a very long time, and the complicated process for disciplining or removing problem employees only makes it worse.

That law also didn't go far enough to protect whistleblowers. There is no question in my mind that without the courage of those who came forward to tell the truth, very little would have changed at the Central Alabama VA, if anything at all, yet those whistleblowers were the very targets of retaliation from supervisors and other officials.

Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity to take that next step on behalf of our veterans and those who are working to serve them. S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, grants the VA Secretary the power to fire, demote, or suspend any VA employee no matter their rank. The bill also increases protections for whistleblowers who put themselves at risk to improve the lives and care for veterans.

Let me say that most VA employees care a great deal about veterans and work very hard to provide the best service. It is not fair for the hard-working employees of the VA that a few bad actors get to evade punishment. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. David Shulkin, has said he wants greater authority to remove bad employees as he sees fit. It is time for Congress to give him that authority and to let him know what we expect and that we expect him to use it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to do the right thing by our veterans, to pass this legislation today and send it to the President's desk.

CANARY IN THE OBAMACARE COAL MINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, ObamaCare has created a healthcare crisis for the people in my district. Not long ago, I received this letter from one of my constituents in Knoxville: "I just read where Humana Insurance Company will not offer health insurance in any of the exchanges in 2018. This puts my wife in a predicament, as there will be no health insurance companies offering health insurance in 2018 in Knoxville at this time. We need help with this mounting issue, as I am sure there are a lot more of us in the same boat. When we first signed up for ACA insurance 3 years ago, her monthly premium was \$245. The second year it was \$660. This year it is \$963 a month. This is absolutely ridiculous for a person on a limited income."

Many thousands in Tennessee and across the Nation have very similar stories. My constituent was right. It is ridiculous. Now, even this expensive insurance will disappear, and there are a lot of people in the same boat as my constituent and his wife.

Because there has been so much publicity about how the Republicans now control both Congress and the White House, it seems a great many people do not realize that we are still totally and completely under ObamaCare. A bill was passed in the House, but a different version is being discussed in the Senate. So Republicans have not yet done anything to change ObamaCare. So if someone is still having trouble getting health insurance or is still paying too much for their insurance, it is still because of ObamaCare.

Just today, in the nonpartisan Capitol Hill newspaper, *The Hill*, is this headline, "Insurer exits bolster GOP case for ObamaCare repeal." Insurance companies are still pulling out right and left all over the country because of ObamaCare. ObamaCare is still imploding all over the country.

ObamaCare's allegedly compassionate regulations were supposed to guarantee access to healthcare for the sick. Instead, they have made access worse. Current propaganda seems to be persuading some people that ObamaCare is really protecting the people it claims to be, but Harvard and others are finding otherwise in their studies. They are finding that the ObamaCare regulations literally penalize insurers who offer quality coverage for the sick. This motivates insurers to offer only unattractive plans to people with expensive medical conditions.

The insurance company who offers the best plans ends up with the most—and the sickest—enrollees, and so the highest costs. Sadly, this is causing a race to the bottom. The ObamaCare regulations are causing everyone, including people with preexisting conditions, to have low-quality coverage or no insurance options at all.

ObamaCare's harmful government regulations have driven every insurer out of the marketplace exchange in 16 counties in the Knoxville region. For

43,000 Tennesseans—unless Blue Cross Blue Shield can come back into the area, which they are considering—there will be no exchange plans available after December.

But it is not just in Knoxville. Millions of Americans have only one insurer left in the exchange, if any. ObamaCare's regulations are driving out more and more insurers every day, leaving Americans with less choice and ultimately no choice.

Throwing more taxpayer money at this problem won't solve it. This will continue to happen all across this country as long as we have ObamaCare's harmful regulations on the books.

Knoxville, Tennessee, is the canary in the ObamaCare coal mine. Mr. Speaker, President Trump says he wants to repeal ObamaCare. He should send his healthcare people to Knoxville, talk and listen to our people, share my constituents' stories, show the American people that ObamaCare's regulations are the cause of our Nation's crisis and are limiting access to healthcare.

If President Trump goes before the Nation on national television and explains in understandable detail what is going on with ObamaCare now and how he is trying to fix it, the American people will rally once again to repeal ObamaCare's harmful government regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD this Wall Street Journal article written by Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the Cato Institute.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, 2017]

HOW OBAMACARE PUNISHES THE SICK (By Michael Cannon)

Republicans are nervous about repealing ObamaCare's supposed ban on discrimination against patients with pre-existing conditions. But a new study by Harvard and the University of Texas-Austin finds those rules penalize high-quality coverage for the sick, reward insurers who slash coverage for the sick, and leave patients unable to obtain adequate insurance.

The researchers estimate a patient with multiple sclerosis, for example, might file \$61,000 in claims. ObamaCare's rules let MS patients buy coverage for far less, forcing insurers to take a loss on every MS patient. That creates "an incentive to avoid enrolling people who are in worse health" by making policies "unattractive to people with expensive health conditions," the Kaiser Family Foundation explains.

To mitigate that perverse incentive, ObamaCare lobs all manner of taxpayer subsidies at insurers. Yet the researchers find insurers still receive just \$47,000 in revenue per MS patient—a \$14,000 loss per patient.

Predictably, that triggers a race to the bottom. Each year, whichever insurer offers the best MS coverage attracts the most MS patients and racks up the most losses. Insurers that offer high-quality coverage either leave the market, as many have, or slash their coverage. Let's call those losses what they are: penalties for offering high-quality coverage.

The result is lower-quality coverage—for MS, rheumatoid arthritis, infertility and other expensive conditions. The researchers

find these patients face higher cost-sharing (even for inexpensive drugs), more prior-authorization requirements, more mandatory substitutions, and often no coverage for the drugs they need, so that consumers “cannot be adequately insured.”

The study also corroborates reports that these rules are subjecting patients to higher deductibles and cost-sharing across the board, narrow networks that exclude leading cancer centers, inaccurate provider directories, and opaque cost-sharing. A coalition of 150 patient groups complains this government-fostered race to the bottom “completely undermines the goal of the ACA.”

It doesn't have to be like this. Employer plans offer drug coverage more comprehensive and sustainable than ObamaCare. The pre-2014 individual market made comprehensive coverage even more secure: High-cost patients were less likely to lose coverage than similar enrollees in employer plans. The individual market created innovative products like “pre-existing conditions insurance” that—for one-fifth the cost of health insurance—gave the uninsured the right to enroll in coverage at healthy-person premiums if they developed expensive conditions.

If anything, Republicans should fear not repealing ObamaCare's pre-existing-conditions rules. The Congressional Budget Office predicts a partial repeal would wipe out the individual market and cause nine million to lose coverage unnecessarily. And contrary to conventional wisdom, the consequences of those rules are wildly unpopular. In a new Cato Institute/YouGov poll, 63% of respondents initially supported ObamaCare's pre-existing-condition rules. That dropped to 31%—with 60% opposition—when they were told of the impact on quality.

Republicans can't keep their promise to repeal ObamaCare and improve access for the sick without repealing the ACA's penalties on high-quality coverage.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 55 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend M. Davies Kirkland, Dulin United Methodist Church, Falls Church, Virginia, offered the following prayer:

Gracious and loving God, we offer thanks for this day that You have given us, a day full of new beginnings, opportunities, and potential for our country.

We ask Your blessings upon these Representatives, their staffs, and all here who work through government to serve people of varied traditions, faiths, and races.

Give them guidance and strength as they debate, deliberate, and make difficult decisions on laws which will govern our country.

Give them patience and civility to listen compassionately, to show respect for each other, and to work together for the common good.

And, O God, give them hope. For though the path may seem perilous and the hurdles high, may hope sustain these public servants that they might accomplish the more perfect union that our forebears dreamed of: a more perfect union of justice, freedom, and liberty for all.

I pray this in Your Almighty name.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND M. DAVIES KIRKLAND

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Pastor Dave Kirkland, who led us in the opening prayer. Pastor Kirkland is appointed as the pastor of Dulin United Methodist Church in Falls Church, Virginia, where he has been the pastor for the last 17 years.

Previously, he was appointed to Del Ray United Methodist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, for 6 years and associate pastor at Asbury United Methodist Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia, for 4 years.

Dave's passion in ministry is related to the great Commandment: to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

This is articulated in preaching, raising money, and good deeds performed

by the congregation through reaching out to the lost and the least.

A highlight of this ministry of hope at Dulin: over 60 homeless persons each Sunday morning are served a breakfast, attend a worship service, and are given toiletries and assistance cards to purchase items at Giant Food.

Dulin is engaged in several local ministries, such as Homeless Shelter, Homestretch, Rebuilding Together, and Meals on Wheels; and he also supports a child rescue center in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to welcome Pastor Dave today to the House of Representatives, and I personally thank him for offering the opening prayer.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HUIZENGA). The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

FORT JACKSON CENTENNIAL

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this month marks the Fort Jackson Centennial, a celebration of 100 years of military service and opportunity at that extraordinary post.

As the largest initial entry training facility for the Army, Fort Jackson has been a leader in training in military readiness. Indeed, Fort Jackson recently achieved a remarkable milestone, having trained an estimated five million soldiers.

I know firsthand of the dedication and capability of Fort Jackson. As a member of the Army Reserve and the South Carolina Army National Guard and a graduate of the Adjutant General School, I trained at Fort Jackson. Additionally, three of my four sons have served in the South Carolina National Guard, receiving world class training at Fort Jackson.

I have also seen how Fort Jackson supports the Midlands community, promoting civilian and military jobs, providing strong leaders and volunteers for our community, drawing millions of visitors. This is why the Midlands has worked hard to become the most military-friendly community in America.

Congratulations to General Pete Johnson for a strong command at Fort Jackson. I look forward to continued success for American families. Victory starts here.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and may we never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

COST-SHARING REDUCTION PAYMENTS

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address

the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last week, Secretary Price refused to say whether the administration would fulfill its obligation to make cost-sharing reduction payments. This is the latest in a string of actions to sabotage the individual health insurance markets and ultimately leave people paying more for their insurance premiums.

President Trump and the Republican majority have said that the Affordable Care Act is collapsing as a justification of taking away insurance from 23 million Americans, but the truth is they are taking active measures to drive uncertainty and undermine the law.

Insurers have little time left to finalize their rate filings for 2018, and without certainty as to whether or not cost-sharing subsidies will be paid, they will significantly raise their rates or exit the marketplaces altogether.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to cut out the games and make the cost-sharing reduction payments, and to stop actively trying to undermine Americans' access to affordable, quality health insurance.

Even my friend from Texas (Mr. BRADY), chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, called for the funding of insurer payments in order to help stabilize the insurance market and help lower premiums for Americans who rely on these subsidies.

There is simply no excuse for delay.

NATIONAL DAIRY MONTH

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, June is National Dairy Month, and, personally, I can't think of a better way to start the summer.

From calcium to potassium, dairy products, like milk, contain nine essential nutrients which may help to better manage your weight, reduce your risk for high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and certain cancers.

Whether it is a protein to help build and repair the muscle tissue of active bodies or vitamin A to help maintain healthy skin, dairy products are a natural nutrient powerhouse. Those are just a few of the reasons that we should celebrate dairy not just in June, but all year long.

National Dairy Month started out as National Milk Month in 1937 as a way to promote drinking milk. It was initially created to stabilize the dairy demand when production was at a surplus, but has now developed into an annual tradition that celebrates the contributions the dairy industry has made to the world.

Proudly, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is one of the largest milk-producing States in the Nation, certainly the largest agriculture commodity in Pennsylvania. As vice chairman of the

House Agriculture Committee and chairman of the Nutrition Subcommittee, I wish everyone a happy National Dairy Month.

RED SQUARE PROTEST BY YOUNG RUSSIANS

(Mr. HIGGINS of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, thousands of Russians took to the streets of Moscow's Red Square to protest President Putin's party of crooks and thieves. The protesters chanted that they want to make Russia free and that they want to live in a modern democratic state. They want democracy.

Today, in America, here in the Nation's Capitol, another Trump official is testifying before Congress on Russia's interference with U.S. elections for the fourth time in as many weeks. There is no doubt that Russia interfered. This we know. Did Russia interfere in coordination with Trump officials? With whom and to what extent? This is what the American people deserve to know.

Today, in America, the talk is how Putin tried to dishonor American democracy to do one thing, to keep his people from wanting it, the very democracy that is uniquely America's.

And yesterday, in Moscow, was about what Putin couldn't do. He couldn't keep young Russia from taking to the streets of his capital city denouncing him as a crook and a coward and demanding American democracy.

NEW AMERICANS CAUCUS' CALL TO VOTE

(Mrs. TORRES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today not only as a Member of Congress but as an immigrant and a proud American, and I and my fellow members of the New Americans Caucus took the step to not just become naturalized citizens and exercise our right to vote but also to get involved in our communities and eventually run for office.

This is why, today, I want to encourage all of those who can to do the same, become a citizen and get involved. Your vote is your voice. It allows you to use that voice to better your community and to speak up for those who still can't.

Citizenship is a security. Citizenship is power. These days, too much is at stake, so don't wait until it is too late.

CONGRATULATING COMMANDER KEITH WOODLEY

(Ms. PLASKETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, with this being Caribbean-American Herit-

age Month, I wanted to highlight and congratulate a native Virgin Islander who is now the new commander of the USS *Gabrielle Giffords*, which was commissioned this past weekend in Texas.

The USS *Gabrielle Giffords*, the 16th ship to be named for a woman and only the 13th ship to be named for a living person since 1850, is, in fact, commanded by Keith Woodley, a native of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, a graduate of Florida A&M and the Florida Institute of Technology.

At the commissioning of the ship, Commander Woodley stated: "This is not just a new ship. This is a new class of ship. . . . They have risen to that challenge and performed exceptionally well in getting this ship ready for service."

I would be remiss in not also acknowledging, during Caribbean-American Heritage month, Alton Adam, born in 1889, who was also from St. Thomas and the U.S. Navy's first bandmaster. His music was performed by numerous bands and continues to be performed.

I also, of course, want to wish my parents a happy 58th wedding anniversary today. We love you. God bless you.

TAKE ACTION ON A COMPREHENSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

(Mr. O'HALLERAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. O'HALLERAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an issue impacting communities throughout Arizona's First Congressional District and the country. We must take action on a comprehensive infrastructure bill. Our crumbling roads and bridges pose a greater threat to safety with every car, truck, and school bus that crosses them.

Our pilots land on runways long overdue for repairs, and rural and travel communities, without access to modern technology, lose their competitive advantage in business and education.

In Arizona, flood control projects in Winslow, essential broadband access in Tuba City, and transportation infrastructure in rural Gila County are all in need of attention.

This is something that impacts every State, every district in this country, and I believe we can find broad bipartisan support on this issue in Congress.

Ensuring that our communities have adequate resources to repair their roads, invest in technology, and protect their residents is of paramount importance. I call on my colleagues to continue working on this.

We cannot push this issue aside any longer. We must come together and pass a bipartisan infrastructure bill that invests in our rural communities.

□ 1215

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE TERRIFIED OF TRUMPCARE

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, the American people are speaking up, and they are absolutely terrified of the Republican healthcare plan, TrumpCare. According to a FOX News poll, two-thirds of Americans disapprove of TrumpCare. That's a FOX News poll.

Why? Because it will take away healthcare from 23 million Americans. For those who still have the good fortune of being able to get insurance, they will pay more for worse care. If you are age 50 to 65, fasten your seatbelts; you are about to pay five times what others will pay for health insurance and for prescription drugs.

Of course, in the Senate, they are crafting their version of TrumpCare in secret, behind closed doors. Nobody knows what is in it. Why? Because they know the American people will reject it.

We know we have got issues we have to deal with in healthcare. No law is perfect, and the ACA is one of those. But my goodness, you cannot do this behind closed doors. We have to do this in public. People need to understand what Congress is doing. We have got to get it right, and we have to do it in the open.

SALUTING THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA ON ITS HISTORIC ASIAN TOUR

(Mr. EVANS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to support the Philadelphia Orchestra on a historical tour through Asia.

I have had the privilege of working to support them over the years during my time in the Pennsylvania Legislature and now here in Congress. I can't think of a better cultural ambassador for our country, the Commonwealth, and our great city than the finely tuned Philadelphia Orchestra.

The historical tour started in Shanghai, China, where they serenaded the visitors of the new Shanghai Disney Resort. They continued on to Beijing and Mongolia.

Philadelphia's magnificent orchestra marked a historical first when they became the first Western orchestra to play at the people-to-people exchange. The President of Mongolia and I met last year in the city of Philadelphia.

The orchestra then continued on to Seoul and to Hong Kong. In Seoul, the orchestra participated in a master class with the Heart to Heart Orchestra and Korea United College Orchestra. In Hong Kong, the Philadelphia Orchestra concluded with a coaching session for the Hong Kong Youth Orchestra and a well-earned reception.

I would like to give special recognition to the Philadelphia Orchestra's director, the chairman, as well as the woman who brought it all together, Allison Vulgamore.

I am proud to represent a city that boasts some of the most iconic music heard around the world. I welcome back our well-traveled Philadelphia Orchestra and look forward to the next symphony.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY

(Mr. YODER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight Congress' making more important strides on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

The last few years, we have all heard stories about employees at the VA who failed in their duty to serve and protect our Nation's heroes. It is true that most VA employees are hardworking and dedicated, but as we have come to find out, there are bad actors who must be held accountable. Our veterans deserve nothing less.

Strangely, as the VA has tried to discipline these bad actors, the existing bureaucracy and red tape has stymied the Secretary's ability to do so. That is why the House today will pass the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, to create a more efficient and effective system to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct.

Our bill still ensures due process and actually expands protections for whistleblowers, but, importantly, it will let the VA Secretary do his job and clean up the Department and protect our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, protecting those veterans isn't a political issue; it is a cause we must all champion. I encourage a bipartisan vote on today's bill.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2017.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on June 13, 2017, at 11:23 a.m.:

Appointment:
Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff
Commission on Native Children.

With best wishes, I am,
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

RESIGNATION AS CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2017.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I, Jason Chaffetz, am submitting my resignation as the Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform effective immediately. It has been the privilege of a lifetime to serve in this position, and I look forward to continuing to serve as a member of this historic committee for the remainder of my time in office.

Sincerely,

JASON CHAFFETZ,
Chairman.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.
There was no objection.

ELECTING MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the House Republican Conference, I send to the desk a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 381

Resolved, That the following named Members be, and are hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY: Mr. Rutherford.

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM: Mr. Gowdy, Chair.

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, ranked as follows on the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM: Mr. Chaffetz, after Mr. Jordan.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2581, VERIFY FIRST ACT, AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF S. 1094, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 378 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 378

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 2581) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require the provision of social security numbers as a condition of receiving the health insurance premium tax credit. All points of order against

consideration of the bill are waived. The amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any further amendment thereto, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. Upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (S. 1094) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. The bill shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and on any amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs; and (2) one motion to commit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the rule and the underlying legislation. This rule provides for debate on the final negotiated bill between the House and the Senate. This process began last Congress and resulted in the House passing H.R. 1259 in March of this year.

The Senate introduced and passed the version of the bill we have before us today by voice vote. It mirrors the reforms contained in Chairman ROE's bill that the House has already passed by a bipartisan vote.

Mr. Speaker, we often talk about veterans in this country: We thank them for their sacrifice; we applaud them at sporting events; we tell ourselves that we must take care of them, must repay them for the service to our Nation. But in the past few years, we have discovered that America's care for our veterans has been wholly inadequate. The Department of Veterans Affairs has failed them.

Shameful misconduct at the VA has been rampant, and it has hurt our veterans:

In 2014, we learned that the Phoenix VA concealed extremely long wait lines for patients and that up to 40 vets may have died while waiting for care at the facility;

Just last year, we discovered that a VA Hospital in Colorado Springs also falsified wait time records. The majority of patients at that hospital faced wait times over 30 days, and 28 patients had an average wait time of 76 days. One veteran is even thought to have committed suicide because he wasn't referred for mental healthcare, even though he had been deemed at risk for suicide.

That is why Congress needs to act. S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, allows the Secretary of the VA to hold all employees at the agency accountable for their conduct.

We desperately need this legislation, not because all the employees at the VA have problems. Quite the opposite. Most VA employees show up to work every day because they are passionate about serving our Nation's veterans. But there are bad apples, people who put our veterans in danger. These people must be held accountable, and, frankly, many of them must be fired.

This bill empowers the Secretary to reprimand, suspend, or remove VA employees who have engaged in misconduct. It also permits the Secretary to recoup bonuses if an employee performed poorly or conducted themselves inappropriately and to recoup relocation expenses for fraud, waste, or malfeasance.

The bill also bolsters protection for whistleblowers, creating an office within the VA devoted to protecting those who expose wrongdoing. Supervisors will be taught how to protect whistleblowers and will be held accountable for how well they do.

And the bill requires reporting to Congress on the performance of senior executives at the VA and on the outcomes of disciplinary actions at the agency.

You may be wondering why Congress has taken such an in-depth interest in an executive branch agency, and I will tell you why. It is our job.

The legislative branch was designed to oversee the executive branch. We appropriate the funds used to pay the salaries of everyone working at the VA. These funds come from the taxpayer. For the sake of the taxpayer, we must ensure that the VA is serving its purpose.

But this bill also empowers the Secretary of the VA, allowing him or her to take immediate action to protect veterans. We can't wait for long appeals processes when a bad employee on the front lines of a VA hospital is harming our veterans.

This legislation should not be controversial. Both Democrats and Republicans want the best for our veterans. This legislation, the legislation we are discussing today, gives the VA Sec-

retary and Congress more tools to hold employees accountable because if we are holding employees accountable, then we are protecting our veterans from abuse.

This bill is one small way to say thank you to those men and women who have served our country. We can never adequately repay them, but we can do our best to provide them with sufficient medical care.

I urge you to support this important legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Colorado, for yielding me the necessary and customary 30 minutes for debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to debate the rule for consideration of two separate pieces of legislation: S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act; and H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act.

I begin with S. 1094, legislation aimed at bringing enhanced accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs and improving the care we provide to our Nation's veterans. Among other things, this bill codifies in law the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection at the VA and streamlines the process to demote, remove, or suspend VA employees if evidence proves they engaged in misconduct or poor performance.

Mr. Speaker, last night at the Rules Committee, we had the opportunity to hear from the chairman and ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee about this legislation, Dr. ROE and Mr. WALZ. They discussed the bipartisan nature in which they have worked on this issue, along with the bipartisan work done in the Senate, to craft legislation that they hope can achieve strong bipartisan support in this body.

It is because of this display of bipartisanship and cooperation and a semblance of regular order that I am dismayed that I must now address the process and substance by which we are considering the second bill encompassed in this rule, H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act.

□ 1230

Let me connect the dots for you on how we got to this point, and bear with me. The Republican majority's path to take healthcare from 23 million Americans has been as convoluted as it has been chaotic.

Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you and my colleagues should remember, first, the Republican mantra was repeal. Then it was repeal and replace. Then it was repeal and delay, followed by access to coverage, and then, patient centered.

Finally, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle settled on a three-bucket strategy. The first bucket of this strategy was the Republicans'

American Health Care Act. The majority brought their first iteration of this bill to the floor after working on it for 17 days, and, with no hearings, only to have it go down in flames in the most public and spectacular fashion.

So they went back to the drawing board—not to improve the bill, or improve healthcare for the American people, mind you, but to garner enough Republican votes for a bill that ultimately had 17 percent approval ratings. And they added a manager's amendment to get support, then they added another manager's amendment, then another, and another.

Then with a bill patched together with the wants and wishes of powerful healthcare lobbyists and tax breaks for the superwealthy, with no CBO score, and with no way for the American people, let alone their own Members, to actually know what was in the bill, the majority pushed the bill through the House of Representatives.

What did my Republican friends do after passing this inexplicably bad bill? They got on a couple of buses from here at the Capitol and went to a rose garden ceremony hosted by President Donald John Trump to celebrate upending one-sixth of the American economy and taking away healthcare from 23 million people.

That was certainly the Republicans' most recent mission-accomplished moment, and it must have been some celebration because it will be another 2 weeks before the majority would actually get around to sending their healthcare bill to the Senate, due to the fact that they were not sure if it complied with the Senate rules or, more specifically, the Byrd rule in the U.S. Senate.

Then there is the second bucket of this plan, which involves the Trump administration rolling back regulations. Should the work associated with the second bucket proceed as it has with the other two, then I am sure it, too, will be a disaster, benefitting the wealthy at the expense of hardworking Americans.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the Republicans' third bucket. According to Senator TED CRUZ, this bucket is "a sucker's bucket." Indeed, some like Senator TOM COTTON have referred to all of this bucket talk as simply a bunch of political spin. Whatever it is, it is an empty bucket.

The most recent bill the Republican majority has decided to dump in this sucker's bucket is H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act. Under current law, premium assistance tax credits are available for eligible individuals and families to subsidize the cost of health insurance. Individuals are not eligible for these credits unless they are U.S. citizens or are living in the country legally.

Currently, applicants have 90 days to provide documentation or otherwise address any issues with citizenship and immigration status, and are presumed eligible to enroll in marketplace coverage. If an individual is unable to pro-

vide the necessary documentation, coverage and financial assistance are terminated.

This provision ensures that individuals are not left in a position of having to wait potentially months to be verified before they can afford coverage, and it provides the proper guardrails to terminate assistance if an individual is deemed ineligible. There is no evidence to support the majority's claim that this process is not working.

H.R. 2581 would repeal this 90-day verification period, setting up an unnecessary barrier for eligible individuals to receive the credits they need to afford lifesaving healthcare. Republicans themselves acknowledge that the verification process could take months, but, nevertheless, they are bringing forth today's bill knowing full well that it will make it harder for vulnerable people to access healthcare when they need it most.

It would disproportionately hurt low-income Americans, especially naturalized Americans from immigrant families since they can have a harder time producing documentation needed to verify their citizenship. But don't just take my word for it.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter signed by dozens and dozens of national, State, and local civil rights and advocacy groups strongly opposing this legislation, such groups as the NAACP, the Children's Defense Fund, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the American Friends Service Committee, the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy, and I could go on, and on, and on, but in the interest of time, I thank the Speaker for allowing it to be made a part of the RECORD.

JUNE 12, 2017.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS: As national, state, and local organizations concerned about immigrant rights or access to affordable health care, we are writing to strongly urge you to VOTE NO on H.R. 2581, the "Verify First" Act. This bill is an attack on people's ability to see a doctor and on immigrants and people of color. It is not the "common sense" taxpayer protection bill that its supporters would have you believe.

H.R. 2581 is a dangerous bill that puts up roadblocks for both citizens and immigrants to obtain timely, affordable health insurance. It would strip away provisions that provide for a person to obtain subsidies for enrollment in an Affordable Care Act (or the contemplated American Health Care Act) plan while they work with Department of Health and Human Services to verify their U.S. citizenship or immigration status. The people most impacted are U.S. citizens who were born abroad or naturalized. The bill also affects many immigrants, especially those newly arrived or certain victims of domestic violence and trafficking survivors.

The fact is that when individuals are not able to immediately verify their citizenship or immigration status on an Affordable Care Act Marketplace, it begins an often months long, strenuous process of sending in documents that must be physically inspected. Health care assistants routinely say these cli-

ents are the hardest cases they work on because the process for verifying citizenship and immigration status is a time-consuming exercise in dealing with inefficient government processes.

Rather than protect American taxpayers, H.R. 2581 would strip from American taxpayers important protections that are needed to overcome deficiencies in federal government databases. Immigrants who are not lawfully present are categorically barred from enrollment in health insurance on the Affordable Care Act marketplaces, and for the subsidies that make that insurance affordable. Moreover, safeguards protecting taxpayers are already built into the ACA; individuals whose citizenship or immigration status cannot be verified already are required to pay back all of their subsidies when they file their taxes and "reconcile" their premium tax credits.

Supporters of this bill cite a sloppy Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee report that arrived at a made-up number of supposed "fraud." It's just not true. The committee assumed that every person who lost coverage for failure to verify their citizenship and immigration status was undocumented. In the experience of our organizations and organizations we work with, this is false. These reports describe the first year of the marketplaces, and it is well documented that system outages and understaffing, among other technical problems, contributed to the federal Marketplace's failure to verify consumers' status promptly. The Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General reported in 2014 that a cause of the delay in verification was the agency's lack of prioritization of this issue.

Despite huge gains since then, problems still persist. The Social Security database holding many citizens' information may not reflect common changes, such as when a person marries and changes their last name, or when someone naturalizes and gains U.S. citizenship. People lose their coverage because they receive notices in languages they cannot read. Immigrants are required to submit documents multiple times, or wait while the Department of Homeland Security finds paper files, a result of deficiencies in their databases affecting groups like asylum applicants and some survivors of domestic violence. These are among the many issues consumers face.

Congress has already deprived undocumented immigrants from the ability to buy coverage, even at full price, so they can see a doctor when they are sick, but this bill would go a step further to delay or put out of reach affordable health insurance for many citizens and lawfully present immigrants. Our organizations firmly believe that this would be detrimental to the people we represent and to all of our communities as a whole. We have seen that when health insurance is unaffordable, people are effectively prevented from obtaining access to the care they need to be healthy.

This bill is not just an attack on our health care system, it is also an attack on immigrants and people of color, which our organizations stand firmly against. In his statements when introducing this bill, Rep. Lou Barletta focused the bill as part of his effort to "stop illegal immigration." Rep. Barletta has a long history of anti-immigrant rhetoric, from trying to prevent immigrants from leasing a residence to stating that they should be denied life-saving services in hospital emergency rooms. This bill is simply a vehicle for scapegoating immigrants and people of color and will keep eligible people from accessing health care.

We the undersigned organizations urge you to vote NO on H.R. 2581 and the continued assault on immigrants and the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL

Advocates for Youth; African American Ministers in Action; American Federation of Teachers (AFT); American Friends Service Committee; American Intercession; American Society on Aging; Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum; Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC; Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence; Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership (APPEAL); Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO); Autistic Self Advocacy Network; Black Alliance for Just Immigration; Breast Cancer Action; Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.; Child Welfare League of America; Children's Advocacy Institute; Children's Defense Fund; Church World Service (CWS).

Coalition on Human Needs; Columbian Center for Advocacy and Outreach; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces; Conscious Talk Radio; Detention Watch Network; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund; Dominican Sisters; Dominicans of Sinsinawa; Family Equality Council; Farmworker Justice; First Focus Campaign for Children; Food Research & Action Center; Franciscan Sisters of the Poor IJPC; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Generations Inc.; GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality; Immigrant Legal Resource Center; Indivisible; Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Interfaith Worker Justice.

Irish Apostolate USA; Jobs With Justice; Justice in Aging; Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province; Lambda Legal; Leadership Team of the Pelican Sisters of North America; League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); Medical Mission Sisters; Mi Familia Vota; MomsRising; NAACP; NAPAFASA; National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum; National Association of County and City Health Officials; National Association of Social Workers; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Transgender Equality; National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA); National Council of Churches.

National Council of La Raza (NCLR); National Education Association; National Employment Law Project; National Health Law Program; National Hispanic Medical Association; National Immigrant Justice Center; National Immigration Law Center; National Justice for Our Neighbors; National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health; National Network of Abortion Funds; National Organization for Women; National Women's Health Network; Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ; NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice; NMAC; OCA—Asian Pacific American Advocates; Our Revolution; Peace and Justice Office of the Congregation of Notre Dame; Physicians for Reproductive Health; PICO National.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign; Prevention Institute; Project Inform; Racine Dominicans; Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need; Refuge Ministries; Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Service Employees International Union; Sisters of Charity; Sisters of Charity of Nazareth; Sisters of Mercy of the Americas—Institute Justice Team; South-

east Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC); The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; United Sikhs; United We Dream; Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province; We Belong Together; API Wellness.

STATE AND LOCAL

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services; Advocates for Children and Youth; AgeOptions; Almost Home, Inc.; Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition; Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families; Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing; Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Los Angeles; Asian Community Alliance—Cincinnati OH; Asian Law Alliance; Asian Services In Action, Inc.; Baltimore Jewish Council; California Health Professional Student Alliance; California Immigrant Policy Center; California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ); California OneCare; California Pan-Ethnic Health Network; California Partnership; California Physicians Alliance; CASA.

Center for Southeast Asians; Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition; Child Care Resources of Rockland; Children Now; Children's Defense Fund—CA; Chinatown Service Center; Chinese-American Planning Council; Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA); Collaborative Center for Justice; Colorado Center on Law and Policy; Colorado Center on Law and Policy; Columbia Legal Services; Community Health Councils; D.C. Hunger Solutions; DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform; Empower Missouri; Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa; Erie Benedictines for Peace; Esperanza Health Centers; EverThrive Illinois; Farmworker Association of Florida.

Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC); Give for a Smile; Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness; Having Our Say Coalition; Health Access California; Health Care for All—WA; Health Law Advocates; Healthy House Within A MATCH Coalition; Hmong Ohio of Tomorrow; Hunger Action Los Angeles; IHM Sisters, Immaculata, PA; IL Hunger Coalition; Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights; Indivisible Mountain Home, Idaho; Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity; IRIS—Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services; Islamic Civic Engagement Project; Jewish Family & Children's Service; Kansas Appleseed; Kentucky Equal Justice Center; Korean Community Services of Metropolitan NY; La Fe Policy Research and Education Center.

La Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program; Legal Council for Health Justice; Legal Services of Southern Piedmont; Maine Consumers for Affordable Health Care; Make the Road New York; Maryland CASH Campaign; Maryland Hunger Solutions; Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA); Massachusetts Law Reform Institute; Maternal and Child Health Access; Maternity Care Coalition; National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter; National Tongan American Society; Nationalities Service Center; NC Child; New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty; New York Immigration Coalition; New York Legal Assistance Group; NICOS Chinese Health Coalition; NJ State Industrial Union Council; NOELA Community Health Center; Northern NJ Chapter, National Organization for Women.

Northwest Health Law Advocates; Northwest Immigrant Rights Project; Office of the Health Care Advocate at Vermont Legal Aid; OneAmerica; Pacific Islander Health Partnership; Pitkin County Human Services; Public Justice Center; Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA); Rainbow Center; Reformed Church of Highland Park; RESULTS—Santa Fe (NM); Salaam Cleveland; Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN); Sisters of Char-

ity of the Incarnate Word, Houston; Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, NY; Sisters of the Most Precious Blood; Social Justice Committee St. Patrick Church; South Asian Network; Southwest Women's Law Center; St. Francis St Vincent de Paul Society; Tennessee Justice Center; Thai Health And Information Service.

The Children's Partnership; The Latino Health Insurance Program, Inc.; Turning Points; United Way Bay Area; URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America; Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition; Virginia Poverty Law Center; Voices for Vermont's Children; Voz Hispana Cambia Comunitario; Washington Community Action Network; Washington Healthcare Access Alliance; Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; West Chester Food Cupboard; West Side Campaign Against Hunger; Westlake Chinese Culture Association; Wisconsin Council of Churches; Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice; Women's Action Movement Washtenaw County, MI; Worksite Wellness LA; Xaverian Brothers; Young Women United.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, "This bill," that letter says, "is an attack on people's ability to see a doctor and on immigrants and people of color."

"H.R. 2581 is a dangerous bill that puts up roadblocks for both citizens and immigrants to obtain timely, affordable health insurance."

If this is what we are in store for with the Republican's third bucket, then it is even worse than a sucker's bucket. It is callous, and it is cruel, and someone described the Vice Presidency once many years ago as a warm bucket of spit.

As my colleague, Congressman RICHARD NEAL, said last night at the Rules Committee, bad process leads to bad product. I agree with Mr. NEAL, and this bill is a perfect example of his salient insight. The provisions in this legislation are contingent upon enactment of the American Health Care Act.

If the American Health Care Act is enacted, this bill would not go into effect. That means we are now considering legislation amending a bill that we have already sent to the Senate, and that the Senate has made clear it has no intention of taking up.

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

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCAUL), chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Colorado as well.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act. I helped introduce this legislation with my good friend and colleague, Mr. BARLETTA from Pennsylvania, to ensure illegal immigrants are not able to use healthcare tax credits to purchase health insurance.

Under ObamaCare, the Federal Government paid these tax credits up front on a temporary basis to people before verifying their immigration status. This created a pay-and-chase system where the Federal Government would seek repayment only after it found it had paid out benefits to an illegal immigrant.

This bill puts an end to this taxpayer abuse by requiring the Social Security Administration, or the Department of Homeland Security, to verify the immigration status of every tax credit applicant before the Treasury Department issues a credit.

Texans and hardworking taxpayers around the country already struggle to pay for their healthcare. Their hard-earned dollars should not be used to foot the bill for those who broke the law to come here. My constituents in Texas and American taxpayers deserve better.

I want to thank Congressman BARLETTA for his dedication and continued leadership on this issue, and, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN).

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

I rise only to express my real disappointment in the way that this bill has been brought to the floor. Had the majority not insisted on a closed rule, preventing the House from voting on any and all amendments to repair and improve S. 1094, I would have offered an amendment to ensure that it applies in a way that respects the due process rights of Federal workers, and that it would apply only to collective bargaining agreements ratified on or after enactment.

I support the goal of improving accountability at the VA, but I want to make sure it is not done in a way that prejudices and undermines the collective bargaining rights and the due process rights of the workforce.

There are real problems at the VA now, we know. There are 45- to 49,000 vacancies there. There is bureaucratic dysfunction in a lot of places, and all that this bill would do is to change the evidentiary standard of proof from the preponderance of the evidence to substantial evidence in leveling sanctions and discipline against employees.

That is a tiny detail. It is an irrelevant distraction from the massive problems that actually are facing the VA today. So we should be filling these vacancies. We should be improving the function of the VA, but we should not use this or that problem as an excuse to undermine the due process rights of the workforce. That sets a terrible example for the Federal workforce, generally, and it does nothing to repair the underlying problems and inadequacies that are taking place at the VA.

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

In response to my friend from Florida's statement about the second piece of legislation that we are dealing with in this rule, I believe it is our responsibility to the American taxpayer, and we are fulfilling that responsibility. We are expected to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. This bill ensures that the government only disburses pre-

mium tax credits under the Affordable Care Act, or under the American Health Care Act, to those individuals who are eligible for those tax credits.

Under the ACA, an individual who is not lawfully present in the United States is ineligible from receiving a premium credit. Unfortunately, the ACA also allows the government to hand out the tax credit first and verify later.

This pay-and-chase scheme means taxpayer money is flowing out the door to people who don't meet the requirements for premium tax credits, and much of these funds may not be recouped. In fact, under the ACA, over half a million people who were ineligible for coverage and tax credits received credits.

H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, requires the Secretary of the Treasury to ensure that any department disbursing payments have first verified the recipient's legal presence with information like Social Security numbers. By requiring this verification, we can confirm that, under both the ACA and AHCA, those who receive credits deserve credits.

With that confirmation, we will ensure that these laws are used as they were intended; that the wishes of the American taxpayer are followed. I urge Members to support this important legislation.

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

□ 1245

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

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, Donald John Trump issued an executive order placing a hiring freeze on Federal civilian employees across the executive branch. This executive order, like many of the executive orders this President has issued, failed to take into account the effects it could have on our most vulnerable communities.

Veterans make up one-third of all Federal workers. I am very pleased that one is in my office. She is probably smiling because sometimes Charity probably doesn't think I even know that she is in the office. But she is there and does incredible work.

The Department of Veterans Affairs—a severely understaffed agency serving those veterans—cannot afford a hiring freeze.

This week, Republicans are bringing to the floor bills they claim would improve veterans' lives. If the President and my Republican colleagues are truly committed to our veterans, then they should ensure that reckless hiring freezes do not harm them in the future.

Mr. Speaker, if we defeat the previous question, I am going to offer an amendment to the rule to bring up Representative SCHRADER's bill, H.R. 696, which would prohibit any hiring freeze from affecting the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert in the RECORD the text of

my amendment, along with extraneous material, immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, what we have here today is a rule with one bill that really was worked on in a bipartisan manner—sort of like regular order like we were promised by the Speaker at the outset of this session of Congress—and another bill, which is just more of the same from this majority: creating problems where none existed before.

The fact remains that the Republicans' healthcare bill and overall bucket strategy is a disaster for the American people, and no amount of Rose Garden backslapping is going to change that fact.

Under the Republican plan, 23 million Americans will be kicked off of their health insurance and \$800 billion will be cut from Medicaid. Footnote right there, we hear that the Senate is taking up something. We don't know where and who is doing the taking up, but what I read today is that they are considering a glide path of some kind to cut Medicaid.

Mr. Speaker, cutting Medicaid hurts poor people. Whether you glide it or run it over them, either way you look at it, it hurts them, and we need to pay attention to that, particularly if we are doing it to provide for those of us that are better off in our society.

Seventy-five billion dollars will be cut from Medicare, insurance premiums would increase for people ages 60 to 64 by more than \$3,000 a year, and protections for those with preexisting conditions will be eliminated.

I read about a 63-year-old lady who said that all of her conditions are preexisting and she can't afford insurance. H.R. 2581 only adds to this pain by setting up an unnecessary barrier for eligible individuals to get access to healthcare.

But not to worry, under the Republican plan, the 400 highest income families would ultimately get tax cuts averaging around \$7 million a year, and that information comes from the Ways and Means Committee's fact sheet.

Mr. Speaker, I and others here very frequently have pointed out that what the Republicans want to do is to cut benefits for poor people—the most vulnerable in our society—and to provide for the better-off tax cuts—those people in our society who least need them.

It occurs to me that if we were to have an opportunity to ask the 400 wealthiest families in this country whether or not they really need a tax cut, my belief, based on the four billionaires that I have known personally—two are deceased now—but in my conversations with all of them, their position was that they didn't need a cut. To the man, each one of them said that, if they were to receive tax cuts, they would prefer that they go to education, particularly education for kindergarten and prekindergarten.

If my Republican colleagues can move past throwing red meat to their base—a group of people, mind you, who are most certainly disadvantaged—one day they are going to wake up and recognize that much of what we are doing here, even though they support it, many of the persons who are doing it, they, too, are caught up in this downward spiral that is involving healthcare in this country, the game that we are playing.

If we are willing to work in a serious manner to address the issues in our healthcare system, then I know that Democrats are ready to work with Republicans. But whatever is going on in the other body, I assure you, no Democrats in the other body are involved in.

Last night I asked the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee whether or not he knew what this bill looked like, and his answer was that he did not.

I also said what I repeat here, that people are hurting in this country. Whether it is ObamaCare that the Republicans, I believe, are going to find that it is going to be hard to fix, or whether it is the Affordable Care Act that is in some phantom hole over in the other body, somehow or another, my friends on the other side are going to be held accountable for all of what is necessary to be done. The only way that is sensible—and I believe that every American is imploring us to undertake—is to sit down together.

I cannot believe that the 435 people plus 6 here in the House of Representatives and the 100 United States Senators do not have the ability to do all of the things that are necessary in order for Americans to receive adequate healthcare and to lead with protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

It is ridiculous to talk about cutting Medicaid when more than 60 percent of the people on Medicaid are seniors that are in nursing homes.

What are we going to say to those families? How are we going to address them when it comes to the reality that they are confronted with while we are up here jaw jacking back and forth about whether or not it is ObamaCare or whether or not it is the Affordable Care Act that we can't seem to find.

Somewhere along the lines, we need to sit down and work together. Failure to do so is to our own peril and to the peril of the citizens of this great country of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, we are here discussing two important bills. One of them fulfills the congressional duty to steward taxpayer dollars well. We shouldn't be handing out tax credits to people without first checking their eligibility for their tax credits. This is common sense.

H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, will require verification of legal presence in

this country before someone can receive a tax credit. It is only fair to the American people that we pass this legislation.

The other bill in this rule, S. 1094, protects our veterans from harm. We all have a commitment to repaying the men and women who have served this Nation in the military. These brave individuals have put much on the line and sacrificed so much time and opportunity. They deserve the best healthcare.

This legislation holds the VA accountable. We need to empower the VA Secretary to quickly fire employees who put our veterans in danger. We also need the VA to report to Congress so that the legislative branch can fulfill its oversight duties.

I thank the sponsors of these important bills—Senator RUBIO for S. 1094 and Representative BARLETTA for H.R. 2581.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a “yes” vote on the resolution, and I urge a “yes” vote on the underlying bills.

The material previously referred to by Mr. HASTINGS is as follows:

AN AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 378 OFFERED BY
MR. HASTINGS

At the end of the resolution, add the following new sections:

SEC. 3. Immediately upon adoption of this resolution the Speaker shall, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 696) to prohibit any hiring freeze from affecting the Department of Veterans Affairs. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the Committee of the Whole rises and reports that it has come to no resolution on the bill, then on the next legislative day the House shall, immediately after the third daily order of business under clause 1 of rule XIV, resolve into the Committee of the Whole for further consideration of the bill.

SEC. 4. Clause 1(c) of rule XIX shall not apply to the consideration of H.R. 696.

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT
IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Republican majority agenda and a vote to allow the Democratic minority to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's *Precedents of the House of Representatives* (VI, 308-311), describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as “a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House

being made by the Member in charge.” To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that “the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition” in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: “The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition.”

The Republican majority may say “the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever.” But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the Republican Leadership Manual on the Legislative Process in the United States House of Representatives, (6th edition, page 135). Here's how the Republicans describe the previous question vote in their own manual: “Although it is generally not possible to amend the rule because the majority Member controlling the time will not yield for the purpose of offering an amendment, the same result may be achieved by voting down the previous question on the rule. . . . When the motion for the previous question is defeated, control of the time passes to the Member who led the opposition to ordering the previous question. That Member, because he then controls the time, may offer an amendment to the rule, or yield for the purpose of amendment.”

In Deschler's *Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives*, the subchapter titled “Amending Special Rules” states: “a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate.” (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: “Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon.”

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Republican majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 and clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on ordering the previous question will be followed by 5-minute votes on adopting the resolution, if ordered, and agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 229, nays 189, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 302]

YEAS—229

Abraham	Gibbs	Olson
Aderholt	Gohmert	Palazzo
Allen	Goodlatte	Palmer
Amash	Gosar	Paulsen
Amodel	Gowdy	Pearce
Arrington	Graves (GA)	Perry
Babin	Graves (LA)	Pittenger
Bacon	Graves (MO)	Poe (TX)
Banks (IN)	Grothman	Poliquin
Barletta	Guthrie	Posey
Barr	Harper	Ratcliffe
Barton	Harris	Reed
Bergman	Hartzler	Reichert
Biggs	Herrera Beutler	Renacci
Bilirakis	Herrera Beutler	Rice (SC)
Bishop (MI)	Hice, Jody B.	Roby
Bishop (UT)	Hill	Roe (TN)
Black	Holding	Rogers (AL)
Blackburn	Hollingsworth	Rogers (KY)
Blum	Hudson	Rohrabacher
Bost	Huizenga	Rokita
Brady (TX)	Hultgren	Rooney, Francis
Brat	Hunter	Rooney, Thomas
Bridenstine	Hurd	J.
Brooks (IN)	Issa	Ros-Lehtinen
Buchanan	Jenkins (KS)	Roskam
Buck	Jenkins (WV)	Ross
Bucshon	Johnson (LA)	Rothfus
Budd	Johnson (OH)	Rouzer
Burgess	Jordan	Royce (CA)
Byrne	Joyce (OH)	Russell
Calvert	Katko	Rutherford
Carter (GA)	Kelly (MS)	Sanford
Carter (TX)	Kelly (PA)	Scalise
Chabot	King (IA)	Schweikert
Chaffetz	King (NY)	Scott, Austin
Cheney	Kinzinger	Sensenbrenner
Coffman	Knight	Sessions
Cole	Kustoff (TN)	Shimkus
Collins (GA)	Labrador	Shuster
Collins (NY)	LaHood	Simpson
Comer	LaMalfa	Smith (MO)
Comstock	Lamborn	Smith (NE)
Conaway	Lance	Smith (NJ)
Cook	Latta	Smith (TX)
Costello (PA)	Lewis (MN)	Smucker
Cramer	LoBiondo	Stefanik
Crawford	Long	Stewart
Culberson	Loudermilk	Stivers
Curbelo (FL)	Love	Tenney
Davidson	Lucas	Thompson (PA)
Davis, Rodney	Luetkemeyer	Thornberry
Denham	MacArthur	Tiberi
Dent	Marchant	Tipton
DeSantis	Marino	Trott
DesJarlais	Marshall	Turner
Diaz-Balart	Massie	Upton
Donovan	Mast	Valadao
Duffy	McCarthy	Wagner
Duncan (SC)	McCaul	Walberg
Duncan (TN)	McClintock	Walden
Dunn	McHenry	Walker
Emmer	McKinley	Walorski
Estes (KS)	McMorris	Walters, Mimi
Farenthold	Rodgers	Webster (FL)
Faso	McSally	Wenstrup
Ferguson	Meadows	Westerman
Fitzpatrick	Meehan	Williams
Fleischmann	Messer	Wilson (SC)
Flores	Mitchell	Wittman
Fortenberry	Moolenaar	Womack
Foxx	Mooney (WV)	Woodall
Franks (AZ)	Mullin	Yoder
Frelinghuysen	Murphy (PA)	Yoho
Gaetz	Newhouse	Young (AK)
Gallagher	Noem	Young (IA)
Garrett	Nunes	Zeldin

NAYS—189

Adams	Brady (PA)	Cicilline
Aguilar	Brown (MD)	Clark (MA)
Barragán	Brownley (CA)	Clarke (NY)
Bass	Bustos	Clay
Beatty	Butterfield	Cleaver
Bera	Capuano	Clyburn
Beyer	Carbajal	Cohen
Bishop (GA)	Cárdenas	Connolly
Blumenauer	Carson (IN)	Conyers
Blunt Rochester	Cartwright	Cooper
Bonamici	Castor (FL)	Correa
Boyle, Brendan	Castro (TX)	Costa
F.	Chu, Judy	Courtney

Crist	Khanna
Crowley	Kihuen
Cuellar	Kildee
Davis (CA)	Kilmer
Davis, Danny	Kind
DeFazio	Krishnamoorthi
DeGette	Kuster (NH)
Delaney	Langevin
DeLauro	Larsen (WA)
DelBene	Larson (CT)
Demings	Lawrence
DeSaulnier	Lawson (FL)
Deutch	Lee
Dingell	Levin
Doggett	Lewis (GA)
Doyle, Michael	Lieu, Ted
F.	Lipinski
Ellison	Loeb
Engel	Lofgren
Eshoo	Lowe
Espallat	Lujan Grisham,
Esty (CT)	M.
Evans	Lujan, Ben Ray
Foster	Lynch
Frankel (FL)	Maloney,
Fudge	Carolyn B.
Gabbard	Maloney, Sean
Gallo	Matsui
Garamendi	McCollum
Gonzalez (TX)	McEachin
Gottheimer	McNerney
Green, Al	Meeks
Green, Gene	Meng
Grijalva	Moore
Gutiérrez	Moulton
Hanabusa	Murphy (FL)
Hastings	Nadler
Heck	Neal
Higgins (NY)	Nolan
Himes	Norcross
Hoyer	O'Halleran
Huffman	O'Rourke
Jackson Lee	Pallone
Jayapal	Panetta
Jeffries	Pascrell
Johnson (GA)	Payne
Johnson, E. B.	Perlmuter
Jones	Peters
Kaptur	Peterson
Keating	Pegree
Kelly (IL)	Pocan
Kennedy	Polis

NOT VOTING—12

Brooks (AL)	Higgins (LA)	Napolitano
Cummings	Johnson, Sam	Pelosi
Granger	Lowenthal	Taylor
Griffith	McGovern	Weber (TX)

□ 1321

Mses. JAYAPAL and WILSON of Florida changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 229, noes 190, not voting 11, as follows:

[Roll No. 303]

AYES—229

Abraham	Barletta	Blackburn
Aderholt	Barr	Blum
Allen	Barton	Bost
Amash	Bergman	Brady (TX)
Amodel	Biggs	Brat
Arrington	Bilirakis	Bridenstine
Babin	Bishop (MI)	Brooks (IN)
Bacon	Bishop (UT)	Buchanan
Banks (IN)	Black	Buck

Price (NC)	Bucshon
Quigley	Budd
Raskin	Burgess
Rice (NY)	Byrne
Richmond	Calvert
Rosen	Carter (GA)
Roybal-Allard	Carter (TX)
Ruiz	Chabot
Ruppersberger	Chaffetz
Rush	Cheney
Ryan (OH)	Coffman
Sánchez	Cole
Sarbanes	Collins (GA)
Schakowsky	Collins (NY)
Schiff	Comer
Schneider	Comstock
Schrader	Conaway
Scott (VA)	Cook
Scott, David	Costello (PA)
Serrano	Cramer
Sewell (AL)	Crawford
Shea-Porter	Culberson
Sherman	Curbelo (FL)
Sinema	Davidson
Sires	Davis, Rodney
Slaughter	Denham
Smith (WA)	Dent
Soto	DeSantis
Speier	DesJarlais
Suozi	Diaz-Balart
Swalwell (CA)	Donovan
Takano	Duffy
Thompson (CA)	Duncan (SC)
Thompson (MS)	Duncan (TN)
Titus	Dunn
Tonko	Emmer
Torres	Estes (KS)
Tsongas	Farenthold
Vargas	Faso
Veasey	Ferguson
Vela	Fitzpatrick
Velázquez	Fleischmann
Visclosky	Flores
Walz	Fortenberry
Wasserman	Foxx
Schultz	Franks (AZ)
Waters, Maxine	Frelinghuysen
Watson Coleman	Gaetz
Welch	Gallagher
Wilson (FL)	Garrett
Yarmuth	Gibbs

Hollingsworth	Posey
Hudson	Ratcliffe
Hultgren	Reed
Hunter	Reichert
Hurd	Renacci
Issa	Rice (SC)
Jenkins (KS)	Roby
Jenkins (WV)	Roe (TN)
Johnson (LA)	Rogers (AL)
Johnson (OH)	Rogers (KY)
Jones	Rohrabacher
Jordan	Rokita
Joyce (OH)	Rooney, Francis
Katko	Rooney, Thomas
Kelly (MS)	J.
Kelly (PA)	Ros-Lehtinen
King (IA)	Roskam
King (NY)	Ross
Kinzinger	Rothfus
Knight	Rouzer
Kustoff (TN)	Royce (CA)
Labrador	Russell
LaHood	Rutherford
LaMalfa	Sanford
Lamborn	Scalise
Lance	Schweikert
Latta	Scott, Austin
Lewis (MN)	Sensenbrenner
LoBiondo	Sessions
Long	Shimkus
Loudermilk	Shuster
Love	Simpson
Lucas	Smith (MO)
Luetkemeyer	Smith (NE)
MacArthur	Smith (NJ)
Marchant	Smith (TX)
Marino	Smucker
Marshall	Stefanik
Massie	Stewart
Mast	Stivers
McCarthy	Tenney
McCaul	Thompson (PA)
McClintock	Thornberry
McHenry	Tiberi
McKinley	Tipton
McMorris	Trott
Rodgers	Turner
McSally	Upton
Meadows	Valadao
Meehan	Wagner
Messer	Walberg
Mitchell	Walden
Moolenaar	Walker
Mooney (WV)	Walorski
Mullin	Walters, Mimi
Murphy (PA)	Webster (FL)
Newhouse	Wenstrup
Nunes	Westerman
	Williams
	Wilson (SC)
	Wittman
	Womack
	Woodall
	Yoder
	Yoho
	Young (AK)
	Young (IA)
	Zeldin

NOES—190

Adams	Clay	Eshoo
Aguilar	Cleaver	Espallat
Barragán	Clyburn	Esty (CT)
Bass	Cohen	Evans
Beatty	Connolly	Foster
Bera	Conyers	Frankel (FL)
Beyer	Cooper	Fudge
Bishop (GA)	Correa	Gabbard
Blumenauer	Costa	Gallo
Blunt Rochester	Courtney	Garamendi
Bonamici	Crist	Gonzalez (TX)
Boyle, Brendan	Crowley	Gottheimer
F.	Cuellar	Green, Al
Brady (PA)	Davis (CA)	Green, Gene
Brown (MD)	Davis, Danny	Grijalva
Brownley (CA)	DeFazio	Gutiérrez
Bustos	DeGette	Hanabusa
Butterfield	Delaney	Hastings
Capuano	DeLauro	Heck
Carbajal	Carbajal	Higgins (NY)
Cárdenas	Demings	Himes
Carson (IN)	DeSaulnier	Hoyer
Cartwright	Deutch	Huffman
Castor (FL)	Dingell	Jackson Lee
Castro (TX)	Doggett	Jayapal
Chu, Judy	Doyle, Michael	Jeffries
Cicilline	F.	Johnson (GA)
Clark (MA)	Ellison	Johnson, E. B.
Clarke (NY)	Engel	Kaptur

Keating	Meeks	Schneider
Kelly (IL)	Meng	Schrader
Kennedy	Moore	Scott (VA)
Khanna	Moulton	Scott, David
Kihuen	Murphy (FL)	Serrano
Kildee	Nadler	Sewell (AL)
Kilmer	Neal	Shea-Porter
Kind	Nolan	Sherman
Krishnamoorthi	Norcross	Sinema
Kuster (NH)	O'Halleran	Sires
Langevin	O'Rourke	Slaughter
Larsen (WA)	Pallone	Smith (WA)
Larson (CT)	Panetta	Soto
Lawrence	Pascrell	Speier
Lawson (FL)	Payne	Suozi
Lee	Perlmutter	Swalwell (CA)
Levin	Peters	Takano
Lewis (GA)	Peterson	Thompson (CA)
Lieu, Ted	Pingree	Thompson (MS)
Lipinski	Pocan	Titus
Loeb sack	Polis	Tonko
Lofgren	Price (NC)	Torres
Lowenthal	Quigley	Tsongas
Lowey	Raskin	Vargas
Lujan Grisham, M.	Rice (NY)	Veasey
Luján, Ben Ray	Richmond	Vela
Lynch	Rosen	Velázquez
Maloney,	Roybal-Allard	Visclosky
Carolyn B.	Ruiz	Walz
Maloney, Sean	Ruppersberger	Wasserman
Matsui	Rush	Schultz
McCollum	Ryan (OH)	Waters, Maxine
McEachin	Sánchez	Watson Coleman
McGovern	Sarbanes	Welch
McNerney	Schakowsky	Wilson (FL)
	Schiff	Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—11

Brooks (AL)	Higgins (LA)	Pelosi
Cummings	Huizenga	Taylor
Granger	Johnson, Sam	Weber (TX)
Griffith	Napolitano	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining.

□ 1327

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall No. 303.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding a missed vote due to a meeting with constituents on the House steps. Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 303, H. Res. 378, The Rule providing for consideration of the bill H.R. 2581—Verify First Act and S. 1094—Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, I would have voted "yea."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I was absent during rollcall votes No. 302 and No. 303 due to my spouse's health situation in California. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on the Motion on Ordering the Previous Question on the Rule providing for consideration of both H.R. 2581 and S. 1094. I would have also voted "nay" on H. Res. 378—Rule providing for consideration of both H.R. 2581—Verify First Act and S. 1094—Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to report my absence on the vote of the H. Res. 378, the combined rule providing for consideration of H.R. 2581 and S. 1094, as well as the vote on the previous question. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on

rollcall No. 302 (Previous Question on H. Res. 378), and "yea" on rollcall No. 303 (Adoption of H. Res. 378).

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

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

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 238, nays 166, answered "present" 2, not voting 24, as follows:

[Roll No. 304]

YEAS—238

Abraham	Duncan (TN)	McMorris
Adams	Dunn	Rodgers
Aderholt	Emmer	McNerney
Allen	Engel	Meadows
Amodei	Estes (KS)	Meehan
Arrington	Esty (CT)	Meeks
Babin	Ferguson	Meng
Bacon	Fleischmann	Messer
Banks (IN)	Portenberry	Mitchell
Barletta	Foster	Moolenaar
Barr	Frelinghuysen	Mooney (WV)
Beatty	Gabbard	Moulton
Bergman	Garamendi	Mullin
Bilirakis	Garrett	Murphy (FL)
Bishop (GA)	Goodlatte	Nadler
Bishop (MI)	Gottheimer	Newhouse
Bishop (UT)	Gowdy	Noem
Black	Green, Al	Nunes
Blackburn	Guthrie	O'Rourke
Blumenauer	Hanabusa	Olson
Blunt Rochester	Harper	Palazzo
Bonamici	Harris	Palmer
Brady (TX)	Hartzler	Panetta
Brat	Heck	Pascrell
Bridenstine	Hensarling	Pearce
Brooks (IN)	Higgins (LA)	Perlmutter
Brown (MD)	Higgins (NY)	Pingree
Buchanan	Hill	Pocan
Bucshon	Himes	Polis
Budd	Hollingsworth	Posey
Bustos	Huffman	Quigley
Butterfield	Huizenga	Reichert
Byrne	Hultgren	Richmond
Calvert	Hunter	Roby
Carson (IN)	Jeffries	Roe (TN)
Carter (TX)	Johnson (GA)	Rogers (AL)
Cartwright	Johnson (LA)	Rogers (KY)
Castro (TX)	Johnson, E. B.	Rooney, Francis
Chabot	Kaptur	Rooney, Thomas J.
Chaffetz	Katko	Roskam
Cheney	Kelly (MS)	Ross
Chu, Judy	Kelly (PA)	Rothfus
Ciavarella	Kildee	Ruppersberger
Clay	King (IA)	Rush
Cleaver	King (NY)	Russell
Clyburn	Krishnamoorthi	Rutherford
Cole	Kuster (NH)	Ryan (OH)
Collins (NY)	Kustoff (TN)	Scalise
Comstock	LaMalfa	Schneider
Cook	Lamborn	Schweikert
Cooper	Larsen (WA)	Scott (VA)
Cramer	Larson (CT)	Scott, David
Crawford	Lewis (MN)	Sensenbrenner
Cuellar	Lipinski	Serrano
Culberson	Long	Sessions
Davidson	Loudermilk	Shea-Porter
Davis (CA)	Love	Sherman
Davis, Danny	Lucas	Shimkus
DeGette	Luetkemeyer	Shuster
DeLauro	Lujan Grisham, M.	Simpson
DelBene	Luján, Ben Ray	Smith (NE)
Demings	Marchant	Smith (NJ)
Denham	Marino	Smith (TX)
Dent	Marshall	Smith (WA)
DeSaulnier	Massie	Smucker
DesJarlais	Mast	Speier
Deutch	McCarthy	Stefanik
Diaz-Balart	McCaul	Stewart
Dingell	McClintock	Suozi
Doggett	McCollum	Takano
Donovan	McEachin	Tenney
Duffy	McHenry	Thornberry
Duncan (SC)		

Titus	Walters, Mimi	Williams
Torres	Walz	Wilson (SC)
Trott	Wasserman	Wittman
Tsongas	Schultz	Womack
Velázquez	Webster (FL)	Yarmuth
Walden	Welch	Young (IA)
Walker	Wenstrup	Zeldin
Walorski	Westerman	

NAYS—166

Aguilar	Gosar	Nolan
Amash	Graves (GA)	Norcross
Barragán	Graves (LA)	O'Halleran
Barton	Graves (MO)	Pallone
Bass	Green, Gene	Paulsen
Beyer	Grothman	Payne
Biggs	Gutiérrez	Perry
Blum	Hastings	Peters
Bost	Herrera Beutler	Peterson
Boyle, Brendan F.	Hice, Jody B.	Pittenger
Brady (PA)	Holding	Poe (TX)
Brownley (CA)	Hoyer	Poliquin
Buck	Hudson	Price (NC)
Burgess	Hurd	Ratcliffe
Capuano	Jackson Lee	Reed
Carbajal	Jayapal	Renacci
Cárdenas	Jenkins (KS)	Rice (NY)
Carter (GA)	Jenkins (WV)	Rohrabacher
Castor (FL)	Johnson (OH)	Rokita
Clark (MA)	Jones	Ros-Lehtinen
Clarke (NY)	Jordan	Rosen
Coffman	Joyce (OH)	Rouzer
Cohen	Keating	Roybal-Allard
Collins (GA)	Kennedy	Ruiz
Comer	Khanna	Sánchez
Conaway	Kihuen	Sanford
Connolly	Kilmer	Sarbanes
Conyers	Kind	Schakowsky
Correa	Kinzing	Schiff
Costa	Knight	Schrader
Costello (PA)	LaHood	Scott, Austin
Courtney	Lance	Sewell (AL)
Crist	Langevin	Sinema
Crowley	Latta	Smith (MO)
Curbelo (FL)	Lawrence	Soto
Davis, Rodney	Lawson (FL)	Stivers
DeFazio	Lee	Swalwell (CA)
Delaney	Levin	Thompson (CA)
DeSantis	Lewis (GA)	Thompson (MS)
Doyle, Michael F.	Lieu, Ted	Thompson (PA)
Ellison	LoBiondo	Tipton
Españillat	Loeb sack	Turner
Evans	Lofgren	Upton
Farenthold	Lowenthal	Valadao
Faso	Lowey	Vargas
Fitzpatrick	Lynch	Veasey
Flores	MacArthur	Vela
Fox	Maloney, Sean	Visclosky
Franks (AZ)	Carolyn B.	Walberg
Fudge	Matsui	Waters, Maxine
Gaetz	McGovern	Watson Coleman
Gallagher	McKinley	Wilson (FL)
Galleo	McSally	Woodall
Gibbs	Moore	Yoder
Gonzalez (TX)	Murphy (PA)	Young (AK)
	Neal	

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—2

Rice (SC)	Tonko
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NOT VOTING—24

Bera	Grijalva	Royce (CA)
Brooks (AL)	Issa	Sires
Cummings	Johnson, Sam	Slaughter
Eshoo	Kelly (IL)	Taylor
Frankel (FL)	Labrador	Tiberi
Gohmert	Napolitano	Wagner
Granger	Pelosi	Weber (TX)
Griffith	Raskin	Yoho

□ 1334

Messrs. RENACCI and CURBELO of Florida changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall No. 304.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Speaker, I was absent for the initial vote series due to my attendance of

the funeral of Kyle Milliken. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall No. 302, “yea” on rollcall No. 303, and “yea” on rollcall No. 304.

VERIFY FIRST ACT

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 378, I call up the bill (H.R. 2581) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require the provision of social security numbers as a condition of receiving the health insurance premium tax credit, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MITCHELL). Pursuant to House Resolution 378, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means, printed in the bill, shall be considered as adopted, and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 2581

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 “Verify First Act”.

SEC. 2. VERIFICATION OF STATUS IN UNITED STATES AS CONDITION OF RECEIVING ADVANCE PAYMENT OF HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.

(a) APPLICATION TO CURRENT HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.—Section 36B of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as in effect for months beginning before January 1, 2020, is amended by redesignating subsection (g) as subsection (h) and by inserting after subsection (f) the following new subsection:

“(g) VERIFICATION OF STATUS IN UNITED STATES FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT.—No advance payment of the credit allowed under this section with respect to any premium under subsection (b)(2)(A) with respect to any individual shall be made under section 1412 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act unless the Secretary has received confirmation from the Secretary of Health and Human Services that the Commissioner of Social Security or the Secretary of Homeland Security has verified under section 1411(c)(2) of such Act the individual’s status as a citizen or national of the United States or an alien lawfully present in the United States using a process that includes the appropriate use of information related to citizenship or immigration status, such as social security account numbers (but not individual taxpayer identification numbers).”.

(b) APPLICATION TO NEW HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.—Section 36B of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended by the American Health Care Act of 2017 and in effect for months beginning after December 31, 2019, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) VERIFICATION OF STATUS IN UNITED STATES FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT.—No advance payment of the credit allowed under this section with respect to any amount under subparagraph (A) or (B) of subsection (b)(1) with respect to any individual shall be made under section 1412 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act unless the Secretary has received confirmation from the Secretary of Health and Human Services that the Commissioner of Social Security or the Secretary of Homeland Security has verified under section 1411(c)(2) of such Act the

individual’s status as a citizen or national of the United States or a qualified alien (within the meaning of section 431 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1641)) using a process that includes the appropriate use of information related to citizenship or immigration status, such as social security account numbers (but not individual taxpayer identification numbers).”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT ON CONTINUOUS HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE PROVISION.—Section 2710A(b)(1) of the Public Health Service Act, as added by section 133 of the American Health Care Act of 2017, is amended by adding after subparagraph (C) the following:

“In the case of an individual who applies for advance payment of a credit under section 1412 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and for whom a determination of eligibility for such advance payment is delayed by reason of the requirement for verification of the individual’s status in the United States under section 1411(c)(2) of such Act, the period of days beginning with the date of application for advance payment and ending with the date of such verification shall not be taken into account in applying subparagraph (B). The Secretary shall establish a procedure by which information relating to this period is provided to the individual.”.

(d) DELAY PERMITTED IN COVERAGE DATE IN CASE OF DELAY IN VERIFICATION OF STATUS FOR INDIVIDUALS APPLYING FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT OF CREDIT.—Section 1411(e) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18081(e)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3), by inserting after “applicant’s eligibility” the following: “(other than eligibility for advance payment of a credit under section 1412)”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(5) DELAY PERMITTED IN COVERAGE DATE IN CASE OF DELAY IN VERIFICATION OF STATUS FOR INDIVIDUALS APPLYING FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT OF CREDIT.—In the case of an individual whose eligibility for advance payments is delayed by reason of the requirement for verification under subsection (c)(2), if, for coverage to be effective as of the date requested in the individual’s application for enrollment, the individual would (but for this paragraph) be required to pay 2 or more months of retroactive premiums, the individual shall be provided the option to elect to postpone the effective date of coverage to the date that is not more than 1 month later than the date requested in the individual’s application for enrollment.”.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATES.—

(1) APPLICATION TO CURRENT HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.—The amendment made by subsection (a) is contingent upon the enactment of the American Health Care Act of 2017 and shall apply (if at all) to months beginning after December 31, 2017.

(2) APPLICATION TO NEW HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.—The amendment made by subsection (b) is contingent upon the enactment of the American Health Care Act of 2017 and shall apply (if at all) to months beginning after December 31, 2019, in taxable years ending after such date.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT ON CONTINUOUS HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE PROVISION.—The amendment made by subsection (c) is contingent upon the enactment of the American Health Care Act of 2017 and shall take effect (if at all) as if included in such Act.

(4) FLEXIBILITY IN COVERAGE DATE IN CASE OF DELAY IN VERIFICATION OF STATUS.—The amendment made by subsection (d) is contingent upon the enactment of the American Health Care Act of 2017 and shall apply (if at all) to applications for advance payments for months beginning after December 31, 2017.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) and

the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SÁNCHEZ) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill currently under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Last month House Republicans took a significant step to return patient-centered healthcare to the American people. We passed the American Health Care Act. The American Health Care Act begins our step-by-step process to repeal ObamaCare and replace this collapsing law with a 21st century healthcare system that truly works for American families, job creators, our States, and our taxpayers.

Now, as work on the American Health Care Act moves forward in the Senate, we are moving forward on a parallel track to deliver more solutions for the American people. One of those is the Verify First Act, sponsored by Congressman LOU BARLETTA of Pennsylvania.

This legislation takes important action to protect taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse. It prevents the American Health Care Act’s monthly tax credits and ObamaCare’s current subsidies from being dispensed until the legal status of an eligible recipient can be verified.

Under ObamaCare, people who are in the United States illegally are prohibited from receiving taxpayer-funded subsidies to help purchase health insurance; but like so many aspects of ObamaCare, there is a major defect. ObamaCare starts by assuming a person is a legal resident and sends the money right away even if the verification process is still incomplete.

As we have seen with so many Federal programs, it is all but impossible to get fraudulently claimed money back after it is already out the door. This flaw of ObamaCare is no different. It has resulted in taxpayer-funded subsidies being spent on people who are not in the United States legally and, therefore, not eligible to receive them.

My constituents in Texas and yours around the country work too hard to see their tax dollars wasted by Washington’s carelessness. The best solution to protect taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse is to stop it before it occurs, and that is what the Verify First Act by Mr. BARLETTA will do.

This bill strengthens existing verification tools by making a commonsense change. Rather than sending the money first and confirming legal status later, it verifies legal status up

front. So if you want to receive financial support for health insurance, this bill simply requires that you first provide a Social Security number or another form of acceptable information to validate citizenship or immigration status.

This commonsense change will apply to ObamaCare beginning with next year's open enrollment period, and after ObamaCare is repealed, it will apply to the tax credits offered in the American Health Care Act when they take effect. This helps ensure that taxpayer-funded assistance for the purchase of health insurance is only distributed to people who are eligible, not to those who are in our country illegally.

I want to thank Congressman BARLETTA for his leadership on this important legislation. The Verify First Act is a much-needed solution to safeguard taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse both now and in the future, and that is crucial as we continue our efforts to repeal and replace the failing ObamaCare law. It is vital to improving America's health system for the long term.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting the passage of the Verify First Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I can't believe we are here today attempting to pass such a blatantly discriminatory bill. Under the guise of fighting fraud, Republicans are attempting to pass a bill that will put additional barriers to care for all Americans—all this in exchange for one Member's vote for TrumpCare, which guts healthcare for 23 million Americans, and the Republicans barely passed that bill out of the House.

This bill fails to recognize the diversity of American families; instead, it forces a single approach for all those who need financial help to get the care that they need.

I don't know if everyone on the other side of the aisle knows this, but there are already measures in place to prevent advanced premium tax credits from going to ineligible people. There is already a mechanism in place for Treasury to reconcile tax credits, and any undocumented individual found to have received a subsidy must repay them in full.

The other side will also try to make the argument that this measure will help fight fraud in the healthcare system, that there is somehow overwhelming amounts of evidence that immigrants are the main perpetrators of fraud. Beneficiaries struggling to access care are not the perpetrators of fraud. These are good people trying to do right by their families and by their country.

Of course, my colleagues over there are going to cite a Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs report, written by a Republican majority, that found, "a half

a million illegal immigrants received \$750 million in healthcare subsidies."

Well, I have that report right here in my hand, and nowhere does it say that 500,000 undocumented immigrants received millions of dollars in healthcare subsidies, as Mr. BARLETTA's press release claims. What the report says is 500,000 individuals, and not 500,000 undocumented individuals or any other term that Republicans like to use to disparage immigrants.

□ 1345

There is no evidence to suggest that immigrants without authorization to be here would take the risk of signing on to a government website to fraudulently get healthcare coverage.

So what are the unintended consequences of this bill?

I hate to break it to my colleagues, but the people most impacted are U.S. citizens who were born abroad or naturalized, not undocumented individuals.

This bill is yet another example that the Republican majority will do anything to demonize even the smallest subsection of immigrants in order to gut healthcare for Americans and get their billionaire buddies a big, fat tax break. Whether that means sowing fear in communities by raiding homes in order to hunt people down or denying access to care for legal immigrants who are entitled to care, no excuse is too ridiculous for Republicans to attack the immigrant community.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter signed by 226 organizations in opposition to H.R. 2581.

JUNE 12, 2017.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS: As national, state, and local organizations concerned about immigrant rights or access to affordable health care, we are writing to strongly urge you to VOTE NO on HR 2581, the "Verify First" Act. This bill is an attack on people's ability to see a doctor and on immigrants and people of color. It is not the "common sense" taxpayer protection bill that its supporters would have you believe.

HR 2581 is a dangerous bill that puts up roadblocks for both citizens and immigrants to obtain timely, affordable health insurance. It would strip away provisions that provide for a person to obtain subsidies for enrollment in an Affordable Care Act (or the contemplated American Health Care Act) plan while they work with Department of Health and Human Services to verify their U.S. citizenship or immigration status. The people most impacted are U.S. citizens who were born abroad or naturalized. The bill also affects many immigrants, especially those newly arrived or certain victims of domestic violence and trafficking survivors.

The fact is that when individuals are not able to immediately verify their citizenship or immigration status on an Affordable Care Act Marketplace, it begins an often months long, strenuous process of sending in documents that must be physically inspected. Health care assistants routinely say these clients are the hardest cases they work on because the process for verifying citizenship and immigration status is a time-consuming exercise in dealing with inefficient government processes.

Rather than protect American taxpayers, HR 2581 would strip from American taxpayers important protections that are need-

ed to overcome deficiencies in federal government databases. Immigrants who are not lawfully present are categorically barred from enrollment in health insurance on the Affordable Care Act marketplaces, and for the subsidies that make that insurance affordable. Moreover, safeguards protecting taxpayers are already built into the ACA; individuals whose citizenship or immigration status cannot be verified already are required to pay back all of their subsidies when they file their taxes and "reconcile" their premium tax credits.

Supporters of this bill cite a sloppy Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee report that arrived at a made-up number of supposed "fraud." It's just not true. The committee assumed that every person who lost coverage for failure to verify their citizenship and immigration status was undocumented. In the experience of our organizations and organizations we work with, this is false. These reports describe the first year of the marketplaces, and it is well documented that system outages and understaffing, among other technical problems, contributed to the federal Marketplace's failure to verify consumers' status promptly. The Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General reported in 2014 that a cause of the delay in verification was the agency's lack of prioritization of this issue.

Despite huge gains since then, problems still persist. The Social Security database holding many citizens' information may not reflect common changes, such as when a person marries and changes their last name, or when someone naturalizes and gains U.S. citizenship. People lose their coverage because they receive notices in languages they cannot read. Immigrants are required to submit documents multiple times, or wait while the Department of Homeland Security finds paper files, a result of deficiencies in their databases affecting groups like asylum applicants and some survivors of domestic violence. These are among the many issues consumers face.

Congress has already deprived undocumented immigrants from the ability to buy coverage, even at full price, so they can see a doctor when they are sick, but this bill would go a step further to delay or put out of reach affordable health insurance for many citizens and lawfully present immigrants. Our organizations firmly believe that this would be detrimental to the people we represent and to all of our communities as a whole. We have seen that when health insurance is unaffordable, people are effectively prevented from obtaining access to the care they need to be healthy.

This bill is not just an attack on our health care system, it is also an attack on immigrants and people of color, which our organizations stand firmly against. In his statements when introducing this bill, Rep. Lou Barletta focused the bill as part of his effort to "stop illegal immigration." Rep. Barletta has a long history of anti-immigrant rhetoric, from trying to prevent immigrants from leasing a residence to stating that they should be denied life-saving services in hospital emergency rooms. This bill is simply a vehicle for scapegoating immigrants and people of color and will keep eligible people from accessing health care.

We the undersigned organizations urge you to vote NO on HR 2581 and the continued assault on immigrants and the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL

Advocates for Youth; African American Ministers In Action; American Federation of Teachers (AFT); American Friends Service

Committee; American Intercession; American Society on Aging; Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum; Asian Americans Advancing Justice/AAJC; Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence; Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership (APPEAL); Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO); Autistic Self Advocacy Network; Black Alliance for Just Immigration; Breast Cancer Action; Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.; Child Welfare League of America; Children's Advocacy Institute; Children's Defense Fund; Church World Service (CWS);

Coalition on Human Needs; Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces; Conscious Talk Radio; Detention Watch Network; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund; Dominican Sisters; Dominicans of Sinsinawa; Family Equality Council; Farmworker Justice; First Focus Campaign for Children; Food Research & Action Center; Franciscan Sisters of the Poor IJPC; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Generations Inc.; GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality; Immigrant Legal Resource Center; Indivisible; Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Interfaith Worker Justice;

Irish Apostolate USA; Jobs With Justice; Justice in Aging; Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province; Lambda Legal; Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America; League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); Medical Mission Sisters; Mi Familia Vota; MomsRising; NAACP; NAPAFAASA; National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum; National Association of County and City Health Officials; National Association of Social Workers; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Transgender Equality; National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA); National Council of Churches;

National Council of La Raza (NCLR); National Education Association; National Employment Law Project; National Health Law Program; National Hispanic Medical Association; National Immigrant Justice Center; National Immigration Law Center; National Justice for Our Neighbors; National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health; National Network of Abortion Funds; National Organization for Women; National Women's Health Network; Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ; NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice; NMAC; OCA—Asian Pacific American Advocates; Our Revolution; Peace and Justice Office of the Congregation of Notre Dame; Physicians for Reproductive Health; PICO National;

Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign; Prevention Institute; Project Inform; Racine Dominicans; Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need; Refuge Ministries; Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Service Employees International Union; Sisters of Charity; Sisters of Charity of Nazareth; Sisters of Mercy of the Americas—Institute Justice Team; Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC); The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; United Sikhs; United We Dream; Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province; We Belong Together; API Wellness;

STATE AND LOCAL

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services; Advocates for Children and Youth; AgeOptions; Almost Home, Inc.; Anti-Hunger

& Nutrition Coalition; Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families; Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing; Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Los Angeles; Asian Community Alliance—Cincinnati OH; Asian Law Alliance; Asian Services In Action, Inc.; Baltimore Jewish Council; California Health Professional Student Alliance; California Immigrant Policy Center; California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ); California OneCare; California Pan-Ethnic Health Network; California Partnership; California Physicians Alliance; CASA;

Center for Southeast Asians; Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition; Child Care Resources of Rockland; Children Now; Children's Defense Fund-CA; Chinatown Service Center; Chinese-American Planning Council; Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA); Collaborative Center for Justice; Colorado Center on Law and Policy; Colorado Center on Law and Policy; Columbia Legal Services; Community Health Councils; D. C. Hunger Solutions; DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform; Empower Missouri; Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa; Erie Benedictines for Peace; Esperanza Health Centers; EverThrive Illinois; Farmworker Association of Florida;

Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC); Give for a Smile; Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness; Having Our Say Coalition; Health Access California; Health Care for All-WA; Health Law Advocates; Healthy House Within A MATCH Coalition; Hmong Ohio of Tomorrow; Hunger Action Los Angeles; IHM Sisters, Immaculata, PA; IL Hunger Coalition; Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights; Indivisible Mountain Home, Idaho; Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity; IRIS—Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services; Islamic Civic Engagement Project; Jewish Family & Children's Service; Kansas Appleseed; Kentucky Equal Justice Center; Korean Community Services of Metropolitan NY; La Fe Policy Research and Education Center;

La Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program; Legal Council for Health Justice; Legal Services of Southern Piedmont; Maine Consumers for Affordable Health Care; Make the Road New York; Maryland CASH Campaign; Maryland Hunger Solutions; Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA); Massachusetts Law Reform Institute; Maternal and Child Health Access; Maternity Care Coalition; National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter; National Tongan American Society; Nationalities Service Center; NC Child; New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty; New York Immigration Coalition; New York Legal Assistance Group; NICOS Chinese Health Coalition; NJ State Industrial Union Council; NOELA Community Health Center; Northern NJ Chapter, National Organization for Women;

Northwest Health Law Advocates; Northwest Immigrant Rights Project; Office of the Health Care Advocate at Vermont Legal Aid; OneAmerica; Pacific Islander Health Partnership; Pitkin County Human Services; Public Justice Center; Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA); Rainbow Center; Reformed Church of Highland Park; RESULTS-Santa Fe (NM); Salaam Cleveland; Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN); Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Houston; Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, NY; Sisters of the Most Precious Blood; Social Justice Committee St. Patrick Church; South Asian Network; Southwest Women's Law Center; St. Francis St Vincent de Paul Society; Tennessee Justice Center; Thai Health And Information Service;

The Children's Partnership; The Latino Health Insurance Program, Inc.; Turning

Points; United Way Bay Area; URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America; Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition; Virginia Poverty Law Center; Voices for Vermont's Children; Voz Hispana Cambio Comunitario; Washington Community Action Network; Washington Healthcare Access Alliance; Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; West Chester Food Cupboard; West Side Campaign Against Hunger; Westlake Chinese Culture Association; Wisconsin Council of Churches; Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice; Women's Action Movement Washtenaw County MI; Worksite Wellness LA; Xaverian Brothers; Young Women United;

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

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA), the author of the Verify First Act, and as chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, I am proud to advance this bill.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and working with me on this important issue. I also thank leadership for recognizing this issue and working with me to fix the problem.

I am proud to rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act.

My bill is intended to stop fraud in the distribution of healthcare tax credits and protect taxpayer dollars. It is simple: the American people expect that we are verifying that someone qualifies for taxpayer money before that money goes out the door.

This is about the Federal Government being good stewards of the money our constituents send to Washington. Every Federal dollar that goes to someone committing fraud is a dollar that is not going to a person who truly needs and deserves assistance.

No one should be allowed to commit fraud at the taxpayers' expense. No business would give a refund without first verifying a receipt.

Yet this is exactly what is happening under our current healthcare system. The law claims that taxpayer money will only go to people who qualify for it. Yet no one is being held responsible for making sure that that happens. My bill does that.

Under current law, the Federal Government pays tax credits to individuals without first verifying that they qualify to receive them. If individuals cannot verify their legal status, the IRS is then forced to chase after the money.

This pay-and-chase model of distributing tax credits has greatly increased costs to the taxpayers. A 2016 Senate report revealed that, under ObamaCare, \$750 million in taxpayer-funded healthcare subsidies went to people who did not qualify for those benefits.

We could fix this problem and save time and money so that IRS agents are helping people, instead of trying to recover improper payments by verifying legal status first.

My bill simply requires the IRS to work with the relevant Federal agencies to verify that an individual is a

citizen, national, or lawfully present in the United States before tax credits go out the door. This can be done by verifying an applicant's Social Security number or other immigration documents. Again, the American people expect that we are already doing this.

Under my bill, everyone who applies for the advance premium tax credit will be verified for legal status. Most people won't even know that this is happening because the verification check is so quick.

My bill also includes protections that ensure that individuals who are legally entitled to these tax credits are not penalized if there is a delay in verifying their documents. I first raised this issue last year with the previous administration. I am raising it again this year because there is no evidence that anything has been done to address it.

Nobody wanted to take responsibility for mismanaging \$750 million of taxpayer money. Everyone pointed fingers at other people. My bill holds people accountable.

While I received assurances from the current administration that it would implement and follow a process to verify legal status, my bill would require it in law. This issue is too important to be left to the changing positions of unelected Federal bureaucrats. The American people deserve to know that their representatives are doing everything in their power to protect taxpayer money.

The Verify First Act provides that certainty and upholds the integrity of the health insurance premium tax credit by putting an end to fraud and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the cosponsors of my bill for their support. They include DIANE BLACK, MO BROOKS, JEFF DUNCAN, JIMMY DUNCAN, MIKE KELLY, DOUG LAMBORN, MIKE McCALL, DAVID MCKINLEY, KRISTI NOEM, JIM RENACCI, MIKE ROGERS, LAMAR SMITH, JASON SMITH, G.T. THOMPSON, and JOE WILSON.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD letters of support from NumbersUSA and FAIR, two groups that have been working with me to protect the interests of the American worker and legal immigrants.

NUMBERSUSA,
Arlington, VA, May 23, 2017.

Hon. LOU BARLETTA,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BARLETTA: NumbersUSA, on behalf of our more than 8 million activists, applauds you for introducing the Verify First Act to ensure that health care tax credits are not paid to illegal aliens or other disqualified aliens. As you know, NumbersUSA opposed the ineffective verification provisions in the Affordable Care Act because we knew they would result in taxpayer-funded subsidies being sent to illegal aliens. Our concerns, unfortunately, were confirmed by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which reported that more than \$700 million in Obamacare subsidies had been paid to ineligible aliens by 2015. Like you, we recognized that these same ineffective

verification procedures in the American Health Care Act (AHCA) would result in the payment of health care tax credits to illegal or otherwise ineligible aliens.

The Verify First Act will require the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to actually verify the citizenship or immigration status of every applicant for a credit under the AHCA before the Treasury Department issues the credit. Both SSA and DHS have established, proven methods of verifying status in a timely and efficient manner, including the E-Verify system, which relies on data from these two agencies to verify work authorization, and the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) system, which uses DHS data to establish welfare eligibility.

Hard-working Americans and legal residents already are struggling to pay for their own health care. There is simply no excuse for the Federal government to force them to subsidize health care for illegal aliens through taxpayer-funded credits.

For this reason, NumbersUSA is delighted to support your Verify First Act and we look forward to working with you to make sure it is enacted into law. We also applaud House Republican Leadership and the House Ways and Means Committee for working with you to close this expensive loophole in our health care system.

Sincerely,

ANNE MANETAS,
Vice President, NumbersUSA.

FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN
IMMIGRATION REFORM,
Washington, DC, May 24, 2017.

Hon. LOU BARLETTA,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BARLETTA: On behalf of the Federation for American Immigration Reform's (FAIR) nearly 1.5 million members and supporters nationwide, I am writing to thank you for introducing the Verify First Act. This important piece of legislation would deny health care tax credits to illegal aliens and ensure that Americans' hard-earned tax dollars only go to those with a valid Social Security number (SSN).

As you know, federal law explicitly prevents illegal aliens from receiving tax credits. Despite this, a recent report by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee found that nearly 500,000 illegal aliens received approximately \$750 million in taxpayer-funded health care subsidies as of June 2015. Under Obamacare, the federal government pays health care tax credits on a "temporary basis" to individuals who are unable to verify their citizenship. If an individual is ultimately unable to verify their immigration status, the funding is suspended and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) attempts to recoup overpayments from the individuals who were wrongly covered. This challenging practice—known as "pay and chase"—is costing taxpayers millions.

As a complement to the recently passed American Health Care Act, your legislation ensures that the IRS has verified that an individual is a citizen, national, or lawfully present in the United States before the advance health insurance premium tax credit is disbursed. This will be done by checking an applicant's SSN or other immigration documents. Additionally, your legislation prohibits the use of the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), which are issued without verification of legal status.

For the aforementioned reasons, FAIR applauds you for introducing the Verify First Act. When this important piece of legislation

is considered on the House floor, FAIR will include the vote in our voting report.

Sincerely,

DAN STEIN,
President.

Mr. BARLETTA. Additionally, this legislation is supported by Citizens Against Government Waste and Americans for Tax Reform.

Finally, I include in the RECORD a Statement of Administration Policy noting that the President would sign this bill into law.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 2581—VERIFY FIRST ACT—REP. BARLETTA,
R-PA AND 14 COSPONSORS

The Administration supports H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act. Under Obamacare, millions of dollars in advance payments of the premium tax credit may have been paid on behalf of individuals who were likely ineligible beneficiaries, including illegal immigrants. By eliminating the practice of providing advance payments while an applicant's immigration status is being verified, this bill stems the flow of payments to ineligible individuals under Obamacare and strengthens the ability of the Administration to ensure premium tax credits will be appropriately provided to eligible individuals under the American Health Care Act of 2017 (AHCA). By protecting the integrity of Federal funds, this bill furthers the President's vision of a more efficient Federal Government that respects taxpayer dollars.

H.R. 2581 would prohibit advance payments of premium tax credits to individuals under current law and the AHCA, unless the Secretary of the Treasury receives confirmation that the individual is a citizen or a national of the United States, or is lawfully present in the United States. H.R. 2581 would also strengthen the AHCA, as passed by the House of Representatives on May 4, 2017, which the Administration continues to support strongly.

If H.R. 2581 were presented to the President in its current form, his advisors would recommend that he sign the bill into law.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge passage of my bill.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the majority that the IRS would be able to do their job if they didn't spend the last 8 years demonizing the IRS and cutting their budget year after year.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), my colleague on the Ways and Means Committee.

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, this act jeopardizes American families' ability to afford health insurance.

The so-called Verify First Act would require a new verification process of an individual's Social Security number before he or she can receive any tax credit for health coverage, either under the ACA or under the disastrous House-passed TrumpCare bill.

This bill does nothing to address the reality that more than 23 million Americans would lose health insurance under the Republican healthcare legislation; nor does it address the harm caused by cutting \$800 billion from Medicaid by eliminating the expansion

for moderate-income workers and by imposing per capita caps on program spending; and it does nothing to address higher premiums for older workers and discrimination against Americans with preexisting conditions that will occur under the TrumpCare bill that this legislation is amending.

Instead, this bill takes that one step further by making it harder for children, including newborns and survivors of domestic violence and sex trafficking, to obtain a tax credit for purchasing their own health coverage. Under the legislation, Social Security numbers would be required before receiving a tax credit, and it prohibits the use of an individual taxpayer identification number, which those without a Social Security number use to file their tax returns.

Mr. Speaker, as has already been said, there are already protections built into the law to ensure that tax credits are issued to qualifying individuals. Under current law, eligibility for tax credits is verified when an individual applies to enroll in coverage. The eligibility is then subject to a secondary verification process that identifies ineligible individuals and terminates their coverage. This system strikes a balance between rigorously verifying eligibility, while also ensuring that eligible individuals are not subject to financial hardship because of red tape.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would make it more difficult for American families to access affordable healthcare. I oppose this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLY), a key member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I have a chart that I am going to put up here in a minute, but there is something that I think we all need to realize: Our positions here not only are as representatives but also stewards of taxpayer money.

Now, a lot of people sometimes become confused as to whose money it is that we are talking about, and what we are talking about is hardworking American taxpayers.

The definition of a steward is pretty simple: It is someone who manages another's property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others.

The oath we take makes us responsible for every single penny that we spend or allocate because it came out of the pocket of a hardworking American taxpayer.

So it just seems to me that Mr. BARLETTA's idea makes sense: this idea that somehow actually making sure that people qualify for a subsidy is somehow being mean-hearted and not being actually a steward of these dollars.

I just wanted to point this out. This is H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. It was the final

vote on March 21, 2010. And I would just tell some of my colleagues: Take a look because some of your names are very prominent there—and you can see it. The piece that we are talking about is the piece that was included in the Affordable Care Act. This isn't something that we dreamed up overnight; this is something that was actually part of the Affordable Care Act.

And now we are saying: My goodness, we are allowing these subsidies to be out there. And then what we are saying is: Well, we are going to presume that whoever it is who applied for these subsidies actually is entitled to them.

Now, that only works in Washington, D.C. In the private sector, you usually have to verify before you do anything, as opposed to saying: Well, do you know what, somebody said that they were entitled to this, so we ought to just go ahead and pass this on.

I have got to tell you: It is a lot easier when it doesn't come out of your pocket. But, when it comes out of hardworking American taxpayers' pockets, I think it is incumbent upon us, as elected representatives, to say that there is something that doesn't make sense here.

When over half a million people receive over \$750 million in subsidies, somebody, somewhere, should be saying: How did this happen?

I think it is interesting that neither HHS or the IRS has any method in place to actually go out and recoup these dollars that were wrongfully awarded. This just doesn't make sense. Mr. BARLETTA is doing something that is common sense.

And I know that when the act was passed, the most famous quote of all is: We have to pass it to find out what is in it.

Well, we did pass it. I wasn't here. I was in the private sector. But these are all of the folks who passed it. This is actually your policy. This is LOU BARLETTA's policy. This isn't a Republican policy. This is a policy that was part of the Affordable Care Act.

Why in the world would we ever, as taxpayers, expect people to verify this type of activity?

We should just say: Listen, they seem like pretty good folks, and they are going to eventually get back to us.

We have no way of recouping this money.

Now, we can rail about people not having hearts; we can rail about people who don't like immigrants; and we can rail about taking this out on hardworking families and making it difficult for them to get by.

I would just say this: We are trying to protect taxpayer money. We are trying to protect something that is so basic. We are trying to protect something that is actually part of the law that was passed as part of the Affordable Care Act. This isn't a foreign idea. This just makes sense.

So I would just ask my friends: Listen, please go to H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act,

and go to section 1411—this is your language, by the way. As I said, I wasn't here at the time. I did read it, and I am still scratching my head to say: Do you know what, this is probably a good policy; you should probably read it before you pass it.

But it says exactly what it is that you expect people receiving these subsidies to go through.

It is amazing me today that, all of a sudden, this is Potomac amnesia: I don't remember that part of the law.

So, look, there could be nothing more sensible—commonsensical—than making sure that before we issue subsidies, that are funded by hardworking American taxpayers, that we actually verify who it is that is getting them; rather than going ahead and putting it out there and then saying: Do you know what, maybe they don't qualify.

Well, how do you get the money back?

This pay-and-chase idea, to me, would never work in the private sector because we actually have to be responsible for what we do.

Now, I don't want you to get all wrapped around the axle and think that somehow we are coming after people in a way that doesn't make sense.

Here is what I want you to think about: I want you to think about the people who actually pay the tab, the people who actually pick up the check, the people who actually pay taxes, the people to who we are the most responsible.

And to somehow come up with an idea that it is mean-hearted to verify who is getting these subsidies, to me, is tomfoolery. If you want to do something, and you want to make it hard for people to understand what we are doing, do this: I would love to go back home and tell people what you folks just don't understand. You sent the money to us, we decided how we are going to spend it, we decided that we can give it to anybody we want, and, by the way, if they don't qualify, that shouldn't bother you.

Now, let's just do something that makes sense.

□ 1400

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Well, you know what? I really don't need a full minute to talk about something that is common sense, but I have been here now a little bit over 6 years, and it is hard for me to believe that this act was passed back on March 21, 2010, and the language we are talking about today is the actual language that was in the bill that we had to pass before we could find out what was in it.

Maybe at that time somebody should have read this, and it was a good idea to actually verify these things. That would have saved a whole lot of time, a whole lot of money, and a whole lot of irresponsible spending.

Again, whether you want to agree with the study or not agree with the study, when half a million people receive over \$750 million in hardworking American taxpayer money, and then we are told: Geez, I can't believe you are that mean that you want to go back and recoup money from people who didn't deserve it—no. What we are saying is let's verify first. Let's make sure of every single penny that goes out of this House—the people's House, by the way—and let's do what is the responsible thing to do as stewards of every single taxpayer penny.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would just remind my colleagues that under the ACA, there is also a verification process for subsidies. But I would just raise the issue that for newborn children, most of whom don't have a Social Security number when they are newborn—and this includes children of our military members serving overseas—if they have a severe health problem, then delaying verification, which can be up to 6 weeks for them, can mean the difference between life and death. And I am talking about a situation such as that experienced by Jimmy Kimmel, if you take the time to see his response to what happened with his newborn.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT), also a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, this so-called American Health Care bill is a real Titanic of a sorry piece of legislation: It would sink 23 million Americans losing their health coverage; millions more who have a preexisting condition would face great barriers; it would undermine Medicare; it would provide price-gouging, Big Pharma manufacturers with a huge tax windfall, all as part of almost a trillion dollars in a tax cut—which is what their bill is really all about, not healthcare—those benefits going to a few corporations and the superrich among us.

Most every healthcare professional group in the country along with the AARP and the vast majority of Americans reject this bill. We would have even more people rejecting if it hadn't been hidden, if even one administration official had had the courage to come and be held accountable for this bill in a public hearing. But, apparently, we will not have that anywhere in this Congress before this huge bill is approved.

The American people are locked on board this sinking ship. Our insurance markets are already taking on water from Trump sabotage, and disaster looms in front of us.

This is not a Verify First bill that we take up today; it is a patch on this sinking Titanic ship.

It is not a Verify First; it is a "Vilify First" our immigrants, and it is really just the next chapter in Trump's anti-immigrant crusade, which he tweets about on a regular basis.

Our Republican colleagues celebrate this Immigrant Heritage Month, June. They celebrate the fourth anniversary of 68 Members of the United States Senate, in a bipartisan way, approving comprehensive immigration reform. They do it with this "Vilify First Act."

And while I want to protect taxpayers and think we have a responsibility to ferret out and prevent every dime of fraud that might be out there, I also feel a responsibility to struggling families that I represent who already have so many barriers in the way of getting medical coverage to their children.

Not everyone is as fortunate as Jimmy Kimmel, although he had the misfortune of a child born with serious medical needs, he at least had the ability to do something about it. And folks need to be able to access promptly and immediately, sometimes, a family doctor.

We should fight fraud wherever it occurs. I do wish we had the same level of enthusiasm about protecting taxpayers from Medicaid fraud by big pharmaceutical manufacturers, for offshore tax dodging that denies us billions of dollars, as they voice for taking on the poor. We don't have that, but we do need to analyze carefully what the Government Accountability Office that provides the basis for this legislation really said.

They found a need to address \$750 million. Under the program, they did not find one dollar, one red cent that an immigrant had taken improperly from this program. They did not document any immigrant fraud. There may be some out there, but you can't rely on this study to find it.

We were asked: Well, why do you think this has anything to do with immigrants? Well, I can tell you why. Because the sponsor of the amendment, who is here on the floor, when he introduced this piece of legislation, said he was after what he called illegal immigrants; and he said that he would not vote for TrumpCare, that sorry Titanic of a bill, he would not vote for it unless this provision was adopted.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, I personally represent San Antonio, San Marcus, Lockhart, and Austin families that already face barriers to getting their children medical coverage, and adding an additional requirement just means they are that much less likely, in the event of an emergency, to be able to get coverage. We need to prevent fraud. This is not the way to do it.

What we need is comprehensive immigration reform to deal with these immigration issues just like the Senate approved 4 years ago—make improvements on it; debate it; consider it—sink this sorry piece of legislation, try to raise up the antifraud provisions and the comprehensive immigration reform that we so desperately need, and to grow this economy.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS).

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act. This legislation is part of our continued focus on improving the Nation's healthcare system beyond the passage of the American Health Care Act. The bill ensures those who receive help to purchase health insurance are truly eligible. What is wrong with that?

Under the Obama administration, an estimated \$750 million in tax credits have been awarded to over 500,000 individuals who were later determined to be ineligible. For the sake of hardworking Americans everywhere, we need to be better stewards of taxpayer dollars. That means verify first.

Why not? The Verify First Act protects taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse under ObamaCare and, in the future, under the American Health Care Act. This bill is good for taxpayers and good for America's healthcare future. It is as simple as that.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. JUDY CHU), a colleague from the Ways and Means Committee.

Ms. JUDY CHU of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this misguided bill. This bill will prevent people who have a legitimate right to healthcare from accessing it and will harm them, and it is for reasons that are completely unjustified.

Currently, taxpayers must provide a Social Security number or tax I.D. number in order to qualify for a premium tax credit for healthcare. While the taxpayer's citizenship and immigration status are verified, they are given a 90-day grace period in which to prove their legal status.

This grace period was put into place to ensure that people do not lose critical healthcare coverage and continue to have it while their paperwork is cleared. This bill would remove this safeguard and make it more difficult for numerous people to obtain health insurance. That could be a matter of life or death.

This bill would certainly create barriers for immigrants who are here legally. It would also create barriers for U.S. citizens who have complications with their Social Security numbers. This includes people who recently change their name after marriage, have an error in their records, were born abroad, or were victims of human trafficking. It would also affect newborns, who do not get their Social Security number right away.

Republicans claim that reports released by the GAO and the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee were proof of immigrants defrauding the government, but neither of these reports back up this claim.

First of all, the GAO report was actually a test to identify vulnerabilities

for fraud in the system. They did not find instances of immigrants committing fraud for healthcare subsidies. The Senate report found that 500,000 individuals did not complete their verification process and were, thus, deemed ineligible for subsidies.

The author of today's bill takes this information and leaps to the conclusion that all those who did not complete the process were undocumented immigrants and were attempting to commit fraud, but there is nothing in either report to substantiate this. In fact, the ACA requires undocumented immigrants or anybody who does receive subsidies in error to pay back every cent on their tax return at the end of the year.

This bill seeks to address a problem that does not exist. Instead, it would harm people by denying or delaying health insurance subsidies to people who need them. This is wrong. I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MARINO).

Mr. MARINO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, which was introduced by my colleague, good friend, and fellow Pennsylvanian LOU BARLETTA. This is a simple piece of legislation that ensures no American taxpayer dollars are used to fund healthcare for those who are here undocumented.

Congress, the American people, and my constituents were told that, under ObamaCare, illegal immigrants would not be eligible for tax credits. Instead, the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee issued a report detailing that, as of June 2015, over half a million people without legal status have received up to \$750 million in taxpayer-funded subsidies. No record can be found if any of this was ever recovered.

It is time that we ensure our taxpayers that their dollars are only going to those with legal status. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this legislation.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at this time to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER), my colleague on the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to share the Chamber with my fellow Northwesterner.

We have gone through this in the Ways and Means Committee with one of the least productive hearings I can remember, and that says a lot in my 10 years on the committee. We do it good natured, but, frankly, it is beside the point. And my friends from the Ways and Means Committee have documented the fact that this is a solution in search of a problem.

The real outrage ought to be what is happening now behind closed doors to take a flawed bill that came from the House, was actually made worse in

order to get the votes for it, and passed through on a narrow party-line vote—actually, a number of Republicans voted against it—lodged in the Senate, no public hearings. In fact, we are told that they are not enabling people to actually get ahold of the documents to know what is going on.

You know, it is stunning to me to have heard some of my Republican friends complain about the process of the Affordable Care Act. I was in the middle of that. We took a year. Three committees in the House had multiple hearings, work sessions. There were actually some Republican amendments adopted out in the open. CBO scored the bill so people knew. Now we are on the verge of, we are told, having that sneak through the Senate without the glare of publicity, without an open public process, which will deny healthcare to millions of people—millions of people—and shred much of the good work that has been done through the Affordable Care Act.

□ 1415

We have been told and we acknowledge there are little things that we could do to fine-tune it, but in 7 years of Republican crow and crow, we have never had an opportunity to do that. Instead, this administration and my Republican friends consistently made it worse, destabilized, sent conflicting signals to the healthcare industry, to the insurance companies. And you don't have to take my word for it. News accounts quote people in the industry about what the Republicans have done to destabilize it and try to make it fail.

There was a reason that virtually everybody in the healthcare space was opposed to the Republican approach. It is not thoughtful. It is not fair. It is not effective. It is not necessary. But today we are looking at some provisions that will make it a little more burdensome.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there may be some people that will be swept up who had gotten care that they didn't, but there will be people who will be swept up who were entitled to care who could not jump through the hurdles or, at a minimum, had their care delayed. We haven't properly analyzed that. But as I say, it is beside the point.

There are tremendous opportunities for us to work together on a bipartisan agenda that we have in the Ways and Means Committee, of things that we could move forward and agree upon to make healthcare better, that doesn't depend on shredding the guarantees of the ACA; that doesn't depend on gutting Medicaid, which more Americans rely upon for their healthcare than any other program in the country. We wouldn't have to mess with that.

Instead, we are having a sideshow. I don't know that it goes anywhere, but it certainly isn't the issue that Americans could focus on, should focus on, that is going to imperil their healthcare for tens of millions of Americans if the Republicans have their way.

That is exactly why we are debating this today, to deflect attention, occupy time, and prevent doing the job that we should have done right here, and allow the Senate to be able to continue this unfortunate process.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RENACCI), a colleague of mine on the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. RENACCI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, introduced by my good friend and colleague, Congressman LOU BARLETTA. This legislation seeks to remedy one of the many oversights of the ACA that it failed to address—an oversight at the expense of the American taxpayer.

Under the current system, the Treasury disburses credits to individuals before their application has been verified. In the real world, where I come from, that just doesn't happen. If the IRS then finds out that this individual is not eligible, they have to try to get the money back. It is almost impossible to recover that money.

This legislation closes a loophole simply by requiring an individual be verified as lawfully present before the Treasury releases the money. It is important to understand that the issue at hand is about poor stewardship of hard-earned tax dollars. That is what the American people sent us down here for. The sole intent of this credit was for the credits to be used lawfully, and this legislation helps ensure just that.

At a time when our national debt is \$19 trillion and counting, it makes no sense for the Federal Government to continue to write these checks. My constituents in Ohio depend on me to ensure responsible stewardship of their hard-earned tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to commit to the same responsibility and support the Verify First Act.

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

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are calling this bill and the two other healthcare bills on the floor this week "fixes" for TrumpCare. But what exactly is it that you are fixing?

This bill does nothing to address the more than 23 million individuals who will lose their coverage or the \$800 billion cut to Medicaid under TrumpCare. Nothing in this bill will do anything to fix the waiver allowing insurers to discriminate against individuals with pre-existing conditions by jacking up their rates, and nothing in this bill will do anything to roll back the massive tax cut that they are handing out to the top 400 households in America.

Instead of addressing the real issues with our healthcare system, you bring

a racist bill to the floor that you use to buy a vote, literally, for your TrumpCare bill.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the rules of the House are very clear about imputing the character of lawmakers, and I would warn the gentleman, she is treading on the rules.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman attempting to raise a parliamentary inquiry?

Mr. BRADY of Texas. I am considering.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has the time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. I will monitor the remainder of the remarks.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I was addressing a racist piece of legislation that was used to buy a vote for the TrumpCare bill. But the problem is that this bill doesn't do anything that it says it does. It is based on a blatantly partisan Senate report that doesn't even say what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle claim that it says.

It is baffling how many of my Republican colleagues believe that this report that they keep citing actually said anything about undocumented immigrants. Did you "read" this report in the same way that you "read" the AHCA and all of its amendments?

If you actually read the report, you would know that it does not state that these individuals were undocumented immigrants, but only that they did not complete the verification process. The hurdles might have been too big, it might have taken too much time or too much effort, and they dropped out of the verification process without completing it.

The report also doesn't say that hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants enrolled and received premium credits. The report states that "as of September 30, 2015, CMS awarded approximately \$750 million in advance premium tax credits to individuals enrolled through healthcare.gov who CMS later determined to be ineligible."

It is funny that the daughter of Mexican American immigrants is able to read and understand the distinctions made in this report better than some of my native-born colleagues can.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by begging my Republican colleagues to prove to me that this bill isn't about shutting out immigrants from access to care: legal immigrants or children of those born overseas to our military or newborn children or victims of domestic violence or victims of human trafficking.

Prove to me that you care about the health and wellbeing of all Americans, regardless of the color of their skin or their economic circumstances.

I am actually in agreement with you that ineligible individuals should not see a single penny of the subsidies provided by both the ACA and the AHCA, but there are protections already in

place where only citizens and people lawfully present in the United States can enroll in marketplace coverage and get subsidies to help them pay their premiums and cost-sharing charges.

This bill doesn't fix anything. It just seeks to further demonize immigrants as criminals and people with my last name out of the healthcare system.

Instead of wasting our time on a bill that is in search of a problem to solve, a problem that doesn't even exist, let's work together to make sure that other Americans are not caught up in the unintended consequences of this bill and aren't denied coverage when they are actually eligible for those subsidies and that coverage.

Let's actually work on a better way for the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let's make sure we fact-check some things here. Nothing in this bill changes the eligibility of the Affordable Care Act and who is eligible for it. In fact, the Republican healthcare bill that passed the House, according to the American Action Network, there will be roughly 5.3 million more Americans that will be eligible for help for their healthcare under the Republican plan than under the Affordable Care Act.

Let's fact-check a couple of other issues. We are told that this has all come about because the IRS has not funded properly, but I would remind our Democrat colleagues that the majority of our Democrat colleagues supported the spending levels, which President Obama signed into law regarding the Internal Revenue Service.

Secondly, they have raised the issue that there are no Social Security numbers available. But in truth, nearly 96 percent of children born in America receive their Social Security numbers within 2 weeks. There is an expedited process going forward to achieve the others as well.

We are told, listening today: there is no fraud in ObamaCare; there is no need for this bill by Mr. BARLETTA.

But I remind our colleagues that twice the Government Accountability Office looked at eligibility within the Affordable Care Act. In 2014, they used fake identities to see if they could obtain ObamaCare coverage on the exchange, and in 11 out of 12 applications—some with no data at all—the GAO was granted subsidies for people who don't even exist.

So you say: Well, that is 2014. Certainly, things got better.

Well, last year, they ran it again in the special enrollment period, and in this test, the GAO was able to obtain coverage for imaginary people in 9 out of 12 cases.

We are told today that our taxpayer dollars aren't being wasted. Well, the American public knows better, and they know this because we have

worked for 7 years to oppose what we knew would be a failing law. We held more than 200 congressional hearings. We had 65-plus hours of open debate on the American Health Care Act, and 37 bills passed the House that were ultimately, in one form or another, included in the Republican bill.

The bottom line is this, Mr. Speaker: Our Democrat friends are in denial. ObamaCare is collapsing. Prices have more than doubled. They haven't gone down. They have more than doubled for most Americans; in some States more than tripled, and those rates aren't going down. They are skyrocketing. People aren't getting more choices of healthcare plans. They are disappearing.

Texas has seen nine insurers abandon our State—I think more than any other State—and it is getting fewer and fewer. It is occurring across the country.

You are not able to see more local doctors and go to more local hospitals; just the opposite. It is fewer, and that is hurting everyone in America. ObamaCare is a sinking ship, and it is taking some very good Americans down with it.

The question is: Do we begin to give people a lifeline to truly affordable care?

With this bill, Mr. BARLETTA insists in a commonsense way that your tax dollars go to those we are trying to help: those who can't get healthcare at work; those who don't get it through government programs like Medicare or the VA; those small-business people; those folks coming out of college; those entrepreneurs who are at home starting a new business or raising their families; even those early retirees. Those are the people we are trying to help, and every dollar counts.

Mr. BARLETTA's bill, which I am proud as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee to bring to you, makes a commonsense requirement: that you be verified to get those subsidies before you receive them; to make sure those precious dollars actually go to the Americans we are trying to help.

I strongly support the Verify First Act. If you stand for stopping waste, and fraud, and abuse in protection of your tax dollars, I would urge your support for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, which will put important safeguards in place to ensure that federal tax dollars are not fraudulently used to pay for illegal immigrants to enroll in Obamacare.

Right now, the federal government provides Obamacare premium tax credits to individuals before fully making sure that these individuals rightfully qualify for these benefits.

For example, the federal government has wrongfully issued hundreds of millions of dollars in tax credits to individuals without first verifying their immigration status. After the money goes out the door, the Internal Revenue Service must attempt to track down these individuals to recoup the money.

Last year the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs reported that more than \$750 million in taxpayer dollars went to 500,000 people who did not meet the qualifications for those benefits.

H.R. 2581 addresses this issue by requiring that the Social Security Administration, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services to certify that an individual is a citizen, national, or legal immigrant before they receive a health care tax credit.

Given that our nation is nearly \$20 trillion in debt, we cannot afford to hand out hundreds of millions of dollars in Obamacare tax credits to individuals who do not qualify.

This bill is a common-sense measure that puts the interests of hardworking taxpayers first and ensures that health care dollars will be directed only at those who are eligible.

I hope that the Senate will soon take up and pass this commonsense bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 378, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

□ 1430

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentlewoman opposed to the bill?

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. I am opposed to the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Ms. Sánchez moves to recommit the bill H.R. 2581 to the Committee on Ways and Means with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Page 4, line 5, insert after the first period the following: "The preceding sentence shall not apply in the case of a delay in verification of such status of an individual who has not attained the age of 1."

Page 5, line 4, insert after the first period the following: "The preceding sentence shall not apply in the case of a delay in verification of such status of an individual who has not attained the age of 1."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes in support of her motion.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, this is the final amendment to the bill, which will not kill the bill.

If adopted, the Verify First Act will proceed to final passage as amended.

The Democratic motion to recommit simply amends the Verify First Act to ensure that our most vulnerable—newborns and infants—do not experience a delay in health coverage.

We know that the citizenship of newborns can't be verified electroni-

cally because they don't have Social Security numbers yet when they are born. In order to verify their child's status, parents have to send a copy of their child's birth certificate, which can take anywhere from 1 to 6 weeks to obtain, depending on the State, and that is the best-case scenario if the parents throw a perfect game in documenting and planning for the arrival of their newborn. Just like any perfect game, a little luck is involved in that.

That luck includes having the Social Security Administration process your child's Social Security number as soon as they receive it, that the Administration doesn't make a mistake in the spelling of your child's name, and that you have the financial resources and education to know exactly what steps you need to take to ensure that your newborn has coverage the moment they come out of your womb.

When most people are anticipating the birth of a child, that is not what they are thinking about. The birth of a child is one of life's most precious moments. The joy you feel when you hold your child for the first time should be the only feeling going through your mind. Filling the paperwork out to ensure that your child is covered shouldn't even be something that you should have to worry about.

But the Verify First Act, as currently drafted, would give you another thing to worry about and add an unnecessary barrier for newborns to receive the care they need. God forbid if your child needs extra care after they are born but doesn't have coverage because your plan is waiting to verify your child's status.

A child's life should not hang in the balance because of paperwork and red tape. For all the claims that Republicans are the pro-life party, they sure know how to make life difficult for a newborn as soon as they are out of the womb. They claim to protect the lives of the unborn and crusade against life-saving institutions such as Planned Parenthood. But where are their morals and love of life after the child is born? It somehow magically disappears, and they will throw every obstacle up to ensure that newborns don't receive the care that they need and that they are entitled to.

Whether it is through the unintended consequences of a poorly drafted bill such as this one, or gutting the program that covers half the births in the U.S., Republicans will do everything to gut access to care or place obstacles in struggling people's paths. That's right, by cutting over \$800 billion out of Medicaid, Republicans are endangering the health and welfare of all newborn children.

Earlier I asked my Republican colleagues to prove to me that they care about the health and well-being of all Americans regardless of the color of their skin or their economic circumstances. Well, I am asking them

now to prove to me that they care about the well-being of newborn children.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for the Democratic motion to recommit, and let us write a bill that will actually help all U.S. citizens get the coverage that they need and are entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this isn't about verifying for infants. Ninety-six percent of children receive their Social Security numbers within 2 weeks after they are born in a hospital, and many of them have parents who are eligible for these credits as well, so it is immediate care. Even without all that, they can achieve and receive healthcare immediately as they process the premium support.

In the American Health Care Act that passed the House, there are more than \$1 billion set aside to help further the verification process to make sure that we are providing timely credits—but for those who are eligible. In truth, our friends across the aisle want to detract from the challenge today, which is that ObamaCare is a sinking ship.

Today's bill is about the taxpayers. Congress has to do all in its power to ensure the money taken from hardworking taxpayers is actually used for programs that improve their lives in this country and are not frittered away on fraud and abuse.

That is why this bill is so critical. It doesn't change eligibility. It simply says that we are not going to pay first and chase later, which always is a losing approach for taxpayers. Not a dollar of taxpayer money should go out the door until citizenship or legal status is verified, period.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to defeat the Democrats' motion to recommit and stand on behalf of taxpayers who want those dollars to go to Americans we are truly trying to help for the first time get truly affordable healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. 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 question will be postponed.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 1094.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 378, I call up the bill (S. 1094) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 378, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1094

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

Sec. 101. Establishment of Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.

Sec. 102. Protection of whistleblowers in Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 103. Report on methods used to investigate employees of Department of Veterans Affairs.

TITLE II—ACCOUNTABILITY OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES, SUPERVISORS, AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

Sec. 201. Improved authorities of Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve accountability of senior executives.

Sec. 202. Improved authorities of Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve accountability of employees.

Sec. 203. Reduction of benefits for Department of Veterans Affairs employees convicted of certain crimes.

Sec. 204. Authority to recoup bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 205. Authority to recoup relocation expenses paid to or on behalf of employees of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 206. Time period for response to notice of adverse actions against supervisory employees who commit prohibited personnel actions.

Sec. 207. Direct hiring authority for medical center directors and VISN directors.

Sec. 208. Time periods for review of adverse actions with respect to certain employees.

Sec. 209. Improvement of training for supervisors.

Sec. 210. Assessment and report on effect on senior executives at Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 211. Measurement of Department of Veterans Affairs disciplinary process outcomes and effectiveness.

TITLE I—OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

SEC. 101. ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 323. Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection

“(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established in the Department an office to be known as the ‘Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection’ (in this section referred to as the ‘Office’).

“(b) **HEAD OF OFFICE.**—(1) The head of the Office shall be responsible for the functions of the Office and shall be appointed by the President pursuant to section 308(a) of this title.

“(2) The head of the Office shall be known as the ‘Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection’.

“(3) The Assistant Secretary shall report directly to the Secretary on all matters relating to the Office.

“(4) Notwithstanding section 308(b) of this title, the Secretary may only assign to the Assistant Secretary responsibilities relating to the functions of the Office set forth in subsection (c).

“(c) **FUNCTIONS.**—(1) The functions of the Office are as follows:

“(A) Advising the Secretary on all matters of the Department relating to accountability, including accountability of employees of the Department, retaliation against whistleblowers, and such matters as the Secretary considers similar and affect public trust in the Department.

“(B) Issuing reports and providing recommendations related to the duties described in subparagraph (A).

“(C) Receiving whistleblower disclosures.

“(D) Referring whistleblower disclosures received under subparagraph (C) for investigation to the Office of the Medical Inspector, the Office of Inspector General, or other investigative entity, as appropriate, if the Assistant Secretary has reason to believe the whistleblower disclosure is evidence of a violation of a provision of law, mismanagement, gross waste of funds, abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

“(E) Receiving and referring disclosures from the Special Counsel for investigation to the Medical Inspector of the Department, the Inspector General of the Department, or such other person with investigatory authority, as the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate.

“(F) Recording, tracking, reviewing, and confirming implementation of recommendations from audits and investigations carried out by the Inspector General of the Department, the Medical Inspector of the Department, the Special Counsel, and the Comptroller General of the United States, including the imposition of disciplinary actions and other corrective actions contained in such recommendations.

“(G) Analyzing data from the Office and the Office of Inspector General telephone hotlines, other whistleblower disclosures, disaggregated by facility and area of health care if appropriate, and relevant audits and investigations to identify trends and issue reports to the Secretary based on analysis conducted under this subparagraph.

“(H) Receiving, reviewing, and investigating allegations of misconduct, retaliation, or poor performance involving—

“(i) an individual in a senior executive position (as defined in section 713(d) of this title) in the Department;

“(ii) an individual employed in a confidential, policy-making, policy-determining, or policy-advocating position in the Department; or

“(iii) a supervisory employee, if the allegation involves retaliation against an employee for making a whistleblower disclosure.

“(I) Making such recommendations to the Secretary for disciplinary action as the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate after substantiating any allegation of misconduct or poor performance pursuant to an investigation carried out as described in subparagraph (F) or (H).

“(2) In carrying out the functions of the Office, the Assistant Secretary shall ensure that the Office maintains a toll-free telephone number and Internet website to receive anonymous whistleblower disclosures.

“(3) In any case in which the Assistant Secretary receives a whistleblower disclosure from an employee of the Department under paragraph (1)(C), the Assistant Secretary may not disclose the identity of the employee without the consent of the employee, except in accordance with the provisions of section 552a of title 5, or as required by any other applicable provision of Federal law.

“(d) **STAFF AND RESOURCES.**—The Secretary shall ensure that the Assistant Secretary has such staff, resources, and access to information as may be necessary to carry out the functions of the Office.

“(e) **RELATION TO OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL.**—The Office shall not be established as an element of the Office of the General Counsel and the Assistant Secretary may not report to the General Counsel.

“(f) **REPORTS.**—(1)(A) Not later than June 30 of each calendar year, beginning with June 30, 2017, the Assistant Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the activities of the Office during the calendar year in which the report is submitted.

“(B) Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include, for the period covered by the report, the following:

“(i) A full and substantive analysis of the activities of the Office, including such statistical information as the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate.

“(ii) Identification of any issues reported to the Secretary under subsection (c)(1)(G), including such data as the Assistant Secretary considers relevant to such issues and any trends the Assistant Secretary may have identified with respect to such issues.

“(iii) Identification of such concerns as the Assistant Secretary may have regarding the size, staffing, and resources of the Office and such recommendations as the Assistant Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action to address such concerns.

“(iv) Such recommendations as the Assistant Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action to improve—

“(I) the process by which concerns are reported to the Office; and

“(II) the protection of whistleblowers within the Department.

“(v) Such other matters as the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate regarding the functions of the Office or other matters relating to the Office.

“(2) If the Secretary receives a recommendation for disciplinary action under subsection (c)(1)(I) and does not take or initiate the recommended disciplinary action

before the date that is 60 days after the date on which the Secretary received the recommendation, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a detailed justification for not taking or initiating such disciplinary action.

“(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘supervisory employee’ means an employee of the Department who is a supervisor as defined in section 7103(a) of title 5.

“(2) The term ‘whistleblower’ means one who makes a whistleblower disclosure.

“(3) The term ‘whistleblower disclosure’ means any disclosure of information by an employee of the Department or individual applying to become an employee of the Department which the employee or individual reasonably believes evidences—

“(A) a violation of a law, rule, or regulation; or

“(B) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 308(b) of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(12) The functions set forth in section 323(c) of this title.”.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 3 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“323. Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.”.

SEC. 102. PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by—

(1) striking sections 731, 732, 734, 735, and 736;

(2) by redesignating section 733 as section 731; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new sections:

“§ 732. Protection of whistleblowers as criteria in evaluation of supervisors

“(a) DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF CRITERIA REQUIRED.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Assistant Secretary of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, shall develop criteria that—

“(1) the Secretary shall use as a critical element in any evaluation of the performance of a supervisory employee; and

“(2) promotes the protection of whistleblowers.

“(b) PRINCIPLES FOR PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS.—The criteria required by subsection (a) shall include principles for the protection of whistleblowers, such as the degree to which supervisory employees respond constructively when employees of the Department report concerns, take responsible action to resolve such concerns, and foster an environment in which employees of the Department feel comfortable reporting concerns to supervisory employees or to the appropriate authorities.

“(c) SUPERVISORY EMPLOYEE AND WHISTLEBLOWER DEFINED.—In this section, the terms ‘supervisory employee’ and ‘whistleblower’ have the meanings given such terms in section 323 of this title.

“§ 733. Training regarding whistleblower disclosures

“(a) TRAINING.—Not less frequently than once every two years, the Secretary, in coordination with the Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman designated under section 3(d)(1)(C) of the Inspector General Act of 1978

(5 U.S.C. App.), shall provide to each employee of the Department training regarding whistleblower disclosures, including—

“(1) an explanation of each method established by law in which an employee may file a whistleblower disclosure;

“(2) the right of the employee to petition Congress regarding a whistleblower disclosure in accordance with section 7211 of title 5;

“(3) an explanation that the employee may not be prosecuted or reprimanded for disclosing information to Congress, the Inspector General, or another investigatory agency in instances where such disclosure is permitted by law, including under sections 5701, 5705, and 7732 of this title, under section 552a of title 5 (commonly referred to as the Privacy Act), under chapter 93 of title 18, and pursuant to regulations promulgated under section 264(c) of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-191);

“(4) an explanation of the language that is required to be included in all nondisclosure policies, forms, and agreements pursuant to section 115(a)(1) of the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 (5 U.S.C. 2302 note); and

“(5) the right of contractors to be protected from reprisal for the disclosure of certain information under section 4705 or 4712 of title 41.

“(b) MANNER TRAINING IS PROVIDED.—The Secretary shall ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that training provided under subsection (a) is provided in person.

“(c) CERTIFICATION.—Not less frequently than once every two years, the Secretary shall provide training on merit system protection in a manner that the Special Counsel certifies as being satisfactory.

“(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on the Internet website of the Department, and display prominently at each facility of the Department, the rights of an employee to make a whistleblower disclosure, including the information described in paragraphs (1) through (5) of subsection (a).

“(e) WHISTLEBLOWER DISCLOSURE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘whistleblower disclosure’ has the meaning given such term in section 323 of this title.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended—

(1) by striking the items relating to sections 731 through 736; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new items:

“731. Adverse actions against supervisory employees who commit prohibited personnel actions relating to whistleblower complaints.

“732. Protection of whistleblowers as criteria in evaluation of supervisors.

“733. Training regarding whistleblower disclosures.”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 731 of such title, as redesignated by subsection (a)(2), is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking subparagraphs (A) and (B) and inserting the following:

“(A) making a whistleblower disclosure to the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, the Inspector General of the Department, the Special Counsel, or Congress;”; and

(ii) by redesignating subparagraphs (C) through (F) as subparagraphs (B) through (E), respectively; and

(iii) in subparagraph (B), as redesignated by clause (ii), by striking “complaint in accordance with section 732 or with” and inserting “disclosure made to the Assistant

Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.”; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking “through (F)” and inserting “through (E)”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) WHISTLEBLOWER DISCLOSURE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘whistleblower disclosure’ has the meaning given such term in section 323(g) of this title.”.

SEC. 103. REPORT ON METHODS USED TO INVESTIGATE EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on methods used to investigate employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs and whether such methods are used to retaliate against whistleblowers.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An assessment of the use of administrative investigation boards, peer review, searches of medical records, and other methods for investigating employees of the Department.

(2) A determination of whether and to what degree the methods described in paragraph (1) are being used to retaliate against whistleblowers.

(3) Recommendations for legislative or administrative action to implement safeguards to prevent the retaliation described in paragraph (2).

(c) WHISTLEBLOWER DEFINED.—In this section, the term “whistleblower” has the meaning given such term in section 323 of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 101.

TITLE II—ACCOUNTABILITY OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES, SUPERVISORS, AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

SEC. 201. IMPROVED AUTHORITIES OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 713 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“§ 713. Senior executives: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or misconduct

“(a) AUTHORITY.—(1) The Secretary may, as provided in this section, reprimand or suspend, involuntarily reassign, demote, or remove a covered individual from a senior executive position at the Department if the Secretary determines that the misconduct or performance of the covered individual warrants such action.

“(2) If the Secretary so removes such an individual, the Secretary may remove the individual from the civil service (as defined in section 2101 of title 5).

“(b) RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES.—(1) A covered individual who is the subject of an action under subsection (a) is entitled to—

“(A) advance notice of the action and a file containing all evidence in support of the proposed action;

“(B) be represented by an attorney or other representative of the covered individual's choice; and

“(C) grieve the action in accordance with an internal grievance process that the Secretary, in consultation with the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, shall establish for purposes of this subsection.

“(2)(A) The aggregate period for notice, response, and decision on an action under subsection (a) may not exceed 15 business days.

“(B) The period for the response of a covered individual to a notice under paragraph (1)(A) of an action under subsection (a) shall be 7 business days.

“(C) A decision under this paragraph on an action under subsection (a) shall be issued not later than 15 business days after notice of the action is provided to the covered individual under paragraph (1)(A). The decision shall be in writing, and shall include the specific reasons therefor.

“(3) The Secretary shall ensure that the grievance process established under paragraph (1)(C) takes fewer than 21 days.

“(4) A decision under paragraph (2) that is not grieved, and a grievance decision under paragraph (3), shall be final and conclusive.

“(5) A covered individual adversely affected by a decision under paragraph (2) that is not grieved, or by a grievance decision under paragraph (3), may obtain judicial review of such decision.

“(6) In any case in which judicial review is sought under paragraph (5), the court shall review the record and may set aside any Department action found to be—

“(A) arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with a provision of law;

“(B) obtained without procedures required by a provision of law having been followed; or

“(C) unsupported by substantial evidence.

“(C) RELATION TO OTHER PROVISIONS OF LAW.—Section 3592(b)(1) of title 5 and the procedures under section 7543(b) of such title do not apply to an action under subsection (a).

“(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered individual’ means—

“(A) a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5); or

“(B) any individual who occupies an administrative or executive position and who was appointed under section 7306(a), section 7401(1), or section 7401(4) of this title.

“(2) The term ‘misconduct’ includes neglect of duty, malfeasance, or failure to accept a directed reassignment or to accompany a position in a transfer of function.

“(3) The term ‘senior executive position’ means—

“(A) with respect to a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a) of title 5), a Senior Executive Service position (as such term is defined in such section); and

“(B) with respect to a covered individual appointed under section 7306(a) or section 7401(1) of this title, an administrative or executive position.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 7461(c)(1) of such title is amended by inserting “employees in senior executive positions (as defined in section 713(d) of this title) and” before “interns”.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 713 and inserting the following new item:

“713. Senior executives: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or misconduct.”.

SEC. 202. IMPROVED AUTHORITIES OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY OF EMPLOYEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 713 the following new section:

“§ 714. Employees: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or misconduct

“(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) The Secretary may remove, demote, or suspend a covered individual who is an employee of the Department

if the Secretary determines the performance or misconduct of the covered individual warrants such removal, demotion, or suspension.

“(2) If the Secretary so removes, demotes, or suspends such a covered individual, the Secretary may—

“(A) remove the covered individual from the civil service (as defined in section 2101 of title 5);

“(B) demote the covered individual by means of a reduction in grade for which the covered individual is qualified, that the Secretary determines is appropriate, and that reduces the annual rate of pay of the covered individual; or

“(C) suspend the covered individual.

“(b) PAY OF CERTAIN DEMOTED INDIVIDUALS.—(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any covered individual subject to a demotion under subsection (a)(2) shall, beginning on the date of such demotion, receive the annual rate of pay applicable to such grade.

“(2)(A) A covered individual so demoted may not be placed on administrative leave during the period during which an appeal (if any) under this section is ongoing, and may only receive pay if the covered individual reports for duty or is approved to use accrued unused annual, sick, family medical, military, or court leave.

“(B) If a covered individual so demoted does not report for duty or receive approval to use accrued unused leave, such covered individual shall not receive pay or other benefits pursuant to subsection (d)(5).

“(c) PROCEDURE.—(1)(A) The aggregate period for notice, response, and final decision in a removal, demotion, or suspension under this section may not exceed 15 business days.

“(B) The period for the response of a covered individual to a notice of a proposed removal, demotion, or suspension under this section shall be 7 business days.

“(C) Paragraph (3) of subsection (b) of section 7513 of title 5 shall apply with respect to a removal, demotion, or suspension under this section.

“(D) The procedures in this subsection shall supersede any collective bargaining agreement to the extent that such agreement is inconsistent with such procedures.

“(2) The Secretary shall issue a final decision with respect to a removal, demotion, or suspension under this section not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice, including a file containing all the evidence in support of the proposed action, to the covered individual of the removal, demotion, or suspension. The decision shall be in writing and shall include the specific reasons therefor.

“(3) The procedures under chapter 43 of title 5 shall not apply to a removal, demotion, or suspension under this section.

“(4)(A) Subject to subparagraph (B) and subsection (d), any removal or demotion under this section, and any suspension of more than 14 days under this section, may be appealed to the Merit Systems Protection Board, which shall refer such appeal to an administrative judge pursuant to section 7701(b)(1) of title 5.

“(B) An appeal under subparagraph (A) of a removal, demotion, or suspension may only be made if such appeal is made not later than 10 business days after the date of such removal, demotion, or suspension.

“(d) EXPEDITED REVIEW.—(1) Upon receipt of an appeal under subsection (c)(4)(A), the administrative judge shall expedite any such appeal under section 7701(b)(1) of title 5 and, in any such case, shall issue a final and complete decision not later than 180 days after the date of the appeal.

“(2)(A) Notwithstanding section 7701(c)(1)(B) of title 5, the administrative judge shall uphold the decision of the Sec-

retary to remove, demote, or suspend an employee under subsection (a) if the decision is supported by substantial evidence.

“(B) Notwithstanding title 5 or any other provision of law, if the decision of the Secretary is supported by substantial evidence, the administrative judge shall not mitigate the penalty prescribed by the Secretary.

“(3)(A) The decision of the administrative judge under paragraph (1) may be appealed to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

“(B) Notwithstanding section 7701(c)(1)(B) of title 5, the Merit Systems Protection Board shall uphold the decision of the Secretary to remove, demote, or suspend an employee under subsection (a) if the decision is supported by substantial evidence.

“(C) Notwithstanding title 5 or any other provision of law, if the decision of the Secretary is supported by substantial evidence, the Merit Systems Protection Board shall not mitigate the penalty prescribed by the Secretary.

“(4) In any case in which the administrative judge cannot issue a decision in accordance with the 180-day requirement under paragraph (1), the Merit Systems Protection Board shall, not later than 14 business days after the expiration of the 180-day period, submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that explains the reasons why a decision was not issued in accordance with such requirement.

“(5)(A) A decision of the Merit Systems Protection Board under paragraph (3) may be appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit pursuant to section 7703 of title 5 or to any court of appeals of competent jurisdiction pursuant to subsection (b)(1)(B) of such section.

“(B) Any decision by such Court shall be in compliance with section 7462(f)(2) of this title.

“(6) The Merit Systems Protection Board may not stay any removal or demotion under this section, except as provided in section 1214(b) of title 5.

“(7) During the period beginning on the date on which a covered individual appeals a removal from the civil service under subsection (c) and ending on the date that the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issues a final decision on such appeal, such covered individual may not receive any pay, awards, bonuses, incentives, allowances, differentials, student loan repayments, special payments, or benefits related to the employment of the individual by the Department.

“(8) To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary shall provide to the Merit Systems Protection Board such information and assistance as may be necessary to ensure an appeal under this subsection is expedited.

“(9) If an employee prevails on appeal under this section, the employee shall be entitled to backpay (as provided in section 5596 of title 5).

“(10) If an employee who is subject to a collective bargaining agreement chooses to grieve an action taken under this section through a grievance procedure provided under the collective bargaining agreement, the timelines and procedures set forth in subsection (c) and this subsection shall apply.

“(e) WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION.—(1) In the case of a covered individual seeking corrective action (or on behalf of whom corrective action is sought) from the Office of Special Counsel based on an alleged prohibited personnel practice described in section 2302(b) of title 5, the Secretary may not remove, demote, or suspend such covered individual under subsection (a) without the approval of the Special Counsel under section 1214(f) of title 5.

“(2) In the case of a covered individual who has made a whistleblower disclosure to the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, the Secretary may not remove, demote, or suspend such covered individual under subsection (a) until—

“(A) in the case in which the Assistant Secretary determines to refer the whistleblower disclosure under section 323(c)(1)(D) of this title to an office or other investigative entity, a final decision with respect to the whistleblower disclosure has been made by such office or other investigative entity; or

“(B) in the case in which the Assistant Secretary determines not to refer the whistleblower disclosure under such section, the Assistant Secretary makes such determination.

“(f) **TERMINATION OF INVESTIGATIONS BY OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL.**—(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Special Counsel (established by section 1211 of title 5) may terminate an investigation of a prohibited personnel practice alleged by an employee or former employee of the Department after the Special Counsel provides to the employee or former employee a written statement of the reasons for the termination of the investigation.

“(2) Such statement may not be admissible as evidence in any judicial or administrative proceeding without the consent of such employee or former employee.

“(g) **VACANCIES.**—In the case of a covered individual who is removed or demoted under subsection (a), to the maximum extent feasible, the Secretary shall fill the vacancy arising as a result of such removal or demotion.

“(h) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered individual’ means an individual occupying a position at the Department, but does not include—

“(A) an individual occupying a senior executive position (as defined in section 713(d) of this title);

“(B) an individual appointed pursuant to sections 7306, 7401(1), 7401(4), or 7405 of this title;

“(C) an individual who has not completed a probationary or trial period; or

“(D) a political appointee.

“(2) The term ‘suspend’ means the placing of an employee, for disciplinary reasons, in a temporary status without duties and pay for a period in excess of 14 days.

“(3) The term ‘grade’ has the meaning given such term in section 7511(a) of title 5.

“(4) The term ‘misconduct’ includes neglect of duty, malfeasance, or failure to accept a directed reassignment or to accompany a position in a transfer of function.

“(5) The term ‘political appointee’ means an individual who is—

“(A) employed in a position described under sections 5312 through 5316 of title 5 (relating to the Executive Schedule);

“(B) a limited term appointee, limited emergency appointee, or noncareer appointee in the Senior Executive Service, as defined under paragraphs (5), (6), and (7), respectively, of section 3132(a) of title 5; or

“(C) employed in a position of a confidential or policy-determining character under schedule C of subpart C of part 213 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, or successor regulation.

“(6) The term ‘whistleblower disclosure’ has the meaning given such term in section 323(g) of this title.”.

(b) **CLERICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—

(1) **CLERICAL.**—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 713 the following new item:

“714. Employees: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or misconduct.”.

(2) **CONFORMING.**—Section 4303(f) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in paragraph (2), by striking “or” at the end;

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking the period at the end and inserting “, or”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(4) any removal or demotion under section 714 of title 38.”.

SEC. 203. REDUCTION OF BENEFITS FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES CONVICTED OF CERTAIN CRIMES.

(a) **REDUCTION OF BENEFITS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§719. Reduction of benefits of employees convicted of certain crimes

“(a) **REDUCTION OF ANNUITY FOR REMOVED EMPLOYEE.**—(1) The Secretary shall order that the covered service of an employee of the Department removed from a position for performance or misconduct under section 713, 714, or 7461 of this title or any other provision of law shall not be taken into account for purposes of calculating an annuity with respect to such individual under chapter 83 or chapter 84 of title 5, if—

“(A) the Secretary determines that the individual is convicted of a felony (and the conviction is final) that influenced the individual’s performance while employed in the position; and

“(B) before such order is made, the individual is afforded—

“(i) notice of the proposed order; and

“(ii) an opportunity to respond to the proposed order by not later than ten business days following receipt of such notice; and

“(C) the Secretary issues the order—

“(i) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual responds under subparagraph (B)(ii), not later than five business days after receiving the response of the individual; or

“(ii) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual does not respond, not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice to the individual under subparagraph (B)(i).

“(2) Any individual with respect to whom an annuity is reduced under this subsection may appeal the reduction to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management pursuant to such regulations as the Director may prescribe for purposes of this subsection.

“(b) **REDUCTION OF ANNUITY FOR RETIRED EMPLOYEE.**—(1) The Secretary may order that the covered service of an individual who the Secretary proposes to remove for performance or misconduct under section 713, 714, or 7461 of this title or any other provision of law but who leaves employment at the Department prior to the issuance of a final decision with respect to such action shall not be taken into account for purposes of calculating an annuity with respect to such individual under chapter 83 or chapter 84 of title 5, if—

“(A) the Secretary determines that individual is convicted of a felony (and the conviction is final) that influenced the individual’s performance while employed in the position; and

“(B) before such order is made, the individual is afforded—

“(i) notice of the proposed order;

“(ii) opportunity to respond to the proposed order by not later than ten business days following receipt of such notice; and

“(C) the Secretary issues the order—

“(i) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual responds under subpara-

graph (B)(ii), not later than five business days after receiving the response of the individual; or

“(ii) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual does not respond, not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice to the individual under subparagraph (B)(i).

“(2) Upon the issuance of an order by the Secretary under paragraph (1), the individual shall have an opportunity to appeal the order to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management before the date that is seven business days after the date of such issuance.

“(3) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal under paragraph (2) within 30 business days of receiving the appeal.

“(c) **ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS.**—Not later than 37 business days after the Secretary issues a final order under subsection (a) or (b) with respect to an individual, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall recalculate the annuity of the individual.

“(d) **LUMP-SUM ANNUITY CREDIT.**—Any individual with respect to whom an annuity is reduced under subsection (a) or (b) shall be entitled to be paid so much of such individual’s lump-sum credit as is attributable to the period of covered service.

“(e) **SPOUSE OR CHILDREN EXCEPTION.**—(1) The Secretary, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, shall prescribe regulations that may provide for the payment to the spouse or children of any individual referred to in subsection (a) or (b) of any amounts which (but for this subsection) would otherwise have been nonpayable by reason of such subsections.

“(2) Regulations prescribed under paragraph (1) shall be consistent with the requirements of section 8332(o)(5) and 8411(l)(5) of title 5, as the case may be.

“(f) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered service’ means, with respect to an individual subject to a removal for performance or misconduct under section 719 or 7461 of this title or any other provision of law, the period of service beginning on the date that the Secretary determines under such applicable provision that the individual engaged in activity that gave rise to such action and ending on the date that the individual is removed from or leaves a position of employment at the Department prior to the issuance of a final decision with respect to such action.

“(2) The term ‘lump-sum credit’ has the meaning given such term in section 8331(8) or section 8401(19) of title 5, as the case may be.

“(3) The term ‘service’ has the meaning given such term in section 8331(12) or section 8401(26) of title 5, as the case may be.”.

(2) **CLERICAL AMENDMENT.**—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 717 the following new item:

“719. Reduction of benefits of employees convicted of certain crimes.”.

(b) **APPLICATION.**—Section 719 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), shall apply to any action of removal of an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 719 or 7461 of such title or any other provision of law, commencing on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 204. AUTHORITY TO RECOUP BONUSES OR AWARDS PAID TO EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, as amended

by section 203, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 721. Recoupment of bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary may issue an order directing an employee of the Department to repay the amount, or a portion of the amount, of any award or bonus paid to the employee under title 5, including under chapters 45 or 53 of such title, or this title if—

“(1) the Secretary determines that the individual engaged in misconduct or poor performance prior to payment of the award or bonus, and that such award or bonus would not have been paid, in whole or in part, had the misconduct or poor performance been known prior to payment; and

“(2) before such repayment, the employee is afforded—

“(A) notice of the proposed order; and

“(B) an opportunity to respond to the proposed order by not later than 10 business days after the receipt of such notice; and

“(3) the Secretary issues the order—

“(A) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual responds under paragraph (2)(B), not later than five business days after receiving the response of the individual; or

“(B) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual does not respond, not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice to the individual under paragraph (2)(A).

“(b) APPEAL OF ORDER OF SECRETARY.—(1) Upon the issuance of an order by the Secretary under subsection (a) with respect to an individual, the individual shall have an opportunity to appeal the order to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management before the date that is seven business days after the date of such issuance.

“(2) The Director shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal under paragraph (1) within 30 business days after receiving such appeal.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter, as amended by section 203(a)(2), is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 719 the following new item:

“721. Recoupment of bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 721 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to an award or bonus paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this Act may be construed to modify the certification issued by the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget regarding the performance appraisal system of the Senior Executive Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 205. AUTHORITY TO RECOUP RELOCATION EXPENSES PAID TO OR ON BEHALF OF EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 204, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 723. Recoupment of relocation expenses paid on behalf of employees of Department

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary may issue an order directing an employee of the Department to repay the amount, or a portion of the amount, paid to or on behalf of the employee under title 5 for relocation expenses, including any expenses under section 5724 or 5724a of such title, or this title if—

“(1) the Secretary determines that relocation expenses were paid following an act of fraud or malfeasance that influenced the authorization of the relocation expenses;

“(2) before such repayment, the employee is afforded—

“(A) notice of the proposed order; and

“(B) an opportunity to respond to the proposed order not later than ten business days following the receipt of such notice; and

“(3) the Secretary issues the order—

“(A) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual responds under paragraph (2)(B), not later than five business days after receiving the response of the individual; or

“(B) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual does not respond, not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice to the individual under paragraph (2)(A).

“(b) APPEAL OF ORDER OF SECRETARY.—(1) Upon the issuance of an order by the Secretary under subsection (a) with respect to an individual, the individual shall have an opportunity to appeal the order to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management before the date that is seven business days after the date of such issuance.

“(2) The Director shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal under paragraph (1) within 30 days after receiving such appeal.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 721, as added by section 204(b), the following new item:

“723. Recoupment of relocation expenses paid on behalf of employees of Department.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 723 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to an amount paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to or on behalf of an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs for relocation expenses on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 206. TIME PERIOD FOR RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF ADVERSE ACTIONS AGAINST SUPERVISORY EMPLOYEES WHO COMMIT PROHIBITED PERSONNEL ACTIONS.

Section 731(a)(2)(B) of title 38, United States Code, as redesignated by section 102(a)(2), is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking “14 days” and inserting “10 days”; and

(2) in clause (ii), by striking “14-day period” and inserting “10-day period”.

SEC. 207. DIRECT HIRING AUTHORITY FOR MEDICAL CENTER DIRECTORS AND VISN DIRECTORS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7401 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) Directors of medical centers and directors of Veterans Integrated Service Networks with demonstrated ability in the medical profession, in health care administration, or in health care fiscal management.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 7404(a)(1) of such title is amended—

(1) by inserting “(A)” before “The annual”; and

(2) in subparagraph (A), as designated by paragraph (1)—

(A) by inserting “and 7401(4)” after “7306”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(B) Section 5377 of title 5 shall apply to a position under section 7401(4) of this title as if such position were included in the definition of ‘position’ in section 5377(a) of title 5.”.

SEC. 208. TIME PERIODS FOR REVIEW OF ADVERSE ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES.

(a) PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, PODIATRISTS, CHIROPRACTORS, OPTOMETRISTS, REGISTERED NURSES, PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS, AND EXPANDED-FUNCTION DENTAL AUXILIARIES.—Paragraph (2) of section 7461(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(2) In any case other than a case described in paragraph (1) that involves or includes a question of professional conduct or competence in which a major adverse action was not taken, such an appeal shall be made through Department grievance procedures under section 7463 of this title.”.

(b) MAJOR ADVERSE ACTIONS INVOLVING PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OR COMPETENCE.—Section 7462(b) of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “, within the aggregate time period specified in paragraph (5)(A),” after “is entitled”; and

(B) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) by striking “At least 30 days advance written notice” and inserting “Advance written notice”; and

(ii) by striking “and a statement” and inserting “a statement”; and

(iii) by inserting “and a file containing all the evidence in support of each charge,” after “with respect to each charge,”; and

(C) in subparagraph (B), by striking “A reasonable time, but not less than seven days” and inserting “The opportunity, within the time period provided for in paragraph (4)(A)”;

(2) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following new paragraph (3):

“(3) After considering the employee’s answer, if any, and within the time period provided for in paragraph (5)(B), the deciding official shall render a decision on the charges. The decision shall be in writing and shall include the specific reasons therefor.”;

(3) in paragraph (4)—

(A) by striking subparagraph (A) and inserting the following new subparagraph (A):

“(A) The period for the response of an employee under paragraph (1)(B) to advance written under paragraph (1)(A) shall be seven business days.”; and

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking “30 days” and inserting “seven business days”; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(5)(A) The aggregate period for the resolution of charges against an employee under this subsection may not exceed 15 business days.

“(B) The deciding official shall render a decision under paragraph (3) on charges under this subsection not later than 15 business days after the Under Secretary provides notice on the charges for purposes of paragraph (1)(A).

“(6) The procedures in this subsection shall supersede any collective bargaining agreement to the extent that such agreement is inconsistent with such procedures.”.

(c) OTHER ADVERSE ACTIONS.—Section 7463(c) of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “the same notice and opportunity to answer with respect to those charges as provided in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of section 7462(b)(1) of this title” and inserting “notice and an opportunity to answer with respect to those charges in accordance with subparagraphs (A) and (B) of section 7462(b)(1) of this title, but within the time periods specified in paragraph (3)”;

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “, within the aggregate

time period specified in paragraph (3)(A),” after “is entitled”;

(B) in subparagraph (A), by striking “an advance written notice” and inserting “written notice”; and

(C) in subparagraph (B), by striking “a reasonable time” and inserting “time to answer”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph (3):

“(3)(A) The aggregate period for the resolution of charges against an employee under paragraph (1) or (2) may not exceed 15 business days.

“(B) The period for the response of an employee under paragraph (1) or (2)(B) to written notice of charges under paragraph (1) or (2)(A), as applicable, shall be seven business days.

“(C) The deciding official shall render a decision on charges under paragraph (1) or (2) not later than 15 business days after notice is provided on the charges for purposes of paragraph (1) or (2)(A), as applicable.”.

SEC. 209. IMPROVEMENT OF TRAINING FOR SUPERVISORS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide to each employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs who is employed as a supervisor periodic training on the following:

(1) The rights of whistleblowers and how to address a report by an employee of a hostile work environment, reprisal, or harassment.

(2) How to effectively motivate, manage, and reward the employees who report to the supervisor.

(3) How to effectively manage employees who are performing at an unacceptable level and access assistance from the human resources office of the Department and the Office of the General Counsel of the Department with respect to those employees.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) SUPERVISOR.—The term “supervisor” has the meaning given such term in section 7103(a) of title 5, United States Code.

(2) WHISTLEBLOWER.—The term “whistleblower” has the meaning given such term in section 323(g) of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 101.

SEC. 210. ASSESSMENT AND REPORT ON EFFECT ON SENIOR EXECUTIVES AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) measure and assess the effect of the enactment of this title on the morale, engagement, hiring, promotion, retention, discipline, and productivity of individuals in senior executive positions at the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(2) submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the findings of the Secretary with respect to the measurement and assessment carried out under paragraph (1).

(b) ELEMENTS.—The assessment required by subsection (a)(1) shall include the following:

(1) With respect to engagement, trends in morale of individuals in senior executive positions and individuals aspiring to senior executive positions.

(2) With respect to promotions—

(A) whether the Department is experiencing an increase or decrease in the number of employees participating in leadership development and candidate development programs with the intention of becoming candidates for senior executive positions; and

(B) trends in applications to senior executive positions within the Department.

(3) With respect to retention—

(A) trends in retirement rates of individuals in senior executive positions at the Department;

(B) trends in quit rates of individuals in senior executive positions at the Department;

(C) rates of transfer of—

(i) individuals from other Federal agencies into senior executive positions at the Department; and

(ii) individuals from senior executive positions at the Department to other Federal agencies; and

(D) trends in total loss rates by job function.

(4) With respect to disciplinary processes—

(A) regarding individuals in senior executive positions at the Department who are the subject of disciplinary action—

(i) the length of the disciplinary process in days for such individuals both before the date of the enactment of this Act and under the provisions of this Act described in subsection (a)(1); and

(ii) the extent to which appeals by such individuals are upheld under such provisions as compared to before the date of the enactment of this Act;

(B) the components or offices of the Department which experience the greatest number of proposed adverse actions against individuals in senior executive positions and components and offices which experience the least relative to the size of the components or offices' total number of senior executive positions;

(C) the tenure of individuals in senior executive positions who are the subject of disciplinary action;

(D) whether the individuals in senior executive positions who are the subject of disciplinary action have previously been disciplined; and

(E) the number of instances of disciplinary action taken by the Secretary against individuals in senior executive positions at the Department as compared to governmentwide discipline against individuals in Senior Executive Service positions (as defined in section 3132(a) of title 5, United States Code) as a percentage of the total number of individuals in senior executive positions at the Department and Senior Executive Service positions (as so defined).

(5) With respect to hiring—

(A) the degree to which the skills of newly hired individuals in senior executive positions at the Department are appropriate with respect to the needs of the Department;

(B) the types of senior executive positions at the Department most commonly filled under the authorities in the provisions described in subsection (a)(1);

(C) the number of senior executive positions at the Department filled by hires outside of the Department compared to hires from within the Department;

(D) the length of time to fill a senior executive position at the Department and for a new hire to begin working in a new senior executive position;

(E) the mission-critical deficiencies filled by newly hired individuals in senior executive positions and the connection between mission-critical deficiencies filled under the provisions described in subsection (a) and annual performance of the Department;

(F) the satisfaction of applicants for senior executive positions at the Department with the hiring process, including the clarity of job announcements, reasons for withdrawal of applications, communication regarding status of applications, and timeliness of hiring decision; and

(G) the satisfaction of newly hired individuals in senior executive positions at the Department with the hiring process and the process of joining and becoming oriented with the Department.

(c) SENIOR EXECUTIVE POSITION DEFINED.—In this section, the term “senior executive

position” has the meaning given such term in section 713 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 211. MEASUREMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISCIPLINARY PROCESS OUTCOMES AND EFFECTIVENESS.

(a) MEASURING AND COLLECTING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall measure and collect information on the outcomes of disciplinary actions carried out by the Department of Veterans Affairs during the three-year period ending on the date of the enactment of this Act and the effectiveness of such actions.

(2) ELEMENTS.—In measuring and collecting pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary shall measure and collect information regarding the following:

(A) The average time from the initiation of an adverse action against an employee at the Department to the final resolution of that action.

(B) The number of distinct steps and levels of review within the Department involved in the disciplinary process and the average length of time required to complete these steps.

(C) The rate of use of alternate disciplinary procedures compared to traditional disciplinary procedures and the frequency with which employees who are subject to alternative disciplinary procedures commit additional offenses.

(D) The number of appeals from adverse actions filed against employees of the Department, the number of appeals upheld, and the reasons for which the appeals were upheld.

(E) The use of paid administrative leave during the disciplinary process and the length of such leave.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than December 31, 2017, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the disciplinary procedures and actions of the Department.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The information collected under subsection (a).

(B) The findings of the Secretary with respect to the measurement and collection carried out under subsection (a).

(C) An analysis of the disciplinary procedures and actions of the Department.

(D) Suggestions for improving the disciplinary procedures and actions of the Department.

(E) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(3) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—In this subsection, the term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(A) the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill shall be debatable for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this is a historic day. You and many Members of this body

are well aware that bringing real accountability to the Department of Veterans Affairs has been a goal of mine and many of my colleagues for many years. That is why I am proud to rise today to support S. 1094, which passed the United States Senate last week via voice vote.

This bill is heavily modeled off of my bill, H.R. 1259, which passed out of the House with bipartisan support earlier this Congress, and I am proud to have worked with Senators ISAKSON, TESTER, and RUBIO to craft this vital piece of legislation.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 would provide the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs with yet another tool to instill accountability at VA by giving him the authority to expeditiously remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct while still preserving an employee's rights to due process.

This bill would create an expedited procedure for all VA employees to respond and appeal to proposed removals, demotions, and suspensions for performance or misconduct, or in the case of title 38 employees, which are our healthcare providers, for a question involving direct patient care or clinical competence.

The prenotification and response process would have to be completed within 15 business days, and the employee would be entitled to an expedited appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board where the first step at the administrative judge level would be limited to 180 days.

Additionally, either party would be able to appeal the administrative judge's decision to the full MSPB and would be provided the opportunity for limited judicial review.

This bill would also provide improved protections for whistleblowers by creating a new office and an Assistant Secretary position specifically for accountability and whistleblowers. It would allow the Secretary to reduce an employee's Federal pension if they are convicted of a felony that influenced their job at VA. It would provide the Secretary with the authority to recoup a bonus provided to an employee who engaged in misconduct or malfeasance prior to receiving the bonus, and would allow the Secretary to recoup any relocation expenses that were authorized for a VA employee only through the employee's ill-gotten means, such as fraud, waste, or malfeasance.

Lastly, it would also provide the Secretary with the direct hiring authority he has been asking for so that he can hire medical center directors and VISN directors in a more expedited manner and fill the leadership vacancies across VA.

Mr. Speaker, as I have always said, I agree with all of my colleagues that the vast majority of VA employees—many of whom I know personally and call friends—are hardworking public

servants who are dedicated to providing quality healthcare and benefits for veterans.

But for far too long, the failures of bad actors have tarnished the good name of all VA employees. Unfortunately, despite the tireless efforts of our courageous whistleblowers, the extensive reporting on a lack of accountability by the media and the outrage of the American public, we still see far too many instances of VA employees not living up to the standards America expects. Most importantly, they are not living up to the standards that the men and women who have served this great Nation deserve.

This isn't a political issue. This is a veterans' issue. I can't imagine how any Member of this body can defend not standing for veterans to vote for this bipartisan legislation. The lack of accountability isn't specific to any one area of the Department. It is systemic. In the last few years, the committee discovered an instance of a VA nurse scrubbing in drunk for a veteran's surgery—I found that unbelievable—and a care support specialist in the agency's drug and addiction program taking a recovering addict to a crack house to buy him drugs and a prostitute, a VA medical center clerk participating in an armed robbery, and a practitioner watching pornography at work while they were supposedly treating a patient.

What is more, it has been proven that some senior managers have retaliated against whistleblowers, costing VA and, in turn, taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in restitution.

All of these acts in and of themselves are egregious, but they are just the tip of the iceberg. They have one thing in common: none of these employees were held accountable in a reasonable timeframe, if at all.

There are many factors that contribute to this failure, but an antiquated civil service system and a complicated grievance process have left VA unwilling—and sometimes just unable—to jump through the many hoops to do what is right. This is not an issue unique to VA. Too often it is nearly impossible to remove a poorly performing government employee.

Officials on both sides of the aisle have expressed their concern about the current process to remove or discipline subpar employees. Just last year, Mr. Speaker, VA's then-Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson sat before our committee and admitted that it was too difficult to fire a substandard VA employee.

Further, the Government Accountability Office studied the government's ability to hold low-performing employees accountable and found that it took 6 months to a year on average, and sometimes significantly longer, to fire a poorly performing government employee—6 months to a year.

I have heard concerns that the bill will hurt the Department's ability to recruit and retain good employees. I don't buy this argument as every em-

ployee I speak to tells me the exact opposite.

Good employees want to work in an environment where they know everyone can be held accountable for their actions. I believe the current status quo hurts the morale of the employees who are doing the right thing each and every day.

This is the same for employees of the Department who are veterans. I know that some have said that this would hurt veterans who are employed at the VA since they make up a large percentage of our VA employees. But as a veteran myself and as my fellow veterans here today would agree, we don't serve, whether in uniform or civilian clothes, because we prioritize our individual protection. The mission always comes first, and at VA, the mission is our veterans.

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Veterans want to work alongside colleagues they know are working hard for the men and women who they served alongside.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want to acknowledge some individuals who have made this bill become a reality.

First and foremost, I want to thank the 18 veterans groups representing millions of veterans and their families who are supporting this bill and real accountability at the VA. Many of them are in the gallery today, and I can't thank them enough for all they have done and all they continue to do for our Nation's heroes.

Many of these groups took a courageous stand in support of VA accountability, even when it wasn't a politically popular idea. And I especially want to thank Concerned Veterans for America, The American Legion, and Paralyzed Veterans of America for being some of our earliest and staunchest supporters.

I also want to thank someone who, this Congress, has been with us from day one, and that is the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Dr. David Shulkin. We have worked with Secretary Shulkin and his team to draft the bill that is before us today, and I am thankful for his and President Trump's support.

President Trump and Secretary Shulkin have endorsed this legislation, not because they want to punish or make it harder to recruit employees, but because they see this change is needed if the Secretary is going to meet the President's goal of truly reforming the VA.

I also want to thank the bipartisan group of Senators who we worked with in crafting this bill, including Senator ISAKSON; Senator TESTER; and the primary sponsor, Senator RUBIO. Senator RUBIO and his staff have been with me every step of the way, and I am thankful for his and his staff's efforts over the years.

I also want to thank a good friend of mine, Ranking Member WALZ, and his staff for their support and leadership.

They have been fantastic. I also want to thank Speaker RYAN and Majority Leader MCCARTHY and their staffs for helping us bring this bill to the floor.

Lastly, I would like to single out former Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller, a good friend, great leader of this committee, and my chairman for 6 years. His leadership got the ball rolling on this issue, which led to House-passed legislation twice last Congress and kept the spotlight on accountability issues at VA through his dogged oversight.

Finally, I would like to thank my staff, and especially the professional and communications staff of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for their years of hard work on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, today, we have a bipartisan, bicameral bill that makes meaningful change to VA's civil service system, while maintaining due process rights.

Today, we have the opportunity to make real and lasting changes to a broken system.

Today, we can stand together with veterans against the status quo that has failed them for far too long. They deserve better.

I hope all of you will join me, and the 18 veterans organizations that support this legislation, to do what is right and send this bill to the President's desk.

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

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

I would like to associate myself with the chairman's remarks, especially the thanks of all the people involved in this. I think, Mr. Speaker, this is the third time we have come to this body this Congress, as the chairman and the ranking member of the VA Committee, as fellow veterans, as friends and American citizens, on issues of utmost importance to our veterans. We do have a constituency. We do have a special interest group that we look out for: America's veterans.

Those 18 groups, plus millions of Americans across this country, their collective voices through their organizations, through the Disabled American Veterans, through The American Legion, articulate every Congress in front of us what their top priorities are. This year, they came in front of us and said the three things that Congress needs to get done, needs to get right, and needs to get moving as soon as possible in this 2-year period that we have is: appeals reform, choice extension of care in the community, and an accountability bill.

Well, I am proud to say this is the third of those three. The other two have moved here in a bipartisan manner.

In the climate that we are in, and the uncertainty that the American public is feeling—quite honestly, probably the frustration they feel with this body—I think it is important to note that none of those things were easy lifts, none of them were locked in, and many of them

contained things that were pretty ideologically polarizing.

Chairman ROE, through his leadership and with the professional staff, was able to navigate to get to that point that the top priority and focus was care for veterans—making sure that care is delivered in a timely manner; making sure those delivering the care are the best possible; and, as the chairman said, if they are doing their job, they are afforded their constitutional rights and appeals. If they are not, I agree with the chairman, they should be removed as quickly as possible. They should certainly not be rewarded for that. That strengthens the VA. That strengthens those good employees.

Again, keep this in mind: This is the second largest agency in the Federal Government. It has a \$190 billion budget. It has 350,000-plus employees. It is an issue that unites us and that Americans are passionate about.

So we stand before you today with an issue that is unified, as Americans, as accountability. Certainly, the examples that Chairman ROE mentioned, no one is going to defend those. I am pleased because I think the chairman clearly understands that every time one of those issues goes unaddressed in a timely manner, it hurts the morale of the entire agency and erodes trust in the system by Americans.

Those veterans who use the VA system know they are getting quality care. On any given day, tens of thousands of appointments and procedures are being carried out in the most professional manner. All of that is undermined if a bad employee is allowed to not live up to those standards.

So I am pleased to say that I am in full support of this piece of legislation. The way this was done is the way we are taught in school how it is supposed to work. We debate, we send something there, we don't agree, then we let the Senate do that. We all work together to get something. We bring back that little, I am just a bill sitting on Capitol Hill. Now it is back over here. It is not perfect in everyone's mind, but it is certainly perfect in terms of how legislation is done and reaching those goals. Everyone compromised.

I think the chairman needs to be singled out on this. I thank him for commenting about Chairman Miller. We had Mike Michaud on our side work on that, too. Others have been here and done it, but we needed someone to get it over the line.

The three pieces I mentioned—appeals, choice, and accountability—are certainly things that were on everybody's mind. All three are going to pass through this House.

Just a couple of notes on this. This does maintain due process protections for employees, and I support that. I hope we can come together and pass the compromise piece.

The bill promotes accountability by giving the VA the tools it needs to hold bad employees accountable, while

maintaining those constitutional-mandated workplace rights.

At this point, I would say that Secretary Shulkin has earned the trust of, certainly, this committee, certainly of the veterans service organizations, and I would say, if you don't know, the American people. He has asked for some of these things. I take that very seriously. If he says this will add to accountability, if he says this will make his job better in delivering care for veterans, that weighs heavily.

He asked us for these things. He asked and was part of making that. We should be grateful that he is willing to work with Congress.

It also requires VA to evaluate supervisors based on their protection of whistleblowers. This commonsense provision aligns the incentives for supervisors to protect whistleblowers when they shed light on dangerous situations and problematic employees at the agency.

I want to be clear: we don't support collective bargaining rights just because it is a union issue that we think should be there, those of us who ideologically believe workplace protections allow for a larger voice and protect good employees who are pointing out bad behavior from being arbitrarily fired without a collective will to fight back.

One person in a manager's office with no support or no legal right is a very dangerous situation. One employee being backed by workplace guarantees and their union collectively bargained rights helps make us stronger.

The bill requires the VA to improve its training regarding whistleblower disclosures. This is a really key piece. We want to ensure there are no excuses for employees at the VA to not know how to handle protected disclosures. Proper training will be a key to ensure all employees and not just supervisors understand the importance.

No matter what this bill does, it would be hard to support if it didn't do the things the chairman said. It does protect those constitutional rights. It maintains all existing due process protections in current law by ensuring there is notice and an opportunity to respond before an employee is fired.

The bill even improves the appeals process by requiring the VA to provide an employee with the complete evidence file when they are fired, thereby empowering them to appeal sooner. If someone is wrongfully accused of wrongdoing, now they are going to see and have the entire file. We are just asking that they do it sooner.

If someone commits one of the acts that the chairman talked about, it is indefensible for it to take 6 months or a year to have it adjudicated. We certainly want them to have a fair due process, but, again, if we are waiting to get that done, that is holding a position for someone else that could be serving veterans. It also keeps an employee under the cloud of not getting it done and moving on. If they are innocent, we want to move it on as quickly

as possible. We do not jeopardize or change any of their appeal process to come back.

Now is the time to bring real, long-lasting constitutional accountability measures to the Department of Veterans Affairs. I would hope we could come together to pass this. Again, the entire goal of all of the people involved with this was to improve the care for this Nation's veterans, ensuring people's rights to be heard, and a fair due process if they are accused of something, but with the intention that if you are not serving our veterans in the manner that you should, then there are other places you should work. This ensures that those tools are there.

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

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY), the majority leader.

Mr. MCCARTHY. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank Chairman ROE and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for their work on this legislation and their focus on reforming the VA. I know they and the Secretary are all committed to making sure our veterans get the best—and only the best—no excuses.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has an honorable task to care for and heal our veterans. We made a promise in this country that, if you serve, your fellow citizens will take care of you. That is through the employees of the VA that we as a nation fulfill the promise. It is for this reason that we cannot accept the failures and backlogs in our veterans' programs.

We all know that there are thousands of great employees at the VA who consider their duty to care for the veterans as much bigger than just a job. But the few bad apples are spoiling the whole barrel.

We know how this works. You can have an office or a team committed to doing the best job possible. But when one isn't pulling their weight; when somebody is breaking the rules and getting away with it; when bad people get transferred or promoted, instead of fired; that totally destroys the whole organization. It undermines morale, makes the team ineffective, and allows for failures to continue or get worse. Failures at the VA have life-or-death consequences.

This has happened for years—years, where a person who was jailed got leave to serve time and then returned to the VA; years, where an employee showed up drunk to work and participated in a surgery; years, where a psychiatrist watched deeply inappropriate videos with a veteran in the room; and after years of all this and none of them getting fired, the good employees become dispirited, the culture of the VA will decline, and too many of our veterans receive low-quality care, if they can get care at all.

Mr. Speaker, the VA is steeped in a culture of ambivalence, coupled with a lack of accountability, and our veterans suffer as a result. Fixing the culture at the VA requires us to acknowledge the great work of the many, without leaving them tainted with the incompetence and scandal of the few. It requires removing the bad apples.

So I am glad that we are finally sending this bill to the President's desk. The House passed a similar bill in 2015, but the Senate did not act. We passed another in the new Congress earlier this year.

Now that our Senate counterparts have voted, we will take our final step today to send this legislation to the President's desk. Once President Trump signs this into law, I predict we will begin to see the culture change at the VA and our veterans will get the care we promised them and they deserve.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO), my good friend and the vice ranking member of the full Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding time. And I want to thank Ranking Member WALZ and Chairman ROE for their work on the issue of accountability and their tireless commitment to our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

Throughout the debate over accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs, I have advocated for legislation that holds VA employees accountable, without violating their constitutional right to due process.

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This legislation strikes that balance far better than previous accountability proposals. This compromise respects current grievance procedures, maintains existing due process protections, and improves the appeals process by requiring managers to present employees with all of the evidence before they move on a disciplinary action.

Today we are voting to strengthen whistleblower protections. This bill codifies the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, and it mandates that its Director is a Senate-confirmed position instead of a political appointee. It also offers training on how to handle whistleblowers correctly, which will encourage employees to come forward if they witness misconduct.

Do I have concerns about this bill? Absolutely, I do. This is not the accountability legislation that I would have written. We must always remember that a third of VA employees are veterans themselves, and they deserve the workplace protections afforded to them in the Constitution as well as the respect of this Congress. But my concerns pale in comparison to the serious

and numerous institutional issues raised by accountability bills previously advanced in the House.

Passing this bill today will accomplish several important objectives:

We will fulfill the repeated requests from veteran service organizations and the VA itself for a stronger accountability system.

We will support the VA's continuing effort to create a culture of excellence.

We will provide veterans greater confidence that the VA is prepared to meet their needs.

Finally, by passing this bill, we can shift our focus from who is fired from the VA to who is hired at the VA.

As I stand here today, there are nearly 50,000 vacant jobs at the VA. This is a significant and urgent challenge. Ultimately, the success of the Department of Veterans Affairs will depend on recruiting, training, and retaining the highest quality talent available.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Veterans' Affairs Committee to streamlining the hiring process and ensuring that the VA has the staff and expertise it needs to provide veterans the care and support they have earned.

I applaud the Senate for forging this compromise, and I again want to recognize Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ for their important work.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from California (Mr. TAKANO) for his support.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), my good friend and vice chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act.

As a grateful nation, we must implement meaningful VA reform. Every day veterans contact my office seeking assistance in dealing with the agency. Like many of my colleagues here, I have full-time staff specifically dedicated to helping veterans with VA casework. I hear from veterans every day who are waiting for care, waiting for an answer, or simply waiting to finally be heard and recognized.

These are true American heroes, Mr. Speaker. We must do all we can to help them. The VA should be rolling out the red carpet for our veterans and treating them like the heroes they are.

The VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act is good, commonsense legislation. If a VA employee is involved in misconduct, they should be demoted, suspended, or fired—certainly not promoted or given a bonus. If a VA employee sees misconduct and wants to report it, they should not fear repercussions.

Of course, the vast majority of VA employees are hardworking and dedicated professionals. At the end of the day, this bill is about holding the bad actors accountable and protecting the

whistleblowers and refocusing the VA on its mission to serve our Nation's heroes. With the passage of the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, we are turning the page to a fresh start for the VA.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman ROE for doing such an outstanding job and also the ranking member for working in a bipartisan fashion. I appreciate it so very much. This is the way Congress should operate.

God bless our veterans.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BROWNLEY), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health.

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill to hold bad actors accountable and make the VA a stronger system for our Nation's veterans.

Since the unacceptable wait time scandal came to light in 2014, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee has worked diligently to fix the long-term problems at the VA and to ensure we are serving our veterans as well as they have served us.

From top to bottom, the number one priority for almost every VA employee is serving our veterans. But when an employee does not live up to this mission, engages in misconduct, or puts veterans at risk, we must ensure that the VA is able to hold them accountable.

It is critically important that we acknowledge that the vast majority of the 350,000 VA employees, a third of whom are veterans themselves, are hardworking individuals who have dedicated themselves to serving our country and our Nation's veterans. By being able to hold accountable the few bad actors in the VA, we not only serve our veterans, but we make the job of the rest of the workforce easier to perform.

Because we need a world-class, 21st century VA, this bill also provides the Secretary with direct hiring authority for senior management so that we can bring on the talent we need to properly serve our veterans.

This is an important example of what we can get done when we work in a bipartisan manner. I want to thank Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ, both the chairman and ranking member of the Senate for working with our VSOs and the VA to find a compromise on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I support this compromise. I ask my colleagues to vote "yes." This is a very good bill.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN), an Army and Marine veteran deployed to Iraq.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I rise today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs and Whistleblower Protection Act, which the House of Representatives will consider today.

Time and time again, I have called to reform the VA, an organization that has been mired in a culture of corruption and bureaucratic incompetence. The VA has consistently failed to meet our Nation's obligations to veterans, the men and women who have sacrificed so much in the protection of our freedoms.

This act also provides the necessary protections for those who do the right thing and come forward to report wrongdoing. This legislation makes it possible to fire the bad VA employees who have failed our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues, along with those in the Senate, for their hard work and support of this legislation. I look forward to getting it to the President's desk for his signature and to finally bringing accountability to the VA.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. PETERS), a friend of all of our veterans and a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, for everything our veterans have given in service to the country, they have earned their benefits and access to timely, quality healthcare at the VA. That is the promise that was made to them when they volunteered to serve. That is the promise that we in Congress are obligated to keep.

Honoring this promise is not just a matter of resources; it also depends on changing the actual culture at the VA. From the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the doctors and nurses, to the administrators who deal with the flood of appointments that come in, it has to be about serving the veteran, not about serving the bureaucracy.

For as long as I have been in Congress, improving VA accountability has been a bipartisan goal. I am glad to see us working across the aisle once again on this legislation that builds on the progress we made in 2014.

This bill strengthens whistleblower protections, which encourages employees to call out careless or criminal behavior that we have unfortunately seen too often at VAs around the country. It gives the Secretary greater authority to remove or discipline poorly performing and negligent employees, and it provides a reasonable and efficient appeals process for VA employees that is the subject of compromise.

The bill won't solve all the problems at the VA, but by holding bad actors accountable and protecting the hardworking employees who care for our veterans, this bipartisan legislation will improve on the service that our veterans receive.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work done by my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, the administration, and the veterans service organizations to craft this important piece of legislation, and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes." Let's send this bill to the President's desk and help veterans in my district in San Diego and across the country get the care that they have earned.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. POLIQUIN), my good friend and a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. POLIQUIN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the Floor on this important issue.

Gentlemen, it was our first Commander in Chief, George Washington, who said something to the effect that we can never expect our young men and women to step forward and fight for our country unless those who have already returned from the battlefield are taken care of.

This is a solemn oath that we all have to honor. It is critically important. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, in the State of Maine, we have about 125,000 veterans, and we love our veterans. We understand what it is like to fight for our freedom and to stand up for our way of life.

In the State of Maine, we have Togus Medical Center, which is the first veterans hospital in the country, about 150 years old. We understand this. They have great employees, and many of them are veterans themselves.

However, a couple of years ago our country was shocked to learn that there were and are some bad actors in this whole process. A few years ago, we learned that some of the folks at the veterans facility in Phoenix, Arizona, were cooking the scheduling books in order to get paid more money through a bonus program when, in fact, they did not and had not scheduled mental health appointments for some of our veterans who were at risk, and, as a result, a number of those veterans died. This is absolutely unacceptable.

There is nobody who has fought for this country on the front lines who comes home, who needs help, that should be denied help; and it certainly shouldn't be those who are supposed to take care of them who are cooking the books for their own benefit.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am asking every Republican and Democrat here in this Chamber to support the Senate's bill, 1094. This is a good bill that holds the VA employees accountable for improper behavior. And, yes, sir, it does give, Mr. Speaker, management at the VA the opportunity to replace, fire, or otherwise, those who are supposed to care for our veterans who have chosen not to do so. Please support S. 1094.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois). The gentleman from Minnesota has 15½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Tennessee has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am certainly willing to yield some of my time to the gentleman from Tennessee if there are other speakers who would like to speak on this if the gentleman's time runs short. If I could save myself 3 minutes for my closing, I would certainly be

willing to do that. I am not certain what the parliamentary procedure is to do so.

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

□ 1515

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DUNN), a veteran and a member of the committee, to speak on this issue.

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. This important legislation will streamline the arduous process to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance, negligence, or misconduct.

We all know the list of scandals: veterans dying on wait lists, intoxicated surgical staff, armed robbery, grossly mismanaged construction projects. Yet the civil service rules allow bad VA employees to stay on the public payroll.

Our veterans deserve better.

Today we take a bold step toward reversing that failure. This legislation will allow Secretary Shulkin to immediately remove bad employees as he works to restructure and improve veterans' care. It also ensures that whistleblowers are protected from retaliation. The bottom line is that it implements real accountability at the VA, accountability to the men and women who have bravely served this country.

The Veterans Affairs Accountability Act is an important first step in addressing poor performance and misconduct at the VA, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this much-needed legislation.

I thank the chair and the ranking member very much for their work on this.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON), chairman of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, it is my highest privilege to serve with Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ on the VA Committee, and I am grateful for the honor to serve as chairman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

I want to thank Chairman ROE for his leadership on an issue that I believe gets at the root cause of many of the problems, maybe most of the problems that plague the Department of Veterans Affairs: the lack of accountability. Where you don't have a culture of accountability in an organization, you have mediocrity; and mediocrity and excellence in service do not and cannot coexist.

We are talking about serving our veterans, the men and women who are willing to sacrifice everything for our freedom and security. These folks gave

their best to our country, and they deserve the very best from our country.

Having almost half a million delinquent disability claims is not our very best; having veterans wait in line for months to see a physician, not our best; having hundreds of billions of dollars in improper payments is not our best; waiting 6 months to a year to terminate somebody for misconduct and poor performance is definitely not our best.

People all over this country, hard-working Americans, get up every day; they work hard; they perform; they deliver results; and if they don't, they lose their job. If they are small-business owners, they go out of business. We ought to have no less expectation for our Federal Government and its employees, especially those who serve our veterans.

The VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act gives the Secretary the tools he needs to hold his employees accountable for serving our veterans and to change the culture from one that accepts mediocrity to one that expects excellence.

I applaud Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ for helping our country take a big step towards delivering on our promises to our veterans.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. RUTHERFORD), a member of our committee and, for many years, who was in the process of protecting us in law enforcement.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

As we have all seen from various reports and news stories, increased accountability at the VA is long, long overdue. For far too long, the leadership in the Department of Veterans Affairs has been unable to make firing decisions that would be common sense in any other setting.

The VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act gives the Secretary the authority to fire the bad actors and creates a removal process that is more in line with the private sector. It also gives the Secretary the ability to punish poor performers by recouping bonuses and relocation expenses. We must ensure that employees who fail to do their jobs are not rewarded but are, instead, held accountable.

Another part of this legislation is the enhanced protection for whistleblowers. These are employees who are doing the right thing and advocating for our veterans. They should not be faced with retribution by their leadership.

One of the most important jobs of this Congress is working to improve the lives of our Nation's veterans. When our fellow Americans bravely put on the uniform and serve, we must ensure that that sacrifice does not go unnoticed.

In my time serving on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have seen how Congress and the leadership of the VA, in partnership with veterans service organizations, are working to create the culture of service and accountability that our veterans truly deserve.

As Secretary Shulkin has often said, the VA needs changing, and I believe this bill is a huge step in that direction.

I would like to thank Chairman ROE for his leadership, and Senator RUBIO. This issue is crucial to the 150,000 veteran men and women of northeast Florida, and I thank them for their leadership, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN), the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee chair and a lieutenant general in the Marine Corps.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act.

Anyone who has been responsible for the success of a business or organization knows that the most important part of the equation is the people. It is no different with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our veterans have given their all, and they deserve our all; but, unfortunately, vulnerabilities in the VA's administrative processes have led to incompetence, neglect, and even unchecked illegal activity on the part of a small number of VA employees.

Unfortunately, lack of oversight and accountability in the hiring and retention process mean that the VA is still failing our veterans. Even in the few instances where the VA has tried to discipline employees for wrongdoing or neglect, it has been foiled by a complex and lengthy administrative process that rarely yields results.

S. 1094 addresses the VA's administrative shortcomings by providing the Secretary with the authority to remove, demote, or suspend any employee for poor performance or misconduct while, at the same time, enhancing protections for whistleblowers.

As a leader of marines and a Vietnam veteran, I know what our servicemen and -women across generations and conflicts have sacrificed for our freedoms and our country. They don't just deserve quality care; they have earned it.

We made a commitment to defend our veterans just as they have defended our way of life, and that starts with reforms that restore efficiency and accountability at Veterans Affairs.

I would like to thank Chairman ROE and the committee for all their hard work. I strongly urge my colleagues to support.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman

from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN), a new member of our committee, who is doing a great job.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, since the day I was elected to Congress, I pledged to do everything in my power to help veterans receive the care and attention they deserve. S. 1094 will ensure that persons hired to care for the health and the well-being of our veterans do so according to VA regulations, and those who fail in their duties are held accountable. Moreover, this bill protects whistleblowers from retaliation when they alarm us of VA misconduct.

Currently, Puerto Rico has one VA regional benefit office, one VA hospital, and a few outpatient clinics. These facilities provide all the VA services to the island's veterans. This bill will help ensure places with limited VA facilities, like Puerto Rico, will be efficiently administered and make certain that the VA's employees adhere to the standards of excellence that our men and women in uniform expect.

I thank Senator RUBIO for sponsoring this bill, but I need to thank Chairman ROE for guiding this important legislation on the House floor the same way he did with H.R. 1529.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 6½ minutes remaining.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MESSER), my good friend who I have served with for 6 years on the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's leadership on this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans deserve high-quality healthcare. They have earned it. That is why I rise today to urge support of S. 1094, the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. This is landmark, bipartisan legislation to reform the VA and improve care for our veterans after years of poor performance and scandal.

My grandfather is a World War II veteran who regularly attends the VA in Indianapolis, so I know firsthand that the vast majority of employees at the VA are honest and hardworking public servants. Lack of accountability at the agency, though, has allowed a few bad actors to damage the VA and harm our vets, from manipulating wait lists to letting calls to the suicide hotline go unanswered, to theft and wrongful prescribing of opioids.

Our veterans deserve better.

The Veterans Accountability Act will hold bureaucrats accountable for wrongdoing, make it easier to dismiss bad employees, and strengthen protections for whistleblowers. These are commonsense reforms and long overdue.

Because our military men and women, our Hoosier heroes, fought to

protect us, the least we can do is fight for them and ensure that they get high-quality care.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of the bill.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST), a combat-wounded veteran, Bronze Star winner, Purple Heart winner, Defense Meritorious Service and Army Commendation Medal winner.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman for yielding me time, and the ranking member, both of the gentlemen, for their leadership, and also our Senator from Florida, Senator RUBIO, for his leadership on this bill.

This is a great bill, and that is why I couldn't be more happy than to rise and speak about this bill. For a long time, our veterans have deserved better, and this bill is exactly that: It is better.

Veterans across the board—Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard—they have common experiences and common healthcare challenges as a result of certainly combat, but also as a result of just simply the austere life of being in the military. Whether it is a daily life of jumping out of planes or roping out of helicopters or kicking in doors or jumping off the back end of trucks, you live an austere life.

Oftentimes, I hear people say a year in the military can be like a dog-year. It is tough on you, and that is why the VA is so critical. It is so critical that the VA maintain an expertise in providing for our unique healthcare needs.

I get my healthcare from the VA. I know many VA employees who are hardworking and certainly unyielding in their dedication, but I have also encountered many who are not, plain and simple, many who lack the hunger or who lack the appropriate mentality or the decorum to care for our men and women who are willing to give their last breath in defense of our country. This is the reality.

Every single veteran needs to be treated like the most important patient ever to be seen every single time they walk into the VA. Anything less is a failure.

In the past several years, this bureaucracy of rules, it has obstructed the VA's ability to go out there and fire employees who have been charged with armed robbery, who have been accused of being drunk while performing surgeries, and this simply cannot stand.

There should never be somebody allowed to service our veterans who would receive a dishonorable discharge in the military for what their actions are. They shouldn't be allowed the honor of serving people who served this country in World War II or Korea or Vietnam or Panama, Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, the Gulf war, Iraq, Afghanistan. Folks shouldn't be given that honor lightly.

It is exactly why this bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs Account-

ability and Whistleblower Protection Act is so important. The bill establishes whistleblower protections so that we can ensure veterans get the best possible care and make sure that no veteran is ever dishonored twice by the same person.

I want to thank you again for yielding me time. I want to thank you on behalf of every single veteran across this country for this great bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman MAST for those kind words and words spoken for every American veteran.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK).

□ 1530

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman, the ranking member, and Senator RUBIO for their leadership.

Mr. Speaker, scandal after scandal has caused heightened distrust between veterans and the VA. For far too long, veterans nationwide have been disrespected by those who are supposed to be advocates for them, sometimes with deadly consequences.

Be it in regional offices—like the one in Philadelphia, which my office has worked closely with—or medical centers, from Phoenix to Florida, we have seen the devastating impact of the current culture of mismanagement and distrust, and its impact on backlogged claims and lack of care for those who devoted their lives to serve our country.

The legislation before the House today institutes the needed reforms throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs by granting the authority, and the expectation, that the Secretary remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct.

Rebuilding this trust between Veterans Affairs and those who had served us must be a priority. The Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act is crucial to reforming this trust, and I am proud to support it. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same. We must serve our veterans as well as they have served us.

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

Mr. Speaker, you heard it from a wide range of folks here on the floor. This is the way Congress is supposed to work and this is what is expected of us. This is what my constituents in southern Minnesota expect, and this is what the gentleman from Tennessee's or the gentleman from Florida's constituents expect: look at a problem, assess it, come up with some different solutions, and debate those out.

I want to be clear, as I said earlier, these are tough issues. There was debate—heated debate. We may even have raised our voices a few times doing

this, but that is the way the world's greatest democracy is supposed to function.

Again, three of the most pressing issues, three of the top priorities of this Nation's veterans, all addressed in the first 6 six months of this Congress, all addressed to the satisfaction of a wide, bipartisan VSO community that is grateful for it.

I think, in trying to find these challenges and understanding them, people are trying to get at the heart of this. I do think there are great frustrations, and I have said, totally indefensible of the examples given.

But when we had this debate before, there were some examples of bad managers inadvertently firing people who were pointing out things that the manager was doing; and the due process considerations got that person their job back, and we got rid of the manager.

I think that when we first started debating this, I made the case that this could be a right-to-work bill in disguise. This bill is not that. This bill, as the chairman said, was not the intention. The intention was accountability. The intention of the bill was to streamline the process while protecting those due process rights.

I am grateful that the chairman, as always, kept his word. He followed through and he negotiated that.

The thing that I would say before closing here, Mr. Speaker, is that I agree with the majority leader. I think the combination of many things that we are doing possesses the potential to see real reforms moving in the right direction. Something that I think hasn't been mentioned here—that the Secretary did with consultation with the chairman, myself, and others—was that he took the action of streamlining the medical record procedure between the DOD, and the VA added to that.

There is transformational, generational-type change happening at the VA, but none of this will matter. And the majority leader said he expects to see that. We must ensure that it happens. We must ensure the accountability, we must monitor, we must ask that it is happening, and we must come back at this again. If there is a glitch that was unintended, let's come back at it again in this same manner of reaching an outcome.

This is a positive day, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that those folks paying attention to this and watching—certainly the veterans, but everyone—know that Congress can work together; Congress can take on pressing issues; Congress can come up with bipartisan solutions; and Congress can agree that the thing that defines us most is not Republican or Democrat—it is U.S. citizen, it is veteran, and it is care for them.

Today I am proud to get this through here. Let's send it on to the President, and let's all celebrate the Administration signing this into law and moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today is a proud day, I think, for this Nation. The United States of America does more for its veterans than all other nations in the world combined; and I don't think that, on some days, that is even enough for these heroes that have served us and many of whom have spoken this afternoon.

I want to express my appreciation to the minority and the majority staff, and to Sergeant Major WALZ for walking hand in hand. As he said, this was not an easy process. There were a lot of difficult issues that we both dealt with.

I also want to thank our friends on the Senate side who also went through the same process and brought a bill to the floor that we can all, I think, enthusiastically support.

The Secretary said when he was first chosen—and I might add, 100-0, Secretary Shulkin was a bipartisan agreement in the Senate. I think he is a leader to transform the VA. He asked for accountability. He said: I cannot do my job as Secretary if I don't have this piece of legislation.

So he was very supportive, along with President Trump, so we gave him that.

We also protected due process rights for the employees who work for the VA—a very important issue.

Whistleblower protections. We could not do our job, Mr. Speaker, if we did not have these whistleblowers. There are 350,000 employees, 154 medical centers, and over 800 outpatient clinics. There is no way that we could monitor that without their help. So their protections are there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage both sides of the aisle to support S. 1094, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support increased accountability and whistleblower protection at the Department of Veterans Affairs. And I recognize that S. 1094 represents a compromise approach that was crafted specifically to address severe, longstanding problems at VA hospitals.

But a number of S. 1094's provisions concern me. As Vice Ranking Member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, these concerns would be amplified if these provisions were applied to other contexts or across the federal government in future legislation.

A partial list of problematic provisions includes:

The bill requires a lower standard of evidence that would allow removal, demotion, and other disciplinary actions even if the majority of evidence is exculpatory.

The bill supersedes existing collective bargaining agreements.

The bill provides for the clawback and forfeiture of bonuses and pensions under a standard that is broad and susceptible to abuse.

The bill denies senior executives of the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board, which they have under current law.

The bill imposes unreasonable timelines on the ability of employees to respond to allegations that may lead to discipline and eliminates the ability of the Merit System Protection Board to mitigate penalties that may have been overly harsh and raise due process concerns.

The bill prohibits the use of administrative leave for employees challenging demotions. This provision could also force employees to use their accrued sick or annual leave while on appeal, which Courts have considered a taking in violation of the Constitution.

While S. 1094 is a bipartisan compromise aimed at dealing with a specific and troubled department, a number of its provisions are problematic and would not serve as an example for future civil service-related legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 378, the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. 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 question will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

The motion to recommit on H.R. 2581;

Passage of H.R. 2581, if ordered; and

Passage of S. 1094.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

VERIFY FIRST ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to recommit on the bill (H.R. 2581) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require the provision of social security numbers as a condition of receiving the health insurance premium tax credit, offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ), on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk will redesignate the motion.

The Clerk redesignated the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 193, nays 231, not voting 6, as follows:

[Roll No. 305]

YEAS—193

Adams	Gabbard	Nolan
Aguilar	Gallego	Norcross
Barragán	Garamendi	O'Halleran
Bass	Gonzalez (TX)	O'Rourke
Beatty	Gottheimer	Pallone
Bera	Green, Al	Panetta
Beyer	Green, Gene	Pascarell
Bishop (GA)	Grijalva	Payne
Blumenauer	Gutiérrez	Pelosi
Blunt Rochester	Hanabusa	Perlmutter
Bonamici	Hastings	Peters
Boyle, Brendan	Heck	Peterson
F.	Higgins (NY)	Pingree
Brady (PA)	Himes	Pocan
Brown (MD)	Hoyer	Polis
Brownley (CA)	Huffman	Price (NC)
Bustos	Jackson Lee	Quigley
Butterfield	Jayapal	Raskin
Capuano	Jeffries	Rice (NY)
Carbajal	Johnson (GA)	Richmond
Cárdenas	Johnson, E. B.	Rosen
Carson (IN)	Jones	Roybal-Allard
Cartwright	Kaptur	Ruiz
Castor (FL)	Keating	Ruppersberger
Castro (TX)	Kelly (IL)	Rush
Chu, Judy	Kennedy	Ryan (OH)
Cicilline	Khanna	Sánchez
Clark (MA)	Kihuen	Sarbanes
Clarke (NY)	Kildee	Schakowsky
Clay	Kilmer	Schiff
Cleaver	Kind	Schneider
Clyburn	Krishnamoorthi	Schrader
Cohen	Kuster (NH)	Scott (VA)
Connolly	Langevin	Scott, David
Conyers	Larsen (WA)	Serrano
Cooper	Larson (CT)	Sewell (AL)
Correa	Lawrence	Shea-Porter
Costa	Lawson (FL)	Sherman
Courtney	Lee	Sinema
Crist	Levin	Sires
Crowley	Lewis (GA)	Slaughter
Cuellar	Lieu, Ted	Smith (WA)
Davis (CA)	Lipinski	Soto
Davis, Danny	Loeb sack	Speier
DeFazio	Lofgren	Suozzi
DeGette	Lowenthal	Swalwell (CA)
Delaney	Lowe y	Takano
DeLauro	Lujan Grisham,	Thompson (CA)
DelBene	M.	Thompson (MS)
Demings	Luján, Ben Ray	Titus
DeSaulnier	Lynch	Tonko
Deutch	Maloney,	Torres
Dingell	Carolyn B.	Tsongas
Doggett	Maloney, Sean	Vargas
Doyle, Michael	Matsui	Veasey
F.	McCollum	Vela
Duncan (TN)	McEachin	Velázquez
Ellison	McGovern	Visclosky
Engel	McNerney	Walz
Eshoo	Meeks	Wasserman
Espallat	Meng	Schultz
Esty (CT)	Moore	Waters, Maxine
Evans	Moulton	Watson Coleman
Foster	Murphy (FL)	Welch
Frankel (FL)	Nadler	Wilson (FL)
Fudge	Neal	Yarmuth

NAYS—231

Abraham	Bucshon	DesJarlais
Aderholt	Budd	Diaz-Balart
Allen	Burgess	Donovan
Amash	Byrne	Duffy
Amodel	Calvert	Duncan (SC)
Arrington	Carter (GA)	Dunn
Babin	Carter (TX)	Emmer
Bacon	Chabot	Estes (KS)
Banks (IN)	Chaffetz	Farenthold
Barletta	Cheney	Faso
Barr	Coffman	Ferguson
Barton	Cole	Fitzpatrick
Bergman	Collins (GA)	Fleischmann
Biggs	Collins (NY)	Flores
Bilirakis	Comer	Fortenberry
Bishop (MI)	Comstock	Fox
Bishop (UT)	Conaway	Franks (AZ)
Black	Cook	Frelinghuysen
Blackburn	Costello (PA)	Gaetz
Blum	Cramer	Gallagher
Bost	Crawford	Garrett
Brady (TX)	Culberson	Gibbs
Brat	Curbelo (FL)	Gohmert
Bridenstine	Davidson	Goodlatte
Brooks (AL)	Davis, Rodney	Gosar
Brooks (IN)	Denham	Gowdy
Buchanan	Dent	Graves (GA)
Buck	DeSantis	Graves (LA)

Graves (MO)	Massie	Royce (CA)
Grothman	Mast	Russell
Guthrie	McCarthy	Rutherford
Harper	McCaull	Sanford
Harris	McClintock	Scalise
Hartzler	McHenry	Schweikert
Hensarling	McKinley	Scott, Austin
Herrera Beutler	McMorris	Sensenbrenner
Hice, Jody B.	Rodgers	Sessions
Higgins (LA)	McSally	Shimkus
Hill	Meadows	Shuster
Holding	Meehan	Simpson
Hollingsworth	Messer	Smith (MO)
Hudson	Mitchell	Smith (NE)
Huizenga	Moolenaar	Smith (NJ)
Hultgren	Mooney (WV)	Smith (TX)
Hunter	Mullin	Smucker
Hurd	Murphy (PA)	Stefanik
Issa	Newhouse	Stewart
Jenkins (KS)	Noem	Stivers
Jenkins (WV)	Nunes	Taylor
Johnson (LA)	Olson	Tenney
Johnson (OH)	Palazzo	Thompson (PA)
Jordan	Palmer	Thornberry
Joyce (OH)	Paulsen	Tiberi
Katko	Pearce	Tipton
Kelly (MS)	Perry	Trott
Kelly (PA)	Pittenger	Turner
King (IA)	Poe (TX)	Upton
King (NY)	Poliquin	Valadao
Kinziger	Posey	Wagner
Knight	Ratcliffe	Walberg
Kustoff (TN)	Reed	Walker
Labrador	Reichert	Walorski
LaHood	Renacci	Walters, Mimi
LaMalfa	Rice (SC)	Webster (FL)
Lamborn	Roby	Wenstrup
Lance	Roe (TN)	Westerman
Latta	Rogers (AL)	Williams
Lewis (MN)	Rogers (KY)	Wilson (SC)
LoBiondo	Rohrabacher	Wittman
Long	Rokita	Womack
Loudermilk	Rooney, Francis	Woodall
Love	Rooney, Thomas	Yoder
Lucas	J.	Yoho
Luetkemeyer	Ros-Lehtinen	Young (AK)
MacArthur	Roskam	Young (IA)
Marchant	Ross	Zeldin
Marino	Rothfus	
Marshall	Rouzer	

NOT VOTING—6

Cummings	Griffith	Napolitano
Granger	Johnson, Sam	Weber (TX)

□ 1603

Messrs. VALADAO, GOHMERT, RUSSELL, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, Messrs. WITTMAN, WALKER, BROOKS of Alabama, GROTHMAN, YOUNG of Alaska, and WENSTRUP changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

Mrs. LAWRENCE, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. SLAUGHTER, KELLY of Illinois, and FRANKEL of Florida changed their vote from “nay” to “yea.”

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 238, noes 184, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 306]

AYES—238

Abraham	Gohmert	Olson
Aguilar	Goodlatte	Palazzo
Barragán	Gosar	Palmer
Bass	Gowdy	Paulsen
Beatty	Graves (GA)	Pearce
Bera	Graves (LA)	Perry
Beyer	Graves (MO)	Peterson
Bishop (GA)	Grothman	Pittenger
Blumenauer	Guthrie	Poe (TX)
Blunt Rochester	Harper	Poliquin
Bonamici	Harris	Posey
Boyle, Brendan	Hartzler	Ratcliffe
F.	Hensarling	Reed
Brady (PA)	Herrera Beutler	Reichert
Brown (MD)	Hice, Jody B.	Renacci
Brownley (CA)	Higgins (LA)	Rice (SC)
Bustos	Hill	Roby
Butterfield	Holding	Roe (TN)
Capuano	Hollingsworth	Rogers (AL)
Carbajal	Hudson	Rogers (KY)
Cárdenas	Huizenga	Rohrabacher
Carson (IN)	Hultgren	Rokita
Cartwright	Hunter	Rooney, Francis
Castor (FL)	Hurd	Rooney, Thomas
Castro (TX)	Issa	J.
Chu, Judy	Jenkins (KS)	Ros-Lehtinen
Cicilline	Jenkins (WV)	Roskam
Clark (MA)	Johnson (LA)	Ross
Clarke (NY)	Johnson (OH)	Rothfus
Clay	Jones	Rouzer
Cleaver	Jordan	Royce (CA)
Clyburn	Joyce (OH)	Russell
Cohen	Kaptur	Rutherford
Connolly	Katko	Sanford
Conyers	Kelly (MS)	Scalise
Cooper	Kelly (PA)	Schweikert
Correa	King (IA)	Scott, Austin
Costa	King (NY)	Sensenbrenner
Courtney	Kinzinger	Sessions
Crist	Knight	Shimkus
Crowley	Kustoff (TN)	Shuster
Cuellar	Labrador	Simpson
Davis (CA)	LaHood	Sinema
Davis, Danny	LaMalfa	Smith (MO)
DeFazio	Lamborn	Smith (NE)
DeGette	Lance	Smith (NJ)
Delaney	Latta	Smith (TX)
DeLauro	LoBiondo	Smucker
DelBene	Long	Stefanik
Demings	Loudermilk	Stewart
DeSaulnier	Love	Stivers
Deutch	Lucas	Taylor
Dingell	Luetkemeyer	Tenney
Doggett	Lynch	Thompson (PA)
Doyle, Michael	MacArthur	Thornberry
F.	Marchant	Tiberi
Duncan (TN)	Marino	Tipton
Ellison	Marshall	Trott
Engel	Massie	Turner
Eshoo	Donovan	Upton
Espallat	Duffy	Valadao
Esty (CT)	Duncan (SC)	Wagner
Evans	Duncan (TN)	Walberg
Foster	Dunn	Walden
Frankel (FL)	Emmer	Walker
Fudge	Estes (KS)	Walorski
	Farenthold	Walters, Mimi
	Faso	Webster (FL)
	Ferguson	Wenstrup
	Fitzpatrick	Westerman
	Fleischmann	Williams
	Flores	Wilson (SC)
	Fortenberry	Wittman
	Fox	Womack
	Franks (AZ)	Woodall
	Frelinghuysen	Yoder
	Gaetz	Yoho
	Gallagher	Young (AK)
	Newhouse	Young (IA)
	Noem	Zeldin
	Nunes	
	O'Halleran	

NOES—184

Adams	Brown (MD)	Clarke (NY)
Aguilar	Brownley (CA)	Clay
Barragán	Bustos	Cleaver
Bass	Butterfield	Clyburn
Beatty	Capuano	Cohen
Bera	Carbajal	Connolly
Beyer	Cárdenas	Conyers
Bishop (GA)	Carson (IN)	Cooper
Blumenauer	Cartwright	Correa
Blunt Rochester	Castor (FL)	Costa
Bonamici	Castro (TX)	Courtney
Boyle, Brendan	Chu, Judy	Crist
F.	Cicilline	Crowley
Brady (PA)	Clark (MA)	Davis (CA)

Davis, Danny	Kilmer	Price (NC)
DeGette	Kind	Quigley
Delaney	Krishnamoorthi	Raskin
DeLauro	Kuster (NH)	Rice (NY)
DelBene	Langevin	Richmond
Demings	Larsen (WA)	Rosen
DeSaulnier	Larson (CT)	Roybal-Allard
Deutch	Lawrence	Ruiz
Diaz-Balart	Lawson (FL)	Ruppersberger
Dingell	Lee	Rush
Doggett	Levin	Ryan (OH)
Doyle, Michael F.	Lewis (GA)	Sánchez
Ellison	Lieu, Ted	Sarbanes
Engel	Lipinski	Schakowsky
Eshoo	Loeb	Schiff
Espallat	Lofgren	Schneider
Esty (CT)	Lowenthal	Schrader
Evans	Lowey	Scott (VA)
Foster	Lujan Grisham, M.	Scott, David
Frankel (FL)	Luján, Ben Ray	Serrano
Fudge	Maloney,	Sewell (AL)
Gabbard	Carolyn B.	Shea-Porter
Galleo	Maloney, Sean	Sires
Garamendi	Matsui	Slaughter
Gonzalez (TX)	McCollum	Smith (WA)
Gotthelmer	McEeachin	Soto
Green, Al	McGovern	Speier
Green, Gene	McNerney	Suozi
Grijalva	Meeks	Swalwell (CA)
Gutiérrez	Meng	Takano
Hanabusa	Moore	Thompson (CA)
Hastings	Moulton	Thompson (MS)
Heck	Murphy (FL)	Titus
Higgins (NY)	Nadler	Tonko
Himes	Neal	Torres
Hoyer	Nolan	Tsongas
Huffman	Norcross	Vargas
Jackson Lee	O'Rourke	Veasey
Jayapal	Pallone	Vela
Jeffries	Panetta	Velázquez
Johnson (GA)	Pascarell	Visclosky
Johnson, E. B.	Payne	Walz
Keating	Pelosi	Wasserman
Kelly (IL)	Perlmutter	Schultz
Kennedy	Peters	Waters, Maxine
Khanna	Pingree	Watson Coleman
Kihuen	Pocan	Welch
Kildee	Polis	Wilson (FL)
		Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—8

Cummings	Johnson, Sam	Sherman
Granger	Lewis (MN)	Weber (TX)
Griffith	Napolitano	

□ 1610

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated against:

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall No. 306.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO OFFER RESOLUTION RAISING A QUESTION OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 2(a)(1) of rule IX, I rise to give notice of my intent to raise a question of the privileges of the House.

The form of the resolution is as follows:

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President shall immediately disclose his tax return information to the House of Representatives and the American people.

Whereas, President Nixon explained that "People have got to know whether or not their President is a crook" when he invited the Joint Committee on Taxation to audit his returns after the Internal Revenue Service gave him an unwarranted tax discount;

Whereas, according to the Tax History Project, every President since

Gerald Ford has disclosed his tax return information to the public;

Whereas, the Chairmen of the Committee on Ways and Means, Joint Committee on Taxation, and the Committee on Finance have the authority to request the President's tax returns under section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;

Whereas, pursuant to Article I, section 7, clause 1 of the Constitution, often referred to as the Origination Clause, the House of Representatives has the sole authority to initiate legislation that raises revenue for the national government, and the Committee on Ways and Means is considering a comprehensive reform of the Tax Code;

Whereas, according to media reports analyzing President Trump's leaked 2005 tax return, we know that had his own tax plan been in place, he would have paid an estimated mere 3.48 percent rate instead of a 24 percent rate, saving him \$31.3 million;

Whereas, according to The New York Times, the President used a legally dubious tax maneuver in 1995 that could have allowed him to avoid paying any Federal taxes for 18 years;

Whereas, President Trump holds "interests as the sole or principal owner in approximately 500 separate entities," according to his attorneys, and the President's tax plan proposes to cut the tax rate on such "pass-through" entities from 39.6 percent to 15 percent;

Whereas, one analysis estimated that President Trump would personally save \$6.7 million from two tax breaks included in the Republicans' first tax cut, which they misleadingly call the American Health Care Act;

Whereas, without the President's tax returns, the American people cannot determine how much he will personally benefit from proposed changes to the Tax Code;

Whereas, an ABCNews/Washington Post poll found that 74 percent of Americans would like President Trump to disclose his tax returns and the most-signed petition on the White House website calls for the release of the President's tax return information to verify compliance with the Emoluments Clause, with more than 1,097,000 signatures as of date of this resolution;

Whereas, disclosure of the President's tax returns could help those investigating Russian influence in the 2016 election better understand the President's financial ties to the Russian Federation, Russian businesses, and Russian individuals;

Whereas, after breaking his pledge to make his tax returns available, President Trump instead presented a one-page letter from a law firm giving him a clean bill of health on any business dealings with Russians, but failed to note that the very same law firm boasted of the "prestigious honor" of being named "Russia Law Firm of the Year" for 2016;

Whereas, former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey, before he was fired by President

Trump, publicly confirmed that the Bureau has been investigating potential ties between President Trump's campaign and Russia since July and that the Russian President Vladimir Putin favored a Trump electoral victory;

Whereas, President Trump's son-in-law and senior advisor, Jared Kushner, met during the Presidential transition at the behest of the Russian Ambassador with Sergey N. Gorkov, a graduate of a school run by the successor to the KGB and who was appointed by Vladimir Putin to head a Russian state-owned bank that is on the U.S. sanctions list;

Whereas, Mr. Kushner proposed establishing a secret back channel of communications directly to Vladimir Putin, even considering the use of Russian embassy facilities to do so;

Whereas, Attorney General Jeff Sessions falsely stated during his Senate confirmation hearing that he "did not have communications with the Russians," when in fact he met at least twice during the campaign with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak;

Whereas, former Director Comey testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee that President Trump had asked him in the Oval Office about "letting Flynn go," referring to the investigation into former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn's business ties to Russia;

Whereas, President Trump stated on May 11, 2017, that he had decided that he was going to fire Comey because of "this Russia thing";

Whereas, former Director Comey, on June 8, 2017, testified that Special Counsel Robert Mueller could investigate whether President Trump's actions with regard to Director Comey and the Flynn investigation constituted obstruction of justice;

Whereas, in 2013, President Trump said, "Well, I've done a lot of business with the Russians. They're smart and they're tough," and President Trump's son, Donald Trump, Jr., told a news outlet in 2008 that "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets";

Whereas, against the advice of ethics attorneys and the nonpartisan Office of Government Ethics, the President has refused to divest his ownership stake in his businesses;

Whereas, the Director of the nonpartisan Office of Government Ethics said that the President's plan to transfer his business holdings to a trust managed by family members is "meaningless" and "does not meet the standards that . . . every President in the past four decades has met";

Whereas, the Emoluments Clause was included in the Constitution for the express purpose of preventing Federal officials from accepting any "present, Emolument, Office, or Title . . . from any King, Prince, or foreign state";

Whereas, the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., has hired a

“director of diplomatic sales” to generate high-priced business among foreign leaders and diplomatic delegations;

Whereas, the Joint Committee on Taxation reviewed the tax returns of President Richard Nixon in 1974 and made the information public;

Whereas, the Committee on Ways and Means used the authority under section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 in 2014 to make public the confidential tax information of 51 taxpayers;

Whereas, the Committee on Ways and Means has now voted three times along party lines to continue to cover-up President Trump's tax returns;

Whereas, the House of Representatives has now refused nine times to act on President Trump's tax returns;

Whereas, the American people have the right to know whether or not their President is operating under conflicts of interest related to international affairs, tax reform, Government contracts, or otherwise;

Whereas, the House of Representatives undermines its dignity and the integrity of its proceedings by continuing the cover-up of President Trump's tax returns: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives shall, one, immediately request the tax return and return information of Donald J. Trump for tax years 2006 through 2015, as provided under section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as well as the tax return and return information with respect to the President's businesses of each business entity disclosed by Donald J. Trump on his Office of Government Ethics Form 278e, specifically each corporation and each partnership within the meaning of subchapter K of chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 where he is listed as an officer, director, or equivalent, or exercises working control; and

Two, postpone consideration of tax reform legislation until the elected Representatives of the American people in this House have obtained President Trump's tax returns and return information to ascertain how any changes to the Tax Code might financially benefit the President.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under rule IX, a resolution offered from the floor by a Member other than the majority leader or the minority leader as a question of the privileges of the House has immediate precedence only at a time designated by the Chair within 2 legislative days after the resolution is properly noticed.

Pending that designation, the form of the resolution noticed by the gentleman from Texas will appear in the RECORD at this point.

The Chair will not at this point determine whether the resolution constitutes a question of privilege. That determination will be made at the time designated for consideration of the resolution.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, 5-minute voting will continue.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on passage of the bill (S. 1094) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 368, nays 55, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 307]

YEAS—368

Abraham	Comer	Gonzalez (TX)
Adams	Comstock	Goodlatte
Aderholt	Conaway	Gosar
Aguiar	Connolly	Gottheimer
Allen	Conyers	Gowdy
Amash	Cook	Graves (GA)
Amodei	Cooper	Graves (LA)
Arrington	Correa	Graves (MO)
Babin	Costa	Green, Gene
Bacon	Costello (PA)	Grothman
Banks (IN)	Courtney	Guthrie
Barletta	Cramer	Harper
Barr	Crawford	Harris
Barton	Crist	Hartzler
Beatty	Cuellar	Heck
Bera	Culberson	Hensarling
Bergman	Curbelo (FL)	Herrera Beutler
Biggs	Davidson	Hice, Jody B.
Bilirakis	Davis (CA)	Higgins (LA)
Bishop (GA)	Davis, Danny	Higgins (NY)
Bishop (MI)	Davis, Rodney	Hill
Bishop (UT)	DeFazio	Himes
Black	DeGette	Holding
Blum	Delaney	Hollingsworth
Blumenauer	DeLauro	Hudson
Blunt Rochester	DelBene	Huffman
Bonamici	Demings	Huizenga
Bost	Denham	Hultgren
Boyle, Brendan	Dent	Hunter
F.	DeSantis	Hurd
Brady (PA)	DesJarlais	Issa
Brady (TX)	Deutch	Jenkins (KS)
Brat	Diaz-Balart	Jenkins (WV)
Bridenstine	Dingell	Johnson (LA)
Brooks (AL)	Doggett	Johnson (OH)
Brooks (IN)	Donovan	Jones
Brownley (CA)	Doyle, Michael	Jordan
Buchanan	F.	Joyce (OH)
Buck	Duffy	Kaptur
Bucshon	Duncan (SC)	Katko
Budd	Duncan (TN)	Keating
Burgess	Dunn	Kelly (MS)
Bustos	Emmer	Kelly (PA)
Butterfield	Eshoo	Kennedy
Byrne	Estes (KS)	Khanna
Calvert	Esty (CT)	Kihuen
Capuano	Farenthold	Kildee
Carbajal	Faso	Kilmer
Cárdenas	Ferguson	Kind
Carter (GA)	Fitzpatrick	King (IA)
Carter (TX)	Fleischmann	King (NY)
Cartwright	Flores	Kinzinger
Castor (FL)	Fortenberry	Knight
Castro (TX)	Foster	Krishnamoorthi
Chabot	Fox	Kuster (NH)
Chaffetz	Frankel (FL)	Kustoff (TN)
Cheney	Franks (AZ)	Labrador
Chu, Judy	Frelinghuysen	LaHood
Cicilline	Gabbard	LaMalfa
Clark (MA)	Gaetz	Lamborn
Clay	Gallagher	Lance
Cleaver	Gallego	Langvin
Coffman	Garamendi	Larsen (WA)
Cole	Garrett	Larson (CT)
Collins (GA)	Gibbs	Latta
Collins (NY)	Gohmert	Lawrence

Lawson (FL)	Palazzo	Sherman
Lewis (MN)	Palmer	Shimkus
Lieu, Ted	Panetta	Shuster
Lipinski	Pascrell	Simpson
LoBiondo	Paulsen	Sinema
Loeback	Pearce	Sires
Lofgren	Perlmutter	Slaughter
Long	Perry	Smith (MO)
Loudermilk	Peters	Smith (NE)
Love	Peterson	Smith (NJ)
Lowenthal	Pingree	Smith (TX)
Lowey	Pittenger	Smucker
Lucas	Poe (TX)	Soto
Luetkemeyer	Poliquin	Speier
Lujan Grisham,	Polis	Stefanik
M.	Posey	Stewart
Luján, Ben Ray	Price (NC)	Stivers
MacArthur	Quigley	Swalwell (CA)
Maloney,	Ratcliffe	Takano
Carolyn B.	Reed	Taylor
Maloney, Sean	Reichert	Tenney
Marchant	Renacci	Thompson (CA)
Marino	Rice (SC)	Thompson (PA)
Marshall	Roby	Thornberry
Massie	Roe (TN)	Tiberi
Mast	Rogers (AL)	Tipton
Matsui	Rogers (KY)	Titus
McCarthy	Rohrabacher	Tonko
McCauley	Rokita	Torres
McClintock	Rooney, Francis	Trott
McCollum	Rooney, Thomas	Tsongas
McGovern	J.	Turner
McHenry	Ros-Lehtinen	Upton
McKinley	Rosen	Rosen
McMorris	Roskam	Valadao
Rodgers	Ross	Veasey
McNerney	Rothfus	Vela
McSally	Rouzer	Visclosky
Meadows	Roybal-Allard	Wagner
Meehan	Royce (CA)	Walberg
Meeks	Ruiz	Walden
Meng	Ruppersberger	Walker
Messer	Rush	Walorski
Mitchell	Russell	Walters, Mimi
Moolenaar	Rutherford	Walz
Mooney (WV)	Ryan (OH)	Webster (FL)
Moore	Sanford	Welch
Moulton	Sarbanes	Wenstrup
Mullin	Scalise	Westerman
Murphy (FL)	Schiff	Williams
Murphy (PA)	Schneider	Wilson (SC)
Neal	Schrader	Wittman
Newhouse	Schweikert	Womack
Noem	Scott, Austin	Woodall
Nolan	Scott, David	Yarmuth
Nunes	Sensenbrenner	Yoder
O'Halleran	Sessions	Yoho
O'Rourke	Sewell (AL)	Young (IA)
Olson	Shea-Porter	Zeldin

NAYS—55

Barragán	Hastings	Raskin
Bass	Hoyer	Rice (NY)
Beyer	Jackson Lee	Richmond
Brown (MD)	Jayapal	Sánchez
Carson (IN)	Jeffries	Schakowsky
Clarke (NY)	Johnson (GA)	Scott (VA)
Clyburn	Johnson, E. B.	Serrano
Cohen	Kelly (IL)	Smith (WA)
Crowley	Lee	Suozi
DeSaulnier	Levin	Thompson (MS)
Ellison	Lewis (GA)	Vargas
Engel	Lynch	Velázquez
Espallat	McEachin	Wasserman
Evans	Nadler	Schultz
Fudge	Norcross	Waters, Maxine
Green, Al	Pallone	Watson Coleman
Grijalva	Payne	Wilson (FL)
Gutiérrez	Pelosi	Young (AK)
Hanabusa	Pocan	

NOT VOTING—7

Blackburn	Griffith	Weber (TX)
Cummings	Johnson, Sam	
Granger	Napolitano	

□ 1635

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to record my last vote due to ineffective card. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall No. 307.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I was absent during rollcall votes No. 305, No. 306, and No. 307 due to my spouse's health situation in California. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on the Democratic Motion to Recommit H.R. 2581. I would have voted "nay" on the Passage of H.R. 2581—Verify First Act. I would have also voted "nay" on the Passage of S. 1094—Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Mariel Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

RECOGNIZING OPHELIA GAINES

(Mr. CARTER of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the remarkable career of Mrs. Ophelia Gaines, who will retire as executive director of Concerted Services on June 30, 2017.

Mrs. Gaines' career with Concerted Services, a nonprofit action group that focuses on fighting poverty throughout 28 counties in southeast Georgia, has spanned nearly 44 years.

Mrs. Gaines began her work with the company in 1973, traveling door to door in low-income communities, educating families on how to enroll in programs like Head Start, Energy Assistance, and Senior Nutrition.

Mrs. Gaines' altruistic career continued with her decision to teach social work classes at both Georgia Southern University and Savannah State University, enabling young people to carry on her work throughout southeast Georgia.

I am proud to rise today to recognize Mrs. Gaines, and thank her for all of her outstanding contributions to our local communities and to the lives of our fellow Georgians.

WARRIORS CHAMPIONSHIP WIN

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, last night the world watched my home team, the Golden State Warriors, end a historic season by bringing home their second national championship in 3 years.

The Warriors, led by unanimous Finals MVP Kevin Durant and legendary players Steph Curry, Draymond Green, and Klay Thompson, showed the power of teamwork both on and off the court.

The team is an example for young people, showing that if you can work together and trust one another, you can accomplish anything.

Mr. Speaker, these finals against the talented Cleveland Cavaliers were a

thrill to watch. We saw basketball at its best—incredible talent and a real passion from both sides. Thank you to the Warriors team for making our dreams of another championship a reality.

This remarkable team has made history as one of the best ever, winning a record 15 straight games in the playoffs and clinching a 16-to-1 postseason record.

Thank you to Coaches Steve Kerr and Mike Brown, the entire Warriors staff, and all of the talented players on their well-deserved victory.

Throughout this journey, Warriors fans have stayed loyal and faithful, and they deserve this victory as well.

My dear late mother, Mildred Massey, was the Warriors' biggest fan, and I know she is smiling from above. I can't wait to celebrate with all the Warriors fans and players back in Oakland. Go Warriors, go Oakland, go Dub Nation.

CREATING ACCOUNTABILITY AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Ms. TENNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act. This important legislation will create a culture of accountability at the VA and begin the process of restoring the VA's sole mission of providing high-quality care for our Nation's veterans.

For far too long, the VA has been plagued with scandal. From years' long wait lists to out-of-control bonuses, the VA needs real reform.

In their selfless service to our great Nation, our veterans have sacrificed so much to protect us. They shouldn't be plagued with difficulty accessing the care that they need and deserve.

As the mother of an Active-Duty U.S. Marine, I am sympathetic to the needs of our veterans. It is among my top priorities to make sure that we advocate for a better, more accountable VA. On behalf of the veterans of the 22nd District of New York, I am pleased to see this legislation pass with bipartisan support.

Today, we are correcting a wrong that has hurt too many of our Nation's heroes. I look forward to seeing the President sign this measure into law and have full confidence in VA Secretary Shulkin's ability to implement the important reforms contained in this critical piece of legislation.

RECOGNIZING SAN PEDRO HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SOFTBALL TEAM

(Ms. BARRAGÁN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the San Pedro High

School girls softball team who late last month reclaimed their crown as L.A. City Section Division I champions.

On the night of Friday, May 19, the Pirates won their first city title in 8 years and 17th overall. Star pitcher Cindy Robles persevered through illness to throw a four-hitter with three strikeouts, illustrating her toughness after coming down with a 102-degree fever earlier in the day.

Her teammates were behind her every step of the way, always making the key play at the necessary moment. By rallying together and continually picking each other up, the Pirates girls softball team represents the true spirit of California's 44th Congressional District.

No matter what adversity we might face individually, our community always finds a way to rally together in pursuit of our common goals. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to pay tribute to these strong young women and all they represent.

EXPORT AMERICAN LIQUIFIED NATURAL GAS

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last week, Cheniere Energy, headquartered in Houston, Texas, delivered its first liquified natural gas shipment out of the Sabine Pass terminal to northern Europe, to the Netherlands, and to Poland. This follows shipments to southern Europe from earlier this year.

Put simply, this is a tremendous game changer. Exporting LNG is not just an economic issue, it is a geopolitical security issue. These shipments help thwart Russian aggression and weaken Russia's stranglehold over Europe, and it is about time.

Under Secretary Perry's leadership, the Energy Department is finally approving licenses for LNG terminals to ship LNG overseas.

Our natural gas is cheaper and more abundant in supply than anywhere in the world. Harnessing our domestic energy resources and exporting some of it to our friends and to our allies around the world makes sense for our economy and for our national security.

We should apply the Blue Bell ice cream philosophy to our domestic energy resources. It is: Use what we can and sell the rest.

And that is just the way it is.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT BURDEN

(Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, today, Americans are more burdened by student loan debt than ever. The statistics are truly stunning. They owe over \$1.4 trillion in student loan debt spread out among 44 million borrowers. That is about \$600

billion more, or double the total United States credit card debt.

And the problem is only getting worse. The average class of 2016 graduate has more than \$37,172 in student loan debt, which is up 6 percent from the previous year. Yet President Trump just proposed gutting the best lifelines and safeguards that these borrowers have.

The Trump budget cuts the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which makes public interest and non-profit work attainable for students, despite their debt loads; it consolidates income-based repayment programs that are critical to managing repayment; and it completely scraps subsidized interest on some student loans.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot profess to stand for the middle class, for American workers, and for American values while pulling the rug out from under 44 million borrowers bearing the weight of what is the greatest systemic threat to our economic stability.

AMERICANS' RIGHT TO LIVE IN FAITH

(Mr. BIGGS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, during his confirmation hearing to become President Trump's Deputy Director for the Office of Management and Budget, Russ Vought faced inappropriate and unconstitutional lines of questioning from two of the Budget Committee's Democratic Senators directly relating to his Christian faith.

A Senator took direct issue with an article Mr. Vought wrote last year describing a core tenet of the Christian faith that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. After attempting to twist that belief into a claim that Mr. Vought is hateful and discriminatory toward non-Christians, Senator SANDERS said: "This nominee is really not someone who this country is supposed to be about. I will vote 'no.'"

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vought's qualifications are excellent. To take the view of Senator SANDERS that is clearly tied to a disagreement over a religious tenet is discriminatory in and of itself.

Article 6 of the U.S. Constitution states "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Mr. Vought's Christian faith should not have been the subject of this harsh questioning, and no excuse should ever justify a public official putting someone's faith on trial. We should not ignore this episode but, rather, stand in defense of Mr. Vought's right to live his faith as we defend the religious freedom of all Americans.

AVON GROVE RED DEVILS WIN STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

(Mr. SMUCKER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMUCKER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Avon Grove Red Devils men's lacrosse team on their State championship victory.

The Red Devils finished the season with a 23-2 record, beating Philadelphia area powerhouse Conestoga in the PIAA Class 3A title game with a thrilling 5-4 victory.

Sophomore Zach Augustine was one of the heroes, scoring the game-winning goal in double overtime, a moment that he described as "unbelievable."

This redeeming victory for them comes 3 years after a heartbreaking loss for the Red Devils in the 2014 State title game. Senior midfielder Doug Jones, a freshman on that 2014 team, said: "I remember as a freshman saying to myself that I wanted to get back here. We knew we had one goal: to win this. It means the absolute world to us."

I applaud the commitment displayed by these young men, both to each other and to their community. Congratulations to the Avon Grove Red Devils team, the coaches, their families, and the faculty, staff, and students that made this championship so special.

CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 115-47)

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida) laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days of the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with that provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine democratic processes or institutions of Belarus that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2017.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine democratic processes or institutions of Belarus, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption con-

tinue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405 with respect to Belarus.

DONALD J. TRUMP.
THE WHITE HOUSE, June 13, 2017.

THE PEOPLE'S NIGHT

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, many times as our Members in the House travel throughout our districts, we are often asked: What is being done in the House? What is being accomplished?

Well, this afternoon we are going to take a few minutes and allow you to hear directly from the Members, something that we like to call the People's Night. This is the people's House, so from time to time we like to bypass any of the outlets and talk directly to the American people.

Now, a lot of people might not know specifically what has been going on in the House. Well, I think these visuals may aid in specifically talking about some of the things that we are accomplishing.

For example, if you will see the chart, this chart lists the House-passed bills to date. It also includes the last four Presidents. As you can see, the House of the 115th Congress has passed 158 pieces of legislation; 158 bills we have sent to the Senate or to the President.

The House isn't the only one that has been busy. Our President has been busy. In fact, if you will notice this chart behind, you will notice that we are also at a record pace if you look at the last four, five Presidents. Of these bills, the President has signed 37 bills into law, compared with the next most, which was George Herbert Walker Bush many years ago, with 35.

That is what the House is working on; it is what we are working with the Senate, we are working with the President.

But this afternoon I want you to hear directly from some of the Members themselves who have been very instrumental not only in what we have accomplished, but also some of the things that we are looking forward to accomplishing over the next few months.

The first person I would like to introduce to you is our chairman of the Financial Services Committee, JEB HENSARLING. Representative HENSARLING is from Texas' Fifth District and has been instrumental in doing something that we have been promising and trying to accomplish for many years.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I yield to Chairman JEB HENSARLING, my good friend.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to

me, and let me thank him for his leadership of the Republican Study Committee and what that committee means to the conservative movement and what it means to the cause of freedom and opportunity for so many working men and women.

I especially want to thank the gentleman from North Carolina for his work on the American Health Care Act and what that means to so many of our constituents to truly be able, after this rise of premiums where people are paying more to get less in healthcare, to really bring us to a moment where we can have patient-centered healthcare. I just want to thank him for that.

These are actually hopeful times for the American people. Regrettably, as we know, working America hasn't received a pay increase in almost a decade. Their savings have remained decimated since the financial crisis. So to get this economy moving again, our President knows, this Congress knows that, number one, we do have to return to patient-centered healthcare, not for what that means just to our families, but what it means to our economy.

We have to have fundamental tax reform as well, and I know that our House Ways and Means Committee is working on that assiduously, but we also have to have fundamental reform of our regulations. There is no regulation that has imposed more burden on our economy than the Dodd-Frank Act. In fact, it is more burdensome to our economy than all Obama-era regulations combined. It is simply that bad.

When they passed this bill in the wake of the financial crisis, they told us that it would lift the economy. But instead of lifting the economy, we are mired in the slowest, weakest recovery in the postwar era.

They told us that it would end bank bailouts, but cynically, it codified them into law and backed it up with a taxpayer bailout fund.

They told us and they promised us it would make the economy more stable, but instead, the big banks have gotten bigger and the small banks have gotten fewer.

They told us and promised us it would help the consumer, but instead of helping the consumer, free checking at banks has been cut in half. Bank fees have increased. Has anybody with-in earshot tried to get a mortgage recently? They are harder to come by. They cost hundreds of more dollars to close. There are fewer credit card offerings.

What has happened here is, under Dodd-Frank, those who are seeking credit are now paying more and receiving less. This is hurting not only our families, but it has hurt our economy. Small business lending hasn't recovered, entrepreneurship is at a generational low.

So that is why it was so important that on Thursday of last week this body, this House, took action and passed the Financial CHOICE Act. The Financial CHOICE Act represents, for

all of America, economic opportunity for all, bank bailouts for none.

It replaces the era of bank bailouts with bankruptcy for these large financial institutions. It replaces Washington micromanagement with market discipline. That is how we help to grow this economy. It will create more credit for more people.

There is a whole part of this legislation that is totally devoted to our small banks and credit unions because it is our small community financial institutions that help finance our small businesses. It is our small businesses which are the job engine of America. That is what has been choked off by this heavy hand of Obama regulation.

So I was proud to play a very small role in the House to bring the Financial CHOICE Act to the House so that we can indeed, as the acronym suggests, create hope and opportunity for investors, for consumers, for entrepreneurs. We want the animal spirits in the American economy to move again. We want that budding optimism that tomorrow can be a better day, that you can be your own boss, that you can start your own small business. We want that opportunity to flourish yet again in America. That is what we managed to do with the Financial CHOICE Act.

I am very happy that we have now sent it over to the Senate. We look forward to having the Senate act upon this. The American people can't wait to get this economy moving again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman for highlighting this for the American people, and I want to thank him again for his leadership of the Republican Study Committee. Without this august group, the Congress' largest caucus, the caucus of conservatives, this would not have happened, and I want to thank him for that.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Chairman HENSARLING. Most people would not describe your role as a small part in making sure that people have more opportunities in our financial industry.

Not that we are showing Texas any partiality this evening, but our second Representative is a former Federal prosecutor from the great State of Texas, and many would consider one of the top conservatives in all of the United States Congress, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RATCLIFFE), my friend, is here to talk about the CFPB, among some other issues. So without further ado, I yield to Mr. RATCLIFFE.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. I would like to thank my colleague and friend from North Carolina, the gentleman, Congressman WALKER, for yielding to me and for hosting this Special Order tonight, which is fittingly titled, "The People's Night." After all, there is a reason that the United States House of Representatives is often called the people's House. It is because our job is to fight for the priorities of the people that we are privileged to represent here.

Over the past 6 months, Republicans have been fighting for the people,

fighting to fundamentally change Washington and to return power to the American people where it really belongs.

We have been doing this against a strong headwind of obstructionists, sometimes from colleagues across the aisle, sometimes from certain in the media more interested in a liberal agenda than in accurate reporting, and sometimes from embedded bureaucrats and special interests within the government industrial complex who really don't want to see the Washington swamp drained. But in spite of that, we are succeeding.

□ 1700

And while many of these conservative winds have gone unreported and, therefore, flown under the radar, the truth is that we are indeed steering the ship in the right direction, we are steadily undoing the damage done by out-of-touch policies by the Obama administration.

Case in point is a fact that has not garnered a lot of headlines, but should have, something that Congressman WALKER pointed out earlier: the fact that in the first 100 days of this 115th Congress, we have passed more bills—158 to be exact—than were passed during the first 100 days of any and all of the four prior administrations: the Obama, Bush, Clinton, and H.W. Bush administrations. And as proof of our productivity, we have signed more of those bills into law than in any of the other administrations' first 100 days as well.

But it is not just the quantity of the bills that we are turning into laws. It is about the quality and the substance. We are passing legislation that is making government smaller. We are passing legislation that is making government less costly. We are passing legislation that is making the government finally more accountable to the people. We are dismantling the enormous bureaucratic overgrowth and underbrush that spun out of control under former President Obama.

As a former prosecutor, I believe you have got to win your case with verifiable facts and evidence, so let me give you some. In the last 20 years, prior Congresses have successfully used the Congressional Review Act one time. Just once in the prior 20 years has Congress used the CRA to undo midnight regulations passed at the 12th hour in the dead of night as administrations were walking out the door. But in the first 4 months of this Congress, Republicans have united to use the CRA 14 times to overturn 14 of President Obama's most harmful midnight regulations, and in so doing, we have saved the American people, the United States taxpayers, billions of dollars in the process.

Now we are in the process of finally saving America from arguably the most disastrous piece of legislation in our Nation's history: ObamaCare.

If anyone needs any further evidence of its implosion into a death spiral,

just yesterday CMS announced that 2 million Americans dropped off of the ObamaCare exchanges in just the first 3 months of this year.

The ObamaCare house is on fire, and rather than waiting for it to burn to the ground with American families still inside, Republicans in the peoples' House have acted now. Republicans won't let Americans suffer in the face of such inevitable continuing adversity when it comes to our healthcare. So as ObamaCare continues to dissolve in front of our eyes, we have already taken action by sending an ObamaCare repeal bill over to the Senate.

All of this work makes me incredibly optimistic about the results that we are continuing to deliver on the people's behalf, just as we did again last week when we passed a House bill that tackles a key issue that I have been sounding the alarm about since my first day in Congress: ending the reckless overreach of ELIZABETH WARREN's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

I was so grateful for the opportunity to support the House's passage of my fellow Texan, JEB HENSARLING's, Financial CHOICE Act last week, which puts an end to the days of the Obama-era CFPB as we know it, because the Financial CHOICE Act legislation converts the CFPB into the Consumer Law Enforcement Agency, which is tasked with promoting competition rather than stifling it, tasked with enhancing consumer choice rather than eliminating it, all the while ensuring congressional oversight that has been missing for far too long.

Mr. Speaker, every Federal agency needs to have someone grading its paper, and the Financial CHOICE Act will allow the CFPB's paper to be graded for the very first time.

I am incredibly excited about the economic opportunities that our Nation is going to continue to be afforded as we continue here to wipe away President Obama's sweeping government mandates and regulations so we can get our country back on track and back working for all Americans.

There is a lot more to be done to ensure that America's brightest days truly are ahead of us, but with so many committed conservatives as we have here tonight, I am optimistic that we are going to continue to deliver results for the people here in what finally, once again, can be appropriately referred to as the peoples' House.

Mr. WALKER. I thank Representative RATCLIFFE for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, once again, if people are watching at home or are gathering here today, I want to remind them that, many times—Members of Congress, when you go back home, you hear a lot of times: Do your job; get things done.

And as I reflect your attention again to our chart here this evening, we can talk a little bit about what we have passed in the House: 158, the most in several different administrations.

However, even though we are going to talk tonight a little about what we have done and what we look forward to, we are not stopping with 158, we are not stopping with the 37 that have been signed into law. We are looking forward to doing some new things.

I think one of the best people to talk about something that we are excited about is certainly somebody that I call a friend, a fellow member, a colleague from North Carolina, someone who allows me to tag along into NASCAR country from time to time, a real friend of the people, someone who I have learned that will tell you the truth no matter what you ask. It is my privilege to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HUDSON).

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman very much for yielding. I thank the chairman also for organizing, once again, an opportunity for us to speak directly to the American people, and for his tremendous leadership on the values that we conservatives hold very dear.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about a piece of legislation tonight that we plan to bring to the floor of the House this fall. The right to defend yourself doesn't end when you cross State lines, which is where my Concealed Reciprocity Act of 2017, also known as H.R. 38, comes into play. We currently have 196 cosponsors from both sides of the aisle.

My bill simply provides law-abiding citizens the right to carry concealed and travel freely between States without worrying about conflicted concealed carry State codes or onerous civil suits.

As it stands, the patchwork of agreements is confusing for even the most cautious concealed-carry permit holder, and it has caused law-abiding citizens, like Shaneen Allen, a single mother from New Jersey, to unwittingly break the law and suffer arrest and detention.

Now, the Constitution's very clear. If you look at Article IV, section 1, it says: "Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State. . . ."

That is why a driver's license is recognized in other States. That is why a marriage license is recognized in other States. That is why divorce proceedings are recognized in other States; in the same way the concealed-carry permit or the right to carry concealed should be recognized.

In the Senate, Senator JOHN CORNYN introduced companion legislation. Senator CORNYN has long been a champion for our Second Amendment rights, and I am pleased to work with him as he continues his strong leadership on national concealed carry reciprocity.

I have already received a tremendous amount of support from my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who recognize our constitutional right to keep and bear arms. However, the left continues to spread misinformation and employ

fear tactics about this bill, erroneously saying it will increase crime and arm criminals.

First of all, under this law, an individual who travels to a different State has to follow the laws of that State. In the same way with a driver's license, when you drive into another State, they recognize that you are a legal driver, but you have got to follow their laws.

Second, every single person who wants to buy a firearm still has to go through the Federal background check. My bill does nothing to change that.

Further, statistics have shown that violent crime has decreased as gun ownership and concealed-carry permits have increased. Since 1991, 25 States have adopted right-to-carry laws. The number of people with carry permits has risen to over 12 million people, and the Nation's violent crime rate has decreased 51 percent.

Also, if a criminal with malice intent wants to get a gun, I can guarantee you that he or she isn't worried about following the laws that are on the books. Unfortunately, we can't change that, but we can ensure that law-abiding citizens can legally carry concealed firearms to defend themselves.

As a shock to no one, big city liberal Michael Bloomberg has promised to spend \$25 million to stop this legislation. He could spend all the money he wants, but our gun rights are not for sale.

With a groundswell of support from Americans across the country and a pro-Second Amendment President, we will make national concealed carry reciprocity a reality this Congress. More and more States are recognizing the rights of law-abiding citizens to carry a concealed handgun without permission from government, including two this year, bringing that total to 12.

In my home State of North Carolina, lawmakers in the House voted in favor of House bill 746 to make a concealed-carry permit no longer necessary in locations where it is currently permissible to openly carry a handgun. It is a commonsense bill. I am proud of the leadership of the folks in Raleigh. It just demonstrates that all across this country, the American people are recognizing that our right to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

So I would just offer this very simple piece of legislation, following the Constitution that says a law-abiding citizen trying to do the right thing is not going to be criminalized because they have crossed an invisible line in the ground.

I am pleased to be here today to talk about it, and I am thankful for having this opportunity and support.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative HUDSON for his passion about that.

Speaking of passion, in the 2½ years that I have served in the United States Congress, there are Members who work on different projects, different concerns, different issues. I will tell you

someone who I have really grown to love and appreciate, someone who has lived it out on the battlefield as he has worked to literally put veterans back together as a surgeon on the battlefield, someone who understands and has worked well into the life arena, and that is Dr. BRAD WENSTRUP, a fellow steering committee member on the Republican Steering Committee.

Without further ado, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio, Dr. WENSTRUP, to please share what is on his heart today.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this.

You know, as a physician, we take an oath. We say: Do no harm.

And today in America and here in Washington, D.C., we are debating physician-assisted suicide, where we are authorizing physicians to take someone's life—to assist in taking someone's life. To me, this undermines the very thing that healthcare is all about.

Who is most affected in this situation?

Our most vulnerable citizens: the disabled and the poor.

As a doctor, I can tell you, what has always been in my heart is this is about care and about comfort, and those are our priorities.

Physician-assisted suicide does not provide comfort. It merely ends life.

In Washington, D.C., a doctor can decide that you may be going to die within 6 months if you have a terminal disease—a terminal disease if you are untreated. Many terminal diseases would be terminal if they are not treated. With that, the doctor can write a prescription. There is no tracking of that prescription once it is given and there is no witness of the patient taking this prescription. They can simply go home to die alone.

In one State where there is physician-assisted suicide, they have had an increase in suicides outside of physician-assisted suicides. I think that what we are saying to too many people is: You are not needed.

Again, this undermines what I think we are all about and what healthcare should be all about.

I think of the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," which so many people watch every Christmastime. Mr. Potter says to George Bailey: "George, you are worth more dead than alive."

Is that really who we want to be?

As a resident in Chicago in the 1980s, one of our responsibilities was to do physical exams on everyone admitted to the hospital regardless of what they were admitted for. I can remember a doctor coming up to me and saying: We just admitted our first AIDS patient, but you don't have to go see him.

And this is a time when people didn't know what was going on, what was causing this, how it was being spread. And I thought that was wrong and I went in anyway to examine this patient. I had to go in like it was a lunar

landing because there was so much uncertainty about what was causing death to so many people. This patient was very sick. I learned so much from this one patient because there were so many things wrong, but it didn't compare to what I learned when I finished that exam and he looked at me and said: You just examined me more than anyone.

□ 1715

I have never forgotten, throughout my entire medical career, the value of human life and what it must feel like to be discarded. He died the next day. I still know his name. And he taught me a valuable lesson on his very last day of life: Healthcare is about cures, it is about caring, it is about compassion, and society should be about the same thing, and the ideal that every person has value until their very last breath.

I am pleased to say that the President's budget addresses this issue, and we will, too, here in the House because you and your loved ones matter.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative WENSTRUP. I appreciate his passionate plea.

Speaking of life, one of the most outstanding voices that I have gotten a chance to meet, someone who, without compromise, unashamedly talks about the value and the worth of an unborn child is Representative TRENT FRANKS from Arizona. He is here today to talk about a future bill, hopefully one that we can add to this total of 37 in the not too distant future.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), someone who is a warrior in Congress.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. WALKER for this opportunity.

It is so appropriate on People's Night to talk about the very littlest people in America, isn't it?

Mr. Speaker, the United States of America is a unique nation that is premised on that bedrock foundation that we are all created equal, and that each of us is endowed by our Creator with the unalienable right to live.

That is why it is so important for Members of Congress to remind ourselves from time to time that protecting the lives of all Americans and their constitutional rights is why we are really all here. It is our sworn oath before God and the people of this Nation.

Yet today, a great shadow looms over America. More than 18,000 late-term abortions, very late-term abortions, are occurring in America every year, placing the mothers at exponentially greater risk and subjecting their pain-capable unborn babies to torture and death without anesthesia—this, in the land of the free and the home of the brave. It is the greatest human rights atrocity in the United States today.

Almost every other major civilized nation on Earth protects pain-capable unborn babies at this stage, and every

credible poll of the American people shows that they are overwhelmingly in favor of protecting them. Yet we have given these little babies less legal protection from unnecessary cruelty than the protection we have given farm animals under the Federal Humane Slaughter Act.

But thankfully, Mr. Speaker, the winds of change have finally begun to blow, and the tide of blindness and blood is finally turning in America. The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act has already once passed in this body, and it will again, Mr. Speaker; and these little babies now have a new and very powerful friend and protector in President Donald J. Trump.

No matter how it is shouted down or what distortions, deception what-ifs, distractions, diversions, gotchas, twisting of words, changing the subject, or blatant falsehoods the abortion industry hurls at this bill and its supporters, it will remain a deeply sincere effort, beginning at the sixth month of pregnancy, to protect both mothers and their pain-capable unborn babies from this torturous atrocity of late-term abortion on demand. Ultimately, it is one all humane Americans can support if they truly understand it for themselves.

So the question that now remains is whether the Republican leader in the Senate will find the courage to prevent pro-abortion Democrats from once again using the Senate filibuster to prevent this bill from even coming to the floor in the Senate for debate.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for all Americans to open our eyes and our souls and recognize the humanity of these helpless little babies and the inhumanity of what is being done to them. Protecting these little children of God and their mothers is not a Republican issue; it is not a Democratic issue; it is a decisive test of our own humanity and who we are as a human family.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative FRANKS as he continues to stand year after year in fighting and standing up for the unborn child.

Many times you get to meet some wonderful people here in the United States Congress. And someone asked me the other day: Who is a strong Member? Who is someone who is willing to stand up?

I guess they might have thought I would have said the Speaker or the majority leader, as well they do in their own right. When I think of somebody willing to engage, it is the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK). She is not just known in the Sixth District; she is known throughout all of Tennessee as far as being willing to stand up for those who cannot stand up and protect themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK).

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER), my colleague and friend, the chair of the RSC, for hosting this Special Order tonight to highlight

some of the recent victories that this Republican-controlled Congress has secured to ensure that every American enjoys freedom and opportunity for which our Nation was founded.

I rise today to thank my colleagues in the House and the Senate for passing my resolution of disapproval, H.J. Res. 43, which used the authority of the Congressional Review Act to overturn the Obama administration's eleventh hour rule forcing States like mine, Tennessee, to fund abortion providers.

Mr. Speaker, I also rise to thank Vice President MIKE PENCE, who cast that tie-breaking vote in the Senate. Tennesseans appreciate his courageous leadership.

Now, abortion is not healthcare, and vulnerable women seeking true comprehensive care deserve better than abortion-centric facilities like Planned Parenthood.

For over 45 years, States like Tennessee had the authority to direct their family planning funds to the healthcare providers that best suited their needs. Yes, they had that decision to decide what is best for their unique communities. Sadly, in a parting gift to the abortion industry, President Obama stole this freedom and flexibility and forced his own political agenda on States across the country like my very own State of Tennessee.

While I am unapologetically pro-life, this bill is simply about states' rights.

Mr. Speaker, when President Trump signed this bill, he put the American people, not the bureaucrats here in Washington, back in the driver's seat of empowering States like Tennessee to steer their title X dollars away from abortion-centric facilities like Planned Parenthood and to give the right back to the State to make that decision about which facilities provide the most comprehensive care for women in their State.

It was an honor to work with Senator ERNST and the pro-life community to help this life-affirming legislation reach the President's desk.

Mr. Speaker, I want to once again thank President Trump for his leadership on this matter.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairwoman BLACK.

When we talk about what is getting done, I want to remind our audience this evening, Mr. Speaker, that our President, even without a full Cabinet, has been busy taking time to make sure that what the House and the Senate are sending him is being signed into law.

As you can see on my chart this evening, 37, that is the most. You have to go back. In fact, the last four Presidents haven't equalled that total. And 158 bills from the House have been passed.

One of the things that has been promised by this administration and by Members of Congress is to make sure that we are doing everything we can to take care of a very important segment of our population, and that is our veterans.

It wasn't long after I arrived 2½ years ago that I had a chance to meet someone. Now, as a former pastor, you can always tell the character and integrity of someone when they have gone through a hardship.

I met Dr. PHIL ROE after he had lost a loved one in his life. He could have gone home, but he had a mission to complete, and that is to stand up for those veterans who needed standing up. A former physician himself, he was willing to come back and continue to fight. What a privilege it is to serve with the chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Dr. PHIL ROE.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE).

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. WALKER for yielding.

I would like to associate my remarks with Mr. HUDSON, Dr. WENSTRUP, Mr. FRANKS, and my good friend DIANE BLACK.

I am a concealed carry permit holder—full disclosure—and what Mr. FRANKS said: I am an OB/GYN doctor by training. I have delivered 5,000 babies in my lifetime, and every single one of them I view as valuable. I have watched these young people that I have delivered grow up and become very productive citizens not only in my community, but around the country.

Mr. Speaker, 44 years ago, I was a young soldier in southeast Asia. When we came home from the military, we were advised not to wear our uniforms when we traveled because of basically what was going on in the country: the opposition to the Vietnam war. That left a very deep, indelible mark on me, and I thought that is no way we should be treating our men and women who protected us and gave us the freedoms that we have and live by to this day.

When I got the privilege of being elected—when I retired from my medical practice in northeast Tennessee and ran for Congress and was fortunate enough to win—I was asked to be on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, which I have served on for the past 8 years.

We know that 3 years ago there was a scandal in Phoenix, Arizona. Then we realized it was not just Phoenix, Arizona. It was all across the country where veterans were not being served, and, actually, veterans were dying while they were waiting for care at a VA. That is as wrong as it gets.

So, what we elected to do in our committee, when we discovered this, was to try to get some legislation up that actually did something about this. And one of the things that touched me—I watched late into the evening, like many of you all probably around the country and in this gallery watched—was the election results. It was around 3 or 3:30 in the morning when then President-elect Trump gave his election speech.

Very shortly into it, not a minute or two into that speech, he mentioned our veterans. And it really, really encour-

aged me because I think he is an administration that is very sincere in improving care.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is not money. When I came here in 2009, you, the taxpayers, were spending about \$97 billion on VA care, on benefits, and on cemeteries. Today, that number is going to be \$186 billion. We have gone from 260,000 employees in the VA to over 360,000 employees. There is enough money and personnel to take care of the problems.

When the President was sworn in and he selected his Secretary of the VA, Dr. David Shulkin—I believe is now the man for the job—he was approved 100–0 by the Senate. Dr. Shulkin said: The first thing I need is accountability legislation that allows me to terminate bad employees.

At the VA, the vast majority—and many of them are personal friends of mine that I have worked with in healthcare—are good people taking the very best care they can of veterans. But there are some bad apples there, and they cannot be terminated. It almost could not happen, Mr. Speaker.

So what this legislation does is it protects the whistleblowers who call these people out. It provides due process rights for employees so that they don't have those trampled on, but it allows the Secretary to terminate these bad apples and, hopefully, improve the morale of the entire VA. This is only phase one.

We also have passed out of this body and over to the Senate—I want to thank our Senate colleagues, Senator ISAKSON; Senator RUBIO, who is a lead sponsor in the Senate; and Senator TESTER, the minority leader. I also want to thank the minority leader on our side of the aisle, Sergeant Major Walz, who worked hand in hand. This was a bipartisan bill, which is how legislation should be passed. We passed it in the House and it went to the Senate. They reformed the bill. It came back, and we now await the President's signature.

We are also doing repeals reform. We passed that out of here. We have, now, 470,000 backlog claims of veterans waiting for their appeals. Hopefully, we are going to address this problem.

The Secretary, we have just extended the Choice Program for veterans who want to choose care outside of the VA, and also a new electronic health system. So we have a lot of work to do.

It is a true privilege to do what I get to do, which is to help the 21 million men and women who have served this country, who allow us to be free.

I thank the gentleman for the privilege to be down here tonight to share this with the American people.

□ 1730

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ROE and appreciate his continued service. It is a privilege to certainly work with him in the House.

One of our newest Members who came in the 115th class, a gentleman by

the name of JIM BANKS—in fact, he is the only new Member serving on the Republican Steering Committee. Some would describe him as a quick study, I guess, but he is here this evening to specifically talk about continued VA accountability and the Department of Defense readiness.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BANKS).

Mr. BANKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his leadership of the Republican Study Committee. It is one of the great honors that I have in this Congress to serve with him and others to advocate for conservative principles to move our country forward.

With a new Republican administration, many of the innovative ideas coming from this House now have a chance to become law and achieve real results for the American people. The contrast between this administration and the last one is most clear when it comes to prioritizing readiness for our Department of Defense and caring for our veterans.

As those veterans in Congress know firsthand, shortchanging readiness on the front end will have long-term implications in the years that follow.

We have the moral imperative to ensure that our young men and women who go into harm's way are never in a fair fight. We have an obligation to ensure that our forces are the best-trained, best-equipped, and best-led fighting force in the world. This obligation starts with prioritizing a stable and predictable budget and appropriations process.

Our leaders in the Department of Defense must be able to forecast and anticipate training needs, and that means ending the trend of continuing resolutions that offer neither good fiscal discipline nor the ability to plan that our military leaders desperately need.

Consider that two-thirds of our Army are not ready to deploy. Our Navy is smaller than it has been in 99 years, and our Air Force is the smallest ever and losing pilots at an alarming rate. These are not the marks of a ready force, and the work to rebuild must begin right now.

However, it is important to look at prioritizing the needs of our servicemembers holistically. Just as we would not send them into harm's way without the training they need, we have an obligation to care for the injuries they sustained when they return home. Our veterans deserve and have earned the highest quality of care and to have that care delivered in a timely and efficient manner.

Unfortunately, too often the VA does not have the power to remove substandard employees who are failing our veterans. The overwhelming majority of VA employees are hardworking and dedicated to their jobs, and it is simply not fair to these employees that the VA cannot hold substandard employees accountable.

But with a Republican President in the White House, our veterans will fi-

nally see real accountability in the VA with passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. With passage of this bill, there will be a new and expedited process to remove employees who are failing to properly serve our veterans, while maintaining the due process rights of VA workers, as well as their right to appeal.

It would also implement stronger protections for whistleblowers, ensuring that no employee is intimidated into silence.

Mr. Speaker, we now have a chance to make sure our Armed Forces have the means to protect our country and ensure all veterans receive the quality of care they deserve.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative BANKS, and I appreciate this is such an important issue that he is battling.

Once again, this evening, Mr. Speaker, we are reminding that tonight is the People's Night here in the people's House. We are focusing in on the work of the Members of Congress.

As you can see in our chart this evening, 158 bills have been passed through Congress. So many times we continue to hear: What is Congress working on?

Well, not only have we passed these 158, we are still working on passing things in the future.

One of the great Members from South Carolina, Mr. JEFF DUNCAN, is someone who has a genuine heart and passion for others, but also has a wonderful heart for the outdoors, as he is currently chairman of the Sportsmen's Caucus.

Without further ado, I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. DUNCAN).

Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina.

I want to talk to America today about the Hearing Protection Act. Consequences of firearms exposure: Noise-induced hearing loss is a major health problem for hunters and recreational shooters.

Now, I started hunting at an early age with my father; and in the field and hunting activities, I learned a lot about life, a lot about myself. Most importantly, I got time to spend with my father, who has now passed away.

But we enjoyed the outdoors generally in the shooting sports, whether that was over a brace of bird dogs, quail hunting, shooting doves, hunting ducks, or deer hunting. And I can tell you, with my own experience, that firing multiple firearms—shotguns, rifles, handguns—risks your hearing health.

Men and women in our United States military experience hearing loss or tinnitus. That is a large expenditure for the VA. Tinnitus accounts for around 1.45 million disability-related instances for veterans. The most prevalent disability compensations are based on that.

So what can we do about it?

Well, there is an apparatus, a firearm accessory, that you can add to a firearm to muffle or suppress that sound. It is commonly called a suppressor or a silencer, but it does anything but silence a weapon.

America, you need to realize that Hollywood has glorified suppressors for firearms. You can see it in your mind—James Bond taking out his concealed weapon that he couldn't conceal with a suppressor on it because the suppressor adds another 8 inches to the length of the barrel—screwing the suppressor on to commit a crime.

Hollywood has made you believe that that suppressor silences that weapon when, in actuality, a suppressor on any sort of firearm drops the decibels about 30 decibels. Most firearms would be louder than a jackhammer, and no one would say that a jackhammer is silent.

So we have got a bill that would allow suppressors to be sold, like they are sold in Europe, but with a little more American restrictions. In Europe, as restrictive as their gun laws are, you can go to the hardware store and buy a suppressor across the counter, just like you could buy a scope, a sling, or a magazine for a deer rifle. It is gentlemanly to hunt or shoot in Europe with a suppressed weapon to keep the sound down, but it doesn't silence it, as we mentioned before.

Depending on the caliber of ammunition, a typical hunting rifle is 160 to 180 decibels—suppressed would be about 125 to 145 decibels.

The bill we have would allow you to go in and purchase a suppressor from your Federal firearm license-holder, do a background check, just like you have to go through to purchase the firearm itself—background check, and purchase a suppressor to help the hunting and the hearing health of the hunters and the shooting sports enthusiasts across the country.

I hope we can get this bill passed to help the hearing health of so many people in America and dispel all the rumors. I thank the gentleman for letting us speak to the American people tonight.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative DUNCAN.

Many times in Congress you hear sometimes maybe big words or crazy words, words like "appropriations" or "appropriators." We have one of those appropriators with us tonight, a strong conservative from the State of Georgia, my friend, Representative TOM GRAVES, who is going to talk a little bit about his proposal and an idea that I believe helps us continue adding to this number of 158.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GRAVES).

Mr. GRAVES of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I could not be more excited to be here tonight and to experience what we are experiencing here.

You know, when this President was elected, he made a promise: He was going to drain the swamp, he was going to shake things up, and he was going to make government work again.

I have got to highlight real quickly though, before I talk about appropriations, what really has happened. Here in the last—in this under 5 months, 600,000 new jobs have been created. Unemployment is at the lowest it has been in nearly a decade, at 4.3 percent. He has put a plan forth to help rescue Americans from a healthcare plan that has been failing.

The largest increase in defense spending in nearly 10 years has already been passed and signed into law and is part of your display there.

He has presented a budget to this Congress that balances in 10 years, rebuilds our military, reforms our Tax Code, and empowers the taxpayers, while not empowering government.

And he has also put the American people and the American workers and American businesses first by pulling us out of that Paris accord. He has been shaking things up and draining the swamp.

So what is next? For us, it is, we have got to reform this appropriations process.

Let me read you some statistics here. The current process that we operate under to fund the greatest Nation on the globe has only worked four times in the last 40 years. The last time we passed all 12 appropriations bills that were enacted by the start of the new fiscal year was in 1996 is the last time.

And, in fact, a more stunning statistic: Since 2009, not one appropriations bill has passed this House, passed the Senate, and been signed into law by the President before its time was due. That is zero for 96.

So I have just got a simple idea, a simple concept. Let's just change what is not working. Let's change the process. Let's design a process that actually works for the American people and funds the government in a very responsible, fiscally responsible way that begins streamlining government; that is eliminating agencies; that is empowering the American people; and, ultimately, showing a responsible House of Representatives and a Republican vision forward.

And it is real simple. Let's run it through the committee. Let's do 12 bills, all through their different subcommittees. Let's combine them in full committee, and let's bring them to the House floor for everybody to have an opportunity to vote on, to amend, to engage in the debate.

I believe, if we do this, we are going to save time. We are going to have more time for tax reform. We are going to have more time for infrastructure investment. We are going to have more time for finishing out the healthcare bill. But it is going to be transparent. Everyone can see it. It is going to be effective. We are going to get it done.

At the end of the day, we are going to be able to rebuild our military to where we know it needs to be. We are going to be able to secure our border. We are going to protect the innocent unborn. We are going to reform Wall

Street. We are going to invest in roads and infrastructure. We are going to streamline or eliminate a lot of agencies, and we are going to do all that while cutting spending. But that is only if we are willing to make government work again.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative GRAVES.

It doesn't take you long, around the Halls of Congress, to see someone who has a genuine heart for service, someone who can quickly give up his chair, or someone who sees someone that is without. Sometimes I think that is a person who has served in faith many years, and sometimes I just think that is part of the natural tendency of a person who certainly has a heart, not only for God but to serve others.

I can think of nobody who better fits that description than our chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, here to talk a little bit about his passion and his vision for tax reform.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY).

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative WALKER. And first let me thank him for not just hosting this evening, People's Night, but his leadership of the Republican Study Committee and how he is leading our efforts to truly move this country back in the right direction.

As a friend, and from someone who admires him so much, I thank him for his leadership. It has already made a huge difference in issues like repealing ObamaCare.

So how many of you are pleased with the way you are taxed in America? Not many Americans are because the code we have got, it is so complex and so costly, it is just unfair.

So House Republicans are working with this President and the Senate to deliver the first pro-growth tax reform in a generation. We know this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and the goals we set out from the House is, first, we want a Tax Code not designed merely to wring money from you. We have that Tax Code. We want a Tax Code built for growth, designed to grow jobs, your wages, and the U.S. economy.

In doing that, we want to leapfrog America from nearly dead last among our global competitors back into the lead pack as the best place on this Earth for that next new job, that next new investment.

What we propose is a Tax Code with three big reforms: The lowest rates for our local businesses in modern history, and redesigned so our local companies can compete and win anywhere in the world, especially here at home.

Secondly, we are proposing for families and individuals a code so fair and simple that 9 out of 10 Americans will be able to file using a simple postcard system, and it works.

And the final reform is because we propose a much fairer and simpler Tax Code; we propose a fairer and simpler tax collector.

□ 1745

So we proposed to bust up the IRS and redesign it into a 21st century agency focused on you, the taxpayer. These are the reforms included in the House Republican blueprint. We are excited to work with President Trump and the Senate to deliver on pro-growth tax reform, bold, that leapfrogs America back to the front and returns jobs back to the United States—manufacturing, research and headquarters jobs.

It is a tough challenge. We will need your input. I encourage you to come to the Ways and Means Committee website, learn more, speak out, be part of changing and reforming this horrible Tax Code.

Mr. WALKER, thank you again for your leadership of this Special Order and our efforts.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman BRADY for his comments. It is an honor to have him with us this evening.

We have talked a little bit about veterans tonight. Former veteran, chaplain, and pastor, Representative COLLINS, we would love for you to talk about something that is part of that 158 pieces of legislation that has been passed, what we called the REINS Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman WALKER for yielding, and I appreciate him offering this. It is providing a different take that we are not getting in the meeting anywhere.

Go back real quickly: a few months ago, the first week of the session, the House comes in and does what it promised. It says it is going to take on regulatory reform. It is going to take on the burdens, and one of the first bills out of the chute was the REINS Act.

The REINS Act is very simple. It has a \$100 million impact on the economy. It comes back to the people's House, into the Senate for approval. Instead of bureaucrats in cubicles down the street thinking they know what is best for our districts and for our country, it is back to the people that were elected.

You see, when it was first brought up, they said: Well, this is going to put a burden on our bureaucrats, our government workers. They are doing all these things.

Well, if they want to run for Congress, then pay the fee and run for Congress.

The REINS Act puts it back where it is supposed to be. This is an accomplishment that I am proud of. The Senate just recently passed their version. This is something that President Trump has said he would sign. This is about moving forward on the promises we have.

Congressman WALKER does a great job highlighting where we have been and where we are going. This is a promise kept. If anybody wants to know what the American agenda looks like, look to the Republican majority, look to the past 5 months. And all I can say

is that the promises are being kept, and there is more to come.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative COLLINS for his comments.

As we continue to talk about some of the things that have been accomplished and also things that we are looking forward to, it is a wonderful opportunity to introduce my friend, Representative JODY HICE from the great State of Georgia, a fellow former pastor who still enjoys those opportunities, I am sure, when you have a few. But tonight I want him to talk about the Free Speech Fairness Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JODY B. HICE).

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. It is an honor to be here with you.

I think by this time most people are familiar, at least they have heard about the Johnson amendment. It came about in 1954, when Lyndon Johnson barely won a race for Senate because many people thought he was soft on communism. So one of the first things he did when he got here was, behind closed doors, without any vetting, without any debate, had inserted into the IRS Code a statement that basically says that nonprofits cannot address political issues, or they could potentially lose their tax-exempt status.

That now, for 60 years-plus, has become a target for pastors, for churches, for nonprofits using tax-exempt status as leverage to prevent them from speaking, addressing political issues. It is political correctness at its worst.

When our government becomes the gatekeeper of free speech, then we actually have no free speech at all. And in this process, they also are influencing what religious institutions can and cannot be.

Our Founders believed that our country should not establish a State church. They also believe that government should not dictate the religious practices of its citizens, or abridge the free speech of Houses of worship. That is what is taking place.

As a result of this, my good friend, Whip STEVE SCALISE, and I introduced H.R. 781, the Free Speech Fairness Act, which creates a carve-out for 501(c)(3) organizations to address political discourse as long as it is within the normal course of business with de minimis associated expenses. I am pleased that the President has also been extremely vocal on this issue, but we really need this codified because the unfairness must stop.

I know our time is running short, but I urge our colleagues to support this, and I deeply appreciate the gentleman providing me the opportunity to speak on this Johnson amendment.

Mr. WALKER. I thank Representative HICE and I appreciate his courage in being willing to stand and speak out.

My great friend, Representative GARY PALMER, from the home of the University, Crimson Tide Alabama

football, great to have you here tonight talking about a very important issue, the Agency Accountability Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER), who will close us out this evening.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman WALKER for arranging this Special Order.

Looking ahead, H.R. 850, the Agency Accountability Act, would be a game changer for government run amuck. In 2015, Federal agencies collected over \$530 billion—that is billion dollars—in fees, fines, and other revenue independent of the appropriations process.

Article I, section 9, clause 7 of the Constitution grants Congress the power of the purse. This assigns to Congress the role of final arbiter of the use of public funds. Allowing agencies to have slush funds outside of the normal appropriations process is a recipe for bad acting.

For instance, during the Obama administration, the Department of Justice would send money collected through fees and settlements to political activist groups aligned with the administration policies; many times in contradiction to Congress' will. Nearly 15 percent of the Department of Justice's entire budget is from alternative funding sources, not Congress. However, DOJ isn't a lone wolf.

The Department of Labor has raised over \$1.3 billion from fines and fees and the Environmental Protection Agency collected over \$600 million, just to name a few.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. PALMER and all the Members for coming out this evening and listening to our presentation on the passage of 158 bills.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1215, PROTECTING ACCESS TO CARE ACT OF 2017

Mr. BURGESS (during the Special Order of Mr. WALKER) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 115-179) on the resolution (H. Res. 382) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1215) to improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RUTHERFORD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER) to finish his statement.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding and allowing me to complete my remarks on this Special Order organized by Congressman WALKER.

As I was saying, if you recall the 2014 debate over funding for the Department of Homeland Security, the Obama administration made it clear that they would contravene the will of Congress with regard to President Obama's amnesty order and would fund his amnesty program using fines and fees.

The Department of Homeland Security had over \$400 million that the Department could spend outside of what Congress appropriated. It is unacceptable for agencies to ignore the will of Congress by funding programs outside of the typical appropriations process.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau gets all of its funding outside of Congress through transfers from the Federal Reserve and from fines imposed on financial institutions. The CFPB does not get one dime appropriated from Congress, meaning they are not subject to congressional oversight. When it comes to the CFPB, Congress has no power of the purse to ensure that that agency is accountable to Congress.

One of the top priorities in the Republican Better Way agenda is our commitment to reclaim our Article I authority. The Agency Accountability Act would direct all fines, fees, and settlements to the Treasury, making them subject to the normal appropriations process. This would end the unconstitutional slush funds that allow programs to operate independently and outside the purview of Congress. Most importantly, it would allow for Congress to fully account for how much money the government actually collects and where that money is coming from. The House should take up the Agency Accountability Act and pass it.

Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank my friend for pointing out the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

One thing about that group, when I was a judge, or assistant DA, if you needed somebody's banking records, then you would have to get sworn evidence—normally in affidavit form—and take it to a judge, and there had to be sufficient detail in the affidavit to establish—again, under oath—that a crime had probably been committed and that the person whose banking records we were seeking had probably committed the crime.

If that could be done, then the judge would sign the warrant. Like my years as a judge handling felony cases, there were some warrants I turned down. There is just not enough particularity here. There is not probable cause that this person committed the crime, or I don't see probable cause that a crime was committed. But, normally, law enforcement was good about making sure that probable cause was there, and the DA office would help them.

But the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has come in and it has basically begun to challenge the Internal Revenue Service for acting in the most unconstitutional ways. It may be a toss up now which one uses more unconstitutional authority than the other.

For the CFPB to gather people's financial records when there is no evidence that they committed a crime, no evidence that any crime had been committed—they just gather evidence, purportedly, to make sure nobody is taking advantage of people—well, that is not the way our Constitution works. It is supposed to be that if a bank or a lender takes advantage of an individual, then the individual can complain; then their banking records can be obtained.

But for a governmental entity to just gather people's financial records, it is not just Orwellian; it is outrageous, and it needs to stop. And as my colleague, Mr. PALMER, was pointing out, they have gotten—it was set up back when the Democrats had the majority, and they intentionally set up this governmental entity that would basically be beyond control by the Congress. They intentionally set up a group that could make a living hell for individuals or for banks, for others, because it is the government and it is gathering people's records.

And then along comes—you had ObamaCare get passed. Well, in order to help people, just like the CFPB—and for my liberal friends, that is sarcasm—well, you are going to get everybody's healthcare records, that way the government can help people better because they will have all of their records.

Well, some people, some liberal left-leaning folks would say: Well, we call that helping people. We gather all of their medical records and we gather all of their financial records so we can help them. But those who are Libertarian, Conservative, we don't consider that helping; we consider that abusive, and we don't need it.

□ 1800

One of the great honors and developments since I have been in Congress has been the development of a friendship with just an absolutely great patriotic American. He is a friend of mine, and he has come twice to sit in my seat in the gallery, most recently to hear President Trump deliver a State of the Union Address.

Here is a story by Sean Hannity. It is entitled, "Pull the plug on the Mueller-Comey witch hunt."

It says: "Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation is turning into a witch hunt and it needs to be shut down immediately.

"Ex-FBI Director James Comey, who admitted sparking the probe by leaking information to The New York Times, is nothing more than a calculating, cunning partisan political hack at home in the D.C. swamp. During last week's

hearing, Comey admitted that he intentionally gave a memo to his friend hoping it would lead to appointment of a special counsel.

"I asked a friend of mine to share the content of the memo with a reporter," Comey told lawmakers. "Didn't do it myself for a variety of reasons, but I asked him to because I thought that might prompt the appointment of a special counsel. And so I asked a close friend of mine to do it."

"What Comey is admitting to under oath cannot be overlooked here or understated. His end goal was the appointment of the special counsel, which just so happens to turn out to be his longtime friend, Robert Mueller.

"By leaking information, Comey could be putting himself again in serious legal trouble. If those memos were classified—and several legal experts are arguing they are—Comey may have broken the law. Comey created those memos on government computers in a government truck, making it property of the U.S. Government, not James Comey. In addition to that, there are nondisclosure agreements that the FBI rules that exist that Comey also could have violated.

"Leaks aside, Comey's relationship with Mueller is a massive conflict of interest. It is why it is time to now shut down this political witch hunt that is really aimed at stopping the President, delegitimizing him and hopefully, in the minds of some, making sure he gets thrown out of office. It is that serious.

"We have a guy, Comey, who is beyond disgruntled and angry after being fired by the President and now one of Comey's closest friends is leading the investigation as the special counsel. I don't care if you are left, right, Republican, Democrat, does that sound fair, honest, objective to you? Of course not.

"Conflict of interest rules disqualify Mueller from being special counsel in a case involving his pal. And if that is not bad enough, four members of Mueller's team have donated to Democrats.

"Not to mention, why did James Comey wait until his hearing last week to actually mention the fact that Loretta Lynch, the then-Attorney General, tried to interfere with an FBI investigation? He testified that she instructed him to soft-pedal his investigation by calling it a 'matter.' This on top of her infamous meeting on the tarmac with Bill Clinton.

"The real collusion that Mueller is never going to probe is not with President Trump and the Russians, it appears to be between the Clinton campaign, the Obama administration, Loretta Lynch and James Comey."

And I would add Mueller himself.

"Let's pull the plug on this witch hunt and go after the real lawbreakers."

So that is from FOX News.

Mr. Speaker, it is extraordinary what has come out. I already knew before all of this started that Robert Mueller—a

great patriot who served this country in the Vietnam war, Bronze Star for courage and bravery—but he got into government, and he apparently wanted nothing but yes-men. He wanted yes-men and -women. He didn't want people who had been around for a while that could point out when he had a suggestion that was going to lead to trouble. He would rather have the trouble than have anybody point out such things. So he created a policy he called the 5-year, up-or-out program.

We have FBI offices all over the country and local law enforcement that I have worked with so many times through so many years. And, as people know, you will have bad apples in every crowd, but I would submit that when you are talking about law enforcement, the percentage of bad apples is dramatically lower than you find in the general population at large. We are greatly blessed in that respect. But with all of the massive number of employees with the Department of Justice, Mueller has this 5-year, up-or-out policy.

So if you were in a supervisory position of any kind for 5 years anywhere in the country, then at the end of the 5 years, you had to uproot your wife and your children—your family—and you had to move to Washington and be a minion among minions in the office here at the Department of Justice; or, if you weren't willing to uproot your family in the communities where they had gained so much credibility and were considered such an important part of law enforcement in the area, then you had to get out of the FBI. It is not that you weren't absolutely priceless and invaluable to law enforcement, it is that Bob Mueller did not want your experience where you might ever question him.

So as an article—I believe it was in The Wall Street Journal—years ago pointed out, under his leadership, the FBI lost thousands upon thousands of years of experience. So we keep having people get killed around the country, and people wonder: How did the FBI not pick this up? How did the FBI not recognize this?

Well, I recall when I got out of law school and I was an assistant DA, I would see criminal defense attorneys. I would think in my head—I would know in my head—I knew a whole lot more law than they did. Heck, I had won moot court; won a trip to London, England; at Baylor Law School, I won an award for best brief award—for that I had a partner. I won an award for a Law Review article on torts that I did. Gee, I was coming up against lawyers who hadn't won awards in law school like I had. So I am going: gee, this ought to be pretty easy. They are not near as smart as I am when it comes to the law.

What I learned rather quickly in courtroom work is that knowledge of the law is extremely helpful, but experience is even more helpful: getting a feel and an understanding of human nature, learning to pick up different signs

from people, what they think about different things, when they are holding something back; when you are cross-examining somebody, when to know to keep going or when to know to stop. There are a lot of things you pick up over questioning thousands of people.

Somebody right out of law school that knows every bit of the law is going to have a hard time competing with somebody that has a tremendous amount of experience in the courtroom with human nature.

That is true of law enforcement. I have known law enforcement that just had an incredible knack for just knowing when people were lying. It is amazing to see some of our great law enforcement at work, as I have through my career.

But FBI Director Robert Mueller didn't want them around. After you have been in a supervisory position for 5 years or more, you either come to Washington and take up your little cubicle or get out. Again, Robert Mueller did incalculable damage to the FBI, to its experience, to its ability to root out and find criminals. That experience that he ran off from the FBI was absolutely incalculable. It is just priceless.

He also spent millions on a software program. Many tried to tell him: Wait, you have got us inputting stuff in a system that is not going to work. It doesn't fit our needs.

I don't know if he had some relative there he got it from, why he was so sold on this terrible program. People tried to tell him, but those are the people he wanted out. He didn't want anybody questioning his brilliant intellect.

As a result, they wasted a massive number of hours by FBI employees and wasted the millions that were spent on the program trying to make the program work. Later they had to scrap it. Why? Because he was talked into a bad program, and he wouldn't listen to anybody that tried to tell him about the problems.

We also know that one of the reasons we continue to have people who were on the radar of the FBI—even questioned by the FBI—continue to get away with murder, literally, or be able to commit murder in America and commit terrorism involving murder, is because Robert Mueller tried to make radical Islamists who hate America and who want to overthrow our way of life feel better. So he brought in people to purge our training material in the FBI so that we wouldn't offend radical Islamists who want to kill us.

Michele Bachmann and I reviewed much of the material that was purged. Lynn Westmoreland viewed some of it and he had to go, but it involved hours going through.

Unfortunately—and obviously it was intentional—but the FBI, under Mueller, classified the purged materials so I couldn't have a blowup poster here to show something very important that FBI agents would need in order to understand radical Islam. So they classified that so I can't bring it down here

and show people. Once again, the damage that FBI Director Robert Mueller did to the FBI was basically incalculable. I mentioned before, one of our intelligence guys said: We were blinded of our ability to see our enemy.

We have Robert Mueller to thank, or CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, that is always there to rush in and have a press conference after violence and say: We don't support this kind of violence.

Though, clearly, when the evidence is reviewed, the Council on American-Islamic Relations—individuals involved in CAIR—ultimately wants to see sharia law as the law of the land. There are principals that should have been prosecuted as supporting terrorism.

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There were scores of people that were listed as co-conspirators in supporting terrorism. Instead of pursuing those after the Holy Land Foundation trial convicted the principals involved—I think it was over 100 counts of supporting terrorism—instead of being alerted and being more on his guard, FBI Director Mueller bent over backwards more and more to accommodate those who want to see Sharia law take over America and be the law of the land, scrapping our Constitution.

At one time it was considered treason to want to scrap the Constitution and replace it with anything, but in Bob Mueller's America, people that wouldn't mind seeing the Constitution go away and be replaced by Sharia law, you want to develop an outreach program for those people.

So instead of going to the Boston mosque, where the Tsarnaevs surely had to have indicated and shown signs of being radicalized, Robert Mueller and his FBI went to the mosque as part of an outreach program to make merry and play patty cake with people who could have established, if they were honest, that the Tsarnaev brothers had indeed been radicalized, the information from Russia was correct.

Yet because, under Bob Mueller's leadership, the training materials were purged, FBI agents didn't know what they were looking for. They didn't know what scriptures in the Koran were referred to, were quoted by people who had been radicalized.

They had no idea what to look for in speaking to Kim Jensen, who prepared over 700 pages of training materials so people in the FBI could learn radical Islam. His training materials were banned. They were supposed to have been destroyed, but after it became clear that the FBI could not recognize radical Islamists, that Mueller had done so much damage in regard to training FBI agents, it was finally decided that we kind of need to get somebody back in here and get some materials back in here so maybe we don't keep getting people killed in the country after we are alerted to somebody who has been radicalized as an Islamic terrorist and we let them go because

we don't know they are radicalized because FBI Director Robert Mueller prevented our FBI from being trained to recognize radical Islam.

I know there are some people who—not because they are aware of his virtues, but have heard other people say he is a great guy—just extoll his virtue, not realizing the kind of damage that has been done.

As I mentioned last night, Mr. Speaker, you look at the damage that James Comey and Robert Mueller—really tight friends—have done to the country to an extent I didn't even realize until we started looking at the article by Mollie Hemmingway in *The Federalist*, which is rather breathtaking, and I had no idea until I read that.

According to the article, Comey talked a very fine man, John Ashcroft, into recusing himself so he would not appoint a special prosecutor to find out who leaked the fact that Valerie Plame was a CIA agent. He commits to Ashcroft: Recuse yourself and I will find somebody good.

Mr. Comey likes to talk about conflicts of interest, unless they apply to himself.

So Ashcroft recuses himself, and Mr. Comey, who convinced him to do so, looks high and low: Who could we possibly find to investigate and prosecute whoever it was that leaked information about Valerie Plame? Oh, how about my very dear friend, Patrick Fitzgerald, who happens also to be the Godfather of my child?

So he likes to talk about conflict of interest and chummy relationships, unless they are his chummy relationships, in which case he just puts them in places which appear to be clear conflicts of interest. Which is no surprise that he was supportive and even manipulative in creating what appeared to be a need for a special prosecutor, which actually there was not a need for a special prosecutor at all. He just leaked information. There was a good chance he probably violated the law. He certainly should have violated his FBI employment agreement.

Memos that he prepares as part of his job regarding meetings he had as part of his job, those should belong to the FBI under an employment agreement. I am sure that he has seen Presidents for whom he has worked take their own memos and take them back and use them to write books. Perhaps that is what he is thinking: I will take my memos that I personally prepared and I will be like a President and I will save my memos and use them to write a book.

Of course, it turns out, with regard to this one memo that he wrote about his conversation with President Trump, he consulted with other members of the Justice Department, who all need to be fired, and colluded with them to figure out what should be done.

There is no question these people are smart, or they wouldn't be where they were. They knew that if there was an obstruction of justice in which Trump

had engaged, then they would have to report it. Failing to report it would be a crime. They didn't. So we know there was no crime. What we know is they were conspiring and colluding to hurt the President of the United States.

So we don't need a special prosecutor. We certainly don't need Mueller. He has done enough damage. It is time to let the special prosecutor go that Comey needlessly created.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. GRIFFITH (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of family matters.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, June 14, 2017, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1628. A letter from the Acting Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's interim rule — Sweet Onions Grown in the Walla Walla Valley of Southeast Washington and Northeast Oregon; Decreased Assessment Rate [Docket No.: AMS-SC-16-0116; SC17-956-1 IR] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1629. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's affirmation of interim rule as final rule — Almonds Grown in California; Change in Quality Control Requirements [Docket No.: AMS-SC-16-0047; SC16-981-3 FIR] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1630. A letter from the Acting Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Tomatoes Grown in Florida; Increased Assessment Rate [Docket No.: AMS-SC-16-0088; SC16-966-1 FR] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1631. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's Major final rule — National Organic Program (NOP); Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices [Docket No.: AMS-NOP-15-0012; NOP-15-06 FR] (RIN: 0581-AD44) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1632. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Triclopyr; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions [EPA-HQ-OPP-2017-0036; FRL-9961-29] received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1633. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Department of Defense, transmitting a notification of an increase in the Program Acquisition Unit Cost for the Chemical Demilitarization — Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2433(d)(3); Public Law 97-252, Sec. 1107(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 110-417, Sec. 811(c)); (122 Stat. 4522); to the Committee on Armed Services.

1634. A letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting the semiannual report titled, "Acceptance of Contributions For Defense Programs, Projects, and Activities; Defense Cooperation Account", pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2608(e); Public Law 101-403, Sec. 202(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 112-81, Sec. 1064(7)); (125 Stat. 1587); to the Committee on Armed Services.

1635. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility (New Haven County, CT, et al.) [Docket ID: FEMA-2017-0002; Internal Agency Docket No.: FEMA-8479] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1636. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator, Diversion Control Division, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department's final order — Schedules of Controlled Substances: Placement of Acetyl Fentanyl Into Schedule I [Docket No.: DEA-413] received June 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1637. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; State of California; Coachella Valley; Attainment Plan for 1997 8-Hour Ozone Standards [EPA-R09-OAR-2016-0244; FRL-9962-54-Region 9] received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1638. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas Control of Air Pollution from Motor Vehicles with Mobile Source Incentive Programs [EPA-R06-OAR-2014-0497; FRL-9962-47-Region 6] received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1639. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas; Revisions to the General Definitions for Texas Air Quality Rules [EPA-R06-OAR-2016-0464; FRL-9962-23-Region 6] received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1640. A letter from the Deputy Chief, Mobility Division, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications

Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Review of the Commission's Part 95 Personal Radio Services Rules [WT Docket No.: 10-119]; Petition for Rulemaking of Garmin International, Inc. (RM-10762); Petition for Rulemaking of Omnitronics, L.L.C. (RM-10844) received June 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1641. A letter from the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Corporation For National and Community Service, transmitting the Corporation's Semiannual Report from the Office of Inspector General for the period October 1, 2016, through March 30, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1642. A letter from the Acting Chief Financial Officer, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's Annual Performance Report for FY 2016-2018, and the Department's Annual Performance Plan, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1115(b); Public Law 111-352, Sec. 3; (124 Stat. 3867); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1643. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Labor, transmitting the Department's Semiannual Report to the Congress from the Office of Inspector General, for the period October 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1644. A letter from the Director, General Counsel and Legal Policy Division, Office of Government Ethics, transmitting the Office's final rule — Technical Updating Amendments to Executive Branch Financial Disclosure and Standards of Ethical Conduct Regulations (RIN: 3209-AA00 and 3209-AA04) received June 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1645. A letter from the Chairman of the Board, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's Semiannual Report to the Congress by Office of Inspector General and the Corporation's Management Response for the period October 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1646. A letter from the Administrator, Small Business Administration, transmitting the Administration's Office of Inspector General Semiannual Report to Congress, covering the period of October 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1647. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Standards Branch, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf-Lease Continuation Through Operations [17XE1700DX EX1SF0000.DAQ000 EEEE50000] (RIN: 1014-AA35) received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1648. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Snapper-Grouper Resources of the South Atlantic; Commercial Trip Limit Reduction [Docket No.: 130312235-3658-02] (RIN: 0648-XF290) received June 6, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110

Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1649. A letter from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NMFS, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Shark Management Measures; Final Amendment 5b [Docket No.: 130417378-7331-02] (RIN: 0648-BD22) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1650. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 620 in the Gulf of Alaska [Docket No.: 160920866-7167-02] (RIN: 0648-XF253) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1651. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2017 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic [Docket No.: 001005281-0369-02] (RIN: 0648-XF218) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1652. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 in the Gulf of Alaska [Docket No.: 140918791-4999-02] (RIN: 0648-XF200) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1653. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's reapportionment of tribal Pacific whiting allocation — Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries Off West Coast States; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; 2016 Tribal Fishery Allocations for Pacific Whiting; Reapportionment Between Tribal and Non-Tribal Sectors [Docket No.: 160126053-6398-02] (RIN: 0648-XF230) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1654. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pollock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands [Docket No.: 161020985-7181-02] (RIN: 0648-XF262) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1655. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Department of Labor, transmitting the Department's final rule — Department of Homeland Security and Department of Labor Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Annual Adjustments for the H-2B Temporary Non-agricultural Worker Program [CIS No.: 2585-16] (RIN: 1615-AC10) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-

121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

1656. A letter from the Chief, Border Security Regulations Branch, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Merchandise Produced by Convict, Forced, or Indentured Labor; Conforming Amendment and Technical Corrections [CBP Dec. No. 17-04] (RIN: 1515-AE22) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

1657. A letter from the Board Chairman and CEO, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting the Administration's Fiscal Year 2018 Proposed Budget and Performance Plan, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1115(b); Public Law 111-352, Sec. 3; (124 Stat. 3867); jointly to the Committees on Agriculture and Oversight and Government Reform.

1658. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a determination to suspend the limitation on the obligation of State Department Appropriations contained in Secs. 3(b) and 7(b) of this Act for six months, pursuant to Public Law 104-45, Sec. 7(a)(1); (109 Stat. 400); jointly to the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Appropriations.

1659. A letter from the Labor Member, and Management Member, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting the Board's report on the actuarial status of the railroad retirement system, including any recommendations for financing changes, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 231u(a)(1); Aug. 29, 1935, ch. 812, Sec. 22(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 107-90, Sec. 108(a)); (115 Stat. 890); jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure.

1660. A letter from the Labor Member, and Management Member, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting the Board's 2017 annual report on the financial status of the railroad unemployment insurance system, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 369; Public Law 100-647, Sec. 7105; (102 Stat. 3772); jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. BURGESS: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 382. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1215) to improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system (Rept. 115-179). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. WELCH (for himself and Mr. HARPER):

H.R. 2889. A bill to amend title III of the Public Health Service Act to limit the orphan drug exclusion under the drug discount program under section 340B of such title; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. HULTGREN (for himself and Ms. MOORE):

H.R. 2890. A bill to amend the Federal Home Loan Bank Act to permit captive insurance companies that were members of a Federal Home Loan Bank prior to September 12, 2014, to continue to be eligible to be members of such a Bank, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. BISHOP of Georgia (for himself and Mr. DENT):

H.R. 2891. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the eligibility of children of Vietnam veterans born with spina bifida for benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. ENGEL (for himself and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN):

H.R. 2892. A bill to amend chapter 329 of title 49, United States Code, to ensure that new vehicles enable fuel competition so as to reduce the strategic importance of oil to the United States; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. GRIFFITH (for himself and Mr. GOODLATTE):

H.R. 2893. A bill to amend the Natural Gas Act to bolster fairness and transparency in consideration of interstate natural gas pipelines, to provide for greater public input opportunities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. KEATING:

H.R. 2894. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for education and outreach with respect to the prevention and treatment of tick-borne illnesses; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of

New York (for himself, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Ms. NORTON, Ms. LEE, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. KEATING, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. TITUS, Mr. PETERS, Ms. ESTY of Connecticut, Mr. POCAN, Mr. KILDEE, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. NADLER, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, and Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York):

H.R. 2895. A bill to provide a requirement to improve data collection efforts; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. NOLAN:

H.R. 2896. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to provide a midyear cost-of-living increase to account for an insufficient increase for 2017, to apply the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) to future Social Security COLAs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 2897. A bill to authorize the Mayor of the District of Columbia and the Director of the National Park Service to enter into cooperative management agreements for the operation, maintenance, and management of units of the National Park System in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. O'HALLERAN (for himself and Mr. WESTERMAN):

H.R. 2898. A bill to amend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 to modify the appointment and

composition of resource advisory committees; to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SENSENBRENNER (for himself, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Mr. WALKER, Mr. MARINO, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mrs. LOVE, Mr. TAYLOR, Mrs. COMSTOCK, and Mr. JEFFRIES):

H.R. 2899. A bill to reauthorize the Second Chance Act of 2007; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BUCK:

H. Res. 381. A resolution electing Members to certain standing committees of the House of Representatives; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. HECK (for himself, Mr. KILMER, Ms. DELBENE, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. LEE, Mr. TED LIEU of California, and Mr. LARSEN of Washington):

H. Res. 383. A resolution to express support for recognition of June 2017 as National Orca Protection Month; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. WELCH:

H.R. 2889.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18: The Congress shall have Power To . . . make all Laws, which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

By Mr. HULTGREN:

H.R. 2890.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18: To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3: To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes

By Mr. BISHOP of Georgia:

H.R. 2891.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The commerce clause, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3.

By Mr. ENGEL:

H.R. 2892.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under the following provisions of the United States Constitution:

Article I, Section 1;

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1;

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3; and

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.

By Mr. GRIFFITH:

H.R. 2893.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. KEATING:

H.R. 2894.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York:

H.R. 2895.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1 Section 8

By Mr. NOLAN:

H.R. 2896.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 2897.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

clause 2 of section 3 of article IV of the Constitution and clause 17 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution.

By Mr. O'HALLERAN:

H.R. 2898.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. SENSENBRENNER:

H.R. 2899.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 15: Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 112: Mr. CRIST and Mr. DUNN.

H.R. 169: Mr. VARGAS.

H.R. 233: Mr. PALLONE.

H.R. 242: Mr. DEFAZZO, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. SUOZZI, and Ms. LOFGREN.

H.R. 373: Mr. ROKITA.

H.R. 392: Mr. GALLAGHER, Mr. MEEHAN, and Mr. RENACCI.

H.R. 422: Mrs. WAGNER, Mr. YODER, Mr. BABIN, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. MESSER, Mr. HILL, and Mr. LABRADOR.

H.R. 468: Mr. SWALWELL of California.

H.R. 489: Ms. SEWELL of Alabama and Mr. FOSTER.

H.R. 535: Mr. LAMALFA.

H.R. 553: Mr. ROUZER.

H.R. 564: Mr. PALAZZO.

H.R. 586: Mr. COLLE.

H.R. 631: Mr. LAHOOD.

H.R. 632: Mr. GALLAGHER.

H.R. 638: Mr. SHERMAN.

H.R. 664: Mr. BOST.

H.R. 721: Ms. STEFANIK and Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 747: Mr. OLSON and Mr. RUSH.

H.R. 750: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 769: Mr. ROKITA.

H.R. 828: Ms. SINEMA.

H.R. 830: Mr. KING of New York.

H.R. 837: Ms. MATSUI.

H.R. 849: Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. BACON, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. LATTI, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, and Mr. GOWDY.

H.R. 852: Mr. FOSTER.

H.R. 878: Mr. POE of Texas.

H.R. 978: Mrs. MURPHY of Florida.

H.R. 1022: Ms. JAYAPAL.

H.R. 1046: Mr. PETERS.

H.R. 1057: Mr. VELA, Mr. SWALWELL of California, and Mr. MULLIN.

H.R. 1058: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1062: Mr. SANFORD.

H.R. 1098: Mr. O'HALLERAN.

H.R. 1148: Mr. RICE of South Carolina.

H.R. 1164: Mr. DESANTIS.

H.R. 1171: Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. KIND, Mr. VALADAO, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. LIPINSKI, and Ms. BROWNLEY of California.

H.R. 1225: Mr. SCHIFF.

H.R. 1267: Mrs. WAGNER.

H.R. 1291: Mr. SOTO and Mr. FOSTER.

H.R. 1298: Mr. LOESACK, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. MARSHALL, and Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 1307: Mr. DELANEY.

H.R. 1316: Mr. MARSHALL.

H.R. 1361: Ms. CASTOR of Florida and Mr. CONYERS.

H.R. 1393: Ms. ROSEN.

H.R. 1406: Mr. LEVIN, Mr. JONES, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. MARINO, and Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 1415: Ms. BASS.

H.R. 1421: Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. REICHERT, and Mr. PETERS.

H.R. 1422: Mr. WILLIAMS.

H.R. 1438: Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 1441: Mr. CARTER of Texas, Mr. KNIGHT, and Mr. BABIN.

H.R. 1444: Mr. COLE and Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 1447: Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. BLUMENAUER, and Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 1456: Mr. YOHO, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. RUIZ, and Mr. BUDD.

H.R. 1475: Mr. SUOZZI and Mrs. TORRES.

H.R. 1494: Mr. VELA, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, and Mr. CLEAVER.

H.R. 1515: Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 1529: Mr. LABRADOR.

H.R. 1542: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1552: Mr. MARSHALL.

H.R. 1558: Mr. MESSER.

H.R. 1566: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1626: Mr. BOST and Ms. BROWNLEY of California.

H.R. 1635: Mr. ROSKAM.

H.R. 1655: Mr. BLUMENAUER.

H.R. 1661: Mr. SOTO.

H.R. 1697: Mr. HUIZENGA, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. MCHENRY, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. BRIDENSTINE, Mr. HUDSON, Mr. BACON, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, Mr. RUSSELL, Mr. GARRETT, Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas, and Mr. COLE.

H.R. 1698: Mr. HUIZENGA, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. MULLIN, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Mr. RUSSELL.

H.R. 1711: Mr. SOTO.

H.R. 1739: Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 1777: Ms. TENNEY.

H.R. 1811: Mrs. COMSTOCK and Mrs. LOVE.

H.R. 1821: Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 1825: Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. TONKO, and Mr. CRAMER.

H.R. 1828: Ms. ROSEN.

H.R. 1832: Mr. RICHMOND.

H.R. 1838: Ms. BONAMICI.

H.R. 1864: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1865: Mr. ROSKAM, Mr. ROUZER, Ms. MOORE, and Mr. SHIMKUS.

H.R. 1874: Mr. KATKO and Mr. STIVERS.

H.R. 1911: Mr. FOSTER, Mr. BOST, Mr. SUOZZI, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, and Mr. PASCRELL.

H.R. 1928: Ms. TENNEY, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. UPTON, and Mr. POSEY.

H.R. 1951: Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 1955: Mr. PEARCE.

H.R. 2002: Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida.

H.R. 2059: Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.

H.R. 2069: Mr. COLE and Mr. HASTINGS.

H.R. 2077: Mr. BACON and Ms. ROSEN.

H.R. 2106: Mr. REICHERT, Ms. STEFANIK, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. COOPER.

- H.R. 2119: Ms. LOFGREN and Mrs. BEATTY.
H.R. 2141: Ms. ROSEN.
H.R. 2148: Mr. TIPTON.
H.R. 2150: Mr. ALLEN and Mr. FORTENBERRY.
H.R. 2158: Mr. RUSH and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey.
H.R. 2215: Mr. BEYER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. SINEMA, and Mr. CAPUANO.
H.R. 2224: Mr. MARSHALL, Mrs. WALORSKI, Mr. HOLDING, Mr. ROUZER, and Mr. TIPTON.
H.R. 2232: Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 2240: Ms. SINEMA and Mrs. MURPHY of Florida.
H.R. 2248: Mr. WELCH, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mrs. DEMINGS, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. KILMER, Ms. WILSON of Florida, and Mr. SERRANO.
H.R. 2306: Ms. PINGREE.
H.R. 2308: Ms. KAPTUR.
H.R. 2315: Mr. POE of Texas.
H.R. 2317: Mr. FITZPATRICK.
H.R. 2318: Mr. HECK.
H.R. 2352: Mr. WALKER.
H.R. 2358: Ms. MCCOLLUM.
H.R. 2371: Mr. GALLEGO.
H.R. 2383: Mr. PETERSON.
H.R. 2396: Mr. SHERMAN and Mr. LUETKEMEYER.
H.R. 2401: Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. DESAULNIER, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. RUSH, and Mr. BOST.
H.R. 2408: Mr. MAST and Ms. KAPTUR.
H.R. 2426: Mr. CAPUANO.
H.R. 2434: Mr. FERGUSON.
H.R. 2435: Mr. RASKIN.
H.R. 2476: Mr. MOULTON.
H.R. 2480: Mr. HARRIS, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. KELLY of Mississippi, Mr. GIBBS, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mr. LAMALFA, Mr. ISSA, Ms. TENNEY, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. FLORES, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, and Mr. RASKIN.
H.R. 2482: Mr. BACON, Mr. GARAMENDI, Ms. LEE, Mr. CLEAVER, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. LAWSON of Florida, and Mr. VALADAO.
H.R. 2506: Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. EVANS, Mr. THOMAS J. ROONEY of Florida, and Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire.
H.R. 2595: Mr. VALADAO.
H.R. 2616: Mr. JONES and Mr. O'HALLERAN.
H.R. 2620: Mr. BABIN, Mr. BUCSHON, and Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 2641: Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. KILMER, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. CONNOLLY, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. PETERS, Mr. DESAULNIER, and Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER.
H.R. 2651: Mr. MEEKS, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. CLAY, Mr. KNIGHT, Mr. DEFazio, and Mr. MACARTHUR.
H.R. 2652: Mr. TAKANO.
H.R. 2662: Mr. CRAMER.
H.R. 2670: Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD and Mr. MEEKS.
H.R. 2704: Ms. BROWNLEY of California.
H.R. 2723: Mrs. ROBY and Mr. ROUZER.
H.R. 2742: Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania and Mr. RENACCI.
H.R. 2745: Mr. SCHIFF and Mr. SERRANO.
H.R. 2790: Ms. MENG, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. AGUILAR, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, and Ms. ESTY of Connecticut.
H.R. 2801: Mr. SERRANO, Miss RICE of New York, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. SUOZZI.
H.R. 2825: Mr. FITZPATRICK, Ms. MCSALLY, Mr. KING of New York, and Mr. GALLAGHER.
H.R. 2826: Mr. RATCLIFFE, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, and Mr. BROOKS of Alabama.
H.R. 2827: Mr. COHEN.
H.R. 2834: Ms. BASS.
H.R. 2836: Mr. DIAZ-BALART.
H.R. 2847: Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2855: Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER.
H.R. 2857: Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2859: Ms. BONAMICI.
H.R. 2866: Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Ms. BASS, and Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2867: Ms. NORTON.
H.R. 2881: Mr. HARRIS.
H.R. 2884: Mr. TED LIEU of California, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. DEFazio, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. SOTO, Ms. LEE, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. CLAY.
H.R. 2887: Mr. ROHRABACHER.
H.J. Res. 51: Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, and Mr. BACON.
H.J. Res. 104: Mr. GRIJALVA.
H. Con. Res. 13: Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. THORNBERRY, and Mr. CURBELO of Florida.
H. Con. Res. 49: Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H. Con. Res. 63: Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. CROWLEY.
H. Res. 15: Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. MOULTON, and Mr. GOTTHEIMER.
H. Res. 30: Mr. KIND.
H. Res. 136: Mrs. LOWEY.
H. Res. 218: Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia.
H. Res. 257: Mr. MEEKS.
H. Res. 285: Mr. PALLONE.
H. Res. 313: Mr. MAST.
H. Res. 316: Mr. POE of Texas, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, and Mr. GOSAR.
H. Res. 317: Mr. COLE.
H. Res. 332: Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Ms. CLARKE of New York.
H. Res. 351: Mr. BLUMENAUER and Ms. MENG.