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 Baldridge, 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 Baldridge and Stephanie Baldridge. 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 Afghans how to be policemen.

Well, the tragedy of this story is that Corporal Baldridge 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 Baldridge, 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
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 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, 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 in interest 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 focused on the White House 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—of 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 Republicans.

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, has not been 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, Mr. Speaker.

And then there is our old friend, the former Speaker, 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, 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 very seriously. If you want to see this President in a trip 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 bringing our valued veterans one step closer to the care they deserve.

NATIONAL TEACHERS HALL OF FAME

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, tweet is that President deleting that post less than 12 hours later. This is just 1 of 18 tweets the President has deleted since his inaguration, 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 decisions, we must require 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.

Tweets are powerful, and the President must be held accountable for every post, from commenting on NATO, to the Paris Accord, 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 allowing 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 rates. Without the high-tech wealth of the bay area, California’s economy would trail well behind the national growth rate.

Paris apologists point to the slow era of green energy job growth. 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 SUV’s.

In 2016, President Obama came to Yosemite Valley to warn that the last of Yosemite’s surrounding glaciers would 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 professional and public scientists 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 mass migration 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.
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,” came out of tweets I posted calling for an end to the war in Yemen, a war escalated by the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen. Houthi rebels and a coalition led by 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 embargo 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.

June 13, 2017
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 the rights of its people. 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 and imprisoned, 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 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 U.S. soldiers have left their 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? Do they know that the White House knows 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 Isa Al-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 may 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 administration must reverse 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 may make 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 this has tied us 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 disenchanted soldiers turn for support and guidance? These are the questions the Trump administration must ask itself before it sends its jallalah 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 prime minister 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. On April 10 of this year 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 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 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 July 6, 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 National 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. I urge the Trump administration to join me. I thank my colleagues for listening.

APPLAUDING THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION

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.

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 or the balancer 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 chair 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.

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 career in STEM. 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.

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 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. I wish you the best, and I hope 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 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 such a dedicated public servant and strong leadership at the helm of this incredibly important department and to the cities of Stearns County.

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
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 boodle 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 out of their own pocket for insurance 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 out 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 not paying their 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 about the buried Watergate 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 and is going to come before 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.

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.

The Speaker, as I have mentioned, 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 given 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
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 insurance in Knoxville in 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 it causes 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 $600. 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 is not going to help. Despite 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 disincentive against patients with pre-existing conditions. But a new study by Harvard and the University of Texas-Austin finds those rules have made matters worse.

The researchers estimate a patient with multiple sclerosis, for example, might file $16,000 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 in worse health” by making policies “unattractive to people with expensive health conditions,” the Kaiser Family Foundation explains.

To mitigate that perverse incentive, ObamaCare lets all manner of taxpayer-subsidized 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 lose business in the market, 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 comprehensively and sustainably 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 impact on quality. If anything, Republicans should fear not repealing ObamaCare’s pre-existing-conditions 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 possibilities for our country. We ask Your blessings upon these Representatives, their staffs, and all here who work through government to serve the 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 You 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 is approved.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand that the ayes be entered 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 ayes answered 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 House in 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.
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.

Every day I hear 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 ensure a better way to start the summer. Your risk for high blood pressure, 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 the health of 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. They have to tell the House to better answer. 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, 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 voice to better your community and to speak up for those who still can’t.

Citizenship is a security. Citizenship 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 Heritage 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 1899, 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.
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:


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

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in House Rule II, 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.
In 2014, we learned that the Phoenix VA concealed extremely long wait times 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 is also falsifying 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 to care in a timely manner, 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 engaged in misconduct. The VA has taken such an in-depth interest in the accountability of patients that America’s care for our veterans has 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.

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 mandate was repeal. Then it was replace 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 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, then 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 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 celebratory music and dancing in this Bucketeer of the American economy and taking away healthcare from 23 million people.

Mr. Speaker, as national, state, and local civil right 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.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS: As national, state, and local civil rights groups are 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 ‘‘common sense’’ taxpayer protection bill. 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 in an Affordable Care Act (or the contemplated American Health Care Act) plan when the Department of Health and Human Services to verify their U.S. citizenship or immigration status. The people most impacted are U.S. citizens who job lose or get laid off, and immigrants. The bill also affects many immigrants, especially those newly arrived or certain victims of domestic violence and trafficking survivors. The fact is that the House of Representatives, to immediately verify their citizenship or immigration status on an Affordable Care Act Marketplace, it begins an often months long, stressful process, including documents that must be physically inspected. Health care assisters 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, H.R. 2581 would strip from American taxpayers important protections that are needed to overcome deficiencies in federal government databases. Immigrants who are not present are 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 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 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 citizenship or immigration status was undocumented. In the experience of our organizations and organizations we work with, this is false. These reports describe the flaw of the year of the marketplace as 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 2011 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 pay back all of their subsidies when they file their taxes and ‘‘reconcile’’ their premium tax credits.

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 testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 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 an extension of a whole federal failed policy of immigration 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. 2811 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 Indian Health Action; American Psychiatric Association (APA); American Society on Aging; Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum; Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC; Asian Pacific American Legal Defense & Education Fund; Asian Pacificists for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership (APEPAEL); Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations; 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 Union for Women’s Educational Rights; CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — HOUSE FORUMS

Coalition of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; Communities for Retirement Action (PSARA); Brennan Center for Justice; Community Health Councils; Concentrated Poverty Initiative; Conscious Talk Radio Network; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund; Dominica Sisters; Dominicans of Sinai; Family Equality Council; Farmworker Justice; First Amos Project; 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 American Professional Advancing GHQ Equality; Jewish Women’s Foundation of Metropolitan New York; 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 Missionaries of the Poor (MMP); Miriam’s Kitchen; MPFA; NAACP; NAFAFSA; National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum; National Association of County and City Officials; National Association of Social Workers; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Transgender Equality; National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCPA); National Council of Churches.


Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign; Prevention Institute; Project Inform; Project盛;&; Raising Women’s Voices for the Health Care We Need; Refugee Ministries; Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Service Employees International Union; 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 the Undersigned—API Wellness. STATE AND LOCAL

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services; Advocates for Children and Youth; AgeOptions; Almost Home, Inc.; Anti-Hunger Action of the New Jersey State Federation of Labor; Black Women’s Health Imperative; Bilingual-Bicultural Network; Black Women for Just Immigration; Black Women’s Health Imperative; Black Women’s Health Imperative; Center on Affordability and Transparency; Center on Health Care Reform; Center on Health Care Policy; Center on Law and Poverty; Center for Affordable Housing Finance; Center for Community Action and Research; Center for Economic and Social Rights; Center for Education and Policy; Center for Empowerment and Advocacy; Center for Community Action and Research; 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 Union for Women’s Educational Rights; CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — HOUSE FORUMS

Coalition of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; Communities for Retirement Action (PSARA); Brennan Center for Justice; Community Health Councils; Concentrated Poverty Initiative; Conscious Talk Radio Network; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund; Dominica Sisters; Dominicans of Sinai; Family Equality Council; Farmworker Justice; First Amos Project; 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 American Professional Advancing GHQ Equality; Jewish Women’s Foundation of Metropolitan New York; 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 Missionaries of the Poor (MMP); Miriam’s Kitchen; MPFA; NAACP; NAFAFSA; National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum; National Association of County and City Officials; National Association of Social Workers; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Transgender Equality; National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCPA); National Council of Churches.


Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign; Prevention Institute; Project Inform; Project 盛;&; Raising Women’s Voices for the Health Care We Need; Refugee Ministries; Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Service Employees International Union; 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 the Undersigned—API Wellness. STATE AND LOCAL

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services; Advocates for Children and Youth; AgeOptions; Almost Home, Inc.; Anti-Hunger Action of the New Jersey State Federation of Labor; Black Women’s Health Imperative; Bilingual-Bicultural Network; Black Women for Just Immigration; Black Women’s Health Imperative; Black Women’s Health Imperative; Center on Affordability and Transparency; Center on Health Care Reform; Center on Health Care Policy; Center on Law and Poverty; Center for Affordable Housing Finance; Center for Community Action and Research; Center for Economic and Social Rights; Center for Education and Policy; Center for Empowerment and Advocacy; Center for Community Action and Research; 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).

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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 disburses.

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 amendments to require 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 bureaucractic dysfunction in a lot of places, and all that we have to do is to prove 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 meeting 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.

In response to the gentleman from Florida, my constituents in Texas and American taxpayers deserve better.

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 are required to reapply 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 the law is as 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.

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 Aff airs—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 SCHRADE’s bill, H.R. 696, which would prohibit any hiring freezes 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. 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 major- ity: 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, Mr. Speaker. We hear that, we are tak- ing 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 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 pre-existing 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 vul- nerable 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 bil- lionaires 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 they would prefer to receive tax cuts, they would prefer that they go to edu- cation, particularly education for kin- dergartners and prekindergartners.
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 whom 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 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 living 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 Nation for this Nation who 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 general debate, add the following new sections:

Sect. 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 at 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 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 having been reached and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the House agrees to the amendments the motion for the previous question may be made at any time and it is now in order to offer 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 lost the vote, controls the time and 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, the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question. A Member who offers a proper amendment or motion who controls the time for debate thereon.”

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on the amendment has substantive 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. YEREmY). 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.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YEREmY). 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 vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 229, nays 189, not voting 12, as follows:

[Table Not Present]
I been present, I would have voted "yea" on the Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

So the resolution was agreed to.

I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollover 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 to vote on rollcall No. 303, The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinishing business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

So the Journal was approved.
the funeral of Kyle Miliken. Had I been present, I would have voted “yes” 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 FOR 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 amended by any individual shall be made under section 1412 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.

(b) DELAY PERMITTED IN COVERAGE DATE IN CASE OF DELAY IN VERIFICATION OF STATUS.—Section 36B of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18081(e)) is amended—

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

(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 permitted 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;”;

(c) 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.—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 340A of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (42 U.S.C. 6001 et seq.), 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)(4) 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 (B), “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. 18091(e)) is amended—

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

(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 permitted 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.

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

(g) 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.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members 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 replace 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 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. It 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 support of passing 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 the American Health Care Act Marketplace, 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.

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 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. The report says 500,000 individuals, and not 500,000 undocumented individuals or any other term that Republicans like to use to disparage immigrants.

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. The American Health Care Act says 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 millionaire buddies a big, fat tax break.

Republicans are using some 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, the title of the bill is a dangerous bill that puts up roadblocks for both citizens and immigrants. 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 firm 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’s bill has a longer history. Republicans have been advocating for years for immigration restrictions for many citizens and lawfully present immigrants. Our organizations firmly believe that there is a way to deport undocumented immigrants and respect the constitutional rights of immigrants to 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.

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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 American Advancing Justice; Asian Pacific Institute for Rights-Based Violence Prevention; Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership (APPEAL); Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations; Asian Pacific Self-Help Coalition; Black Alliance for Just Immigration; Breast Cancer Action; Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services; Children’s Defense Fund; Children’s Advocacy Institute; Children’s Defense Fund; Church World Service (CWS); Coalition on Human Need; 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; Domincans of Sinai; Family Equality Council; Farmworker Justice; First Focus Campaign for Children; Food Research & Action Center; Franciscan Sisters of the Poor LPJC; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Generations Inc.; GLAMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality; Immigrant Legal Resource Center; Individual Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Interfaith Worker Justice; Irish American Legal Aid & Defender; Jobs With Justice; Justice in Aging; Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart; 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; NAPAFSA; 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 Employment Law Project; National Health Law Program; National Hispanic Medical Association; National Immigrant Justice Center; National Legal Center for Constitutional Justice for Our Neighbors; National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health; National Network of Abortion Rights; National Organization for Women; National Council of 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; Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Poor People’s Campaign; Project Inform; Promise Keepers; Raising Women’s Voices for the Health Care We Need; Refugee 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; Southwest Asian Resource Action Center (SEARAC); The Amerasia; The Center for Reproductive Rights—Asian American Women’s Network; 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; Washington Area Jewish Community Relations Council; Washington Community Action Network; Washington Healthcare Access Alliance; Washington State Labor Council; AFL-CIO; Women Against Military Exploitation; World March of Women; Xoximilco Campaign Against Hunger; Westlake Chinese Culture Association; Wisconsin Council of Churches; Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice Women’s Action Movement; Waukesha 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 money goes out the door.

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 already to be 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 that this issue 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 dollars.

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 McCaul, 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.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BARLETTA: NumbersUSA, on behalf of our more than 8 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 are not paid to ineligible aliens.

As you know, federal law explicitly prevents illegal aliens from receiving tax credit payments. Despite this law, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs 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 for a “temporary basis” to individuals who are unable to verify their citizenship status. If an individual is ultimately unable to verify their immigration status, the funding is suspended and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) attempts to recover payments from the individuals who were wrongly covered. This challenging practice—known as “pay and chase” —is costing taxpayers millions more.

As a complement to the recently passed American Health Care Act (AHCA), 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 Social Security number (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.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge passage of my bill. 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 could 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 25 million Americans would lose health insurance under the Republican health care 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 the American people want.

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 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 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 want you 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 other's property or financial affairs; and, simple: It is someone who manages another's 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: 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. We are entitled to this, so we ought to 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. 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.

Wherever 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 their 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.

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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.

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

It is amazing to 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 who is getting these subsidies, to me, is more 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 are talking about: I want you to think about the people who actually pay the tab, the people who actually pay taxes, 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.

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 out this. 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 is 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. 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.

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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 get 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 they get 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; that is not healthcare; that is not helping those benefits going to a few corporations and the super-rich 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” on 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. The Senate did that in the “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 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 bilions 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: Why do you think this has anything to do with immigration? 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 a “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 healthcare, 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 a 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 anti-fraud 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, for the sake of hardworking Americans everywhere, we need to be better stewards of taxpayer dollars. That means verify first.

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 flawed.

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 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 have 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. MARINO of Texas. 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 on a narrow party-line vote—actually, a number of Republicans voted against it—and lodged in the Senate, no public hearings. In fact, we are told that they are not enabling people to actually get absurd 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 it all. Three times the 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.

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 saying that what the Republicans have done to destabilize it and try to make it fall.

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 had their 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 all 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 the protections that 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 Batiuk. 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 disburse 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 cred 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 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 today "fixes". 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. But 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 gentlewoman from California has the time.

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

Mr. BRADY of Texas. I am considering the SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from California has the time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, 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 deceptive 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 Republi- can colleagues believe that this re- port that they keep citing actually said what their undocumented im- migrants. 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 violated the rules, 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 com- pleting it.

The report also doesn’t say that hun- dreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants enrolled and received pre- vious credits. The report states that “as of September 30, 2015, CMS awarded approximately $750 million in advance premium tax credits to individuals en- rolled through healthcare.gov who CMS later determined to be ineligible. . .”

It is funny that the daughter of Mexi- can 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 yield back the balance of my time and that coverage.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may con- sume.

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 Congressional Budget Office, will make 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. Were you told that this has all come about because the IRS has not funded properly, but I would remind our Democrat colleagues that the ma- jority of our Democrat colleagues sup- ported the spending levels, which President Obama signed into law re- garding the Internal Revenue Service.

Secondly, they have raised the issue that there are no Social Security num- bers available. But in truth, nearly 96 percent of children born in America re- ceive 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 fraud to worry about; 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 names and addresses to fake Obtain Obamacare coverage on the ex- change, and in 11 out of 12 applica- tions—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. Cer- tainly, 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 falling 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 ulti- mately, in one form or another, in- cluded 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 have’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 dis- appearing.

Texas has 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 all, 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 subsi- dyes before you receive them; to make sure those precious dollars actu- ally 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 sup- port 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’s 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 dol- lars in premium tax credits to individuals first verifying their immigration status. After the money goes out the door, the Internal Rev- enue Service must attempt to track down these individuals to recoup the money.
Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the yeas and nays were ordered.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman 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 electronically 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 of 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 possible. Unfortunately, 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 thing on 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, will 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 against the 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 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, 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, we had the Verify First Act 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 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.

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.
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend the 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:

Title I—Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection

Title II—Accountability of Senior Executives, Supervisors, and Other Employees

Title III—Reporting and披露

Title IV—Repeal of Financial Disclosure Requirements

Title V—Miscellaneous

§ 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 380(a) of this title.

(2) The head of the Office shall be known as the 'Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection' (in this section referred to as the 'Assistant Secretary').

(3) The Assistant Secretary shall report directly to the Secretary on all matters relating to the Office.

(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 affecting 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 paragraph (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 believes that such 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 General 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 for findings 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 504(d) of this title in the Department;

(ii) an individual employed in a confidential, policy-making, policy-determining, or policy-protecting 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).

(J) 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.

(K) In any case in which the Assistant Secretary receives a whistleblower disclosure from an employee of the Department under paragraph (I)(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.

(L) 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.

(M) 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.

(N) Reports.—(1) A 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 and the Office’s overall 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 to 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 on other matters relating to the Office.

(VI) If the Secretary receives a recommendation for discipline for an individual described in subsection (c)(1)(D) 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 Assistant Secretary on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a detailed justification for not taking or initiating such disciplinary action.

"(g) ‘Whistleblower disclosure’ means—

(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 communication 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 388(b) of this title is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(32) 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:

 title 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 by 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 reprimised for disclosing information;

the Inspector General, or another investigatory agency in instances where such disclosure is permitted by law, including under sections 7501, 7506, and 7508 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

the right of contractors to be protected from reprisal for the disclosure of certain information under section 4706 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 protections in a manner that the Special Counsel certifies as being satisfactory.

(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on the Internet website of the Department, as promptly as is practicable, 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.

(f) TRAINING REGARDING WHISTLEBLOWER DISCLOSURES.—In this section, the Secretary shall ensure, in accordance with section 7211 of title 5, that training provided under subsection (a) is provided in person.

(g) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall provide training on merit system protections in a manner that the Special Counsel certifies as being satisfactory.
"(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 from the date of such notice.

"(C) A provision of law 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)(C) and the decision shall be in writing, and shall include the specific reasons therefor.

"(D) The Secretary shall ensure that the grievances so established under paragraph (1)(C) take fewer than 21 days.

"(E) A decision under paragraph (2) that is not appealed, and a grievance decision under paragraph (3)(D) shall be final and may not be further reviewed.

"(F) A covered individual adversely affected by a decision under paragraph (2) that is not appealed, or by a grievance decision under paragraph (3)(D), may obtain judicial review of such decision.

"(G) 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;

"(C) unsupported by substantial evidence.

"(H) RELATION TO OTHER PROVISIONS OF LAW.—Section 3592(b)(1) of title 5 and the provisions under section 7549(b) of such title do not apply to an action under subsection (a).

"(I) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

"(A) the term 'covered individual' means—

"(i) a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5); or

"(ii) any individual who occupies an administrative position or position that was appointed under section 7306(a), section 7401(1), or section 7401(4) of this title.

"(J) The term 'misconduct' includes neglect of duty, malfeasance, or failure to accept or direct a reassignment or to accommodate a position in a transfer of function.

"(K) The term 'senior executive position' means—

"(A) with respect to a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5), a Senior Executive Service position (as such term is defined in section 7312(a)(7));

"(B) with respect to a covered individual appointed under section 7306(a) or section 7401(1) of this title, an administrative or executive position;

"(L) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 7401(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'".

"(M) CEREMONIAL 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.

"(N) IMPROVED AUTHORITIES OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO DEMOTE AN EMPLOYEE UNDER SUBSECTION (A).

"(a) In general.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 7121 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 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, and that reduces the annual rate of pay of the covered individual; or

"(C) suspend the covered individual.

"(b) Payment of certain demoted individuals.—(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any covered individual subject to a demotion under subsection (a)(2) shall—

"(i) receive the annual rate of pay applicable to such grade;

"(ii) be removed from the civil service under subsection (a)(2) if the covered individual does not report for duty or is approved to use accrual leave;

"(iii) 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.

"(c) 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.

"(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.

"(2) 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 that agreement, the timelines and procedures set forth in section 713(d) of this title apply.

"(e) WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION.—(1) In the case of a covered individual seeking corrective action (or on behalf of whom corrective action is sought) by the Office of Special Counsel based on prohibited personnel practice described in section 2302(b)(1) of title 5, the Secretary shall not remove, demote, or suspend such covered individual under subsection (a)(3)(D) of this title.

"(f) The Merit Systems Protection Board shall not mitigate the penalty prescribed by the Secretary.
‘’(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 determine, in the absence of notice, of suspension or suspension, of each 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.

(1) 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, 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;

(D) a political appointee.

(2) The term ‘service’ means the placing of an employee, for disciplinary reasons, in a temporary status without duties and pay for a period in calendar years of 14 days or less.

(3) The term ‘service’ 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 appointed to, or designated to, an executive position—

(A) in a position described under sections 3312 through 3316 of title 5 (relating to the Executive Schedule);

(B) in an appointive, limited emergency appointee, or noncareer appointee in the Senior Executive Service, as defined under paragraphs (5), (6), and (7), respectively, of section 3322(a) of title 5;

(C) in a position of a confidential or policy-determining character under schedule C of part 213 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 title 5 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 by adding at the end the following:

‘’(A) in paragraph (2), by striking ‘or’ at the end;

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking the period at the end of such paragraph and adding at the end ‘;’; 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) 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 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

(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) 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 3322(a) of title 5;

(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 3322(a) of title 5;

(C) an individual appointed pursuant to sections 7306, 7401(1), 7401(4), or 7405 of this title;

(D) an individual who has not completed a probationary or trial period;

(E) a political appointee.

(2) The term ‘service’ means the placing of an employee, for disciplinary reasons, in a temporary status without duties and pay for a period in calendar years of 14 days or less.

(3) The term ‘service’ 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 appointed to, or designated to, an executive position—

(A) in a position described under sections 3312 through 3316 of title 5 (relating to the Executive Schedule);

(B) in an appointive, limited emergency appointee, or noncareer appointee in the Senior Executive Service, as defined under paragraphs (5), (6), and (7), respectively, of section 3322(a) of title 5;

(C) in a position of a confidential or policy-determining character under schedule C of part 213 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 title 5 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 by adding after the end the following:}
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 thereof, paid to the employee under title 5, including upon a determination that the misconduct or poor performance occurred prior to payment; and

(b) before such repayment, the employee is afforded—

"1) the Secretary determines that the individual engaged in misconduct or poor performance in order to avoid the award or bonus; 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; or

"(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 fifteen 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 fifteen 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 issuance.

(2) The Director shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal under paragraph (1) within thirty business days after receiving such appeal.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of this chapter is further amended by inserting the following new item:

"723. Recoupment of relocation expenses paid on behalf of employees of Department.

SEC. 206. TIME PERIODS FOR RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF ADVERSE ACTIONS AGAINST SUPERVISING 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 VHN 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 Health Service Networks with demonstrated ability in the medical profession, in health care administration, or in health care financial management.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 7401(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(b)" 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(a) 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 Assistants.—Section 7462(b)(3) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"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;";

"(B) in subparagraph (A)—

"(i) by striking "At least 30 days advance written notice" and inserting "Advance written notice"; and

") by striking "and a statement" and inserting "a statement"; and

"(ii) 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 in no case more than 20 days" and inserting "The opportunity, within the time period provided for in paragraph (5)(A),";

(2) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following new paragraph:

"(3) After considering the employee's answer, if any, and within the time period provided for in paragraph (5)(A), 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 aggregate period for the resolution of charges against an employee under this subsection may not exceed 15 business days; and

"(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 and opportunity to answer with respect to such charges in accordance with subparagraphs (A) and (B) of section 7462(b)(1) of this title; and

(c) TIME PERIODS FOR REVIEW OF ADVERSE ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, Podiatrists, Chiropractors, Optometrists, Registered Nurses, Physician Assistants, and Expanded-Function Dental Assistants.—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 (5)(A)," after "is entitled;";

"(B) in subparagraph (A)—

"(i) by striking "At least 30 days advance written notice" and inserting "Advance written notice"; and

") by striking "and a statement" and inserting "a statement"; and

"(ii) 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 in no case more than 20 days" and inserting "The opportunity, within the time period provided for in paragraph (5)(A),";
time period specified in paragraph (3)(A)."

"after is entitled":

(B) in subparagraph (A), by striking "an advance written notice" and inserting "written notice";

(C) in subparagraph (B), by striking "a reasonable time" and inserting "time to answer"; and

(3) by striking at the end of 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) shall be at least 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 SUPERVISING OFFICERS.

(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.

(4) How to effectively manage employees who are the subject of disciplinary action.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) the term "supervisor" has the meaning given such term in section 732(g) of title 5, United States Code.

(2) WHISTLEBLOWER.—The term "whistleblower" has the meaning given such term in section 732(g) of title 5, United States Code, as added by section 101.

SEC. 210. ASSESSMENT AND REPORT ON EFFECT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISCIPLINARY ACTION TAKEN AGAINST EMPLOYEES.

(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 House of Representatives;

(B) the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

(C) the appropriate committees of the Congress of the Delegate from Tennessee.

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 as safe as I may consider.

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 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 to proposed removals, demotions, and suspensions for performance or misconduct, or in the case of tão and veterans, which are well aware that bringing real accountability to the Department of Veterans Affairs has been a goal of mine for years. That is why I am proud to rise today to support S. 1094, 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.

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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 Miller as 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 that 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 there. I say, if I were the chairman, I was 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, 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 seek to address 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 and everyone understands that 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 the importance of 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 like it, 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 certainly of 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 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 about or understand 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 something is wrong, or is wronged or 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 who could be in bad behavior.

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 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 they don’t want to go through. 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 the Department 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 discouraged, 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 incompetency of a 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 our ranking member, Mr. 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.

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 our support and are 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 the VA get back to 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 the 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 and gives the Secretary greater authority to appeal decisions and bureaucratic incompetence. This is the promise that was made to them and to the VA.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROE). And to the gentleman from Tennessee has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. POLIQUIN), a friend of all of our veterans and a member of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

Mr. POLIQUIN. 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 promise was that 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 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 includes 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 VA faces 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 deserve.

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 important 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 shortchanged on the promise 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 care of the VA 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 11 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 to see if there are 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.

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 this. 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 department’s 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 the House 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 1 1/2 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.

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, who are fired but are, instead, held accountable.

Another part of this legislation is the enhanced protection for whistleblowers. These employees are who are doing the right thing and advocating for our veterans. They should not be faced with retaliation 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.

Our 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 1 1/2 minutes to the gentlewoman
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 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 from 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. You shouldn't be given that honor lightly.

It is exactly why this bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability 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.

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).

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 disregarded by the very people 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. 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. Those are 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 options. We 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 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.

Today 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 different 50,000 employees, we 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 when he was first assigned—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 50,000 employees, 154 medical centers, and over 800 outpatient clinics. There is no way that we could monitor without that. 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 protections at the Department of Veterans Affairs. And I recognize that S. 1094 represents a compromise approach that was drafted specifically to address severe, long-standing 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 yeas appeared to have it.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, 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 gentleman from California (Ms. SÁNCHEZ), 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:
**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."**

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 as follows:—aye 238, noes 184, not voting 8. 
Gerald Ford has disclosed his tax return information to the public.

Whereas, the Chairman 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 he had his own tax plan been in place, where 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 to 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 resorted to 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 represented 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 had 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 added in the Constitution for the express purpose of preventing Federal officials from accepting payments from any King, Prince, or foreign state;

Whereas, the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., has hired a...
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, the question is on the 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 are 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:

[Bill No. R07] YEAS—368

Abraham
Adams
Adherolt
Agular
Allen
Amash
Amodei
Arrington
Bahn
Baker
Banks (IN)
Barrett
Barton
Bartley
Bergman
Bluemenscher
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Bost
Boyle, Brendan
Buck
Buchanan
Burke
Bush
Bustos
Byrne
Calvert
Capuano
Carbajal
Cardenas
Cardenas (GA)
Cardenas (TX)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Che Ney
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clay
Coffman
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)

NAYS—55

Barr
Bass
Bayor
Beatty (OH)
Buck
Budd
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
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Cardenas (GA)
Cardenas (TX)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Che Ney
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clay
Coffman
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)

NAYs NOT VOTING—7

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:

Mr. 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 rollover on No. 307.
talented Cleveland Cavaliers were a team that can accomplish anything. People, showing that if you can work together, the power of teamwork both on and off the court. Green, and Klay Thompson, showed the national championship in 3 years.

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, 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 throughout 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 the ones to have to deal with our government. 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 Massey, was the Pirates’ biggest fan, and I know she is smiling from above. I can’t wait to celebrate with all the Pirates fans and players back in Oakland. Go Pirates, go Oakland, go Dub Nation.

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 million per borrower.
ANDREW J. TRUMP.


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 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, 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 77 bills 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 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 Americans.

I especially want to thank the gentleman from North Carolina for his work on the American Health Care and what that means to so many of our constituents to truly be able, after this rise of premiums where people are paying more 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 that, we have to have regulatory relief to help the consumer, free checking at banks has been cut in half. Bank fees have increased. Has anybody with-

tons of premiums where people are pay-
ing more in healthcare, to really bring us to a moment where we can have patient-centered healthcare. I just want to thank him for that.

What has happened here is, under Dodd-Frank, which is now choking off credit to 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, as it was in America in the postwar era.

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.

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We have been doing this against a strong headwind of obstructionists, sometimes from Congress, sometimes from both sides of 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.

And while many of these conservative winds have gone unrepeated and, therefore, flown under the radar, the truth is that we are indeed steering the government smaller. We are passing legislation that is making government less costly. We are passing legislation that is making government finally more accountable to the people.

We are dismantling the enormous bureaucratic overreach 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,
June 13, 2017

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

H4903

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 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 us one step closer to dismantling 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 empowering 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 could continue to be foreclosed upon 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, after so many years, will 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 you 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 a bigger picture:

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 and we have some time together. The thing 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 again on that 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 richly deserved bill 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 builds on the 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 holders, 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 concealed carry permit, when you drive into another State, you 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 has to go through the Federal background check. My bill does nothing to change that.

First, 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 and Senate, including 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 plea to 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 life 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. That undermines the very thing that healthcare is all about.

Who is most affected in this situation?

Our most vulnerable citizens: the disabled and the elderly.

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 enables a physician to pronounce death to so many people. This patient went in anyway to examine this patient. And I thought that was wrong. I said: You just examined me more than anyone.

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 I hope 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 of Arizona. 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 little 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 here, all of us. 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 Protective 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 early in the sperm, 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 blocking the Senate 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 helplessly 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 a decisively pro-choice issue. 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 say 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 provide abortion.

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. It was 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 an unapologetically pro-life member of Congress, I would like to discuss with you the American values—full disclosure—and what Mr. HUDSON, DR. WENSTRUP, MR. FRANKES, and my good friend DIANE BLACK, and I am a concealed carry permit holder—full disclosure—and what Mr. FRANKES 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 the babies 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, 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 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—this is not 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.

Now, 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 of our 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 RUHLO, 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 formed that bill back, and we now await the President’s signature.

We are also doing repeal reform. We passed that out of here. We have, now, 470,000 backlogged 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 talk about this with the American people.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman Roe and appreciate his continuing 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 Chairman 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 is 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 these 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 defense budget and appropriating 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 and imposing fiscal discipline or the ability to plan that our military leaders desperately need.

Consider that two-thirds of our Army and Navy 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 service members 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 sustain 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 sub-standard 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 finally 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 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. 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—risk 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 nothing but silence a weapon.

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 siling, 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 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, Mr. Walker.

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.

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 nothing but silence a weapon.
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 4.5 percent. He has also started forth to help the 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 Committee. And this House, and been signed into law by the Senate, and been signed into law and into nearly a decade, at 4.3 percent.

The current process that we operate under to fund the greatest Nation on the ground 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 appropriation has been signed into law and into nearly a decade, at 4.3 percent.

So I have just got a simple idea, a simple concept. Let's just change what we have got, it is so complex and so costly, it is just unfair. And I think Representative WALKER. I thank Chairman BRADY for his comments. It is an honor to have him with us this evening.

Wayne 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 138 pieces of legislation that has been passed that 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: 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. 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 oversight, he 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 customary for Congress, for keeping nonprofits from speaking, from 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 or 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 leverage to prevent them from speaking, addressing political issues. It is political correctness at its worst.

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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 that 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. GOHMIERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMIERT. 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 all 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 System and is 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 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 uncontrolled discretionary slush funds that give agencies the power 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. GOHMIERT. 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 legitimate investigation existed 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 those 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 have 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, purporting to be under oath, 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, 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 Libertarians, Conservative, we don’t consider that helping; we consider that abusive, and we don’t need it.

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 the right eye on what is going on and has it up in his 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 is inside of the memo 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 building, using 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 some way, 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 him, 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 is on top of her 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 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 there 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, and 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 want our people to be 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 law enforcement group, 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 police and other law enforcement in that area, 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 most court; won a trip to London, England, and Baylor Law School; 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 to say this; that 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 the years of being there.

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.

The FBI is the police 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 or more years, you either come to Washington and take up your little cubicle again, or you leave. 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 invested 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 who had 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. I couldn’t have blown up poster here of 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, it is striking. CAIR said: We were blinded to the problems.

Lynn Westmoreland viewed some of it and he had to go, but it involved hours of questioning thousands of people. It is amazing.

Mr. Comey, you look at the damage that James Comey and 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 recuse yourself and I will find somebody good.

Mr. Comey likes to talk about conflicts of interest, unless they apply to himself.

John 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 already 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. G. R. MOORE (at the request of Mr. McCARTHY) for today on account of family matters.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GOHMHRT. 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:

1624. A letter from the Acting Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department’s interim rule —berry 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 FR] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2608 (as amended by Public Law 117 Stat. 1259); to the Committee on Armed Services.

1625. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator, Division Control, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department’s final order — Suspension of Community Eligibility (New Haven County, CT, et al.) [Docket ID: FEMA-2017-0002; Internal Agency Docket No.: 2017-0007] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1626. A letter from the Director, Assistant Administrator, Division Control, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department’s final order — Suspension of Community Eligibility (New Haven County, CT, et al.) [Docket ID: FEMA-2017-0002; Internal Agency Docket No.: 2017-0007] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1627. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency’s final rule — Approval and Proclamation of the Department of California; Coachella Valley; Attainment Plan for 1997 8-Hour Ozone Standards [EPA-R09-OAR-2016-0224; FRL-9662-54-Region 9] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.


1629. 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.


1631. 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.


1634. 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.


1637. 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.


1639. 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.

1640. A letter from the Acting Chief Financial 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 31, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.


A letter from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration’s final rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species and Atlantic Shortfin Mako Shark Management Measures; Final Amendment 5b [Docket No.: 13041737-7351-02] (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.

A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration’s temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 in the Gulf of Alaska [Docket No.: 16012696-6716-02] (RIN: 0648-XF23) 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.

A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration’s determination to suspend the limitation on the obligation of State Department Appropriations contained in Secs. 5(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.

A letter from the Labor Member, 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. 231a(a); Aug. 29, 1935, ch. 812, 81st Cong., 2d Sess., Sec. 221(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 107-90, Sec. 102); jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure.

A letter from the Labor Member, 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 100-447, 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 transmittal 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. 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, 2008, to continue 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. GOODLATTE):

H.R. 2891. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the eligibility of children of Vietnam veterans born with spine bifida for benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

By Mr. ENGEL (for himself and Mr. RODNEY J. PITT):

H.R. 2892. A bill to amend chapter 329 of title 49, United States Code, to ensure that new vehicles enable fuel savings 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 pipeline rate obligations; to provide for greater public input opportunities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. KILDEE:

H.R. 2894. A bill to amend the Public 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. CANTOR of Nevada, Ms. NORTON, Mr. LEW, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut, Mr. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. KEATING, Mr. MURPHY of Massachusetts, Ms. TITUS, Mr. PETERS, Ms. ESTY of Connecticut, Mr. FOCAN, Mr. KILDEE, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. NADER, Mr. G. 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 in 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 Committees on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as may 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 Committees on Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as may fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. O’HALLERAN (for himself and Mr. WELCH):

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 Indiana, 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. RUCK:

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. Kilbourn, 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 Awareness Month; to Committees on the Judiciary.

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. 2899.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 7, 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 I, 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 I, 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.

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. DeFazio, Mr. Sarbanes, Mr. Suozzi, and Mr. Tiberi.

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. 488: 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. Cole.

H. R. 631: Mr. LaHood.

H. R. 632: Mr. Gallagher.

H. R. 638: Mr. Shull.

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. Latta, Mr. Duncan of Tennessee, and Mr. Gotvary.

H. R. 852: Mr. Foster.

H. R. 878: Mr. Poe of Texas.

H. R. 978: Mrs. Murphy of Florida.


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. 1066: Mr. Scalise.

H. R. 1148: Mr. Rice of South Carolina.

H. R. 1164: Mr. DeSantis.

H. R. 1171: Mr. Gottheimer, Mr. Kind, Mr. Vargas, Mr. Takano, Mr. Lipinski, and Ms. Brownley of California.

H. R. 1225: Mr. Schiff.

H. R. 1237: Mrs. Wagner of Pennsylvania.

H. R. 1291: Mr. Soto and Mr. Fostie.

H. R. 1298: Mr. Loeb, Ms. Rosen, Mr. Marshall, and Mr. Moulton.

H. R. 1307: Mr. Delaney.


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. 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. Kinzinger, and Mr. Baird.

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. 1558: Mr. Messer.

H. R. 1568: Mr. Carson of Indiana.

H. R. 1588: Mr. Bost and Ms. Brownley of California.

H. R. 1635: Mr. Roskam.

H. R. 1655: Mr. Blumenauer.

H. R. 1661: Mr. Soto.

H. R. 1699: Mr. Huizenga, Mr. Sessions, Mr. McHenry, Mr. McCaul, Mr. Bridenstine, Mr. Hinson, Mr. Bacon, Mr. Smith of Nebraska, Mr. Russell, Mr. Garrett, Mr. Gonzalez of Texas, and Mr. Cole.

H. R. 1689: Mr. Huizenga, Mr. Vargas, Mr. Mulvaney, 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 Ms. Love.

H. R. 1821: Mr. Allen.

H. R. 1825: Ms. Brownley of California, Mr. Tonko, and Mr. Cramer.

H. R. 1828: Mr. Rossen.

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. Meehan, and Mr. Shimkus.

H. R. 1874: Mr. Katko and Mr. Stokes.

H. R. 1911: Mr. Foster, Mr. Bost, Mr. Suozzi, Mr. Bishop of Michigan, Mr. Lipinski to the Committee, Mrs. Watson Coleman, and Mr. Paschen.

H. R. 1928: Ms. Tenney, Mr. McCaul, Mr. Upton, and Mr. Posey.

H. R. 1931: 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. A LLEN and Mr. F ORTENBERRY.
H.R. 2158: Mr. R USH and Mr. S MITH of New Jersey.
H.R. 2215: Mr. B EYER, Mr. G RIJALVA, Ms. S INEMA, and Mr. CAPUANO.
H.R. 2224: Mr. M ARSHALL, Mrs. W ALORSKI, Mr. HOLDING, Mr. ROUZER, and Mr. TIPTON.
H.R. 2232: Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 2240: Ms. S INEMA and Mrs. M URPHY of Florida.
H.R. 2248: Mr. W ELCH, Ms. S CHAKOWSKY, Mrs. D EMINGS, Ms. E SHOO, Mr. K ILMER, Ms. WILSON of Florida, and Mr. SERRANO.
H.R. 2306: Ms. PINGREE.
H.R. 2317: Mr. FITZPATRICK.
H.R. 2318: Mr. HECK.
H.R. 2332: Mr. WALKER.
H.R. 2358: Ms. McCOLLUM.
H.R. 2371: Mr. GALLEGO.
H.R. 2383: Mr. PETERSON.
H.R. 2396: Mr. S HERMAN and Mr. L UETKEMEYER.
H.R. 2401: Mr. K ENNEDY, Mr. D ESAULNIER, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. L ARSEN of Washington, Mr. J OHNSON of Georgia, Mr. F ILLMORE, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, and Mr. B ROOKS of Alabama.
H.R. 2419: Mr. J ACKSON of Florida, Mr. S LANE of North Carolina, Mr. H ARRIS, Mr. D EFAZIO, and Mr. PALLONE.
H.R. 2426: Mr. BACON, Mr. GARAMENDI, Ms. LEE, Mr. C LEAVER, Ms. M CCOLLUM, Mr. L AWSON of Florida, and Mr. V ALADAO.
H.R. 2435: Mr. RASKIN.
H.R. 2476: Mr. DIAZ-BALART.
H.R. 2487: Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2488: Mr. BROWNLEY of California.
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. 2517: Mr. ROHRABACHER.
H.R. 2519: Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2542: Mr. HARRIS.
H.R. 2559: Mr. SCHIFF and Mr. SERRANO.
H.R. 2576: Mr. HARRIS, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. K ELDOE of North Carolina, and Ms. E STY of Connecticut.
H.R. 2595: Mr. V ALADAO.
H.R. 2616: Mr. JONES and Mr. O’HALLERAN.
H.R. 2620: Mr. BABIN, Mr. BCUSCHON, and Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 2641: Mr. GALLEGO.
H.R. 2651: Mr. MEEKS, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. K SNIDOR, Mr. C ONNOLLY, Miss R ICE of New York, Mr. P ETERS, Mr. D ESAULNIER, and Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER.
H.R. 2652: Mr. MEEKS, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. C ONNOLLY, Miss R ICE of New York, Mr. P EETERS, Mr. D ESAULNIER, and Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER.
H.R. 2670: Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD and Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H.R. 2671: Mr. DIAZ-BALART.
H.R. 2686: Mr. BASS, and Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2687: Ms. D EMINGS.
H.R. 2691: Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 2704: Mr. HARRIS.
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. 2750: Ms. MENG, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. AGUILAR, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, and Ms. ESTY of Connecticut.
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. SUDZIEL.
H.R. 2825: Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. MCSALLY, Mr. KING of New York, and Mr. GALLAGHER.
H.R. 2826: Mr. RATCLIFFE, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. SISNOBENZNER, and Mr. BROOKS of Alabama.
H.R. 2827: Mr. COHEN.
H.R. 2834: Ms. BASS.
H.R. 2847: Mr. KRUGER.
H.R. 2855: Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER.
H.R. 2867: Mr. NORTON.
H.R. 2881: Mr. HARRIS.
H.R. 2884: Mr. TEO LIU of California, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. McCOLLUM, Mr. SOTO, Ms. LEE, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. CLAY.
H.R. 2887: Mr. ROHRABACHER.
H.J. Res. 13: Mr. MC MORRIS RODGERS, Mr. THORNHUSBURY, and Mr. CURBelo of Florida.
H.J. Res. 29: Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H.J. Res. 52: Mr. SCHWARTZ.
H.J. Res. 69: Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. KILL adder, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Ms. MICHELLE LUIJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. CROWLEY.
H.J. Res. 85: Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. M OULTON, and Mr. GOTTTHEIMER.
H.J. Res. 104: Mr. GRI JALVA.
H. Con. Res. 13: Mr. SCHAMBERG, Mr. B EYER, Mr. G RIJALVA, and Mr. D ESAULNIER.