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No. 47

Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 20, 2017, at 10 a.m.

House of Representatives

FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 2017

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Merciful God, thank You for giving us another day.

Your care and wisdom are shown to us by the way You extend Your kingdom into our world down to the present day. Your Word reveals every aspect of Your saving plan. You accomplish Your designed purpose in and through the hearts of the faithful who respond to You.

Today, convert our minds and hearts that we may become the great Nation You hope us to be.

Help the Members of the people's House to seek Your presence in the midst of their busy lives. Animate them with Your spirit, and help them to perform their appointed tasks to come to solutions that will redound to the benefit of our Nation.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.
Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. HARPER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HARPER led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

TIMBER INNOVATION ACT

(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, last week, with Rep-

resentative SUZAN DELBENE, I introduced the Timber Innovation Act to help find new and innovative uses for wood as a building material.

Proudly, the Allegheny National Forest is a part of the Fifth Congressional District of Pennsylvania. Communities in my district depend on the revenue from high-value timbering and forest products that are generated by the forest as well as privately held lands throughout the Commonwealth.

This bipartisan legislation encourages the advancement of tall wood building construction along with research and development.

Mr. Speaker, since our earliest days, we have used wood as a building material. New technology will help expand and develop the use of wood in larger construction projects. Currently, most wood buildings do not exceed three to four stories in height, but we hope to change that.

There is so much potential for mass timber, and this bill truly encourages new advancements of wood construction. This bill is good for both consumers and the industry, and I encourage my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill and advance the sustainable forest management and opportunities in our rural communities.

FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

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

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

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



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H2153

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, since 2013 I have flown the pride flag outside my D.C. office in solidarity with the LGBT community. According to the House historian, I was the first to do so, a fact that I am very proud of.

Yesterday, outside my office in Washington, D.C., a man took that flag out of its holder, threw it on the ground, and stomped on it. He called the flag disgusting and immoral.

This flag is a symbol of pride for the LGBT community—an international symbol of love, understanding, equality, and hope.

The shadows of intolerance have grown longer in recent days: bomb threats called into Jewish community centers, desecrations of Jewish cemeteries, hate crimes against minorities and the transgender community, horrifically racist statements from a Member of this body.

To all our brothers and sisters who endure through these hateful acts, we stand with you, and we will continue to fight for your rights and your equality.

LISTENING TO EVERYBODY'S VOICE

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, you can learn a lot when you listen. During times like these, when political infighting makes it difficult to hear everyone's voice, we need to try even harder.

Today I would like to encourage all of my constituents in the Illinois 12th District to visit bost.house.gov/yourstory to share your personal perspective on the Affordable Care Act. Again, that is bost.house.gov/yourstory.

If the law has helped you and your family receive care you needed, I want to hear about it. If the law has put you in a situation where you don't have insurance or have higher premiums, I want to hear about that, too.

It is important that we deal with this healthcare issue and reform it so that it works for all people. And for the people of southern Illinois, I want to hear your story.

HEALTH CARE IS COMPLICATED

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

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, President Trump has made some implausible statements recently, but one that certainly takes the cake on the issue of health care is when he said that nobody knew that health care could be so complicated.

Well, for President Trump and those who are attacking the Affordable Care Act, I would like to talk about one little boy who challenges this claim.

This week, of course, we know from the nonpartisan CBO just how dev-

astating the Trump-Ryan repeal would be for millions of Americans, including Rhett Krawitt, a 9-year-old boy who lives in my district.

Rhett battled and won a tough fight with leukemia. He spoke to a townhall in my district on Monday, where he said: "Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, my parents don't have to worry about losing coverage because I have a preexisting condition. My family knows exactly how much money our health care will cost. I can stay on my parents' plan and get medical insurance when I go to college and medical school."

And he added one more thing. He said: "I may only be 9 years old, but I have known for a long time that health care is complicated."

Mr. Trump, if only you had spoken to this 9-year-old before trying to gut health care for millions of Americans.

Let's not go backward on health care in this country.

REMEMBERING CAPTAIN ANDREW BECKER AND FIRST LIEUTENANT FREDERICK "DREW" DELLECKER

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

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my condolences to the families of the three Air Force officers who were killed in a plane crash earlier this week in New Mexico. Two of these officers had strong ties to the Sixth Congressional District in Florida, and particularly Volusia County.

Captain Andrew Becker graduated from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach in 2007. He was a great student, a real world beater. He did what many graduates of Riddle do. He served our country with honor and distinction, and we are thankful for his service to this country. We send our condolences to his wife.

First Lieutenant Drew Dellecker graduated from the Air Force Academy in 2013 after growing up in Volusia County. This special guy dedicated his life to serving our country and defending our freedoms. The Volusia County community is saddened by his loss; and his parents, Bill and Karen, are in our thoughts and prayers.

May God bless these fine young men, and may God bless their memory in the United States of America.

IRISH LESSONS

(Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today I join with millions around the globe to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The United States of America would not be the country we are today without the enormous contributions of millions of Irish immigrants and their descendants.

From serving in every war our country has ever faced and leading our country at every level of government, Irish Americans have done it all. Today, more than 33 million Irish Americans claim Irish ancestry.

Tragically, our country didn't always welcome the Irish. During the late 19th and 20th centuries, Irish arriving on our shores were met with contempt, disdain, and with signs that read, "Irish need not apply." But they persisted, and our country is all the better for it.

So, today, St. Patrick's Day, I thank you and say thank you to all the Irish men and women who helped shape the great country we are today.

Thank you, and happy St. Patrick's Day.

PROVIDING FOR THE EXPENSES OF CERTAIN COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN THE 115TH CONGRESS

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on House Administration, I call up House Resolution 173 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 173

Resolved,

SECTION 1. COMMITTEE EXPENSES FOR THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—With respect to the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress, there shall be paid out of the applicable accounts of the House of Representatives, in accordance with this primary expense resolution, not more than the amount specified in subsection (b) for the expenses (including the expenses of all staff salaries) of each committee named in such subsection.

(b) COMMITTEES AND AMOUNTS.—The committees and amounts referred to in subsection (a) are: Committee on Agriculture, \$11,437,517; Committee on Armed Services, \$16,188,340; Committee on the Budget, \$10,380,424; Committee on Education and the Workforce, \$14,454,212; Committee on Energy and Commerce, \$20,531,442; Committee on Ethics, \$6,681,326; Committee on Financial Services, \$16,580,450; Committee on Foreign Affairs, \$15,673,986; Committee on Homeland Security, \$15,007,846; Committee on House Administration, \$10,343,130; Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, \$12,100,000; Committee on the Judiciary, \$15,350,572; Committee on Natural Resources, \$13,758,344; Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, \$18,259,682; Committee on Rules, \$6,460,562; Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, \$10,969,956; Committee on Small Business, \$6,287,037; Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, \$17,416,000; Committee on Veterans' Affairs, \$7,958,062; and Committee on Ways and Means, \$17,940,692.

SEC. 2. FIRST SESSION LIMITATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Of the amount provided for in section 1 for each committee named in subsection (b), not more than the amount specified in such subsection shall be available for expenses incurred during the period beginning at noon on January 3, 2017, and ending immediately before noon on January 3, 2018.

(b) COMMITTEES AND AMOUNTS.—The committees and amounts referred to in subsection (a) are: Committee on Agriculture,

\$5,699,668; Committee on Armed Services, \$8,094,170; Committee on the Budget, \$5,190,212; Committee on Education and the Workforce, \$7,146,429; Committee on Energy and Commerce, \$10,265,721; Committee on Ethics, \$3,340,663; Committee on Financial Services, \$8,290,225; Committee on Foreign Affairs, \$7,836,993; Committee on Homeland Security, \$7,503,923; Committee on House Administration, \$5,021,565; Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, \$6,050,000; Committee on the Judiciary, \$7,625,286; Committee on Natural Resources, \$6,879,172; Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, \$9,129,841; Committee on Rules, \$3,230,281; Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, \$5,484,978; Committee on Small Business, \$3,037,400; Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, \$8,655,500; Committee on Veterans' Affairs, \$3,979,031; and Committee on Ways and Means, \$8,954,346.

SEC. 3. SECOND SESSION LIMITATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Of the amount provided for in section 1 for each committee named in subsection (b), not more than the amount specified in such subsection shall be available for expenses incurred during the period beginning at noon on January 3, 2018, and ending immediately before noon on January 3, 2019.

(b) COMMITTEES AND AMOUNTS.—The committees and amounts referred to in subsection (a) are: Committee on Agriculture, \$5,737,849; Committee on Armed Services, \$8,094,170; Committee on the Budget, \$5,190,212; Committee on Education and the Workforce, \$7,307,783; Committee on Energy and Commerce, \$10,265,721; Committee on Ethics, \$3,340,663; Committee on Financial Services, \$8,290,225; Committee on Foreign Affairs, \$7,836,993; Committee on Homeland Security, \$7,503,923; Committee on House Administration, \$5,321,565; Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, \$6,050,000; Committee on the Judiciary, \$7,625,286; Committee on Natural Resources, \$6,879,172; Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, \$9,129,841; Committee on Rules, \$3,230,281; Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, \$5,484,978; Committee on Small Business, \$3,249,637; Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, \$8,760,500; Committee on Veterans' Affairs, \$3,979,031; and Committee on Ways and Means, \$8,986,346.

(c) REVIEW OF USE OF FUNDS IN FIRST SESSION.—

(1) REVIEW.—None of the amounts provided for in section 1 for a committee named in subsection (b) may be available for expenses of the committee after March 15, 2018, unless the chair or ranking minority member of the committee appears and presents testimony at a hearing of the Committee on House Administration held prior to such date to review the committee's use of the amounts provided for in section 1 during the first session of the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress and to determine whether the amount specified in subsection (b) with respect to the committee should be updated on the basis of the review.

(2) WAIVER.—The Committee on House Administration may waive the application of paragraph (1) to any or all of the committees named in subsection (b).

SEC. 4. VOUCHERS.

Payments under this resolution shall be made on vouchers authorized by the committee involved, signed by the chairman of such committee, and approved in the manner directed by the Committee on House Administration.

SEC. 5. REGULATIONS.

Amounts made available under this resolution shall be expended in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Committee on House Administration.

SEC. 6. RESERVE FUND FOR UNANTICIPATED EXPENSES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is hereby established a reserve fund for unanticipated expenses of committees for the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress.

(b) AMOUNT.—The reserve fund under this section shall have a balance of \$2,500,000, of which—

(1) \$1,250,000 shall be available for unanticipated expenses incurred during the period beginning at noon on January 3, 2017, and ending immediately before noon on January 3, 2018; and

(2) \$1,250,000 shall be available for unanticipated expenses incurred during the period beginning at noon on January 3, 2018, and ending immediately before noon on January 3, 2019.

(c) ALLOCATION TO COMMITTEES.—Amounts in the reserve fund under this section shall be paid to a committee pursuant to an allocation approved by the Committee on House Administration.

SEC. 7. ADJUSTMENT AUTHORITY.

The Committee on House Administration shall have authority to make adjustments in amounts under section 1, if necessary to comply with an order of the President issued under section 251A or 254 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 or to conform to any change in appropriations for the purposes of such section 1.

Mr. HARPER (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Mississippi?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY), the ranking member of the Committee on House Administration, pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on House Resolution 173.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 173, a resolution which authorizes House Committee budget levels for the 115th Congress.

Each Congress, the House looks to the Committee on House Administration to carry out the responsibility of determining the amount needed to fund standing House committees for this year and next.

Our committee began this process by holding a hearing to receive input from the chairmen and ranking members of the various standing committees.

I thank each of them and their staffs for providing us and our colleagues with the information needed to help our committee determine the appropriate funding levels.

I also want to extend my sincere thanks for the collaborative manner in which the chairmen and ranking members worked together to create a budget request that is really targeted to meet their legislative and important oversight responsibilities.

My colleagues and I took the priorities laid out in the hearing we held into account; and together, our committee passed, by unanimous voice vote, the bipartisan funding resolution that is before us today.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution before us.

The credit for this bipartisan legislation goes to my colleague and friend, the gentleman from Mississippi. I want to thank Chairman HARPER for his bipartisan cooperation in developing this agreeable legislation. All committees should follow our lead.

I also want to thank our staffs, the Democratic and the Republican sides, for putting together the bill that we have on the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation we are considering now.

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

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

I want to express my appreciation to the ranking member of the committee, Mr. BRADY. The cooperation that we have had, I think, is a good model to follow. I thank him for that support.

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

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

IMPROVING AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO HIRE AND RETAIN PHYSICIANS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HARPER). Pursuant to House Resolution 198 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 1367.

Will the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. SIMPSON) kindly take the chair.

□ 0915

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire

and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, with Mr. SIMPSON (Acting Chair) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Acting CHAIR. When the Committee of the Whole House rose on Thursday, March 16, 2017, all time for general debate had expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 115-6. That amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read.

The text of the amendment in the nature of a substitute is as follows:

H.R. 1367

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Modification to annual determination of staffing shortages in Veterans Health Administration.
- Sec. 3. Executive management fellowship program.
- Sec. 4. Accountability of leaders for managing the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Sec. 5. Modification to veterans preference.
- Sec. 6. Reemployment of former employees.
- Sec. 7. Recruiting database.
- Sec. 8. Human resources academy.
- Sec. 9. Promotional opportunities for technical experts.
- Sec. 10. Comptroller General study on succession planning.
- Sec. 11. Information on hiring effectiveness.
- Sec. 12. Employment of students and recent graduates.
- Sec. 13. Exit surveys.

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION TO ANNUAL DETERMINATION OF STAFFING SHORTAGES IN VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.

Section 7412(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking “the five occupations” and inserting “the five clinical occupations and the five nonclinical occupations”; and

(2) by striking “throughout the Department” and inserting “with respect to each medical center of the Department.”.

SEC. 3. EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.

(a) FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.—Chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subchapter:

“SUBCHAPTER III—EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM “§ 741. Executive Management Fellowship Program

“(a) FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.—There is in the Department an Executive Management Fellowship Program. The purpose of the program shall be to provide—

“(1) eligible employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration with training and experience in the private sector; and

“(2) eligible employees of a private-sector entity with training and experience in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“(b) FELLOWSHIP.—(1) A fellowship provided under this section is a one-year fellowship during which—

“(A) with respect to a Department participant, the participant receives training and experience at a private-sector entity that is engaged in the administration and delivery of health care or other services similar to the benefits administered by the Secretary; and

“(B) with respect to a private-sector participant, the participant receives training and experience at the Veterans Benefits Administration or the Veterans Health Administration.

“(2) The Secretary shall enter into such agreements with private-sector entities as are necessary to carry out this section.

“(c) SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.—(1) In August of each year, the Secretary shall select—

“(A) not fewer than 18 and not more than 30 eligible employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration to receive a fellowship under this section; and

“(B) not fewer than 18 and not more than 30 eligible employees of private-sector entities to receive a fellowship under this section.

“(2) To the extent practicable, the Secretary shall select eligible employees under subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (1) from among eligible employees who are veterans in a manner that is reflective of the demographics of the veteran population of the United States.

“(d) ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES.—For the purposes of this section, an eligible employee is—

“(1) with respect to an employee of the Veterans Benefits Administration or the Veterans Health Administration, an employee who—

“(A) is compensated at a rate of basic pay not less than the minimum rate of basic pay payable for grade GS-14 of the General Schedule and not more than either the minimum rate of basic pay payable to a member of the Senior Executive Service under section 5382 of title 5, United States Code, or the minimum rate of basic pay payable pursuant to chapter 74 of this title, as the case may be;

“(B) enters into an agreement with the Secretary under subsection (e); and

“(C) submits to the Secretary an application containing such information and assurances as the Secretary may require; and

“(2) with respect to an employee of a private-sector entity, an employee who—

“(A) is employed in a position whose duties and responsibilities are commensurate with an employee of the Department described in paragraph (1);

“(B) enters into an agreement with the Secretary under subsection (e); and

“(C) submits to the Secretary an application containing such information and assurances as the Secretary may require.

“(e) AGREEMENTS.—(1) An agreement between the Secretary and a Department participant shall be in writing, shall be signed by the participant, and shall include the following provisions:

“(A) The Secretary’s agreement to provide the participant with a fellowship under this section;

“(B) The participant’s agreement—

“(i) to accept the fellowship;

“(ii) after completion of the fellowship, to serve as a full-time employee in the Veterans Benefits Administration or the Veterans Health Administration for at least two years as specified in the agreement; and

“(iii) that, during the two-year period beginning on the last day of the fellowship, the participant will not accept employment in

the same industry as the industry of the private-sector entity at which the participant accepts the fellowship.

“(C) A provision that any financial obligation of the United States arising out of an agreement entered into under this subchapter, and any obligation of the participant which is conditioned on such agreement, is contingent upon funds being appropriated.

“(D) A statement of the damages to which the United States is entitled under this subchapter for the participant’s breach of the agreement.

“(E) Such other terms as the Secretary determines are required to be included in the agreement.

“(2) An agreement between the Secretary and a private-sector participant shall be in writing, shall be signed by the participant, and shall include the following provisions:

“(A) The Secretary’s agreement to provide the participant with a fellowship under this section.

“(B) The participant’s agreement to accept the fellowship.

“(C) Such other terms as the Secretary determines are required to be included in the agreement.

“(f) TREATMENT OF RECIPIENTS.—(1) A Department participant shall be considered an employee of the Department for all purposes, including for purposes of receiving a salary and benefits, and shall remain eligible for all promotion and incentive programs otherwise available to such an employee.

“(2) A private-sector participant shall be considered an employee of the private-sector entity that employs the participant for all purposes, including for purposes of receiving a salary and benefits, and during the fellowship shall be treated as a contractor of the Department.

“(g) REPORTS.—Not later than 60 days after completing a fellowship under this section, a recipient of the fellowship shall submit to the Secretary a report on the fellowship. Each such report shall describe the duties of the recipient during the fellowship and any recommendations of the recipient for the application by the Secretary of industry processes, technologies, and best practices. Not later than seven days after receiving each such report, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives such report without change.

“(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘Department participant’ means an employee of the Veterans Benefits Administration or the Veterans Health Administration who is participating in the fellowship under this section.

“(2) The term ‘private-sector entity’ includes an entity operating under a public-private partnership.

“(3) The term ‘private-sector participant’ means an employee of a private-sector entity who is participating in the fellowship under this section.”.

(b) DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement the Executive Management Fellowship Program required under section 741 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new items:

“SUBCHAPTER III—EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

“741. Executive Management Fellowship Program.”.

SEC. 4. ACCOUNTABILITY OF LEADERS FOR MANAGING THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 717 the following new section:

“§ 719. Annual performance plan for political appointees

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct an annual performance plan for each political appointee of the Department that is similar to the annual performance plan conducted for an employee of the Department who is appointed as a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5) within the Senior Executive Service at the Department.

“(b) ELEMENTS OF PLAN.—Each annual performance plan conducted under subsection (a) with respect to a political appointee of the Department shall include an assessment of whether the appointee is meeting the following goals:

“(1) Recruiting, selecting, and retaining well-qualified individuals for employment at the Department.

“(2) Engaging and motivating employees.

“(3) Training and developing employees and preparing those employees for future leadership roles within the Department.

“(4) Holding each employee of the Department that is a manager accountable for addressing issues relating to performance, in particular issues relating to the performance of employees that report to the manager.

“(c) DEFINITION OF POLITICAL APPOINTEE.—In this section, the term ‘political appointee’ means an employee of the Department who holds—

“(1) a position which has been excepted from the competitive service by reason of its confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating character; or

“(2) a position in the Senior Executive Service as a noncareer appointee (as such term is defined in section 3132(a) of title 5).”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 717 the following new item:

“719. Annual performance plan for political appointees.”.

SEC. 5. MODIFICATION TO VETERANS PREFERENCE.

(a) ACTIVE DUTY REQUIREMENT.—Section 2108(1)(B) and (D) of title 5, United States Code, are amended by striking “consecutive” in each instance it appears and inserting “cumulative”.

(b) EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY OF RETIRED VETERANS.—Section 2108(4) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(4) ‘preference eligible’ includes a retired member of the armed forces; and”.

SEC. 6. REEMPLOYMENT OF FORMER EMPLOYEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may noncompetitively appoint a qualified former employee to any position within the competitive service or any excepted service position under chapter 74 of title 38, United States Code, at the Department of Veterans Affairs that is one grade higher than the grade of the position at the Department most recently occupied by the employee.

(b) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may not appoint a qualified former employee to a position that is more than one grade (or equivalent) higher than the position at the Department most recently occupied by the employee.

(c) DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED FORMER EMPLOYEE.—For purposes of this section, the term “qualified former employee” means any individual who—

(1) formerly occupied any position at the Department of Veterans Affairs within two years before applying for reemployment at the Department;

(2) voluntarily left such position, or was subject to a reduction in force, and had a satisfactory performance record while occupying such position; and

(3) since leaving such position has maintained licensing requirements, related to the position, if any, and gained skill, knowledge, or other factors related to the position.

SEC. 7. RECRUITING DATABASE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a single database that lists each vacant position in the Department of Veterans Affairs that the Secretary determines is critical to the mission of the Department, difficult to fill, or both.

(b) QUALIFIED APPLICANT.—If the Secretary determines that an applicant for a vacant position listed in the database established under subsection (a) is qualified for such position but does not select the applicant for such position, the Secretary, at the election of the applicant, shall consider the applicant for other similar vacant positions listed in the database for which the applicant is qualified.

(c) PROLONGED VACANCIES.—If the Secretary does not fill a vacant position listed in the database established under subsection (a) after a period determined appropriate by the Secretary, the Secretary—

(1) shall ensure that applicants described in subsection (b) are considered for such position; and

(2) shall use the database established under subsection (a) to assist in filling such position.

(d) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the use and efficacy of the database established under subsection (a).

SEC. 8. HUMAN RESOURCES ACADEMY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide to human resources professionals of the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs training on how to best recruit and retain employees of the Veterans Health Administration, including with respect to any recruitment and retention matters that are unique to the Veterans Health Administration pursuant to chapter 74 of title 38, United States Code, or other provisions of law. The Secretary shall provide such training in a manner that the Secretary determines appropriate in light of budget, travel, and other constraints.

(b) AMOUNT OF TRAINING.—The Secretary shall ensure that each human resources professional of the Veterans Health Administration receives the training described in subsection (a)—

(1) as soon as practicable after being hired by the Secretary as a human resource professional; and

(2) annually thereafter.

(c) CERTIFICATION.—The Secretary shall require that each human resources professional of the Veterans Health Administration, upon the completion of the training described in subsection (a), certifies that the professional received the training and understands the information provided by the training.

(d) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate an annual report on the training described in subsection (a), including the cost of providing such training and the number of human resources professionals who received such training during the year covered by the report.

SEC. 9. PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TECHNICAL EXPERTS.

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a promotional track system for employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs that the Secretary determines are technical experts pursuant to regulations prescribed by the Secretary for purposes of carrying out this section. Such system shall—

(1) provide any such employee the opportunity to advance within the Department without being required to transition to a management position; and

(2) for purposes of achieving career advancement—

(A) provide for the establishment of new positions within the Department; and

(B) notwithstanding any other provision of law, provide for increases in pay for any such employee.

SEC. 10. COMPTROLLER GENERAL STUDY ON SUCCESSION PLANNING.

(a) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study on each of the following:

(1) The succession planning at each medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) The succession planning at the Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration of the Department.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The study under subsection (a) shall include, for each entity studied under the study, the following:

(1) A determination of the mission-critical positions within the entity and the vacancy risk of such positions.

(2) An analysis of the future needs for mission-critical positions and gaps within the existing talent pool of the entity.

(3) A description of strategies to close skill gaps through the use of training for existing staff, targeted recruitment, and hiring.

(4) A plan to regularly evaluate progress of staff and update existing succession plans using clear and measurable metrics and benchmarks.

(5) A demonstration of the capacity of the entity to execute succession plans with successful succession management strategies.

(6) Any other matters the Comptroller General determines appropriate.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report containing each study conducted under subsection (a).

SEC. 11. INFORMATION ON HIRING EFFECTIVENESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall measure and collect information on indicators of hiring effectiveness as follows:

(1) With respect to recruiting and hiring—

(A) the ability to reach and recruit well-qualified talent from diverse talent pools, including sources of candidates for mission-critical occupations;

(B) the use and impact of special hiring authorities and flexibilities to recruit most qualified applicants, including the use of student internships as a talent pool for permanent hires;

(C) the use and impact of special hiring authorities and flexibilities to recruit diverse candidates, including veteran, minority and disabled candidates;

(D) the use and impact of special hiring authorities and flexibilities to recruit candidates for mission-critical occupations and occupations with shortages;

(E) the age, educational level, and source of applicants;

(F) the length of time between the date on which a position is advertised and the date on which a first offer of employment is made;

(G) the length of time between the date on which a first offer of employment for a position is made and the date on which a new hire starts in that position;

(H) the number of internal and external applicants for positions; and

(I) the number of offers accepted compared to the number of offers made for permanent positions.

(2) With respect to the hiring authority—

(A) the satisfaction of the hiring authority with—

(i) the quality of new hires;

(ii) the match between the skills of newly hired individuals and the needs of the Department;

(iii) the hiring process and hiring outcomes after the first year of the employment of a new hire; and

(iv) the length of time that elapses to fill a position and for a new hire to begin working in a new position; and

(B) mission-critical deficiencies filled by new hires and the connection between mission-critical deficiencies and annual agency performance.

(3) Satisfaction of employment applicants with the hiring process, including with respect to the clarity of job announcement, reasons for withdrawal of applications, user-friendliness of the application process, communication regarding status of application, and timeliness of hiring decision.

(4) With respect to a newly hired employee—

(A) the satisfaction of the employee with the hiring process as described in paragraph (3);

(B) the satisfaction with the process of joining and becoming oriented with the Department, including with respect to the timeliness of such process after the hiring decision, the orientation process, and being provided with timely and useful new employee information and assistance after the hire is made but before the new hire starts in that position and after the new hire has begun;

(C) attrition and reasons for leaving;

(D) investment in training and development for the employee during the first year of employment; and

(E) significant barriers to the effective recruitment, selection, joining and becoming oriented with the Department, and retention of employees.

(b) DISAGGREGATION OF DATA.—To the extent practicable and in a manner which protects personally identifiable information of applicants and employees, the Secretary shall collect and report data collected under subsection (a) disaggregated by facility or Veterans Integrated Service Network.

(c) REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—On an annual basis, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report of the information collected under subsection (a).

(2) AVAILABILITY OF RECRUITING AND HIRING INFORMATION.—On an annual basis, the Secretary shall make publicly available the information collected under subsection (a) in a consistent and machine-readable format to allow for a comparison of hiring effectiveness and experience by Veterans Integrated Service Network or comparable public or private sector organization.

SEC. 12. EMPLOYMENT OF STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall prescribe regulations to allow for excepted service appointments of students and recent graduates leading to

conversion to career or career conditional employment of a student or recent graduate of a qualifying educational institution, as defined by the Department.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The conversion authority described in subsection (a) shall be applicable to individuals in good standing who—

(1) are employed in a qualifying internship or fellowship program at the Department;

(2) are employed in the Department in a volunteer capacity and performing substantive duties comparable to those of individuals in internship or fellowship programs and meet the required number of hours for conversion; or

(3) are employed in the Department under a contract or agreement with an external nonprofit organization and performing substantive duties comparable to those of individuals in internship or fellowship programs.

(c) UNIFORMITY.—For the purposes of subsections (b)(2) and (b)(3), hours of work performed by an individual employed shall be considered equal to those performed by an individual employed in a qualifying internship or fellowship program by the Department.

SEC. 13. EXIT SURVEYS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and carry out a standardized exit survey to be voluntarily completed by career and noncareer employees and executives of the Department of Veterans Affairs who voluntarily separate from the Department. Such exit survey shall be developed in consultation with an appropriate non-Department entity with experience developing such surveys.

(b) SURVEY CONTENT.—The survey shall include, at a minimum—

(1) reasons for leaving the Department;

(2) efforts made by the supervisor of the employee to retain the individual;

(3) the extent of job satisfaction and engagement during the employment;

(4) the intent of employee to either remain employed within the Federal Government or to leave employment with the Federal Government; and

(5) such other matters as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(c) ANONYMITY OF SURVEY CONTENT.—The Secretary shall ensure that, to the extent possible, data collected under subsection (a) is anonymized and personally identifiable information is removed.

(d) SHARING OF SURVEY DATA.—The Secretary shall ensure that the results of the survey required by subsection (a) are shared on an annual basis with directors and managers of facilities of the Department and the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

(e) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report containing the aggregate results of the exit survey under subsection (a) covering the year prior to the report. The report shall include—

(1) an analysis of the most common reasons employees choose to leave the Department;

(2) steps the Secretary is taking to improve retention, particularly for mission-critical occupations;

(3) the demographic characteristics of employees choosing to leave the Department;

(4) any legislative barriers to improving employee retention; and

(5) the number of employees who took the exit survey under subsection (a).

The Acting CHAIR. No amendment to that amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in part B of House Report

115-39. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. WENSTRUP

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 1 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 8, line 8, strike “90 days” and insert “one year”.

Page 12, line 12, strike “shall” and insert “may”.

Page 12, line 19, strike “shall” and insert “may”.

Page 12, line 21, strike “shall” and insert “may”.

Page 13, strike lines 11 through 13 and insert “such training virtually.”.

Page 16, line 9, strike “one year” and insert “two years”.

Page 16, beginning line 14, strike section 11.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, my manager's amendment makes a number of minor technical changes to the reported version of the bill and would significantly reduce discretionary costs while maintaining the overall intent of the bill.

The biggest change that would be made in the manager's amendment is the removal of section 11 of the bill, which would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to track a number of hiring effectiveness metrics.

That section alone scored at \$6 million because the Congressional Budget Office expected that the VA would have to hire an additional employee in each Veterans Integrated Service Network in order to gather that information. I disagree with that assertion and I intend to continue working on that provision to, hopefully, include it in future legislation in some form.

In addition, the manager's amendment would authorize but not require the VA to track and match qualified job applicants for vacant positions using the recruiting database that the bill would establish. The CBO estimated that the VA would have to hire up to 40 additional employees with an average compensation of \$100,000 per year to accomplish that task, meaning that provision in total would cost \$19 million. Again, I disagree with the assertion that such a task could not be accomplished using existing staff.

The Subcommittee on Health, which I am proud to chair, is holding an oversight hearing next week where I intend

to ask the VA how the Department would utilize the recruiting database and whether it would entail additional employees. Should it appear that the VA would not use the recruiting database to identify qualified candidates for open positions in a timely manner and to promptly fill prolonged vacancies, I will certainly reconsider mandating that in future legislation.

The manager's amendment would also stipulate that the additional human resources training that the bill would require be done virtually. Finally, it would extend the timeline to implement the executive management fellowship program from 90 days to 1 year, which would provide the VA additional time to set up this important new leadership development program and would extend the GAO reporting deadline from 1 to 2 years, which would provide the GAO additional time to complete their investigation into the VA succession planning.

Mr. Chair, I urge the adoption of the amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Minnesota is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, as mentioned last night during general debate on the underlying bill, the VA has experienced a shortage of medical providers. This shortage impacts not only a veteran's access to care, but also the quality of care a veteran may receive.

Dr. Wenstrup's amendment is smart. It would allow the VA more authority, information, and resources, all of which they need to compete with non-VA facilities. The honorable Member from Ohio has worked hard to ensure that what we are proposing with this legislation is reasonable from all sides. I am grateful for that. I do not object to the various changes he is proposing with this amendment to the timeline, to the GAO reporting deadline, and to the establishment of a recruiting database from a "shall" to a "may" authority. This is exactly what we should be doing, putting forward good pieces of legislation, making sure that the VA gets the best possible people, keeps them there, and care for our veterans. I fully support the gentleman's amendment.

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MS. MENG

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 2 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Ms. MENG. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 2, line 2, strike "the five clinical" and insert "at a minimum, the five clinical".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

Ms. MENG. Mr. Chair, I thank Representative WENSTRUP for his thoughtful amendment, and I thank Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ for bringing it to the floor today.

Clearly, there are staffing shortages within the Department of Veterans Affairs, and, clearly, something must be done. Personally, I think this legislation is a good first step toward improving the VA's ability to identify staffing shortages, recruit and retain high-quality employees, and onboard new hires.

The amendment I am offering today speaks to the identification of staffing shortages portion of this bill. Under current law, 38 U.S.C. 7412 to be exact, the inspector general of the VA is required to submit a report to the VA Secretary annually highlighting the five personnel occupations with the largest staffing shortages throughout the Department. After receiving this report, the Secretary is then permitted to recruit and directly appoint qualified individuals to fill those vacancies.

Section 2 of the bill before us does something important to current law. It will require the IG to report on not just the five occupations with the largest staffing shortages, it will require the IG to report on the five clinical and five nonclinical occupations with the largest shortages in the VA. Additionally, it will require this reporting to be done for each medical center. Mr. Chair, I think this is a wonderful change, one that is sorely needed.

What my amendment would do is add to this expanded reporting requirement a simple clarification: the IG must report on, at minimum, the five clinical and nonclinical occupations with the largest staffing shortages at each facility. It would allow the IG to report on more than the five occupations with the largest shortages, should his findings require it.

This amendment is not an additional reporting requirement. It simply makes clear that should the IG find additional staffing shortages, he may highlight those so that the Secretary may fill them more quickly. It is a simple attempt to avoid the necessity of passing similar legislation 2, 3, or even 4 years from now.

Our veterans need the care that they have earned and that they deserve. They need it now. The first step in that endeavor is making sure that the VA staffing levels are adequate.

Again, Mr. Chair, I am pleased to see this amendment on the floor today and to do my small part in ensuring that veterans get the care they need. I urge my colleagues to support this amend-

ment, which would allow the VA inspector general to highlight additional staffing shortages within the Department.

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Representative MENG's amendment, which would stipulate that the annual determination of Veterans Health Administration staffing shortages must include at least five clinical occupations and five nonclinical occupations within each VA medical center.

This amendment rightfully recognizes that some VA medical centers may have staffing challenges that extend beyond just 10 occupations and provides sufficient flexibility for this reporting requirement—which triggers the VA's direct hiring authority—to accommodate that by reporting more than five clinical and five nonclinical occupations, as needed.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment. I thank Representative MENG for submitting it.

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

Ms. MENG. Mr. Chairman, I urge support for this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MS. SEWELL OF ALABAMA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 3 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 4, line 2, before the period insert the following: "and that whenever practicable provides a preference to such employees who represent or service rural areas".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Chair, today I rise in support of bipartisan work to enhance recruitment and retention strategies at VA medical centers. While we focus on strengthening the VA workforce, we must also

focus on making sure the geographic diversity of our VA workforce is reflective of the veteran patient population and that rural populations are adequately represented.

I thank Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ for working with me on this critically important amendment and for their dedication to our Nation's veterans.

My amendment is simple. It allows the Secretary to select eligible employees for the fellowship program who represent or service rural communities in order to alleviate the systemic burdens of rural healthcare workforce shortages for our Nation's veterans. In order to best serve our Nation's heroes from rural America, we must invest in training VA workers who understand the unique needs of rural America.

This amendment would help ensure that veterans who are serviced by rural VAs have access to the most cutting-edge healthcare industry procedures and practices. My amendment also helps address an issue that is indicative of a larger systemic issue in rural America where healthcare workforce recruitment is a barrier to improved population health. Workforce shortages, especially in health care, permeate every aspect of rural life, aggregating already long driving distances and minimal access to care.

There is significant evidence that increased recruitment and retention of professionals to underserved areas can exist if we recruit people from rural areas to come into our healthcare profession. To help address concerns of veterans' access to care, Congress established the Office of Rural Health within the VA in 2007. This office has done outstanding work over the years to recruit, train, and retain rural healthcare professionals. Everything we do in Congress in relation to the VA workforce must complement that work.

Approximately 25 percent of our Nation's veterans live in rural communities and comprise nearly 11 percent of the adult rural population. Rural veterans account for 36 percent of all VA enrollees. 43 percent of rural veterans earn an annual income of less than \$26,000, and more than 40 percent do not have access to broadband internet. This limits the accessibility of our rural veterans to online healthcare services.

According to the Census, the rates of uninsurance, disability, poverty, and unemployment among veterans all increase as the levels of rurality increase. Four in ten have at least one service-connected disability. The Seventh Congressional District of Alabama is home to more than 36,000 veterans and over 5,000 VA employees at eight facilities. I visited with the VA staff at several of these facilities, and I am always impressed with the work that they do every day on behalf of our Nation's veterans. With all of the negativity surrounding our VA employees over the past several years, I want to

take this opportunity to commend those public servants who rise every morning to help our veterans lead productive and healthy lives.

I hope my colleagues, both urban and rural, will work with me to ensure that rural veterans thrive in their communities and rural Americans are included in this outstanding VA workforce recruitment bill. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of Representative SEWELL's amendment, which would authorize the Secretary in selecting employees to participate in the executive management fellowship program established by section 3 of the bill, to provide a preference for employees in rural areas.

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According to VA's Office of Rural Health, there are currently 3 million veterans living in rural communities across the country who rely on the VA healthcare system for their care.

It is critical that VA medical facilities in rural areas are given access to leadership development opportunities like the executive management fellowship program so that rural veterans benefit from them.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment, and I thank Representative SEWELL for submitting it.

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

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentleman for supporting this amendment, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it as well.

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MS. HANABUSA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 4 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Strike section 6.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HANABUSA) and a

Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Hawaii.

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak on my amendment to strike Section 6, Reemployment of Former Employees.

Mr. Chairman, I understand the value of rehiring competent and capable former employees who left and want to return to serve our veterans at the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, the current text would allow the Secretary to rehire a former employee without the former employee going through any competitive process. And the current text allows the Secretary to hire them at a grade higher than when they were previously in the department.

So, I asked my colleagues, what about the hardworking, competent employees who chose not to leave the Department of Veterans Affairs and who dedicated their lives to serving veterans? Is it fair to them for former employees to reenter civil service without going through the competitive selection process and be rewarded with an automatic pay grade increase?

My amendment supports the retention of a Federal hiring process that is fair and time-tested.

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to support my amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to Representative HANABUSA's amendment, which would strike section 6 of the bill.

Section 6 would allow the VA to non-competitively reappoint a former VA employee to a position not more than one grade higher than their former position, as long as the employee left voluntarily within the prior 2 years, had a satisfactory performance record, and maintained necessary licensures and credentials.

The former employees who would be helped by this section had performed admirably, left voluntarily, and gone on to gain relevant education or experience that the VA needs. They should be encouraged to come back to the VA and put their new skills to work for our veterans, not required to go through a lengthy competitive selection process at the VA for the second time.

Striking this provision would deprive the VA of an authority that could be used to address access and other challenges by recruiting high-performing former employees back to VA employment.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in opposing this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HANABUSA).

The amendment was rejected.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. BUCK

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 5 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 11, line 2, strike "The Secretary" and insert "Notwithstanding sections 3309 through 3318 of title 5, United States Code, the Secretary".

Page 11, line 3, insert "career or career conditional" after "former".

Page 11, beginning on line 4, strike "or any excepted service position under chapter 74 of title 38, United States Code,".

Page 11, line 7, insert "or equivalent" after "grade" both places it appears.

Page 11, line 16, insert "career or career conditional" before "position".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BUCK) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of my amendment to H.R. 1367.

First, I thank Chairman ROE and Representative WENSTRUP for bringing this bill before us today and for consideration of my amendment.

As Americans, as Members of Congress, our job is to serve and care for our veterans once they return home. That is what H.R. 1367 does.

My amendment strengthens this important bill, guaranteeing that the Department of Veterans Affairs can employ the best people to care for our veterans.

My amendment makes clear that former political appointees at the VA are not eligible for direct hire authority for competitively selected positions without first going through the proper civil service hiring process.

America's veterans deserve the top care from people who are devoted to serving them. The VA is run by hard-working civil servants, men and women hired in a competitive, merit-based process that assessed their skill and their passion for serving our Nation's veterans.

Political appointees, on the other hand, are meant to serve their appointing President's agenda for a temporary period of time. Part of their duty to the Nation is to know when it is time to step down from their position of power.

My amendment prevents former VA political appointees from using their political connections to jump ahead of other qualified individuals, burrowing into a high-paying career position at the VA.

Along with my friend and colleague Representative LIEU, I have already introduced a bill to address the problem of political burrowing.

H.R. 1132 would prevent political appointees from burrowing into the civil

service across the government for 2 years after leaving their political position. Until that bill is enacted, this amendment will ensure that the most qualified workers are filling the crucial jobs at the VA, providing our veterans the treatment they deserve.

We must protect the independence of our merit-based civil service, we must employ the best people in the VA, and we must guard our veterans from the failed policies and practices of administrations past.

I urge a "yes" vote on my amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition, even though I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Minnesota is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, we must enable the VA to recruit and retain the most capable people to serve our Nation's veterans.

We also know that one size does not fit all when considering an applicant's background and experience. If an individual has gained valuable experience over many years at an agency, we don't want to eliminate them as an option. Federal hiring officials need the most complete list of options available to select the most highly qualified employees.

I do not object to requiring former political appointees at the VA go through the proper selection process when they apply for nonpolitical, competitively selected positions.

I truly appreciate the spirit and intent of the gentleman from Colorado's amendment. I support it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP), my friend and colleague.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Representative BUCK's amendment, which would prevent former VA political appointees from receiving nonpolitical, competitively selected positions pursuant to section 6 of the bill without going through the proper competitive selection process.

This amendment would prevent political appointees from inappropriately burrowing in across VA, and I am in full support of it.

I thank Representative BUCK for submitting this amendment, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BUCK).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MS. SHEA-PORTER

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 6 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment to H.R. 1367.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 12, strike lines 2 through 6 and insert the following:

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a single database that lists—

(1) each vacant position in the Department of Veterans Affairs that the Secretary determines is critical to the mission of the Department, difficult to fill, or both; and

(2) each vacant position in the Department of Veterans Affairs for a mental health professional.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Hampshire.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Chairman, under this legislation, the VA would create a database to help match qualified job applicants to critical open positions in order to more quickly fill those vacancies.

My amendment is simple. It requires the VA to include mental health positions in that database, allowing it to better serve veterans with critical needs by ensuring that the VA uses all available tools to recruit and hire qualified mental health professionals in a timely and effective manner.

The VA faces a critical shortage of mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health counselors, and peer support specialists. These providers care for our veterans with behavioral health needs that include post-traumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma, and substance use disorder. Too many of our veterans must wait to receive the mental health care we have promised to them, and some might never receive needed care at all.

In my home State of New Hampshire, we are fighting a fentanyl, heroin, and prescription opioid crisis that is disproportionately affecting the veteran community. Rates of opioid-use disorder among veterans rose 55 percent between 2010 and 2015, and overdose rates for prescription opioids are twice as high as the national average among veterans getting care at the VA. Increasing mental health provider capacity will allow more of these veterans to enter treatment and, ultimately, recover.

Our veterans deserve to be treated by professionals who fully understand the veteran experience and veteran-specific mental health conditions. That is why it is so important for veterans to have the option to receive specialized mental health care from VA mental health professionals who have the training that will allow them to build trust.

In fact, only 13 percent of non-VA mental health providers meet the criteria to deliver veteran-centric mental

health care, according to RAND. That is why it is so important to hire and retain mental health professionals within the VA.

Right now, there are several open mental health positions at our local VA Medical Center. They seek to hire clinical staff and a mental health service line manager, but are finding it hard to locate qualified applicants. My amendment will make it easier for the VA to find such applicants and match them with the open positions that we need filled.

There is an urgent need to address this problem. Every day, 20 veterans commit suicide. MST, opioid, PTSD—these are all crises we need to address. The time to act is now. Please vote “yes” on this amendment.

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Representative SHEA-PORTER's amendment, which would require the VA to ensure that the recruiting database established by section 7 of the bill includes a list of open mental health positions.

Though I am glad to report that, as of January, only 3,469 of VA's 45,360 vacant positions were specific to mental health, it is critical that the VA closely track to mental health vacancies on an ongoing basis so that they can be prioritized and filled to prevent any disruptions in care to our most vulnerable veterans.

I am fully supportive of this amendment and grateful to Representative SHEA-PORTER for submitting it.

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

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MS. BROWNLEY OF CALIFORNIA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 7 printed in part B of House Report 115–39.

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 15, line 9, insert “, including each medical center, domiciliary facility, outpatient clinic, community-based outpatient clinic, and vet center” after “Affairs”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentlewoman

from California (Ms. BROWNLEY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise to offer an amendment to H.R. 1367.

I thank my friend and colleague, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, for introducing this bill to make important reforms to the VA's hiring and retention systems.

My amendment makes a small, but important, change to clarify a provision in the bill.

As long as I have served on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, we have seen and heard that retaining high-quality candidates has been a real challenge. I can speak from experience on this.

In the greater Los Angeles region, which serves my constituents, there has been significant turnover of senior leadership at all of our local facilities, including our community clinic in Oxnard. These changes and uncertainty have, in my view, been harmful to the quality of care that our veterans receive.

That is why I am so pleased the bill directs the Comptroller General to review succession planning at VA medical facilities.

Effective succession planning, understanding what positions are mission critical, ensuring better training, and closing the skills gap will help the VA become a healthier organization, and help ensure that the VA accomplishes its mission—serving our Nation's veterans.

My amendment clarifies that a medical facility includes all VHA facilities, including medical centers, outpatient clinics, community-based outpatient clinics, and vet centers.

We must ensure each local facility has a strong workforce and a succession plan for the future. Because without strong leadership, we cannot provide the high-quality care that veterans have earned and deserve.

I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Representative BROWNLEY's amendment, which would stipulate that the Government Accountability Office report on VA succession planning should include an assessment of succession planning at VA medical centers, domiciliary facilities, outpatient clinics, community-based outpatient clinics, and vet centers.

I appreciate this clarifying amendment and my friend and colleague Rep-

resentative BROWNLEY, the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health, for submitting it.

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

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Chairman, I thank the Chair for accepting my amendment, and I look forward to our continued bipartisan work together to provide high-quality care for our veterans.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BROWNLEY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 8 OFFERED BY MR. WELCH

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 8 printed in part B of House Report 115–39.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 16, after line 6, insert the following:

(6) An analysis of succession planning and hiring as it relates to rural areas.

Page 16, line 7, strike “(6)” and insert “(7)”.

Page 17, line 21, strike “and”.

Page 17, line 24, strike the period and insert “; and”.

Page 17, after line 24, insert the following: (J) the ability to recruit and hire in rural areas.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Chair, my amendment has one goal: to ensure that rural America is very much a part of the conversation on improving the Veterans Administration.

This very good, bipartisan bill that is before us will help the VA improve its ability to recruit, hire, train, promote, and retain physicians and other employees at the VA, but it could be slightly changed to help veterans in rural America. And, by the way, a significant number of veterans are in rural America, including Vermont.

My amendment would add two provisions. First, the underlying bill requires the GAO to conduct a study on succession planning at the VA. That is intended to try to better understand the problem the agency has to have a pipeline of qualified candidates to assume critical roles that are open.

My amendment would require the GAO to study and analyze succession planning and hiring in rural areas. The vast majority of our country is rural, so we have got to put an emphasis on that. The challenges in rural America are different than in the urban areas.

Second, the underlying bill also requires the VA to collect information on

hiring effectiveness: the time it takes to fill a vacant position, the attrition rate, the reason staff leaves, investment in training and development, and other barriers to recruitment and training. My amendment would require that study to focus on the rural challenges that are different, significantly, than in the urban areas.

The lack of qualified candidates that the VA can recruit and, ultimately, fill open positions with is a real problem. But we have to recognize that that is even more difficult in rural America.

In Vermont, we have 50,000 veterans living in the State and only nine VA facilities to help them. These are some of the satellite facilities that are quite small. Our largest facility is White River Junction, the VA Medical Center there that we are very proud of. It provided medical care for over 26,000 of those veterans in 2016. The director there has indicated to me that it is a real struggle to find qualified candidates to fill mission-critical positions.

We had, at that facility, a wonderful neuropsychologist—desperately needed—but that person was married, had children, and due to the inability of her husband to find a job within his field of work, they have left the VA there to go to an urban area. This is one variation of the problem we face—to recruit, to hire, and to retain critical personnel—that needs to be addressed in rural areas.

My amendment will help us better understand the unique challenges rural America faces dealing with the critical staff shortages at our veterans facilities and sets the stage for us to fix the problem.

Mr. Chair, I ask Members to support my amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of Representative WELCH's amendment, which would ensure that the GAO report on VA succession planning includes an analysis of succession planning in rural areas.

Rural facilities undoubtedly face unique challenges in recruiting and retaining employees and in planning effectively to ensure leadership continuity as employees retire or depart. I am glad that, with the adoption of this amendment, GAO will be reviewing these issues specifically and will be able to offer recommendations as to how VA can improve succession planning in rural areas where approximately 40 percent of our veterans reside.

I appreciate Representative WELCH for submitting this amendment, and I

ask all of my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 9 OFFERED BY MR. GOTTHEIMER

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 9 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 21, line 10, strike "or".

Page 21, line 15, strike the period and insert a semicolon.

Page 21, insert after line 15 the following:

(4) have received educational assistance under chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code; or

(5) graduated from a qualifying educational institution, as defined by the Department, and have not reached 30 years of age.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GOTTHEIMER) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the chairman and ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and Representative WENSTRUP for their work on this important bill.

This legislation empowers the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with the authority to hire the best and brightest employees.

We can all agree that you can't have a top-notch VA without employing young veterans who want to continue serving their country after they return from the front lines. Each and every day, our brave men and women in uniform put their lives on the line for us, and we owe it to them to ensure that, when they return home, they have the best care at the VA and that they also have the best career opportunities available to them.

This legislation is about veterans serving veterans. Young veterans in the Fifth District of New Jersey, where I live, tell me that they face significant challenges when they return home, even though many of them have a desire to help serve other veterans.

I was lucky enough to hire one such veteran on my team, Mike DeVilliers, who served in the U.S. Army. Mike is committed to helping other veterans and has, at a local community college, where he ran a program for student veterans. He now serves my constituents, including our veterans and across the four counties in the Fifth District.

We should be encouraging talented and qualified young veterans like Mike to put their skills to use and give back to their fellow servicemen and -women. The VA is one place those skills are

sorely needed to best serve the 473,000 veterans who live in New Jersey and the many other veterans across our country.

Mr. Chairman, approximately 60 percent of VA employees are over the age of 45, and the Department has struggled to develop an adequate pipeline for younger employees and emerging leaders to fill crucial and critical roles. We have seen the negative effects of not having the right team in place to support our veterans. While programs like Pathways at the VA are a step in the right direction, we can do more to improve the process and give a leg up to all veterans who wish to bring their skills to the VA.

More than half of the post-9/11 veterans are 34 years of age or younger, and approximately 30 percent have bachelor's or advanced degrees; yet the Department of Labor reported that post-9/11 vets face a higher unemployment rate than other veterans. That is simply unacceptable.

The VA should draw from their excellent source of talent to strengthen the care all of our veterans receive by considering more young veterans for excepted service appointments. That is why my amendment would make sure that the VA Secretary includes recipients of the post-9/11 GI Bill and younger veterans who have recently graduated from college as a distinct category qualifying for excepted service appointments to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Chairman, the mission statement of the VA is inscribed outside the Department's headquarters. It reads: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." This is President Lincoln's promise to serving and honoring the men and women who are America's heroes, and it should and must be our same commitment today. I know of no one who stands more willing and able to serve fellow veterans and their brothers and sisters in arms than the veterans themselves.

There is nothing partisan about serving our veterans. This is a common-sense solution without any new costs, and it is a perfect example of working across party lines to help get the backs of those who have served our country.

I urge my colleagues to join me in standing up for our veterans by supporting this win-win solution.

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of Representative GOTTHEIMER's amendments which would ensure that veterans who are recent graduates and/or recipients of the

post-9/11 GI Bill are also eligible for excepted service appointments under section 12 of the bill.

As a veteran and as the former chairman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, there are few things I support as strongly as assisting veterans in seeking and receiving employment opportunities, particularly in the Federal Government.

The skill sets and commitment to service that veterans display while in uniform often make them particularly suited to government work once they transition to civilian life. The adoption of this amendment would provide yet another tool to support veterans looking to continue their service to our Nation, and I am grateful to Representative GOTTHEIMER for submitting it.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GOTTHEIMER).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 10 OFFERED BY MS. HERRERA BEUTLER

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 10 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 22, line 18, strike “, to the extent possible,”.

Page 22, beginning on line 19, strike “and personally identifiable information is removed” and insert “, including through the use of a location that allows for privacy, is not directly visible by another employee, and does not require the departing employee to input any personally identifiable data”.

Page 22, line 23, insert “are aggregated at the Veterans Integrated Service Network level and” after “subsection (a)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington.

Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER. Mr. Chairman, I want to commend Dr. WENSTRUP and the chairman and ranking member for their work on this bill.

Today I am offering this amendment that will help get to the root of one of the big problems within the VA that leads to high turnover by providers and compromises care for our veteran heroes. Specifically, my amendment strengthens anonymity protections for VA employees who fill out exit surveys and requires that this exit survey data be more localized so that the agency can better solve region-specific problems.

High staff turnover is an ongoing problem in our VA and it negatively affects our veterans. High turnover leads to staff shortages and results in veterans having to wait longer to see their doctor or their specialist, and it also

means that there are issues with continuity of care for veterans.

Over the last few years, I have asked the VA why healthcare providers are leaving. The VA took some educated guesses as to why but could not provide hard data or facts.

Two years ago I inserted a directive into the MILCON VA approps bill requiring the VA to begin offering exit surveys to collect data on why healthcare providers are leaving. I also required that the VA develop a detailed plan to address the primary reasons these providers were leaving. While that report has provided some insights, we found that it is failing to take a few important steps that would make sure we are receiving honest feedback from these exiting providers.

For instance, the Portland VA employees who fill out the survey have to fill it out at a kiosk in the HR office where the HR staff can see them doing it. While the survey, itself, is anonymous, departing employees have to log into the kiosk with their employee identification number. The fear of being identified is a big deterrent for providers filling out this voluntary but critical survey. Only if VA providers are telling the honest truth about what they saw, heard, and experienced in their workplace can the VA then fix the problems that plague its facilities.

Therefore, we have to make this exit survey as easy and confidential to fill out as possible, and that is what my amendment requires. It requires these surveys to be conducted at a location that allows for privacy, not directly visible by another VA employee, and it does not require the departing employee to put in any personal, identifiable information. It also requires the exit survey data to be compiled at the regional level to identify and acknowledge local needs.

What needs to be changed in southwest Washington may not be the same as what is happening in Texas or Virginia or Florida, and this amendment will help the VA identify the right region-specific solutions.

With that, I urge Members to support my amendment so we can better serve and support our veterans by retaining their healthcare providers.

Mr. Chair, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ).

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I do not oppose this amendment. It is smart.

I have seen how important employee exit surveys can be in facilitating and understanding how an organization can be improved, made more efficient, or take constructive criticism. It makes absolute sense that employees filling them out know that they can provide honest responses because their anonymity will be protected by law, not by a promise or regulation.

Ensuring that exit data is collected on the VISN level will give VA leadership the most accurate look at where in the country higher retention policies are working and where they are not. That is just good, best practice.

Mr. Chair, I support the gentlewoman's smart amendment.

Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER).

The amendment was agreed to.

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AMENDMENT NO. 11 OFFERED BY MS. HANABUSA

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. HULTGREN). It is now in order to consider amendment No. 11 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 23, line 16, strike “the number of employees who” and insert the following: “the total number of employees who voluntarily separated from the Department and the number and percentage of whom”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HANABUSA) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Hawaii.

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak on my amendment to ensure certain types of information are added to the Department of Veterans Affairs survey data that this bill requires the Department to create and report to the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

This bill instructs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and carry out a standardized exit survey to be voluntarily completed by career and noncareer employees and executives of the Department of Veterans Affairs who voluntarily separate from the Department.

The bill currently requires the Department to report to Congress the following types of information on an annual basis: first, an analysis of the most common reasons employees choose to leave; second, steps the Secretary is taking to improve retention; third, the demographic characteristics of employees choosing to leave; fourth, the legislative barriers to improving employee retention; and, fifth, the number of employees who took the survey.

Mr. Chairman, there is important information missing that must be gathered by the Department: one, the total number of employees who voluntarily exited the Department during the reporting period; and, two, the percentage of those employees who actually responded to the survey.

Without this critical information, Congress will be unable to assess the value of the reported data relative to the total number of employees who departed the Department.

Mr. Chairman, I am asking that we get a full picture, and my amendment will help us do that.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment.

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of Representative HANABUSA's amendment, which would tweak the report on exit surveys the VA is required to submit in section 13 of the bill to stipulate the VA provide the total number of employees who voluntarily separated from VA service and the percentage of those who took an exit survey.

This information will be very helpful for Congress to receive in order to track how many employees are choosing to voluntarily leave the VA and are taking advantage of the opportunity to complete an exit survey prior to their departure.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment, and I am grateful to Representative HANABUSA for submitting it.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HANABUSA).

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

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 12 OFFERED BY MS. MENG

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 12 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Ms. MENG. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill insert the following:

SEC. 14. ENCOURAGING TRANSITION OF MILITARY MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS INTO EMPLOYMENT WITH VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a program to encourage an individual who serves in the Armed Forces with a military occupational specialty relating to the provision of health care to seek employment with the Veterans Health Administration when the individual has been discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces or is contemplating separating from such service.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG) and a Mem-

ber opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

Ms. MENG. Mr. Chairman, this amendment would require the VA Secretary to establish a program encouraging members of our Armed Forces serving as health professionals to pursue jobs with the Veterans Health Administration upon discharge or separation from the military.

As we all know, the VHA has existing shortages of health professionals. We also know that our servicemen and -women sometimes have difficulty transitioning back to civilian life after serving.

What would be better than having a servicemember with healthcare training and experience transition into employment with the VHA serving their brothers and sisters?

Mr. Chair, I believe that everyone wins with this amendment. This program would be completely optional to participate in, would help reduce staffing shortages at the VHA, and would provide job opportunities to recently discharged servicemembers.

I urge support for this commonsense amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Representative MENG's amendment, which would encourage military medical professionals who are transitioning out of the Armed Forces to seek employment within the Veterans Health Administration.

Wherever possible, the VA should be filling vacant positions at VA medical facilities with eligible, qualified veterans. And I am fully supportive of any amendment like this one that recognizes the highly specialized skills that many veterans gained while in uniform, skills that, in this case, could be used in service to fellow veterans by addressing access to care challenges across the country.

I am grateful to Representative MENG for this important amendment, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG). The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 13 OFFERED BY MR. BOST

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 13 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

SEC. 14. PLAN TO HIRE DIRECTORS OF MEDICAL CENTERS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PLAN.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and implement a plan to hire highly qualified directors for each medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs that lacks a permanent director as of the date of the plan. The Secretary shall prioritize the hiring of such directors for the medical centers that have not had a permanent director for the longest periods.

(b) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The plan developed under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A deadline to hire the directors of the medical centers of the Department as described in such subsection.

(2) Identification of the possible impediments to such hiring.

(3) Identification of opportunities to promote and train candidates from within the Department to senior executive positions in the Department, including as directors of medical centers.

(c) SUBMISSION.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate the plan developed under subsection (a).

(d) SEMIANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and each 180-day period thereafter until January 1, 2018, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a list of each medical center of the Department that lacks a permanent director as of the date of the report.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of my amendment to H.R. 1367.

My simple and straightforward amendment would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement a plan to hire permanent directors for each medical center of the VA. It also specifies that the Secretary should prioritize the hiring of directors for locations that have spent the longest amount of time without one.

Mr. Chairman, last Congress it was brought to my attention that the VA medical center that many of my constituents utilize had not had a permanent director in almost 3 years. This is simply unacceptable when we have veterans needing quality care and are demanding reform to the current healthcare system.

After reaching out to the Department, I came to realize that this is a common problem around the country, which led to my introduction of the amendment.

Under the current VA system, the Secretary is allowed to appoint an interim director at facilities, but those individuals can only serve a maximum of 240 days. This is simply far too short

a period of time to properly get to know the staff at the centers and the needs of the location, let alone implement new reforms.

This commonsense bipartisan amendment is identical to a bill I introduced earlier in this Congress with Members of both parties supporting the legislation. It is also identical to legislation that this body passed last Congress with strong bipartisan support.

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Minnesota is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chair, every Member of Congress has heard directly from their constituents who receive health care from the VA that it is understaffed. This is true at all levels, but it is vital to both the workforce and the veterans served that each medical center have permanent leadership.

I think all of us know—and there is an old saying—if you have been to one VA facility, you have been to one VA facility. Again, it may seem like the easiest thing to say that leadership matters at these facilities. Nothing matters more.

When a VA facility is moving in the right direction, it can always be traced to strong, directed leadership. In almost every case each one of us has worked on, whether it is weak leadership or lack of leadership, those situations go awry.

I have a situation in Minnesota where we have been waiting for leadership for a year. We were notified, I believe, a week or so ago that we are finally getting that.

I enthusiastically endorse Mr. BOST's amendment, which would require the Department to get these things done, develop and implement a plan within 120 days of enactment to hire a permanent director for each medical center which does not have one.

As the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) says in his amendment, a new director may well be identified from senior executives already within the Department, or he or she may be someone from outside the agency who meets the qualifications and wants to work at the VA.

What is necessary is that filling these open directorships be made a priority. Requiring the VA to show us the plan to do so and provide regular updates as that plan is implemented is a way to set this priority.

I commend the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) for getting at the heart of this. This will be about accountability. It will put the right people in place to make the right decisions and get the care for our veterans.

Mr. Chairman, I strongly support it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Chair, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP).

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Representative BOST's amendment, which would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement a plan to hire directors at each VA medical center that lacks a permanent director.

Twenty-five percent of current VA medical center directors are eligible to retire, and the VA testified last year that it can take more than 6 months and multiple reannouncements to recruit new VA medical center directors.

The VA must begin planning now to ensure that leadership at VA medical centers across the country remain stable and that medical center director vacancies are closely monitored and prioritized.

The text of this amendment passed the House last year with unanimous support, and I am grateful to Representative BOST for submitting this amendment again this year to H.R. 1367.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 14 OFFERED BY MR. O'ROURKE

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 14 printed in part B of House Report 115-39.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Add at the end the following new section:

SEC. 14. RECRUITMENT OF PHYSICIANS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7402(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting “or to be offered a contingent appointment to such position,” after “position,”; and

(2) by striking subparagraph (B) and inserting the following new subparagraph (B):

“(B)(i) have completed a residency program satisfactory to the Secretary; or

“(ii) with respect to an offer for a contingent appointment upon the completion of a post-graduate training program, complete such a residency program by not later than two years after the date of such offer; and”.

(b) OVERSIGHT OF GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.—The Secretary shall—

(1) ensure that a recruiter or other similar official of each Veterans Integrated Service Network visits, not less than annually, each allopathic and osteopathic teaching institution with a graduate medical education program within the Network to recruit individuals to be appointed to positions in the Veterans Health Administration; and

(2) submit to Congress an annual report on the implementation of paragraph (1), including the success of such recruiting efforts.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 198, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. O'ROURKE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin by recognizing the incredibly important work of my colleague from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP) in ensuring that we bring more physicians and care providers into the VA so that more veterans can get access to quality, timely care, producing better outcomes for them.

Of course, our veterans have served this country so honorably and have put their lives on the line, and now it is our turn to fulfill our obligation. Dr. Wenstrup's underlying legislation is going to ensure that we get a step closer to doing that. He will agree with me, I hope, that one of our challenges is recruiting the right talent into the VA out of residency programs across the country.

Right now, the VA is operating with one hand tied behind its back because it limits itself to the last year of a medical residency before it begins talking to that resident to try to recruit them to serve at the VA.

Meanwhile, most residents begin making career decisions a year or two earlier than that. And private sector clinics, hospitals, other public institutions are talking to those residents, trying to recruit them, and successfully bringing them to places other than the VA.

This amendment will allow the VA to begin recruiting and offering conditional job offers with 2 years left in a residency. It will help us to address the fact that today there are 43,000 authorized funded positions that are open in the VA where we don't have the doctors, the psychiatrists, the primary care providers, the medical professionals we need to provide the care that veterans need.

We need to begin recruiting earlier, more effectively, and more successfully. This amendment to the underlying legislation will allow us to do that.

I hope that I will have the support of my friend from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP), of the ranking member of the full committee, and of my colleagues here in the Chamber.

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Representative O'ROURKE's amendment, which would allow the VA to offer physicians conditional job offers 2 years prior to the completion of their residency, and also require VA recruiters or other officials to visit each teaching institution with a residency program at least once a

year. It is a great idea and one that I greatly appreciate.

The VA's existing workforce is increasingly retirement-eligible, and, historically, the VA has performed poorly in comparison to other Federal agencies when it comes to hiring younger employees.

By creating a pipeline of young, up-and-coming physicians willing to practice in VA medical facilities and committed to VA service, this amendment would help ensure that the VA healthcare system is fully staffed to care for our veterans for years to come.

The text of this amendment passed the House last year as an amendment to H.R. 5620, and I am grateful to Representative O'ROURKE for submitting it as an amendment to H.R. 1367 today.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. O'ROURKE).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia) having assumed the chair, Mr. HULTGREN, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 15 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1102

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) at 11 o'clock and 2 minutes a.m.

IMPROVING AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO HIRE AND RETAIN PHYSICIANS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 198 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 1367.

Will the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HULTGREN) kindly resume the chair.

□ 1103

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, with Mr. HULTGREN (Acting Chair) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Acting CHAIR. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, amendment No. 14 printed in part B of House Report 115-39, offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. O'ROURKE), had been disposed of.

AMENDMENT NO. 11 OFFERED BY MS. HANABUSA

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, the unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on amendment No. 11 printed in part B of House Report 115-39 offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HANABUSA) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the ayes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIR. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 400, noes 8, not voting 21, as follows:

[Roll No. 170]

AYES—400

Abraham
Adams
Aderholt
Aguilar
Allen
Amash
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barletta
Barr
Barton
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Bergman
Beyer
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Blumenauer
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Bost
Boyle, Brendan
F.
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brat
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Brown (MD)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan

Buck
Bucshon
Budd
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Capuano
Carbajal
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Cheney
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Clever
Clyburn
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comer
Comstock
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Correa
Costa
Costello (PA)

Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crist
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Curbelo (FL)
Davidson
Davis (CA)
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DeSaulnier
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Donovan
Doyle, Michael
F.
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Dunn
Ellison
Emmer
Engel
Eshoo
Españillat
Esty
Evans
Farenthold
Faso
Ferguson

Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Fortenberry
Foster
Fox
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallagher
Gallego
Garamendi
Garrett
Gibbs
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gottheimer
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Griffith
Grijalva
Grothman
Guthrie
Hanabusa
Harper
Hartzler
Hastings
Heck
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins (LA)
Hill
Himes
Holding
Hollingsworth
Hoyer
Hudson
Huffman
Huizenga
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd
Issa
Jayapal
Jenkins (KS)
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Joyce (OH)
Kaptur
Katko
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (MS)
Kennedy
Khanna
Kihuen
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger
Knight
Krishnamoorthi
Kuster (NH)
Kustoff (TN)
Labrador
LaHood
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latta
Lawrence
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)

Lewis (MN)
Lieu, Ted
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loeb
Lofgren
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham, M.
Luján, Ben Ray
Lynch
MacArthur
Maloney
Carolyn B.
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marshall
Massie
Mast
Matsui
McCarthy
McClintock
McCollum
McGovern
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris
Rodgers
McNerney
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Meeks
Meng
Messer
Mitchell
Moonen
Mooney (WV)
Moore
Moulton
Mullin
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Newhouse
Noem
Nolan
Norcross
Nunes
O'Halleran
O'Rourke
Olson
Palazzo
Pallone
Palmer
Panetta
Pascarella
Paulsen
Pearce
Perlmutter
Peters
Peterson
Pingree
Pittenger
Pocan
Poliquin
Polis
Posey
Price (NC)
Quigley
Raskin
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (NY)
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Robby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney, Francis
Rooney, Thomas
J.

Ros-Lehtinen
Rosen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Royce (CA)
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Russell
Rutherford
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schiff
Schneider
Schradler
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Smucker
Soto
Speier
Stefanik
Stivers
Suozi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Tennet
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Trott
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Walz
Wasserman
Schultz
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westerman
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Zeldin

NOES—8

Gaetz
Harris
McCaul
Perry
Poe (TX)
Rogers (AL)

Stewart
Taylor

NOT VOTING—21

Barragán	Jackson Lee	Pelosi
Crowley	Jeffries	Roybal-Allard
Davis, Danny	Jordan	Rush
Deutch	Kelly (PA)	Schakowsky
Gonzalez (TX)	Marino	Serrano
Gutiérrez	McEachin	Slaughter
Higgins (NY)	Payne	Vargas

□ 1128

Mses. TENNEY, JENKINS of Kansas, Mrs. NOEM, Messrs. SMITH of Missouri, STIVERS, MEADOWS, GALLAGHER, BURGESS, LAMALFA, WEBER of Texas, TIPTON, SMITH of Texas, CARTER of Texas, ROTHFUS, BABIN, GARRETT, DUNCAN of South Carolina, WESTERMAN, RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, and Mmes. BLACKBURN and BLACK changed their vote from “no” to “aye.”

So the amendment was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Chair, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall No. 170.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Chair, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall No. 170.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Chair, I was unavoidably absent in the House chamber for a rollcall vote on Friday, March 17, 2017. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall vote 170.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended.

The amendment was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIR. Under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN) having assumed the chair, Mr. HULTGREN, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, and, pursuant to House Resolution 198, he reported the bill back to the House with an amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment to the amendment reported from the Committee of the Whole?

If not, the question is on the amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended.

The amendment was agreed to.

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

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 5-minute vote on passage of the bill will be followed by a 5-minute vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, if ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 412, nays 0, not voting 17, as follows:

[Roll No. 171]

YEAS—412

Abraham	Correa	Hastings
Adams	Costa	Heck
Aderholt	Costello (PA)	Hensarling
Aguilar	Courtney	Herrera Beutler
Allen	Cramer	Hice, Jody B.
Amash	Crawford	Higgins (LA)
Amodei	Crist	Hill
Arrington	Cuellar	Himes
Babin	Culberson	Holding
Bacon	Cummings	Hollingsworth
Banks (IN)	Curbelo (FL)	Hoyer
Barletta	Davidson	Hudson
Barr	Davis (CA)	Huffman
Barragán	Davis, Rodney	Huizenga
Barton	DeFazio	Hultgren
Bass	DeGette	Hunter
Beatty	Delaney	Hurd
Bera	DeLauro	Issa
Bergman	DelBene	Jackson Lee
Beyer	Demings	Jayapal
Biggs	Denham	Jenkins (KS)
Bilirakis	Dent	Jenkins (WV)
Bishop (GA)	DeSantis	Johnson (GA)
Bishop (MI)	DeSaulnier	Johnson (LA)
Bishop (UT)	DesJarlais	Johnson (OH)
Black	Diaz-Balart	Johnson, E. B.
Blackburn	Dingell	Johnson, Sam
Blum	Doggett	Jones
Blumenauer	Donovan	Joyce (OH)
Blunt Rochester	Doyle, Michael	Kaptur
Bonamici	F.	Katko
Bost	Duffy	Keating
Boyle, Brendan	Duncan (SC)	Kelly (IL)
F.	Duncan (TN)	Kelly (MS)
Brady (PA)	Dunn	Kennedy
Brat	Ellison	Khanna
Bridenstine	Emmer	Kihuen
Brooks (AL)	Eshoo	Kildee
Brooks (IN)	Españillat	Kilmer
Brown (MD)	Esty	Kind
Brownley (CA)	Evans	King (IA)
Buchanan	Farenthold	King (NY)
Buck	Faso	Kinzinger
Bucshon	Ferguson	Knight
Budd	Fitzpatrick	Krishnamoorthi
Burgess	Fleischmann	Kuster (NH)
Bustos	Flores	Kustoff (TN)
Butterfield	Fortenberry	Labrador
Byrne	Foster	LaHood
Calvert	Fox	LaMalfa
Capuano	Frankel (FL)	Lamborn
Carbajal	Franks (AZ)	Lance
Cárdenas	Frelinghuysen	Langevin
Carson (IN)	Fudge	Larsen (WA)
Carter (GA)	Gabbard	Larson (CT)
Carter (TX)	Gaetz	Latta
Cartwright	Gallagher	Lawrence
Castor (FL)	Gallego	Lawson (FL)
Castro (TX)	Garamendi	Lee
Chabot	Garrett	Levin
Chaffetz	Gibbs	Lewis (GA)
Cheney	Gohmert	Lewis (MN)
Chu, Judy	Goodlatte	Lieu, Ted
Cicilline	Gosar	Lipinski
Clark (MA)	Gottheimer	LoBiondo
Clarke (NY)	Gowdy	Loeb
Clay	Granger	Lofgren
Cleaver	Graves (GA)	Long
Clyburn	Graves (LA)	Loudermilk
Coffman	Graves (MO)	Love
Cohen	Green, Al	Lowenthal
Cole	Green, Gene	Lowey
Collins (GA)	Griffith	Lucas
Collins (NY)	Grijalva	Luetkemeyer
Comer	Grothman	Lujan Grisham,
Comstock	Guthrie	M.
Conaway	Gutiérrez	Luján, Ben Ray
Connolly	Hanabusa	Lynch
Conyers	Harper	MacArthur
Cook	Harris	Maloney,
Cooper	Hartzler	Carolyn B.

Maloney, Sean	Price (NC)	Smucker
Marchant	Quigley	Soto
Marshall	Raskin	Speier
Massie	Ratcliffe	Stefanik
Mast	Reed	Stewart
Matsui	Reichert	Stivers
McCarthy	Renacci	Suozzi
McCaul	Rice (NY)	Swalwell (CA)
McClintock	Rice (SC)	Takano
McCollum	Richmond	Taylor
McGovern	Roby	Tenney
McHenry	Roe (TN)	Thompson (CA)
McKinley	Rogers (AL)	Thompson (MS)
McMorris	Rogers (KY)	Thompson (PA)
Rodgers	Rohrabacher	Thornberry
McNerney	Rokita	Tiberi
McSally	Rooney, Francis	Tipton
Meadows	Rooney, Thomas	Titus
Meehan	J.	Tonko
Meeks	Ros-Lehtinen	Torres
Costa	Rosen	Trott
Meng	Roskam	Tsongas
Messer	Ross	Turner
Mitchell	Rothfus	Upton
Moolenaar	Rouzer	Valadao
Mooney (WV)	Roybal-Allard	Vargas
Moore	Royce (CA)	Veasey
Moulton	Ruiz	Vela
Mullin	Ruppersberger	Velázquez
Murphy (FL)	Russell	Visclosky
Murphy (PA)	Rutherford	Wagner
Nadler	Ryan (OH)	Walberg
Napolitano	Sanford	Walden
Neal	Sarbanes	Walker
Newhouse	Scalise	Walorski
Noem	Schakowsky	Walters, Mimi
Nolan	Schiff	Walz
Norcross	Schneider	Wasserman
Nunes	Schrader	Schultz
O'Halleran	Schweikert	Waters, Maxine
O'Rourke	Scott (VA)	Watson Coleman
Olson	Scott, Austin	Weber (TX)
Palazzo	Scott, David	Webster (FL)
Pallone	Sensenbrenner	Welch
Palmer	Serrano	Wenstrup
Panetta	Sessions	Westerman
Pascarella	Sewell (AL)	Williams
Paulsen	Shea-Porter	Wilson (FL)
Pearce	Sherman	Wilson (SC)
Perlmutter	Shimkus	Wittman
Perry	Shuster	Womack
Peters	Simpson	Woodall
Peterson	Sinema	Yarmuth
Pingree	Sires	Yoder
Pittenger	Smith (MO)	Yoho
Pocan	Smith (NE)	Young (AK)
Poe (TX)	Smith (NJ)	Young (IA)
Poliquin	Smith (TX)	Zeldin
Polis	Smith (WA)	
Posey		

NOT VOTING—17

Brady (TX)	Higgins (NY)	Payne
Crowley	Jeffries	Pelosi
Davis, Danny	Jordan	Rush
Deutch	Kelly (PA)	Sánchez
Engel	Marino	Slaughter
Gonzalez (TX)	McEachin	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

□ 1136

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. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall No. 171.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 171 I was unavoidably detained to cast my vote in time. Had I been present, I would have voted “yes.”

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of

the Journal, which the Chair will put de novo.

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

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

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 246, noes 143, answered “present” 2, not voting 38, as follows:

[Roll No. 172]

AYES—246

Abraham	Espallat	McCarthy
Adams	Esty	McCaul
Aderholt	Farenthold	McClintock
Allen	Faso	McCollum
Arrington	Ferguson	McHenry
Babin	Fleischmann	McMorris
Bacon	Fortenberry	Rodgers
Banks (IN)	Foster	McNerney
Barletta	Frankel (FL)	Meadows
Barr	Franks (AZ)	Meehan
Barton	Frelinghuysen	Meeks
Beatty	Gabbard	Meng
Bilirakis	Gallego	Messer
Bishop (MI)	Garamendi	Mitchell
Bishop (UT)	Garrett	Moolenaar
Black	Goodlatte	Mooney (WV)
Blumenauer	Gowdy	Moore
Blunt Rochester	Granger	Moulton
Bonamici	Green, Al	Mullin
Brady (TX)	Griffith	Murphy (FL)
Brat	Grijalva	Nadler
Bridenstine	Guthrie	Newhouse
Brooks (AL)	Hanabusa	Noem
Brooks (IN)	Harris	Norcross
Buchanan	Hartzler	Nunes
Budd	Hastings	O'Rourke
Bustos	Heck	Olson
Butterfield	Hensarling	Palmer
Byrne	Higgins (LA)	Panetta
Calvert	Himes	Perlmutter
Carter (TX)	Hollingsworth	Perry
Cartwright	Huffman	Pingree
Castro (TX)	Hultgren	Pocan
Chabot	Hunter	Polis
Cheney	Issa	Posey
Chu, Judy	Jayapal	Richmond
Ciциline	Johnson (GA)	Roby
Clark (MA)	Johnson (LA)	Roe (TN)
Clay	Johnson, E. B.	Rogers (AL)
Cleaver	Johnson, Sam	Rogers (KY)
Clyburn	Kaptur	Rooney, Francis
Cole	Keating	Rooney, Thomas
Collins (NY)	Kelly (IL)	J.
Comer	Kelly (MS)	Ros-Lehtinen
Comstock	Kennedy	Rothfus
Connolly	Khanna	Royce (CA)
Conyers	Kildee	Ruppersberger
Cook	Kind	Russell
Cooper	King (IA)	Rutherford
Correa	King (NY)	Sanford
Courtney	Krishnamoorthi	Scalise
Cramer	Kuster (NH)	Schiff
Crawford	Kustoff (TN)	Schneider
Cuellar	Labrador	Schweikert
Culberson	Lamborn	Scott (VA)
Davidson	Larson (CT)	Scott, Austin
Davis (CA)	Latta	Scott, David
DeGette	Lawson (FL)	Sensenbrenner
DeLauro	Lewis (GA)	Serrano
DelBene	Lewis (MN)	Sessions
Demings	Lipinski	Sewell (AL)
Dent	Lofgren	Shea-Porter
DeSaulnier	Long	Sherman
DesJarlais	Loudermilk	Shimkus
Diaz-Balart	Love	Shuster
Dingell	Lowenthal	Sinema
Doggett	Lucas	Smith (NE)
Donovan	Luetkemeyer	Smith (NJ)
Duncan (SC)	Lujan Grisham,	Smith (TX)
Dunn	M.	Smith (WA)
Ellison	Maloney,	Smucker
Emmer	Carolyn B.	Soto
Engel	Marshall	Speier
Eshoo	Massie	Stefanik

Stewart
Suozzi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Taylor
Thornberry
Tiberi
Titus
Torres
Trott

Tsongas
Vela
Velázquez
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Walz
Wasserman
Schultz
Waters, Maxine

Welch
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Wilson (FL)
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Brownley (CA)
Buck
Burgess
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Carter (GA)
Castor (FL)
Chaffetz
Clarke (NY)
Coffman
Cohen
Collins (GA)
Conaway
Costa
Costello (PA)
Crist
Crowley
Cummings
Curbelo (FL)
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
Denham
DeSantis
Duffy
Evans
Fitzpatrick
Flores
Foa
Fudge
Gaetz
Gallagher
Gibbs

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Rice (SC)

Tonko

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Brown (MD)
Bucshon
Davis, Danny
Delaney
Deutch
Doyle, Michael
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Gonzalez (TX)
Graves (LA)

Grothman
Harper
Higgins (NY)
Jeffries
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Katko
Kelly (PA)
LaMalfa
Larsen (WA)
Marino
McEachin
Napolitano

Pascarell
Payne
Pearce
Quigley
Renacci
Roskam
Ross
Rush
Simpson
Slaughter
Tenney
Wagner
Webster (FL)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

□ 1144

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall No. 172.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote

Nos. 170, 171, and 172. Had I been present, I would have voted Aye on roll call vote Nos. 170 and 171. I would have voted “nay” on roll-call vote No. 172.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purpose of inquiring of the majority leader the schedule for the week to come, and it is my pleasure to yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY), the majority leader.

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

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I do want to wish everybody a happy St. Patrick's Day.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the House will meet at noon for morning hour and 2 p.m. for legislative business. Votes will be postponed until 6:30.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the House will meet at 10 a.m. for morning hour and noon for legislative business.

On Thursday, the House will meet at 9 a.m. for legislative business. Mr. Speaker, late votes are likely in the House on Thursday, and Members are advised to adjust their schedules accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, the House will consider a number of suspensions next week, a complete list of which will be announced at close of business today.

In addition, the House will consider several critical pieces of the Republican plan to repeal and replace ObamaCare:

First, H.R. 372, the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act, sponsored by Representative PAUL GOSAR, creates competition in the healthcare market by eliminating antitrust protection for insurance providers.

Next, H.R. 1101, the Small Business Health Fairness Act, sponsored by Representative SAM JOHNSON of Texas, allows small businesses to pool together and purchase plans, an important step toward purchasing health care across State lines.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we will consider the FY 2017 reconciliation bill, also known as the American Health Care Act. This bill eliminates the many taxes and mandates of ObamaCare. It gives patients enhanced tools to take control of their healthcare decisions, and it expands choice so Americans are free to pick the plan that is best for themselves and their families.

Mr. Speaker, it is known that ObamaCare is failing, and we have a responsibility to provide Americans relief. These bills are the result of much deliberation and hard work, and their passage will help create a competitive marketplace that provides high-quality care at an affordable cost.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I must hasten to add that the gentleman from California added a little comment that

In fact, we had a hearing yesterday when the former Director of the Congressional Budget Office appointed by Democrats testified on the Affordable Care Act and testified on the American Health Care Act. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Elmendorf agreed with the present CBO Director. In other words—and everybody in America ought to be pleased on this because they all are asking for bipartisan—the former Director appointed by Democrats of the CBO agrees with the Republican Director of the CBO, who just came down with his advice and counsel to the Congress just a few days ago.

That ought to give pause to those who are pressing to pass a bill, which would result in the loss by 24 million Americans of their insurance and would result in the increased costs to almost every American of their insurance.

Now, yes, there are some Americans who would choose not to have health care. Then they would get sick or they would get in an automobile accident or something else would happen where they would require medical care, and they would not be able to pay for it. Guess what? We would all pay for it.

That is what was happening before the Affordable Care Act. It is still happening with some who choose either to pay their contribution toward health—some people call it a penalty; I call it a contribution—to meet their personal responsibility, as the Heritage Foundation suggested, of having provisions that, if they get sick, they will be able to pay for it.

Now, last week, Mr. Speaker, the majority leader had some quotes from people who did not like the Affordable Care Act. At this hearing that we had, we had a number of people, and I want to quote some of them:

I certainly never imagined I would have a child who would rely so much on a government program like Medicaid.

This child, Mr. Speaker, suffers from Rett syndrome, which is a neurology disorder that strikes mostly young girls with normal development for the first 18 or 24 months of their life. Then their development is arrested and, in fact, in some respects, there is a retreat in their abilities.

She went on to say:

Medicaid provides skilled nursing care, which allows us to raise our daughter, Caroline, in our home instead of a hospital or institution.

Of course, a hospital or institution would be far more expensive, Mr. Speaker.

She went on to say:

This allows my husband and me to hold jobs and take care of other family needs. The House Republican plan for Medicaid would put my daughter's life at risk, and my family is terrified.

That was Marta Conner, mother of a child with Rett syndrome covered under Medicaid.

I titled yesterday's hearing: The hearing that the Republicans refused to have on the American Health Care Act or the Affordable Care Act itself.

This quote is by a doctor:

In public debate in Congress, the actual people can be obscured by graphs and numbers. But, ladies and gentlemen, every day in clinic, I am one-on-one with the real people, real Americans who could take steps closer to health or suffer more with this Congress' decision. I urge you and your colleagues to reject the American Health Care Act and, instead, strengthen the Affordable Care Act.

To that extent, Mr. Speaker, as the majority leader knows, that testimony joined hundreds in the medical field: The American Medical Association, associations of physicians with particular skill sets, of hospitals, of insurance companies, of patients, of providers, of urban hospitals, suburban hospitals, rural hospitals, and literally hundreds of people intimately involved in the healthcare system who are urging us not to pass the American Health Care Act and to leave in place but improve the Affordable Care Act.

Mr. Speaker, I have indicated to many on this side of the aisle that we are prepared to work to improve any piece of legislation that has been passed and particularly a piece of legislation which affects so many Americans. Unfortunately, we have not had that opportunity since this bill, the Affordable Care Act, was first considered and passed.

This week, the Congressional Budget Office released their estimate and impacts of the House Republicans' bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Mr. Speaker, as the majority leader knows, President Trump, in this body and at that rostrum, promised insurance for everybody that is much less expensive and much better. He has not offered such a bill. The American Health Care Act certainly does not provide that.

In fact, the CBO—both Republican and Democratic directors—opined at least 24 million people will lose their insurance and, by 2026, there will be 58 million people in America without health insurance.

Mr. Speaker, the majority leader has indicated this bill will be on the floor next week. I hope that everybody takes the opportunity to read the CBO report and the testimony given in yesterday's hearing on the bill. It was the first and only hearing that was held on the bill that will be on the floor. Previous hearings on the Affordable Care Act are not good, and previous hearings that there are alternatives out there don't deal with the bill that is going to be on the floor next Wednesday or Thursday.

Senator SUSAN COLLINS has said of the bill that is going to be on the floor:

It should prompt the House to slow down and reconsider certain provisions of the bill.

She was referring, of course, to the CBO report.

Senator BILL CASSIDY from that liberal leftwing bastion of Louisiana said:

Can't sugarcoat it. Doesn't look good. The CBO score was, shall we say, an eyepopper. I also hope it was a thought provoker.

And Senator ROB PORTMAN, who served in this body for many years, said:

I am concerned about the Medicaid population. That is the biggest part of coverage for Ohio.

That is why their Governor, a Republican, and ROB PORTMAN, a Republican who served on the Ways and Means Committee, is urging caution and has great reservations about the bill that has been announced to come to the floor.

□ 1200

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the majority leader whether or not he can confirm whether changes will be made to the repeal bill, that is the American Health Care Act, that was reported out of the Budget Committee, whether he can confirm whether or not the repeal bill will be changed before it comes to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

And his question, based upon scheduling, and I know there were a lot of questions in there, so please let me work through and try to answer all of his questions.

The last question was in regard to the bill itself, and we are working through the process. It will be in the Rules Committee. As the legislative process works, there are always ways that you refine the bill, and I expect that there will be some elements that get refined inside the Rules Committee before it comes to the floor.

You had about five different questions there if I may follow all the way through. First, you talked about, and I was happy to hear—I wrote it down—you are glad to work to help to improve the bill—because when we were in the more than 26 hours of Energy and Commerce, the amendments the Democrats offered, we spent a couple of hours on just the one amendment about a hashtag of renaming the bill. So there is a change in attitude. I appreciate that from the other side of the aisle because we are always willing to work with you.

Mr. HOYER. Reclaiming my time, just to clarify, Mr. Speaker, that the bill to which he is referring is not the bill to which I was referring. I was referring to the Affordable Care Act and improvement of the Affordable Care Act.

He is now referring to the American Health Care Act which, we think, bears no resemblance to the Affordable Care Act.

Mr. MCCARTHY. But you are not willing to help with it, then?

Mr. HOYER. Of course, with the Affordable Care Act. We think the bill that has been, as I said, Mr. Speaker, offered will devastate many individuals, millions and millions and millions of people in this country. We have said that pretty clearly.

But more importantly, the CBO Director, appointed by Republicans, said that in his report, which was, by the way, Mr. Speaker, given after, after it was considered in either one of the

committees, either the Energy and Commerce Committee or the Ways and Means Committee.

They did not wait for the CBO report. My opinion, Mr. Speaker, they did not wait for the CBO report because they knew how devastatingly negative the CBO report would be to the legislation they were considering.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me, and I ask if he would let me finish through.

Mr. HOYER. I certainly will do that.

Mr. MCCARTHY. It seems as though the gentleman has a little short-term memory of how they brought the Affordable Care Act and the CBO report when it came before us. It was not brought before us until it came right before the floor.

But let me follow through on all your questions because my response back was, I was actually excited to hear that Democrats wanted to work with us, that their attitude has changed from when we were in committee and they had amendments going forward, that it was no longer going to be hashtag amendments, it was actually going to be productive amendments; and I thank you for having that change of attitude.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the transparent process we have taken in the House, and I think this needs to be reminded to all the American public.

As I mentioned last week, our healthcare bill is the result of 113 hearings. I know the gentleman on the other side of the aisle, he is proud of the 72 hearings they had before they did the Affordable Care Act.

We have now marked up this bill in three separate committees, with over 18 hours of debate in Ways and Means, and over 27 hours of debate in Energy and Commerce, and the countless amendments from both Republicans and Democrats.

By the time we vote on the floor, this bill will have been publicly available online for 3 weeks. Now, it is only 127 pages. That is a far contrast to the 2,700-plus pages, if you want to compare it to ObamaCare.

So far, nearly 590,000 people have visited our website, and over 200,000 have downloaded this legislative text.

So, Mr. Speaker, that means more people have read our healthcare bill than went to Woodstock. I call that transparency. Republicans have been committed to repealing and replacing ObamaCare for years, and so now I think it is time to act.

The gentleman also commented about the CBO. Well, I am actually excited that you had another person who confirmed what the CBO said because what the CBO says about this bill is it will lower the deficit by \$337 billion.

It will also reduce premiums by 10 percent by 2026, and it will secure major entitlement reform by capping Medicaid spending, giving States certainty and flexibility, saving taxpayers

\$880 billion, and making the program solvent for future generations, because that was a concern in one of the letters.

Now, Mr. Speaker, those are the facts. With regard to the coverage numbers, the CBO reports that most of that increase would stem from repealing the penalties associated with individual mandates. Let me repeat that. Most of the increase would stem from repealing the penalties associated with the individual mandate.

Now, that makes sense to me, because if we no longer force Americans to buy something they do not want, one-size-fits-all health care, they will naturally choose not to buy it.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know the gentleman across the other side of the aisle argues with me about the knowledge that everybody knows ObamaCare is failing. I would ask the gentleman to visit one-third of the counties in this country that only have one option.

Or why don't you go to Tennessee, where the President just was because, you know, 16 counties in Tennessee have no option. But ObamaCare will penalize you for not having health care when you can't even buy it.

But if ObamaCare was working so well, why do more people accept the penalty or the exemption than actually buy ObamaCare? That is a number that is quite interesting. That is why I am encouraged to see our plan will decrease the average premiums that people have been asking for.

Now, our goal is not just to sign up people for insurance. Our goal is to get America better health care.

Now, the gentleman also commented and had letters—and I love to read letters. I love to listen to constituents because that is what our work should be. And you read a letter when it came to Medicaid. And I would not scare people, I would actually talk to that individual.

Medicaid is on an unsustainable path. In one 10-year window, it will cost \$1 trillion.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman on the other side knows what \$1 trillion is because that is about the entire amount we spend on discretionary spending. From all of the appropriations that we go through, that would take up everything we have.

Well, we know that is not sustainable, so we should do something about it. That is why we had a meeting with 18 Governors, Republicans and Democrats. And the number one thing they told us, give us flexibility to be able to manage. That is exactly what this bill does.

But I like to read some letters. Here is one from Colleen from Annapolis:

I just received the notice for my 2017 health insurance policy. It will skyrocket, not by the advertised Maryland State average of 20 to 25 percent but, rather, by 60 percent. In addition, my deductible is going up 45 percent. Since the inception of ObamaCare, my policy has increased 75 percent.

I am a 63-year-old female in excellent health who takes no medication. My only

benefit from the ACA has been two mammograms, which I paid \$12,600 in premiums to get. What a disaster of a program.

I will be voting Republican this year, in the hope of finally getting the ACA repealed. I just hope it happens before my checkbook goes on life support.

Or the letter to the editor from Carl in Lusby, Maryland:

I can't afford my health insurance now under ObamaCare. It's been a burden on our joint income, which is just above the limit for qualifying for subsidies; and for 2017, I am facing a 61 percent rate increase.

I'm faced with either paying a premium that will bankrupt me and my wife, or paying the tax penalty at the end of the year, which will also be unaffordable. And there are probably several million Americans who are in the same boat as I am.

You know what, Carl? We listened to you. We listened, and now we are going to lead. We have moved a bill from the legislative process to the rules, what it says, for reconciliation. We have done hours of debate in three other committees. We will continue the process, as the rules say. We will go to the Rules Committee and then we will come to this floor. And for those who have written, change will come.

Yes, the Republican-appointed CBO Director and the Democratic CBO Director, as the gentleman, Mr. Speaker, from across the aisle says, agree that the premiums will go down, as so many Americans have asked for. We will put Medicaid on a sustainable path.

We will give Republican and Democrat Governors flexibility so they can manage their States in a better form. And most importantly, we will give America exactly what they asked for, the freedom to choose their own health care, the options of having more so they can direct what they want and desire, at the same time, having a lower cost.

So I welcome the gentleman for his questions. I know that wasn't about scheduling, but I think this is too important, because those 113 hearings we listened to the people before us, and we promised we would act, and we are keeping that promise as we move forward.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his information. People, I am sure, listening to this colloquy must get confused because they hear one representation from somebody who sounds pretty reasonable, my friend, Mr. MCCARTHY, and then they hear exactly the opposite from me. So they will have to make a judgment.

The bill that is going to be on this floor next week was introduced a week ago Monday. It was marked up less than 42 hours later.

My friend, the majority leader, Mr. Speaker, said: I love to listen to constituents. Not a single constituent on his side of the aisle or my side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, had the opportunity to testify on this bill. Not a single one of my constituents, or the majority leader's constituents, had the opportunity to know what the CBO said was going to happen; that 24 million people

would lose their insurance, 14 million next year; that Medicare would be put at risk; and Medicaid would be gutted by 2021. Not a single constituent was listened to because they had no opportunity to come and say: this is what I think.

The testimony to which I referred was yesterday. I don't know the dates on the letters that the gentleman just read, but perhaps they were just within the last few days.

But I will tell that 63-year-old woman that what this bill does, if you got a 60 percent increase, will up that by 66 percent because you are going to go from a 3-to-1 ratio to a 5-to-1 ratio on which seniors, and 63 years of age, regrettably, from my standpoint, are referred to as seniors. The bill that is going to be considered will allow the insurance company to do a 5-to-1 ratio, rather than a 3-to-1 ratio, so that 60 percent is going to go up by 40, maybe get to 100 percent.

Mr. Speaker, the American people know about transparency. That means they can see something.

The gentleman says: Well, now it is online. Yes, they had 40 hours, give or take, to see this bill from Monday night to Wednesday, when it was marked up, and it was marked up and passed in the Ways and Means Committee in the dead of night, sort of like they passed the prescription drug bill, at 5:59 in the morning. The majority leader wasn't here. I was here. Perhaps there is a predilection to middle of the night. By the time the Energy and Commerce Committee passed it, they had been in session for over 24 hours and were bleary-eyed.

As I told him last week, Mr. Speaker, my folks were not up at 4 a.m. watching the Energy and Commerce Committee. And I would tell him further that—he said the bill was now online and people had an opportunity to read it. Perhaps, Mr. Majority Leader, Mr. Speaker, that is why the Affordable Care Act has now got more support from the country than it has had at any time since its existence; where there are 49 percent of Americans who now like the Affordable Care Act. Perhaps the reason that is happening now is because they have had the opportunity to see the alternative that the Republicans have offered and are offering on Wednesday.

□ 1215

This bill that they offered is going to significantly raise—I will tell Colleen—her out-of-pocket expenses.

And, yes, under their bill, the CBO says that perhaps the premiums will go down. Why will the premiums go down? Why does insurance go up and down? Because the risk goes up and down; and the greater the risk, the more the cost. But if you don't allow people who are sick people to get into the system because they can't afford it, then the risk goes down. When the risk goes down and you shut people out of the system and 24 million people are out of the

system, yes, of course, the rates go down because you are insuring the healthy.

Now, Americans know that very well because they know they have automobile insurance—which, by the way, they are mandated to have in almost every State, if not every State. Why are they mandated to have it? So the rest of us are protected when we have an accident or we are protected from our rates going up because there is not a broad spectrum of the insured so that the risk can be minimal for the insurance company.

So I say to my friend that CBO has told the truth. The Americans are seeing that, and they don't like that. I would urge those on the other side of the aisle to be very careful when they vote either Wednesday or Thursday on this bill because this bill is going to have a very detrimental effect on the American people.

Now, I understand there are going to be two other bills. There are going to be four bills on the floor, as I understand it. Can the gentleman inform us of when we will see the details of this additional legislation?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MCCARTHY. I ask the gentleman which bills he is referring to?

Mr. HOYER. The third bill and the fourth bill.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Those will be later in the month. Next week we will have two of those up that you referred to.

Mr. HOYER. Are they available now to be reviewed prior to them coming up later in the month?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Yes. The committee has marked them up.

Mr. HOYER. Lastly—and I know you are glad to hear that comment, as are the folks waiting to do 1-minutes—we have received a letter from Secretary Mnuchin on March 8. It was directed to the Speaker, Mr. Leader, and like most Secretaries of the Treasury, he is hoping that we will pursue financially responsible and confidence-building policies.

I won't read the whole letter, but he says in the last paragraph: "As I said in my confirmation hearing, honoring the full faith and credit of our outstanding debt is a critical commitment. I encourage Congress to raise the debt limit at the first opportunity so that we can proceed with our joint priorities."

Mr. Speaker, I ask the majority leader whether that is going to be scheduled in the near term because, on March 15, we met the debt-limit extension. This administration and every previous administration have taken steps to prolong the time before we default by using extra mechanisms so that we are, in effect, not investing in the retirement system or something else and paying our debts.

I have indicated publicly, Mr. Speaker, and I reiterate here, that I will urge my side to support a debt-limit extension if it is clean. What I mean by

"clean," if it does not incorporate something that is not agreed to and there is not a consensus on. By that I mean, simply, if there are things that we have a consensus on that need to be passed, certainly including those in the debt-limit extension would not be objectionable. But if there are items in that bill designed to force us to vote for what is a responsible policy but takes something that we obviously very strongly disagree with, we will not do so.

So my questions to the majority leader are: A, can we expect a clean debt-limit extension? B, can we expect that in the near term, as Secretary Mnuchin requests, so that we can put that matter behind us and not undermine confidence in our fiscal posture as a nation?

I yield to my friend.

Mr. MCCARTHY. I think we both agree that responsible fiscal policy is important to our country's ability to succeed, and that includes honoring the full faith and credit of the United States. We expect to continue working closely with Secretary Mnuchin to ensure that America is on the right path to a strong fiscal future.

We know the amount of debt that has been added in the last 8 years has been tremendous. I know that the gentleman, when he looks to what we do next week—to be able to lower premiums, save more than \$300 billion of the deficit, and let people have more choice—that is also a first step.

Now, I do not have any immediate action to announce, but we will relay any information to the Members as we move forward.

I thank the gentleman.

Is that going to be your last question?

Mr. HOYER. It will probably be my last question. I have an additional observation.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Before I depart, though, I would like, Mr. Speaker, to wish my friend from the other side of the aisle a very happy St. Patrick's Day. I do apologize. I feel bad, when we look at the basketball round, what happened to Maryland; but if you look at NIT, Cal State Bakersfield is still on the march, so I have another team you can root for.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask that the gentleman's words be taken down. I have never had such a vicious attack made on me.

But I must admit I was deeply disappointed last night. My congratulations to the young men at Xavier and their coach, but my, my, my, I was disappointed in the quality of our play. We have got a great group of young people playing, but it was not their night.

I am sure that I will pick another team sometime as the March Madness continues. What I would hope, though, is we would not have March Madness on this floor next week.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MCCARTHY. There will be no upsets.

Mr. HOYER. I guess the answer to that question, Mr. Speaker, is what will determine an upset. Will the American people be upset? Will the Republicans be upset? The answer to that question remains in the hands of our Republican colleagues, because what I want to do in observation, I disagree with all three of the propositions that the majority leader said in his closing statement.

This is not going to reduce the budget. Yes, on its face, they give a \$600 billion tax cut to the wealthiest in America. Where do they take it from? Medicaid, some of the poorest people in America. That is where that money comes from.

Premiums are going to go up. Deductibles are going to go up. You can quote me on this 2, 3 years from now. I don't think your bill is going to pass. But if it did pass, that is what would happen. You won't be able to test me because I don't think the bill is going to pass. It may pass this floor, but it will not become law.

The majority leader's statement, Mr. Speaker, that that is what the American people are expecting, I disagree with that. What the President of the United States said he was going to give to the American people is insurance for everybody. The majority leader ignores the 24 million. He hasn't spoken about that. He spoke about some other observations in the CBO report, as did Speaker RYAN. I don't blame him. I would try to point to some positive indicators myself.

I think this is going to up the deficit, it is going to up costs, and it will decrease the insured and make hospitals have more uncompensated care. We will have this debate next week, Mr. Speaker.

But on the last issue, I would hope, Mr. Leader, that we do agree on fiscal responsibility. I happen to believe, as you know, the debt limit issue is a phony issue, a totally political issue. It has been used as a political issue on both sides of the aisle. There should be no question but of course the United States is going to pay its debt, of course the United States is going to pay people whom it has bought things from, and of course it is going to pay people moneys that they have been promised. Of course it is going to do that. This is not about new spending. It is about spending that we have already incurred.

I would urge the majority leader to bring a clean bill to the floor. I will work with him. We will get the overwhelming majority of Democrats to vote for that. Let's not blame one another for the debt. There is plenty of opportunity to do that, and both sides are guilty of that result.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman has nothing further he wants to say, I yield back the balance of my time.

ADJOURNMENT FROM FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 2017, TO MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2017

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet on Monday, March 20, 2017, when it shall convene at noon for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

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

There was no objection.

WELFARE REFORM

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

Mr. DAVIDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about Welfare BRAC, an opportunity to reorganize our 92 social safety net programs.

Mr. Speaker, I call attention to the 92 programs that, over time, since the Great Society, our country has launched. I call attention to Ronald Reagan's prescient quote about the near eternity of government programs. It is very hard to take a program away once it is launched, and this plan acts on The Brookings Institution's data, which has rarely been accused of being on the right side of the political ideology.

It says that if we do three things, we will eliminate 80 percent of poverty: graduate high school, work full-time at any wage, and have no kids outside of marriage.

This program that I am proposing in this bill, H.R. 1469, the Welfare Benefit Reform and Alignment Commission, would nominate four Republicans and four Democrats. They would have 1 year to work together until September 30, 2018, to prioritize not taking any money away, but taking the 92 programs and making them fewer.

So if you think about the social worker out in the country trying to help somebody who is in a social safety net, each of these programs may have a 4-inch binder. I don't think we need 92. Maybe it is 6; maybe it is 12. It is not 92.

I encourage my colleagues to support this and work together to make this a more efficient program so we can help meet their needs.

THE HEALTHCARE BILL

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, just a little bit of history.

Let me, first of all, say happy St. Patrick's Day. Many know that the Irish fled in the 1800s, if my history is correct, because of the potato famine. We welcomed them as immigrants, and as an early member of the Immigration and Border Security Subcommittee, I remember the Irish sitting in our hear-

ing room saying: Remember the Irish as relates to immigration.

We all have come from someplace to do better. This last week, I sat in the Budget Committee listening to debate on the healthcare bill. I stand here today to argue vigorously against the Medicaid changes: \$880 billion taken away from Medicaid for low-income, hardworking Americans; the language that was added to the bill to instruct that we should not incentivize or that we should make sure that able-bodied men do not get Medicaid.

Well, let me say this. In the spirit of those who have come to this Nation, this bill cannot stand because it ignores the vulnerable and the people who need health insurance, who are, themselves, either addicted or have families.

I want to stand for what America is right for: its values. Let us vote down a healthcare bill that does not help America become unsick.

□ 1230

RECOGNIZING TODD ZOBRIST

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Todd Zobrist, a paramedic with Highland EMS in Highland, Illinois.

Yesterday afternoon, Todd was the first to arrive on the scene after receiving a call of a vehicle in Silver Lake with a person possibly inside. When he saw the vehicle partially submerged, he swam out in the cold water to search for anyone inside. He found an unresponsive baby boy, rescued him from the vehicle, and immediately began CPR on the roof of the vehicle. Todd was able to revive the 3-month-old at the scene and the baby was transported to a St. Louis hospital where he is expected to make a full recovery.

I would like to commend Todd for his heroic and lifesaving actions. It is a great tribute to a southern Illinoisan.

HEALTHCARE PLAN BAD FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

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

Mr. AGUILAR. Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: the Affordable Care Act covered over 20 million Americans. The House Republicans' bill will strip 24 million people of their health care.

I have received thousands of calls, emails, and social media messages regarding this topic from constituents opposing a repeal and sharing their stories of how the Affordable Care Act has helped them and how terrified they are of losing their coverage. I would like to share just one of those stories.

Daria from Redlands wrote to me about how Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, is called a lifeline in her

family. Daria, who suffers from a debilitating and rare disease, closed her letter by saying: "There are tens of millions more like me. American citizens, Moms and dads. Working hard, struggling with illness. Loving our families through hardship and disease. All of us—these tens of millions of American families, would be absolutely devastated by the loss of our insurance coverage."

Mr. Speaker, what would you say to Daria about your plan that would cut Medicaid and raise the cost of insurance on families like hers while giving tax breaks to the uberwealthy?

Instead of working with Democrats to improve the bill, Republicans drafted it in secret, rushed it through committee in the dead of night, and are now ramming it through Congress. This plan is bad for the middle class.

FATHER TRAFFICKS DAUGHTER

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is said that there is no need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection. That is a father's job.

Recently, a Texas father arrogantly violated all of his responsibilities. He forcibly sex trafficked his teenage daughter. In the milky darkness of night, he would take her to truck stops and coerce her to have sex so he could pocket the filthy lucre.

The 16-year-old was sold to multiple customers in a single night. Every dollar the deviant collected was stolen at the expense of his daughter's childhood. His evil and greed were so boundless that this so-called father placed ads on the internet to sell his daughter. She was sold on the marketplace of sex trafficking. But the girl was rescued. The defendant was convicted and put in the deepest bowels of a Texas prison.

America cannot turn our back on the scourge of sex slavery. Mr. Speaker, our children, our daughters, are not for sale.

And that is just the way it is.

WE CAN'T GO THERE

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

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, the camera of history is rolling, and here on the House floor it is recorded. So I want to make sure that we are clear.

When I think about going back into the nineties, it was Bill and Hillary Clinton that put forward a healthcare plan. My colleagues on the other side had the goal of stopping it. And they did. We had nothing.

For 6 of the 8 years that I was here—from 2000 until 2006—they controlled both the House, the Senate and the Presidency, and they did nothing in reference to health care. It took 2008

and Barack Obama to come up with the Affordable Care Act, which gave 20 million Americans health care that didn't have it. It made sure that those that had a preexisting condition could continue to make sure that there was no discrimination against women and girls, so as to make sure they had equal health care. It also made sure that you removed the caps so that Americans would not be caught, as they were beforehand, going bankrupt, disturbing families and separating families who did not know how to make it until tomorrow. It was the Affordable Care Act.

Yet, here, history will record that our colleagues are prepared to vote on Thursday to take those 20 million Americans that did not have access to health care away from health care and back to the bad, old days. We can't go there.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the House's efforts this week to improve the employment standards at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In recent years, complex bureaucratic processes can take up to a year to remove or discipline a VA employee for misconduct or subpar performance. The VA has even had trouble firing one employee who participated in an armed robbery and another who participated in a veteran's surgery while intoxicated.

Just last year, VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson testified at a hearing that it was too difficult to fire bad employees. That is why I was happy to vote in the House this week for the VA Accountability First Act of 2017. This legislation provides the VA Secretary more flexibility to demote, suspend, or remove employees for misconduct or subpar performance.

Additionally, the House has passed a second bill today to make the hiring process more efficient, allowing the VA to recruit and retain the best in the field. As a result, the VA can fire bad employees and replace them with good ones who have a passion, and we can retain at the agencies we want to work hard for our veterans. This will lead directly to higher quality care for our veterans, which is the whole reason and purpose we do this.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF MICHAEL JAY GROBSTEIN

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the memory of my good friend of nearly three decades, Michael Jay Grobstein of Encino, California, who passed away Wednesday, March 8.

Michael died at home, surrounded by his loving family, including his wife of 53 years, Barrie; his children, Marla and Marc; and his grandchildren, Miranda and Avery.

Fifty years ago, as a young and talented CPA, Michael founded a CPA firm which grew to be the largest accounting firm in the San Fernando Valley, Grobstein and Horwath. In that role, he provided financial and strategic advice to businesses throughout southern California, and beyond. There are thousands of people who are employed today at businesses that Michael guided with insight and wisdom.

Michael served as a founding member and president of The Executives, a group of business leaders in the Valley formed to support the Jewish Home for the Aging, where my own mother lives, along with hundreds of those enjoying their senior years. For that effort, Barrie and Michael earned the Circle of Life Award.

As lifelong residents of the Valley, both Michael and Barrie were involved in many charities, including the Junior Blind of America, the Grossman Burn Foundation, City of Hope, Cal State University Northridge, Sherman Oaks Hospital, and the Sheriff's Youth Foundation.

Above all, Michael was an example of one of San Fernando Valley's finest community leaders, and he was a good friend. He will be missed.

WE CANNOT LEAVE OUR VETERANS BEHIND

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

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor our veterans who have served in our country's Armed Forces.

For over 240 years, millions of brave souls have fought, bled, and some have died, to defend our American freedom. The Bible says: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Mr. Speaker, the American veteran truly has great love for his fellow man. Because of the great sacrifices of our veterans, we must see to their care and well-being. We have often failed in this obligation. We have left our veterans helpless, suffering through bureaucratic nightmares to get care they desperately need.

The Phoenix Veterans Administration has worked hard to improve its care for veterans, and the newly-opened Southeast Veterans Affairs Health Care Clinic in Gilbert is intent on providing the best possible care for our Nation's finest.

While conditions have been improving in Phoenix and around the Nation, there is still much work to be done. I have made it a priority to provide excellent service to the veterans in my district. They deserve nothing less.

Our veterans did not leave us behind. Mr. Speaker, we cannot leave them behind.

LOSING MEDICAID COVERAGE

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

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, as this week and the week before have passed, I watched Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle debate the better parts of either the Affordable Care Act or its replacement, the American Health Care Act.

For the people I represent, the people of the Northern Marianas and of the insular areas, none of this matters to us. None of those mandates, none of those subsidies ever applied to us. The one thing that did apply to us was Medicaid—not expansion, not the regular program, but the block grant for Medicaid—which has now just been completely taken out of the bill before us.

There are 14,000 participants on Medicaid in the Northern Marianas. Over 10,000 are children and students. Come October 1, 2019, they will no longer have access to health care because they lose their Medicaid coverage.

I CANNOT TELL A LIE

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I am a proud member of the House of Representatives. Yet, at the same time, I am embarrassed that, in somewhat of a Felliniesque nature, we have followed down the rabbit's hole.

Our current President suggests that President Obama wiretapped Trump Tower. Our President has the FBI and the intelligence agencies at his beck and call. He can easily make a phone call and know whether or not it is true; but, instead, he asks Congress to make an investigation, and Congress agrees.

This is absurd. It didn't happen. In fact, his security adviser called the British to apologize for suggesting that the British were listening in at Trump Tower.

Our Nation needs to be more like it was when George Washington was President. He was known to have said: "I cannot tell a lie."

We need to be straight with the American people. Microwaves cannot take pictures or surveil your house. The past President is an honorable man and committed no crime. He should not be accused of such.

I hope this Fellini movie ends quickly.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

MUSLIM BAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, happy St. Patrick's Day.

March 17 is St. Patrick's Day—a day that, for so many, has become a reason for frivolity and joy and fun. Some think it is a day just for drinking, but St. Patrick is remembered not because he drank, not because of frivolity, but because he was a dedicated Christian committed to serving the Lord. I think it is good on St. Patrick's Day to remember why he was a saint.

□ 1245

Now going 180 degrees from talking about saints, Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth discussing the decision made by a Federal judge in Hawaii, also in Maryland. We have judges who have become dictators. We have judges who have ceased to abide by the Constitution. They have widely applied themselves as politicians, though they do not run for office.

A true judge, a conscientious and ethical judge, would review a document such as the President's executive order for what it is, what it says, what it does. Intent is not an issue. What does it do?

The President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, was seeking and is seeking to protect Americans, but we have judges who are not interested in protecting Americans so much as they are patronizing and sucking up to the liberals in the country: those in the media, those in entertainment, those in their highbrow circles. They are not interested in following the Constitution or the law.

We had a hearing in the Committee on the Judiciary on the Ninth Circuit this week. The Ninth Circuit apparently is the most overturned circuit in the country. It has a massive number more cases filed in their circuit than any other circuit. In fact, I have now filed a bill that would divide the Ninth Circuit so that the Ninth Circuit would be comprised of California only, and then all the other States—Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming I believe is in, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, and territories—I may have missed a State, but all of the other States and territories would be in a new 12th Circuit. The judges who are currently on the 12th Circuit Court in my bill—who are currently part of the Ninth Circuit would remain with the Ninth Circuit. We would have a new circuit, and the judges would be appointed by the current President.

I know there are a lot of people in California who have great sympathy for that, have been begging for years to be carved out of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals because their destructive, unconstitutional decisions are doing great harm to those who believe in the Constitution as written, not as some liberal judge thought it might should be as he tries or she tries to play up to friends at their get-togethers. They would be hailed as being so wise, but the truth is, as Scripture talks about, these are people

who are wise in their own eyes, but they are doing great harm to the United States of America.

When anyone in any kind of leadership position loses their common sense, they are educated beyond common sense—they educate common sense completely out of some folks in the United States now—we have problems. And anytime people are educated and taught to believe that what instinctively they knew or were taught was not the right thing to think, and those people become leaders in the country, that country speeds up in its travel down the road to the dustbin of history.

No nation has ever lasted forever. No nation ever will in this world. It is not going to happen. So the question is, from its founding, how long does it go? It depends on how long the leaders of that nation can keep good sense within their consideration in making decisions. That is not happening. Good sense is not being used by judges who have assumed powers they never had, were never given.

Under the Constitution, the powers regarding refugees, immigration, those decisions are left to the President. Some judge may say, oh, you can't consider religion, but indeed any judge that so says is completely wrong. Thank God religion has been considered many times, as when Jews were being persecuted and killed, it was appropriate to say that we want to welcome Jews out of those horrors as refugees, bring them in. But this Nation is being put at risk by judges who are wise in their own eyes.

Now, there is an article here about the Hawaii judge. It is in The Guardian. It was written by Les Carpenter, Oliver Laughland, and Liz Barney. It was written apparently before the decision was made.

"U.S. district judge Derrick Watson is one of several judges hearing arguments over the ban in the final hours before its implementation. He said on Wednesday afternoon after hearing oral arguments that he would issue a written ruling before 6pm Hawaii time. Hawaii was the first state to challenge the second version of Trump's travel ban, after the first was halted by court order.

"The state has argued that the ban is unconstitutional, and that it will suffer damage to its local economy and to various educational and religious institutions. It also argued that some Hawaiians will be prevented from reuniting with family members swept up in the ban."

That is heart rending, but the fact is none of those are a basis for reversing a Presidential executive order that Congress and the Constitution together gave the President to issue.

We also find from comments that the courts didn't look to the four corners of the document and look what the document says because many of us know that as long as the Constitution is the foundational bedrock for the

country, we have a solid foundation. But when we have judges like this Derrick Watson or the judge from Maryland or James Robart, who issued a ban in the first travel order, when they don't pay attention to the Constitution but pay more attention to what they hear from their liberal friends who are disgusted by the elected President of the United States, and they know they will be heroes, and they long for the accolades of the intelligentsia, which actually isn't the intelligent—educated, yes; intelligent, no.

The Constitution gives certain powers to certain parts of the government. Congress has the power to make decisions on immigration, migration, naturalization, but it has the power to delegate those responsibilities as it sees fit to the President, and it has done so. The President has certain powers of his own office, of his own right to protect the United States of America. But these judges think that you should not consider the fact that one of the most educated people in the world on what Islam is and what it isn't says the Islamic State is Islam. He has a Ph.D. in Islamic studies from the University of Baghdad, as I recall, and he happens to be the head of the Islamic State.

But the judge would have us disregard the fact that a man who spent his life studying Islam, Koran, the Holy Koran because the Koran that is brought around to some of our offices, they take out verses that have to do with violence against those who are not Muslims, but the Holy Koran he spent his life studying, but these judges would say, oh, no, no, you can't consider the fact that these radical Islamists claim to be Muslim or Islamists, you can't consider that.

One article out this week pointed out that somebody should tell these judges that the terrorists coming in from the nations designated by the President are Muslim. They are not Christians. They are not Jews. They are not secularists. They are radical Islamists. It is ridiculous to have to continually state the obvious that we all know, that all Muslims are not a threat to the United States, but it is absurd not to understand that those who in the name of Allah are killing, beheading, torturing, trying to destroy a free society in the name of Allah, they should not be allowed into the United States. If they are U.S. citizens and their goal is to supplant the U.S. Constitution with sharia law, that is treasonous.

That is why I was so pleased with President Sisi, as a Muslim leader, telling a room full of imams: We have got to stand up to the radicals who have hijacked our religion. President Obama didn't know that. He kept continuing to say that, oh, no, the Islamic State, it is not Islamic, these Islamic terrorists are not Islamic, when actually wise Muslim leaders like President Sisi, they understand, yes, these people are Islamic. They claim it in the name of Allah. They claim it in the name of the Holy Koran, but they have hijacked

our religion, and it is time to stand up to them. As long as we have world leaders who are, metaphorically speaking, without clothes, and nobody has the nerve among the world leaders to say: you are naked, put on some clothes. Again, for those who are educated beyond their intellectual level, that means you have got to call it like it is and don't just go along to play to the crowd, the media, the Hollywood types. Stand up and call it like it is. We have a President who is trying to do that.

□ 1300

There is no doubt, as Justice Scalia said about one of the ill-advised decisions previously made by the Supreme Court, this will end up costing American lives. These decisions, if they are allowed to stand, by these unconstitutional judges will cost American lives, and the blood will be on the judges' hands in their pursuit of accolades and popularity among the neo-intellectual elite. They left common sense behind and put our Nation at risk. It is tragic.

I have the two decisions from the courts—one from the District of Hawaii and one from the District of Maryland. But it is interesting. In this article I was reading, Mr. Speaker, it says the judge, within just a matter of brief hours, was going to have this 42- or 43-page decision made. Let's see. This is the Hawaii decision, 43 pages. It seems to me somebody must have been working on that before oral arguments. The decision must have been worked on before that to have a 43-page decision just within a matter of a few hours.

But let's face it, the litigant surely knew before they ever had a hearing what the judge surely knew before the hearing—that he was biased, prejudiced, and was in no way going to have a fair hearing. He was going to end up ridiculing the President of the United States, and unwittingly, witlessly, putting America at risk.

We have testimony here from the FBI Director saying: We will vet these people, but we have nothing against which we can check the information they give us. Yeah, we will vet them, but we got nothing to check their information against.

As Director Comey pointed out: At least in Iraq, we had government records from Iraq, we had the criminal records. But in Syria, since the Obama administration was so diametrically opposed to the Assad administration in Syria, well, the official government certainly wasn't sharing information. And since this administration said we were going to stop the Islamic State—even though we did nothing from the administration decisions, at least, but help the Islamic State grow bigger and strong, and kept sending weapons, material to what the Obama administration thought or said were our friends and allies, but actually ended up repeatedly allowing the weaponry, the heavy artillery tanks, to fall into the hands of the Islamic State—well, the Islamic State was not sharing the in-

formation they had about the people of Syria.

And, in fact, Mr. Baghdadi made clear that they were going to get some of their best warriors mixed in with refugees, and they surely have. When you have judges who close their eyes, wet their finger, and hold it up for liberal friends to blow on so they know which direction they should move, well, we get had decisions that put the Nation at risk.

For those of us who spent much of our lives studying history, it is very clear. Since you know no nation lasts forever, then you look at important milestones along the rise and along the demise, and these are the kind of decisions that lead to a country's demise. When you refuse to recognize what your enemies say—that they are your enemies, they are going to destroy your way of life, they are going to get refugees who are terrorists into your country—because you are so stupid you don't know how to defend yourself, you want to pat yourselves on the back for being so open-minded and open-doored that you allow your killer to come in and kill you, just like the proverbial song and tale taking in a snake, warming it, bringing it back to life, and it bites the rescuer; or the tale of the tortoise carrying the scorpion across the water and then getting stung. When people tell you they despise your way of life, they are going to bring your way of life down. When their documents tell you that they believe that you are infidels and need to be destroyed, there has to be somebody at the top of the country's leadership that understands the risk and stands up to protect the country.

And when people like these judges take the Constitution into their own hands, rip it up, and say, "I don't care what restrictions we have on us, I don't have any restrictions, I am a Federal judge for life," well, that is only so long as the judge has good behavior. And these judges have not had good behavior. They have taken powers under themselves—their name might as well be Chavez or Morsi—taking power into their own hands that they were never supposed to have.

But at least in the case of Chavez and, possibly, Morsi, they won elections. There was a great deal of fraud involved in Morsi's election. It was questionable whether he actually won. The threats eliminated any contest to the election results. But the 30 million or so that went to the streets and demanded his ouster in Egypt, the greatest public step in world history, demanded the removal of an unconstitutional leader in world history. There has never been 30 million people go to the streets peaceably. It wasn't all peace. But the part that wasn't peace was caused by the Muslim Brotherhood. That is why they have been labeled as a terrorist organization, and that is why the United States should label them as a terrorist organization.

Regardless of what anybody thinks about President Trump, his order was

an attempt to protect Americans against judges who think they are unaccountable because we haven't impeached near enough and who become dictators and seize power that was never given to them.

I have got a bill we are preparing that would eliminate any jurisdiction for any Federal court other than the Supreme Court to take up an issue involving immigration of refugees, other than immigration courts, but not on a constitutional level, not to issue an injunction to stop a congressional action or a Presidential action. That would have to come from the Supreme Court, and that is the way it ought to be.

When the Constitution was written, there was only one Federal court provided for. That was the United States Supreme Court. Any other court that is Federal in this country owes its life, its jurisdiction, to the U.S. Congress. As some have said in other applications, "We brought them into the world and we can take them out," as far as their courts are concerned; and we need to do that. We need to take their courts out of the business of making decisions that overrule congressional and Presidential action on refugees and our national security when it is involved with those refugees.

At a hearing that Dr. Alid Perez and STEVE KING, my friend from Iowa, set up and held yesterday, there were very touching stories of Christians, Yazidis, the persecution of Jews in the Middle East. We heard from people that know what it is to be persecuted by radical Islamists. They see how stupid the policies have been in this country.

We heard from one of the people in the Homeland Security Department that with the massive millions of dollars that Congress appropriated to be used in countering violent extremism, an inarticulate euphemism, that we have spent millions on things like teaching young school choirs Muslim songs. Now, that is one of the contributing factors to the senseless Orlando killings, the San Bernardino killings, the Boston marathon killings—choirs. A contributing factor is that we have wasted millions of dollars, maybe billions, on outreach programs that should not necessarily be the role of some parts of our law enforcement.

I challenged FBI Director Mueller that they had not even gone to the mosque where Tsarnaev went to find out if his pattern had changed, if his behavior had changed, you know, if he was memorizing more and more scripture than he ever had.

We often hear after these shootings, these killings, or these bombings take place: Well, he was becoming more and more religious.

Well, that can be an indication that somebody has become radicalized. There are a number of factors.

Kim Jensen from the FBI, who prepared 700 pages or so on training people how to spot radical Islamists, well, he had his 700 pages purged from training materials for a long period of time. Fi-

nally, they realized somebody really needs to know what radical Islam is. They allowed some of the training materials to be used again—maybe all of them—but only for a limited number of FBI agents, as I understand it. We had material that was removed during the purge of our State Department, Homeland Security Department, intelligence departments, agencies, during the purge of their training materials, removed what our Federal agents need to know in order to be able to spot if somebody is no longer a peace-loving Muslim but now has been radicalized and wants to kill American infidels.

There are things that can be spotted if you know what to look for. We have people that know how to train for those things. Phil Haney with Homeland Security knew. With this scientific methodology of finding the connections between radical Islamists, as we have heard publicly, he had identified 800 who may have terrorist ties—reviewed 400, where nearly every one of them ended up being named on the terrorist watch list, but the other 400 were not ever analyzed.

□ 1315

No telling how many of those potential terrorist individuals may actually kill people, kill Americans some day, if they haven't already.

Although Secretary Napolitano said we get pinged and we connect the dots, yet she was Secretary when somebody high—maybe her, but probably someone else—was eliminating the dots, thousands of pages of dots, dots representing terrorist ties. They wiped them out. They erased them.

Phil Haney saw it as it was happening, was able to capture much that was being deleted, that would allow us to know who in the United States has terrorist ties. Under President Obama, our ability to identify our enemy was greatly weakened, and now we have judges that will put us even further at risk.

But you see it repeatedly through history. When a nation's leaders begin to think they are so wise, so above the fray that they refuse to recognize a direct threat to the nation, then the nation is—it speeds up its trip to that dustbin of history. My continued hope and prayer is that this administration will reverse that slide.

I know there are many that say that you have a cycle—whether it was ancient Greece, Rome, other societies—where they pursue freedom, they have some freedom, they begin to lose freedom, they fall under a dictatorship, a totalitarian regime, and then the cycle goes on. But my reading of history leads me to believe perhaps it is more like, can be like, bell-shaped curves where you can go up, create more and more freedoms, have periods where you lose freedoms, but if you have a generation or two that stands up and recaptures those freedoms, you could have another bell-shaped curve. It doesn't have to be a cycle where you com-

pletely lose your freedom. But the way we are headed, this will happen.

I was hearing from my friend Secretary Tom Price yesterday that there are 76,000 employees in Health and Human Services, and we are not talking about people that even put Band-Aids on those who need medical care. We are talking mainly about bureaucrats. That is one of the things that contributed so mightily to the increased cost of health care: so many more bureaucrats were being hired, had to be hired, more and more regulations.

You had IRS agents, by the thousands, that had to be hired in order to implement ObamaCare. They weren't going to help anybody's health. They might actually cause problems with people's health—ulcers, at least.

But this Nation is at risk. We have gotten a reprieve, a chance to catch our breath, restore freedom.

As I have said before, for those who have read "Nineteen Eighty-Four" by George Orwell, the main thing that Orwell got wrong was the date, because we now have eyes in our homes wherever we are that are staring at us, allow the government to stare at us through our own computers, through our own smartphones. When watching the movie of "1984," it actually is an eye like a picture, but what it really is these days, they are computer screens, smartphone screens. The government can watch any time it wants.

We were assured that the government would not be watching like that unless they followed the law or got a FISA court warrant, but Edward Snowden showed that—those of us who heard testimony and heard statements from people in authority about what they would do and not do—has been proven to be false.

That became clear to me when I saw the affidavit seeking a warrant for all of Verizon's data on all of their customers, all of their calls, all of the information, because the Fourth Amendment says it has to be with particularity. You have got to be specific, what it is you are seeking, make sure there is probable cause to believe a crime is being committed and this person committed it, and that there is evidence to show that that is being sought, and then you get the warrant.

That is the way I reviewed applications for warrants repeatedly when I was a judge, but not anymore. No, no. A guy comes in, swears to a FISA court judge that at one time I had great trust in because we were assured, hey, these are appointed—nominated, at least—confirmed Federal judges. They would never violate the Constitution. Well, we found out that is just not true. They became a rubber stamp.

So the particularity in the affidavit we saw was: We need all the information on all the customers Verizon has. The FISA judge, supposedly out there to protect Americans' private information, said: Oh, well, that is particular enough. You want everything, all of the numbers, all of the information.

Okay, here is the order. Here is the warrant. Verizon, turn over everything you have got on all the numbers you have.

Well, so much for protection of our rights by the FISA court. We now know we are not protected by the FISA court. We can't trust the FISA court.

As I said in our hearing last week—well, I have said it publicly—unless our intelligence agencies produce the culprits who violated the law and did not follow the law in masking the name, minimizing the transcripts, unless our intelligence agencies can root out the people that have been violating the law, I will vote against a reauthorization of 702.

I know they say: Well, we need all of this power to keep us safe. But we have competing interests here. On the one hand, we have a government that yearns to be bigger and bigger and know more and more until it knows everything about everybody; and on the other hand, we have got people wanting to be safe and wanting their government to protect them. So there has to be a balance.

But when government officials can get every bit of information about your private life, then why do we even need a Congress? You have got bureaucrats making your decisions, know all about you. Might as well let them make the rest of your personal decisions. They know everything else you know.

So we are living in a dangerous time, but the judges have got to be reined in. I hope that my colleagues will join us in restricting the ability of a district or circuit court, any Federal court other than the Supreme Court, taking up these types of national security issues involving refugees or immigrants, because it looks like that is the best thing we can do at this time.

In the meantime, I do intend to review more information about these two judges from Hawaii and Maryland—any others that may join hands as they jump off the cliff—and see if their conduct seems to be sufficiently bad conduct to require their removal from office.

I know this will be looked at as a political thing, but it is not. We are talking about the freedoms of every Democrat, every Republican, everybody that is not identified with a party—every American. The judges have overtaken the Constitution.

In the name of political correctness, we have ended up, apparently, according to the information that is coming out, allowing people who happen to be Muslim to have total access to our congressional computer systems. This article from March 15 in the *Conservative Review* by Luke Rosiak—and apparently, he has done a great deal of digging on this story. He seems to have more stories about it.

Well, let me touch on the one from March 13:

“Congressional IT staffers who are the subject of a criminal investigation into misusing their positions had full

access to Members’ ‘correspondence, emails, confidential files,’ and there was almost no tracking of what they did, a former House technology worker said.

“Imran Awan bullied central IT to bend the rules for him so there wouldn’t be a paper trail about the unusually high permissions he was requesting. And their actions were not logged, so Members have no way of knowing what information they may have taken, the central IT employee said.

“Awan ran technology for multiple House Democrats, and soon four of his relatives—including brothers Abid and Jamal—appeared on the payroll of dozens of other Members”—of Congress—“collecting \$4 million in taxpayer funds since 2010.

“U.S. Capitol Police named him and his relatives as subjects of a criminal probe on February 2, and banned them from the complex’s computer networks. But Members of Congress for whom they worked have downplayed their access or publicly ignored the issue.”

And, of course, the reason is no one wants to be seen as a racist. Islam, being Muslim, is not a race; it is a religion. And for some, it is not only a religion, it is a form of government that some—fortunately, a minority—think should replace our own Constitution.

Anyway, the article goes on: “‘They had access to everything. Correspondence, emails, confidential files—if it was stored on the Member’s system, they had access to it,’ the former House Information Resources technology worker with first-hand knowledge of Imran’s privileges told *The Daily Caller News Foundation*.

“Technology employees who work for Members must initially get authority from HIR, a component of the House’s chief administrative officer, which maintains campus-wide technology systems.

“There were some things—like access to the House email system that were totally controlled by the technicians at HIR. In order for certain permissions to be granted, a form was required to ensure that there was a paper trail for the requested changes. Imran was constantly complaining that he had to go through this process and trying to get people to process his access requests without the proper forms. Some of the permissions he wanted would give him total access to the Members’ stuff.”

And again, he used the threat of calling someone bigoted because he was Muslim if he was not given the total access that this person now being investigated as a criminal said he needed.

And it is amazing how many people gave him the full access he wanted without the proper credentials, without the proper background investigation, because no one wanted to be called bigoted since he was Muslim.

□ 1330

“IT staff at HIR can be tracked for every keystroke they make,” the work-

er said. But by comparison, ‘when these guys were granted access to the Member’s computer systems there is no oversight or tracking of what they may be doing on the Member’s system. For example they could make a copy of anything on the Member’s computer system to a thumb drive or have it sent to a private server that they had set up and no one would know.’

“That raises questions about why Members are so quick to brush off the seriousness of the investigation.”

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we are not hearing a lot of people talk about it. We are not seeing a bunch of stories about it. But this is critical to the ongoing of Congress’ actions. You can’t have privileged communications that allow us to know what is going on in the departments, agencies, over which we have oversight—you can’t have access to that kind of information.

The wrong people know everybody we talk to, everything that is said. They know how to fend off and best come after America. They know how to manipulate us and do so so much easier and better. You don’t have to be Russian, apparently, to get access to the Democratic National Committee’s emails.

I am still really interested to know if any of these five who didn’t have proper background investigations, that worked on so many of our Democratic friends’ computer systems, if they possibly helped set up the Democratic National Committee’s computer system.

“After being notified by the House Administration Committee, Abid was removed from our payroll.” This is a quote. “‘We are confident that everything in our office is secure,’ Hilarie Chambers, chief of staff for Democratic Representative SANDER LEVIN of Michigan, told *TheDCNF*.

“Multiple House IT workers said it is impossible for Members’ offices to make that judgment, and that Capitol Police—who are running an investigation that involves cybercrimes and current and potential international fugitives, despite their primary duties being providing physical security—are not capable of determining what actually occurred either.

“The Capitol Police web page listing their authority, scope of work, and expertise does not mention the word ‘computers.’

“A Fairfax County, Virginia, police report shows that the brothers’ stepmother called the police on them in January, and a relative said Imran has been out of the country attempting to access assets stored in Pakistan in his deceased father’s name. The relative said they forced her to sign power of attorney documents against her will.

“After naming them as suspects in a criminal investigation, the Capitol Police have not taken their passports or arrested them. The brothers previously took a \$100,000 loan from a fugitive wanted by U.S. authorities, Dr. Ali Al-Attar, who has fled to Iraq and been linked to Hezbollah.”

Just gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling, Mr. Speaker, that we have got people with ties owing money to known associates of the Hezbollah terrorist organization and their having full access to Members' computers.

This says: "Imran ran technology for Florida Rep. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ—who resigned as head of the Democratic National Committee after a disastrous email hack that was blamed on Russians—and had the password to an iPad used for DNC business.

"Politico described the investigation this way: 'Five House staffers are accused of stealing equipment from Members' offices without their knowledge and committing serious, potentially illegal, violations on the House IT network.'

"But it later said Hill staffers were downplaying the information security component, writing, 'Sources close to the House investigation said the former staffers, while able to view some Member data, did not have access to any classified information.'

"That description rankled multiple House IT workers, who told TheDCNF those semantics misleadingly made it seem like they didn't have access to extremely sensitive information.

"Classified' is a terminology used by spy agencies and other executive branch agencies, not generally Congress, with the exception of the Intelligence Committee. The full email correspondence and hard drives of Members of Congress are nonetheless sensitive, extremely private, and likely to contain privileged information of the utmost import.

"And an email need not deal with national security to open that Member to blackmail or extortion. All a rogue IT staffer would need to do was threaten to release emails that were politically embarrassing.

"The central IT staffer said any suggestion that the brothers' access didn't span the full gamut of congressional intrigue was silly because they were the ones giving out permissions.

"When a new Member begins, they guide them on everything from which computer system to purchase to which constituent management system to go with and all other related hardware purchases. Then they install everything and set up all the accounts and grant all the required permissions and restrictions,' the staffer said.

"In effect, they are given administrative control of the Members' computer operations. They then set up a remote access so they can connect from wherever they are and have full access to everything on the Member's system.'

"Numerous Members of Congress who employed the suspects wouldn't say whether they've been fired or what steps they've taken to examine whether their information is safe."

Spokesmen for a number of Members of Congress "all ignored requests or refused to say.

"The central IT worker said they were ignoring the problem in the hopes

that it will go away, but that their apathy speaks to the problem.

"Unfortunately, as the recent election has shown, security of computer systems on the Hill is not really taken seriously.'"

So we are told now, this article from March 15, says that the Capitol Police are getting outside help. We will see.

Might I inquire how much time I have?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, in my remaining time, I want to address the question of ObamaCare.

Two years ago when Joe Biden was Vice President, making him President of the Senate, there was a compromise. Instead of doing complete and full repeal of ObamaCare as Republicans have been promising for years, there was a compromise: All right. We will take out all but the regulatory authority, those things that actually caused the greatest increase and expense.

But it didn't change the fact, Mr. Speaker, that we had made a pledge to America that I didn't help write but our leaders of the Republican Party in the House did, and it said: Because the new healthcare law kills jobs, raises taxes, increases the cost of health care, we will immediately take action to repeal this law. Then it goes into some detail about that.

Then we know we had A Better Way, Speaker RYAN, our leadership, current leadership's Better Way. And this was from June 22 of 2016.

The plan begins by laying out five principles. It begins by repealing ObamaCare. That is all of it as its first principle. And the last sentence of the paragraph says: "We need a clean start in order to pursue the patient-centered reforms the American people deserve."

That is exactly right, and I was glad that our leadership of our party put that in there because we needed a full repeal.

But 2 years ago, it wasn't a complete repeal. More so than what is being done now, in what we are being told is the new bill. It was more repeal then. But even then we wanted to do a full repeal, but we were told because Joe Biden could come over from the White House, come down Pennsylvania Avenue and take the presiding officer's seat straight down the hall, that he would likely rule that other part was not in compliance with the Byrd rule.

In essence, the Byrd rule basically means, if something is merely incidental in its effect on the budget, then it may not be considered under the procedure that was being used, and that procedure only requires 51 votes.

So the thing that everybody knew back then is, if it were a Republican in the presiding officer's seat, of course, would say all of this, especially the part that was taken out, would survive the Byrd rule because it is not just an incidental effect on the budget. It is

the most dramatic effect on the budget of most any bill that Congress has ever taken up—dramatic and not incidental, dramatic.

And so now we are told: Look, everybody needs to get on board with this new bill that doesn't go as far as the one 2 years ago, and it leaves all these regulations and things, all that power. 1,400 times it says the Secretary will make the rules, regulations to implement the bill. But we are being told it is okay; you don't have to knock those out because now we have Secretary Price that can do that.

Well, for one thing, if he could, then that would mean when the next Secretary of Health and Human Services comes along and it is a Democrat, you can put them all back. We hadn't done anything. We didn't accomplish anything. We just had a little breather.

But we are also told the prices will likely continue up. There may be a 10 percent drop of the two to four times the healthcare costs, health insurance costs, at least, are increasing.

But since we know it will be a Republican in the chair, then the Republican in the chair in the Senate will be free to do the right thing and say, honestly, truthfully, absolutely, the repeal of all this regulatory massive mess is dramatically going to affect the budget, not incidentally. So it survives the Byrd rule. It stays in.

There are things that are in the new bill that probably won't survive that analysis that have been added.

Why don't we do what we promised for 7 long years, repeal all of ObamaCare? But we are told there is a second bucket, a second stage, where Secretary Tom Price—in whom I have got great faith because he knows health care, he knows healthcare law—can change those regulations.

Well, we also know that this is going to be taken to court very quickly. And even I, as the conservative appellate chief justice that I was at one time, would probably look at that and say wait a minute.

The law gives you the power to create regulations to implement the bill; it doesn't give you the power to make regulations that will destroy the bill. So it won't have to be a liberal judge that can knock down regulations.

I remember my late friend Justice Scalia not talking about a particular case, but talking about the issue of when Congress doesn't do something and has a lawsuit to do it instead, Justice Scalia said: If you guys in Congress don't have the guts to stop something you have the power to stop, don't come running over to the Supreme Court to demand we do it. You do your job. That is not our job.

□ 1345

And this is the case with ObamaCare. It needs to be repealed—as MITCH MCCONNELL said, root and branch. And it survives the Byrd Rule, and then we really help America.

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

PRESIDENT TRUMP'S BROKEN HEALTHCARE PROMISES TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGO) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, I am going to cut directly to the chase. The Trump-Ryan healthcare bill betrays every single promise Donald Trump made about health care, and does it all for the sake of an enormous tax cut for those who need it least.

The first promise that Donald Trump made to the American people was that everyone would have health insurance. Although the ACA expanded health coverage to more than 20 million Americans, Donald Trump said repeatedly that he didn't think the ACA provided enough people with coverage. He said: "We're going to have insurance for everybody," and "I'm not going to leave the lower 20 percent that can't afford health insurance."

What does the Trump-Ryan bill do?

According to the Congressional Budget Office, 14 million people would immediately lose coverage next year, and 24 million people would lose coverage by 2027. That is outrageous. But it gets worse.

According to the White House's own estimate, 26 million people, not 24 million people, will lose coverage under the Trump-Ryan bill.

The second promise that Donald Trump made to the American people was that their health insurance would be cheaper. Donald Trump said that his plans would have "much lower deductibles."

Secretary Tom Price said last week that under the Trump-Ryan proposal "nobody will be worse off financially."

What does the Trump-Ryan bill actually do?

In my home State, Arizonans will get hit hard, very hard. In 2020, under the Trump-Ryan plan, Arizonans will receive on average \$3,500 less in subsidies than ObamaCare, meaning they are going to be forced to spend more money out of pocket to continue getting care.

The Trump-Ryan bill will stick it to older Americans. It peels back an ObamaCare rule that protects older people from higher costs. The Trump-Ryan bill green-lights insurance companies to charge older Americans 66 percent more.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, a typical, low-income, 64-year-old's out-of-pocket costs would increase from less than \$2,000 a year to almost \$15,000 a year by 2026. So if you are an older American and you don't like ObamaCare, let me tell you this right now: You are going to hate TrumpCare.

The third promise that Donald Trump made to the American people was that Americans would enjoy better health care. As a candidate, Donald

Trump said that ObamaCare was "horrible health care." He promised that "everybody's going to be taken care of much better than they're taken care of now."

So what does the Trump-Ryan bill do?

Well, if you are lucky enough to still have health insurance under the Trump-Ryan plan, it will provide you even worse coverage. The bill does nothing to increase the quality of your care. It will cut some of the healthcare services you receive now.

In his speech before Congress less than 3 weeks ago, Donald Trump said that "we will expand treatment for those who have become so badly addicted."

At a time when opiate overdoses kill more Americans than car accidents, we absolutely should be expanding treatment. But what does the Trump-Ryan bill do?

It does the opposite by cutting addiction services and mental health treatment under Medicaid.

Donald Trump's fourth promise to the American was that he would not cut Medicaid. During the Republican presidential primary, he bragged that he was the first and only potential GOP candidate to state that there will be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

What does the Trump-Ryan bill do?

It cuts Medicaid more than it has ever been cut before. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, it cuts Medicaid funding by \$370 billion over 10 years.

The Trump-Ryan bill will permanently and radically weaken this critical safety net for the working poor. It freezes enrollment in Medicaid and unravels the Medicaid expansion. If you are worried about what this means for you, your family, and your friends, you should be.

Donald Trump is breaking his promise on Medicaid. Will he break his promise on Medicare, too? Will he break his promise on Social Security? Why is Donald Trump breaking promise after promise he made on health care?

The Trump-Ryan bill takes healthcare coverage away from millions of people, it raises deductibles and copays, and provides worse coverage for those who are lucky enough to still be able to afford it.

So what are Donald Trump, PAUL RYAN, and House Republicans up to? This bill does a lot of things poorly, but there is one thing, and really only one thing, that this bill does incredibly well. It cuts a whole lot of taxes for the rich.

This Trump-Ryan "healthcare bill" includes a whopping \$600 billion in tax cuts, almost all for the wealthy. The single biggest tax cut in the bill repeals a 3.8 percent tax on investors who make more than \$250,000.

This tax cut will not put a single dollar back in the pocket of any family who makes less than \$250,000. But if

you are the top one-tenth of 1 percent, which means that you make at least \$3.75 million per year, then you will get on average a \$165,000 tax cut. This is outrageous.

The Trump-Ryan bill also repeals a nearly 1 percent tax on families making over \$250,000. Again, if you are in the top one-tenth of 1 percent, you are going to do great under the Trump-Ryan bill. You will get an average tax cut of over \$30,000.

But, if you are in the bottom 90 percent, if you are an average, hard-working American, you will get nothing from this tax cut.

Who are Donald Trump, PAUL RYAN, and House Republicans looking out for? If you are an out-of-work steelworker in Youngstown, it is not you. If you are a struggling farmer in rural Alabama, it is not you. If you are working at Target, Walmart, or McDonald's, you are out of luck, too. Heck, even if you are making a decent living as an auto worker or a truck driver, it is not you.

Two nights ago, Donald Trump even admitted this. In an interview on FOX News, Tucker Carlson pointed out to Donald Trump that the rich do a lot better under the Trump-Ryan healthcare bill than working and middle class people, many of whom supported him in this election.

What did Donald Trump say in response? "Oh, I know."

Donald Trump, PAUL RYAN, and House Republicans are looking out for the richest of the rich. They are putting the pinch to you, hardworking Americans, to give their rich friends and supporters a giant tax break, and they are willing to wreck our healthcare system and take healthcare insurance away from 24 million Americans to do it.

Two years ago, MARCO RUBIO called out Donald Trump as a con artist. The Trump-Ryan healthcare bill is one big con on the American people.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to avoid engaging in personalities toward the President.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. MCEACHIN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 1362. An act to name the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Pago Pago, American Samoa, the Faleomavaega Eni Fa'aua'a Hunkin VA Clinic.

JOINT RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED
TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on March 16, 2017, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following joint resolutions:

H.J. Res. 57. Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to accountability and State plans under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

H.J. Res. 58. Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to teacher preparation issues

H.J. Res. 44. Disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of the Interior relating to Bureau of Land Management regulations that establish the procedures used to prepare, revise, or amend land use plans pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976

H.J. Res. 37. Disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Defense, the General Services Administration, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration relating to the Federal Acquisition Regulation

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 53 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, March 20, 2017, at noon 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:

802. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — Benefits Payable in Terminated Single-Employer Plans; Interest Assumptions for Paying Benefits received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

803. A letter from the Acting Chairman, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's Twenty-third Report to Congress on Progress Made in Licensing and Constructing the Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 16523; Public Law 109-58, Sec. 1810; (119 Stat. 1126); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

804. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Limited Federal Implementation Plan; Prevention of Significant Deterioration Requirements for Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}); California; North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District [EPA-R09-OAR-2016-0727; FRL-9960-32-Region 9] received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

805. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's

final rule — Technical Correction to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter [EPA-HQ-OAR-2016-0408; FRL-9958-29-OAR] (RIN: 2060-AS89) received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

806. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Further Delay of Effective Date for the Final Rule Entitled "Accidental Release Prevention Requirements: Risk Management Programs Under the Clean Air Act" Published by the Environmental Protection Agency on January 13, 2017 [EPA-HQ-OEM-2015-0725; FRL-9959-57-OLEM] (RIN: 2050-AG82) received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

807. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Delay of Effective Date for Partial Approval and Partial Disapproval of Attainment Plan for the Idaho Portion of the Logan, Utah/Idaho PM_{2.5} Nonattainment Area Published by the Environmental Protection Agency on January 4, 2017 [EPA-R10-OAR-2015-0067; FRL-9960-35-Region 10] received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

808. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Air Plan Approval; Georgia; Atlanta; Requirements for the 2008 8-Hour Ozone Standard [EPA-R04-OAR-2015-0248; FRL-9957-89-Region 4] received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

809. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Alabama: Final Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program Revisions [EPA-R04-RCRA-2016-0497; FRL-9959-14-Region 4] received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

810. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Louisiana; Volatile Organic Compounds Rule Revision and Stage II Vapor Recovery [EPA-R06-OAR-2013-0167; FRL-9958-60-Region 6] received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

811. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; New Mexico; Albuquerque/Bernalillo County; Inspection and Maintenance Program Error Correction [EPA-R06-OAR-2011-0695; FRL-9957-41-Region 6] received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

812. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas; El Paso Carbon Monoxide Limited Maintenance Plan [EPA-R06-OAR-2016-0550; FRL-9957-56-

Region 6] received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

813. A letter from the Executive Director, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Annual Update of Filing Fees [Docket No.: RM17-00006-000] received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

814. A letter from the Chair, Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission, transmitting the March 2017 Report to Congress on Medicaid and CHIP, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 1396(b)(1)(C); Aug. 14, 1935, ch. 531, title XIX, Sec. 1900 (as amended by Public Law 111-148, Sec. 2801(a)(1)(A)(iv)); (123 Stat. 91); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

815. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Office of the General Counsel, Consumer Product Safety Commission, transmitting the Commission's direct final rule — Revisions to Safety Standard for Toddler Beds [Docket No.: CPSC-2017-0012] received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

816. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting the Department's final rule — Temporary General License: Extension of Validity [Docket No.: 160106014-7155-06] (RIN: 0694-AG82) received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

817. A letter from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting a notification of a federal nomination, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

818. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Communications and Legislative Affairs, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, transmitting the Commission's Annual Sunshine Act Report for 2016, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552b(j); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

819. A letter from the Acting Chairman, Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, transmitting the FY 2016 No FEAR Act report, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 2301 note; Public Law 107-174, 203(a) (as amended by Public Law 109-435, Sec. 604(f)); (120 Stat. 3242); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

820. A letter from the Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board, transmitting the Board's FY 2016 No FEAR Act report, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 2301 note; Public Law 107-174, 203(a) (as amended by Public Law 109-435, Sec. 604(f)); (120 Stat. 3242); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

821. A letter from the Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the final map and perimeter boundary description for the Ontonagon Wild and Scenic River, in Michigan, pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1274(b); Public Law 90-542, Sec. 3(b) (as amended by Public Law 100-534, Sec. 501); (102 Stat. 2708); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

822. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2016 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for South Atlantic Vermilion Snapper [Docket No.: 130312235-3658-02] (RIN: 0648-

XE910) received March 15, 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.

823. A letter from the Deputy General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel, Small Business Administration, transmitting the Administration's interim final rule — Civil Monetary Penalties Inflation Adjustments (RIN: 3245-AG83) received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

824. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works, Department of Defense, transmitting a report on the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area Flood Risk Management Project, pursuant to the Clean Water Act, Sec. 404(r); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

825. A letter from the Attorney-Advisor, CG-LRA, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's interim rule — Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Sturgeon Bay, Sturgeon Bay, WI [Docket No.: USCG-2017-0050] (RIN: 1625-AA09) received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

826. A letter from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary interim rule — Safety Zone; Columbia River, Sand Island, WA [Docket No.: USCG-2017-0118] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

827. A letter from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Special Local Regulation; Black Warrior River; Tuscaloosa, AL [Docket No.: USCG-2017-0032] (RIN: 1625-AA08) received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

828. A letter from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Safety Zone; Loop Parkway Bridge — Long Creek, Hempstead, NY [Docket No.: USCG-2017-0019] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

829. A letter from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Special Local Regulation; Black Warrior River; Tuscaloosa, AL [Docket No.: USCG-2017-0034] (RIN: 1625-AA08) received March 15, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

830. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Further Delay of Effective Dates for Five Final Regulations Published by the Environmental Protection Agency Between December 12, 2016 and January 17, 2017 [FRL-9960-28-OP] received March 16, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Agriculture.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk

for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Ms. FOXX, Committee on Education and the Workforce. H.R. 1101. A bill to amend title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to improve access and choice for entrepreneurs with small businesses with respect to medical care for their employees; with an amendment (Rept. 115-43). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

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. WILLIAMS:

H.R. 1593. A bill to repeal the corporate average fuel economy standards; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. CARTWRIGHT (for himself, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. CONNOLLY):

H.R. 1594. A bill to ensure that the percentage increase in rates of basic pay for prevailing wage employees shall be equal to the percentage increase received by other Federal employees in the same pay locality, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. ROTHFUS (for himself and Mr. STIVERS):

H.R. 1595. A bill to amend the Federal Deposit Insurance Act to allow mutual capital certificates to satisfy capital requirements for mutual depositories; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. BYRNE (for himself, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. NEAL, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. LYNCH, and Mr. MCGOVERN):

H.R. 1596. A bill to establish the Commission to study the potential creation of a National Museum of Irish American History, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, 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. BRAT (for himself, Mrs. MURPHY of Florida, and Mr. KNIGHT):

H.R. 1597. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to clarify the responsibilities of commercial market representatives, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business.

By Mr. GOHMERT (for himself and Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina):

H.R. 1598. A bill to amend title 28, United States Code, to divide the ninth judicial circuit of the United States into 2 circuits, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas:

H.R. 1599. A bill to prohibit the provision of performance awards to employees of the Internal Revenue Service who owe back taxes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. POE of Texas:

H.R. 1600. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the work opportunity tax credit for veterans and to allow an exemption from an employer's employment taxes in an amount equivalent to the value of such credit in the case of veterans; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Ms. SINEMA (for herself and Mr. ZELDIN):

H.R. 1601. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to clarify when certain academic assessments shall be administered; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. LEWIS of Georgia:

H.R. 1602. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an exclusion from gross income for AmeriCorps educational awards; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Ms. BASS:

H.R. 1603. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve education opportunities for physician assistants, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Ms. BASS:

H.R. 1604. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to extend to physician assistants eligibility for Medicaid incentive payments for the adoption and use of certified electronic health records, whether or not such physician assistants practice at a rural health center or Federally qualified health center; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Ms. BASS:

H.R. 1605. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide loan repayment incentives for physician assistants, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, 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. CARTER of Georgia (for himself, Mr. LOEBACK, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. GOSAR, and Mr. PITTINGER):

H.R. 1606. A bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to improve health care coverage under vision and dental plans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. DEUTCH (for himself and Mr. THOMAS J. ROONEY of Florida):

H.R. 1607. A bill to establish the National Criminal Justice Commission; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ESPAILLAT (for himself, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. CORREA, Mrs. TORRES, Mr. SABLON, Mr. GUTIÉRREZ, Mr. SOTO, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. COSTA, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. GALLEGU, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. BONAMICI, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. CARBAJAL, Ms. NORTON, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. MOORE, Mr. BEYER, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. O'ROURKE, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia):

H.R. 1608. A bill to require agents and officers of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to wear body cameras, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security, and in addition to the Committees on the Judiciary, and Ways and Means, 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. LANGEVIN (for himself, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. AGUILAR, Mr. RATCLIFFE, and Mr. TED LIEU of California):

H.R. 1609. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to support meeting the increasing needs of the United States for a cybersecurity and information assurance workforce by reinvigorating and modifying the Information Assurance Scholarship Program of the Department of Defense, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico (for herself and Mr. CONYERS):

H.R. 1610. A bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act, and title XVIII of the Social Security Act, to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct audits of medical loss ratio reports submitted by health insurance issuers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, 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 Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York (for herself, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. JENKINS of Kansas, and Mr. BEYER):

H.R. 1611. A bill to require the Securities and Exchange Commission to establish a Gender Diversity Advisory Group to study and make recommendations on strategies to increase gender diversity among the members of the board of directors of issuers, to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to require issuers to make disclosures to shareholders with respect to gender diversity, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York (for herself, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. CUMMINGS, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. KEATING, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. LYNCH, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. NADLER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. O'ROURKE, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. POCAN, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. SERRANO, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and Mrs. LOWEY):

H.R. 1612. A bill to require criminal background checks on all firearms transactions occurring at gun shows; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MCKINLEY (for himself and Mr. WELCH):

H.R. 1613. A bill to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to transfer certain funds to the Multiemployer Health Benefit Plan, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, 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. POCAN (for himself, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. RUSH, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. BEYER, Ms. MOORE, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. WELCH, Mr. NOLAN, Mr. SCHRADER, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. KIND, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. KILMER, Mr. PAYNE, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. GROTHMAN, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, and Mr. PERLMUTTER):

H.R. 1614. A bill to authorize borrowers of loans under the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program to modify the interest rate of such loans to be equal to the interest rate for such loans at the time of modification; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. RASKIN (for himself, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. BROWN of Maryland, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Mr. CLAY,

Mr. COHEN, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. COOPER, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. EVANS, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. KIHUEN, Ms. LEE, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. MCNERNEY, Ms. NORTON, Mr. O'ROURKE, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. SOTO, and Mr. WELCH):

H.R. 1615. A bill to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to apply the ban on contributions and expenditures by foreign nationals under such Act to foreign-controlled, foreign-influenced, and foreign-owned domestic corporations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. RATCLIFFE (for himself and Mr. PALMER):

H.R. 1616. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to authorize the National Computer Forensics Institute, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Homeland Security, 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. REED (for himself and Mr. BLUMENAUER):

H.R. 1617. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to permit nurse practitioners and physician assistants to satisfy the documentation requirement under the Medicare program for coverage of certain shoes for individuals with diabetes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, 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. RUIZ:

H.R. 1618. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify that caregivers for veterans with serious illnesses are eligible for assistance and support services provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. RUIZ:

H.R. 1619. A bill to authorize assistance and training to increase maritime security and domain awareness of foreign countries bordering the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, or the Mediterranean Sea in order to deter and counter illicit smuggling and related maritime activity by Iran, including illicit Iranian weapons shipments; to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 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. RUIZ:

H.R. 1620. A bill to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 and title 5, United States Code, to permit leave to care for an adult child, grandchild, or grandparent who has a serious health condition, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committees on Oversight and Government Reform, and House Administration, 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. RUIZ:

H.R. 1621. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to distribute additional information to Medicare beneficiaries to prevent health care fraud, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on

Ways and Means, 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. RUIZ (for himself, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. WALZ, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. COHEN, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, and Mr. STEWART):

H.R. 1622. A bill to provide for a lifetime National Recreational Pass for any veteran with a service-connected disability, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture, 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. RUSSELL:

H.R. 1623. A bill to repeal the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing Incentive Program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. LEWIS of Georgia (for himself and Mr. TIBERI):

H. Con. Res. 34. Concurrent resolution recognizing the 100th anniversary of the charitable contribution deduction; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. CARTER of Georgia (for himself, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Ms. SINEMA, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. ARRINGTON, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Ms. MOORE, Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia, Ms. ESTY, and Ms. TENNEY):

H. Res. 206. A resolution recognizing Girl Scouts of the United States of America on its 105th birthday and on the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scout Cookie Program; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. KEATING (for himself, Mr. NEAL, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. KING of New York, and Mr. CONNOLLY):

H. Res. 207. A resolution expressing the continued support of the House of Representatives for the Good Friday Agreement (the Belfast Agreement); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. RUIZ (for himself, Ms. LEE, and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN):

H. Res. 208. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of "National Latino AIDS Awareness Day" on October 15, 2017, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

MEMORIALS

Under clause 3 of rule XII, memorials were presented and referred as follows:

8. The SPEAKER presented a memorial of the Legislature of the State of Louisiana, relative to House Concurrent Resolution No. 4, to memorialize the United States Congress to recognize that the Louisiana coastal area as an area in crisis and to enact federal regulatory reform and disaster recovery regulations that minimize delays in the processes by which the state of Louisiana responds to the crises that we face as a result of coastal land loss and natural disasters; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

9. Also, a memorial of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado, relative to House Joint Resolution HJR17-1006, recognizing the bravery and sacrifice of the crew of the U.S.S. Pueblo; jointly to the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Armed Services.

10. Also, a memorial of the Senate of the State of Louisiana, relative to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4, to memorialize the

Congress of the United States to extend Louisiana's seaward boundary in the Gulf of Mexico to three marine leagues; jointly to the Committees on the Judiciary and Natural Resources.

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. WILLIAMS:

H.R. 1593.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 ("To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes").

By Mr. CARTWRIGHT:

H.R. 1594.

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

Article I, Section 8; Clause 1 of the Constitution states The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States . . .

By Mr. ROTHFUS:

H.R. 1595.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the Constitution of the United States "[t]o regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes."

By Mr. BYRNE:

H.R. 1596.

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

Article I, section 8 of the U.S. Constitution.

By Mr. BRAT:

H.R. 1597.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1 gives Congress power to raise revenue for spending on the general welfare. Pursuant to Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18, it is necessary and proper that Congress provides guidelines for the manner in which public funds are spent.

By Mr. GOHMERT:

H.R. 1598.

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

Article I, Section 8
"The Congress shall have Power . . . To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court"

By Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas:

H.R. 1599.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. POE of Texas:

H.R. 1600.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1 of the Constitution, which states that "the Congress shall have power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States . . ."

By Ms. SINEMA:

H.R. 1601.

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

Article 1, Section 8

By Mr. LEWIS of Georgia:

H.R. 1602.

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 of the United States Constitution and its subsequent amendments, and further clarified and interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States.

By Ms. BASS:

H.R. 1603.

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

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

By Ms. BASS:

H.R. 1604.

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

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

By Ms. BASS:

H.R. 1605.

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

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

By Mr. CARTER of Georgia:

H.R. 1606.

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

Article 1, Section 8

By Mr. DEUTCH:

H.R. 1607.

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

Clause 1 of Section 8 of Article I of the U.S. Constitution and Clause 18 of Section 8 of Article I of the U.S. Constitution.

By Mr. ESPAILLAT:

H.R. 1608.

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

Article One of the United States Constitution, section 8, clause 18:

The Congress shall have Power—To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof or

Article One of the United States Constitution, Section 8, Clause 3:

The Congress shall have Power—To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian tribes;

By Mr. LANGEVIN:

H.R. 1609.

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

Pursuant to clause 16 of section 8 of article 1 of the United States Constitution.

By Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico:

H.R. 1610.

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

Article One, Section 8, Clause 18 of the United States Constitution, "The Congress shall have Power . . . To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof "

By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York:

H.R. 1611.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3, the Commerce Clause

By Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York:

H.R. 1612.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3, the Commerce Clause

By Mr. MCKINLEY:

H.R. 1613.

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

According to Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the Constitution: The Congress shall have power to enact this legislation to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes.

By Mr. POCAN:

H.R. 1614.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3

The Congress shall have Power . . . To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.

By Mr. RASKIN:

H.R. 1615.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3: "[The Congress shall have the power] to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes . . ."

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18: "[The Congress shall have the power to] make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

By Mr. RATCLIFFE:

H.R. 1616.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18—To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

By Mr. REED:

H.R. 1617.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1

By Mr. RUIZ:

H.R. 1618.

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

clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution

By Mr. RUIZ:

H.R. 1619.

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

clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution

By Mr. RUIZ:

H.R. 1620.

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

clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution

By Mr. RUIZ:

H.R. 1621.

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

clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution

By Mr. RUIZ:

H.R. 1622.

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

clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution

By Mr. RUSSELL:

H.R. 1623.

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

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 38: Mr. LOUDERMILK and Mrs. BLACKBURN.

H.R. 60: Ms. SPEIER, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mr. TAKANO, Ms. TENNEY, Mr. SMUCKER, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. HULTGREN, Mr. REED, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia, Mr. GUTHRIE, and Mr. POE of Texas.

H.R. 84: Mr. WILLIAMS.

H.R. 103: Mr. LOEBSACK.

H.R. 147: Mrs. HARTZLER.

H.R. 250: Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina.

H.R. 355: Mr. FERGUSON.

H.R. 368: Mr. JONES.

H.R. 392: Ms. TENNEY, Mr. UPTON, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. KNIGHT, Mr. ROKITA, and Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 395: Mr. NEWHOUSE.

H.R. 442: Mr. MARSHALL and Mr. GARRETT.

H.R. 453: Mr. DESJARLAIS and Mr. BISHOP of Michigan.

H.R. 490: Mr. GIBBS and Mr. JONES.

H.R. 510: Mr. BARR and Mr. BISHOP of Michigan.

H.R. 530: Mr. HIMES.

H.R. 532: Mr. DESAULNIER.

H.R. 544: Mr. THOMAS J. ROONEY of Florida.

H.R. 553: Mr. MESSER.

H.R. 630: Mr. CÁRDENAS.

H.R. 669: Mr. KILDEE.

H.R. 732: Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida.

H.R. 747: Mr. KING of New York.

H.R. 772: Mr. GRIFFITH.

H.R. 790: Mr. WALZ and Mr. DOGGETT.

H.R. 825: Ms. ROSEN.

H.R. 846: Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. BARLETTA, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. TAYLOR, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. HILL, Mr. WALZ, and Mr. O'ROURKE.

H.R. 849: Mr. BABIN, Mrs. NOEM, and Mr. GIBBS.

H.R. 860: Mr. GRIFFITH.

H.R. 866: Ms. MOORE and Mrs. LOWEY.

H.R. 909: Mr. SMUCKER and Mr. SCHNEIDER.

H.R. 914: Mr. NORCROSS.

H.R. 919: Ms. ESHOO, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, and Ms. DELAURO.

H.R. 930: Mr. ROSS, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. SMUCKER, Mr. DESANTIS, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. DOGGETT, and Mr. SCHRADER.

H.R. 931: Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. DESAULNIER, Ms. LOFGREN, and Mrs. DEMINGS.

H.R. 953: Mr. BROOKS of Alabama.

H.R. 975: Mr. LEWIS of Minnesota and Mr. HECK.

H.R. 976: Mr. WOMACK.

H.R. 1005: Mrs. LOWEY.

H.R. 1022: Mr. LEVIN, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Ms. MENG, and Mr. JEFFRIES.

H.R. 1036: Mr. HURD.

H.R. 1049: Ms. GABBARD and Mr. BROWN of Maryland.

H.R. 1057: Mr. ALLEN, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. HUDSON, Mr. VALADAO, Mr. GALLAGHER, Mr. UPTON, and Mr. GUTHRIE.

H.R. 1136: Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Mr. HARRIS, and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1148: Mr. AMODEI and Mr. LONG.

H.R. 1155: Mr. RUSH.

H.R. 1239: Mr. HIMES.

H.R. 1240: Mr. BROWN of Maryland, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. DESAULNIER, and Mr. LOWENTHAL.

H.R. 1242: Ms. JACKSON LEE.

H.R. 1243: Ms. ROSEN, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, and Mr. CUMMINGS.

H.R. 1251: Ms. SPEIER.

H.R. 1267: Ms. LOFGREN.

H.R. 1299: Mr. MCGOVERN.

H.R. 1304: Mr. MESSER.

H.R. 1313: Mr. MESSER.

H.R. 1315: Mr. VALADAO and Mr. FASO.

H.R. 1338: Mr. PALAZZO.

H.R. 1361: Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania and Mr. CARTWRIGHT.

H.R. 1384: Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. COURTNEY, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. BORDALLO, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. LANGEVIN, and Mr. O'ROURKE.

H.R. 1405: Mr. RUSH, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. CORREA, Ms. HANABUSA, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. RASKIN, and Ms. MCCOLLUM,

H.R. 1421: Mr. LOEBSACK.

H.R. 1426: Mr. STIVERS.

H.R. 1438: Ms. CASTOR of Florida and Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 1447: Mr. DENT and Mr. BEYER.

H.R. 1448: Mr. O'ROURKE.

H.R. 1452: Ms. SHEA-PORTER.

H.R. 1456: Mr. KNIGHT and Ms. LOFGREN.

H.R. 1466: Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. GALLEG0, and Ms. JACKSON LEE.

H.R. 1475: Ms. NORTON.

H.R. 1512: Mr. NUNES and Ms. JENKINS of Kansas.

H.R. 1533: Mr. MEEHAN.

H.R. 1561: Mr. GARAMENDI and Ms. JACKSON LEE.

H.R. 1566: Mrs. BEATTY.

H.R. 1588: Ms. JACKSON LEE.

H.J. Res. 6: Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana.

H.J. Res. 33: Mr. SHERMAN and Ms. BROWNLEY of California.

H. Res. 92: Mrs. TORRES, Mr. BIGGS, Mr. POLIS, and Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS.

H. Res. 133: Mr. DENT, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. POLIQUIN, and Ms. JENKINS of Kansas.

H. Res. 152: Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana and Mr. DAVIDSON.

H. Res. 178: Mr. VEASEY and Ms. LOFGREN.

H. Res. 188: Mr. COFFMAN.

H. Res. 193: Mr. TED LIEU of California.

H. Res. 204: Ms. LOFGREN.

PETITIONS, ETC.

Under clause 3 of rule XII, petitions and papers were laid on the clerk's desk and referred as follows:

28. The SPEAKER presented a petition of the City Commission of Miami, FL, relative to Resolution R-17-0023, urging the President, the United States Congress, and the EPA to continue supporting the Clean Power Plan, including the requirements for states to implement individual plans to comply with the Clean Power Plan's emission standards under the current established timeframes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

29. Also, a petition of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Tucson, AZ, relative to Resolution No. C02-36-17, regarding the hiring freeze for the Indian Health Service; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize The Rotary Foundation's 100th anniversary as the Rotary International District 5150 celebrates the occasion on March 18, 2017.

Founded in 1917 by Rotary International's sixth president, Arch C. Klump, with an initial contribution of \$26.50 as an endowment fund for the Rotary to support and grow community services throughout the world, The Rotary Foundation has grown to \$4 billion in contributions from all over the world and now provides humanitarian services, encourages high ethical standards, and builds goodwill throughout the world.

One of the world's largest nongovernmental organizations with 1.2 million members and activities in more than 200 countries, The Rotary Foundation has provided more than \$3.8 billion focusing on six specific sustainable programs: promoting peace, fighting disease, providing clean water, improving health care for mothers and children, supporting education, and growing local economies. Among its many contributions felt around the globe is its partnership with the Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization, and other governments to eradicate 99.9 percent of Polio worldwide.

Locally, The Rotary International District 5150 currently oversees 42 Rotary Clubs, serving Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo. The three county clubs consist of nearly 2,000 members who volunteer their time raising money and doing good in their communities and around the world. On Saturday, March 18, 2017, District 5150 will hold its annual Learning and Development Assembly at Redwood High School in Marin County to provide training opportunities for hundreds of Rotarians, Rotaractors, Interactors and guests in the District.

Mr. Speaker, The Rotary Foundation's commitment to providing important services that enrich our community and beyond is exceptional. It is therefore fitting to honor and thank The Rotary Foundation for a century of success in adhering to its motto of "doing good in the world" and The Rotary International District 5150 for its important service, and to offer both best wishes on 100 more years of good work.

RECOGNIZING NICHOLAS CARUSELLE

HON. DANIEL M. DONOVAN, JR.

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. DONOVAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Nicholas Caruselle for his lifelong com-

mitment to providing quality hospital care to the community.

Born on December 10, 1954, to Anna Maria and Paul Caruselle, Nicholas has lived on Staten Island his whole life. In 1974, he began working at Staten Island University Hospital (SIUH) as an oxygen technician, where he would spend the next 42 years of his life. It was there where he met his sweetheart, Janice, whom he later married on November 23, 1979. They have been happily married for 37 years with three wonderful children, all of whom were born at SIUH.

Nick's dedication to patient-centered care is evidenced by how long he has worked at SIUH. After serving as an oxygen technician, he later went on to serve in various positions providing excellent cardiopulmonary care from 1977 to 1996. Later on, he served as Senior Vice President of Operations and retired as Deputy Executive Director and South Site Administrator for SIUH.

Nicholas Caruselle has achieved numerous accomplishments throughout his career at SIUH. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, he tirelessly fought to obtain \$40 million in government funding to rebuild crucial hospital infrastructure. Furthermore, he was instrumental in the development of the Sleep Medicine Institute, the Elizabeth A. Connelly Emergency and Trauma Center, the Regina McGinn, MD Education Center, and the Heart Tower. The enormous impact Nick has had on improving SIUH and the care of its patients is truly immeasurable.

Mr. Speaker, Nicholas Caruselle has spent his entire career improving the lives of others. I thank him for his devotion to his community of work and I wish him a very happy retirement.

RECOGNIZING BETTY DEFOREST ON HER PASSING

HON. ERIC SWALWELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Hayward resident Betty DeForest following the occasion of her passing on March 10, 2017.

Betty was a dedicated advocate and servant to the Hayward community, where she had lived since 1952. She devoted her life to fighting discrimination and seeking justice for persons of color as well as our poor, homeless, immigrant, and LGBTQ communities.

Betty was a member of the Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church and was instrumental in the formation of its interfaith assemblage, the South Hayward Parish, which provides food for individuals and families in need, along with housing and healthcare resources. She quickly became an integral component of the group's efforts to advocate for the rights of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, religion, or race.

Betty was deeply committed to our children and their education, serving two terms on the Hayward School Board, as well as Executive Director of the Eden Youth and Family Center, which provides an assortment of services to children and families across Alameda County.

She also was a champion for the LGBTQ community. As President of her local PFLAG chapter and proud mother of a gay son, Betty helped establish the annual Hayward Gay Prom in 1995, creating an atmosphere for LGBTQ youth to feel safe and protected, without fear of judgement or reprisal.

I had the privilege of working personally with Betty on numerous occasions. Betty devoted not only her time, but also precious resources, to accommodate interfaith meetings addressing gun violence within our community. Most recently, Betty allowed me the honor of participating in the South Hayward Parish's Martin Luther King Jr. Day March, an annual event highlighting the strides our country has made and bringing focus to the work yet ahead.

Betty's commitment to the Hayward community touched the lives of countless individuals and was truly extraordinary. I want to acknowledge Betty's remarkable accomplishments and pass along my condolences to her family and friends—our community will certainly feel her absence.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PETER T. KING

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I was not present for recorded votes on the evening of March 16, 2017. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 165, NAY on Roll Call No. 166, NAY on Roll Call No. 167, YEA on Roll Call No. 168, and NAY on Roll Call No. 169.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DIANE BLACK

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, on Roll Call No. 166 on Agreeing to the Takano Amendment for H.R. 1259, which took place Thursday, March 16, 2017, I am not recorded because I was unavoidably detained.

Had I been present, I would have voted Nay on Roll Call No. 166 on Agreeing to the Takano Amendment for H.R. 1259.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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

IN RECOGNITION OF REGINALD
SIMMS

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend my constituent, Reginald "Reggie" Simms, on his exhibit in the Purcellville Art Council's Black History Month Celebration, located at the historic Purcellville Train Station. Mr. Simms, now retired, dedicated his career to the arts, while also maintaining a deep love for African American history, and is deserving of this unique recognition.

As a child and teenager, Mr. Simms attended Carver Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia and Douglas High School in Leesburg, Virginia, both historic African American schools in Northern Virginia. During his youth, segregation prevented him from using public libraries and local resources, but he was able to obtain copies of National Geographic magazines. These magazines created a new lens through which Mr. Simms understood and viewed the world around him and also sparked his interest in art—specifically photo realism.

After attending the National Art School in Washington, D.C., he entered the Air Force at the age of 21 where he was stationed in Korea. After his time in the Air Force, Mr. Simms moved to New York where he took classes at Newark Fine Industrial Arts and also worked for a slew of graphic design and silkscreen companies. Finally, it was a position in the graphics department of the Washington Metro that brought Mr. Simms and his wife, Marion, back to Loudoun County, and he has lived at his home in Purcellville, Virginia ever since.

It is important to note that throughout his illustrious career, Mr. Simms never lost sight of his love for art or appreciation for history. At his home, his finished basement, which doubles as his studio, is filled with water color paintings, oil paintings, sculptures, refurbished toys, and more, which he has painted, sculpted, and collected for years. Last month's exhibit was a compilation of his artistic works, books, and memorabilia which he and his brother, Larry, have obtained over the years. To this day, Mr. Simms enjoys painting his favorite National Geographic covers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding Reginald Simms for his impressive career, dedication to the African American community, and his most recent exhibit in Purcellville, Virginia. I wish him, his wife, Marion, and their family the best in all of their future endeavors.

IN RECOGNITION OF STANLEY
WALESKI, RECIPIENT OF THE
GREATER PITTSBURGH FRIENDLY
SONS OF SAINT PATRICK 2017
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Stanley Waleski, who will re-

ceive the 2017 Achievement Award from the Greater Pittsburgh Friendly Sons of St. Patrick. Stan will be honored by the Friendly Sons during the 103rd annual dinner on March 17.

Stan is a former educator in the Pittsburgh Area School District. He served as a teacher, coach, and principal for over 35 years, retiring in 2012. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from East Stroudsburg University with a teaching certification in Health and Physical Education. Stan received a Masters of Arts degree from Marywood University with certifications in Elementary Education, Elementary and Secondary School Administration, and a Superintendent's Letter of Intent. While attending Scranton Preparatory School, Stan was an outstanding athlete and a member of the 1973 PCIAA state champion basketball team.

For 51 years, Stan has been an active member of the Avoca Jolly Boys, a civic and community service organization, serving on its board of directors and at one time as president. The organization provides the community with athletic programs for youth and adults, as well as social events and picnics. The Jolly Boys sponsor the popular Avoca Basketball League, which Stan has served as the director of for the past 22 years. The league plays annually with over 450 players and 75 coaching volunteers.

It is an honor to recognize Stanley Waleski for his lifelong service to the Pittsburgh community, and I congratulate him for receiving the Greater Pittsburgh Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Achievement Award. I am grateful for his contributions to his community, and I wish him continued success in the future.

RUTH WATERS, IN RECOGNITION
OF 40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO
THE ARTS IN SAN MATEO COUN-
TY

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Ruth Waters, a remarkable artist and arts activist who has been sculpting for six decades and supporting the arts on the San Francisco Peninsula for four decades. This week, Ruth will be honored by her peers and the institution that she leads will celebrate its fourth year at its present location in Burlingame, offering art and artist studies to the community.

I first met Ruth in the 1980s when I served on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and when Ruth was the founder and director of the Twin Pines Art Center in Belmont. Her passion for the arts and promoting public art in particular, led me to create a County Arts Task Force. Ruth's passion continues to this very day. She is a prolific artist and has exhibited solo in at least 25 exhibits and at dozens of regional and national juried shows.

In addition to being a talented sculptor and arts advocate, Ruth is an amazing administrator and organizer. She founded the Peninsula Museum of Art in 2004 and serves as its Executive Director. The museum moved to its current location in Burlingame in 2013. The museum's mission is to enhance the region and enrich lives through art and education. It offers five exhibition galleries, an art reference

library, gift shop, and working studios for 30 professional-level artists. The inclusion of the artist studios in the space is a deliberate effort to bridge the gap between the creative community, professional artists and the community at large.

The current museum grew from the Twin Pines Art Center, which operated from 1977 to 1985 in Belmont. During this time, Ruth was also the co-founder and president of the Peninsula Sculptors' Guild, and she co-founded and served on the board of the Peninsula Arts Council from 1992 to 2008.

The accomplishments of Ruth Waters have been recognized on many occasions, including but not limited to the President's Award from the National Conference of the Women's Caucus for Art, and through her listings in the Dictionary of International Biography, Who's Who in Art, Architecture and Design, and the International Who's Who of Professional & Business Women.

Mr. Speaker, it is a rare person who personifies a profession that itself lends beauty to this world. Ruth personifies the world of art and sculpting, and we are fortunate to have the beauty that she continues to create around us. We should all be grateful for her leadership in promoting the arts and art appreciation. Beauty can neither be denied nor muzzled, and in Ruth Waters' work we see beauty abound while a passionate voice for the arts proclaims its presence in service to us all.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF
PHILIP T. KALAYIL

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and many accomplishments of Philip T. Kalayil, a leader in Chicago and in the Indian-American community.

Mr. Kalayil lived a life of purpose, spent enriching the lives of those he met and those he served. We in Chicago are indeed fortunate that he settled here, coming from his state of Kerala in India to pursue his studies at Loyola University and staying to promote diversity, opportunity and understanding.

Philip Kalayil was always a scholar, earning a double master's in sociology and industrial relations and receiving the Heart of Asian American Community Award from the Association for Asian American Studies in 2008. His research helped him understand the disparities and discrimination facing members of the Asian American community, and it led him to a lifetime of work to tear down barriers so others could also succeed. He was a scholar with a vision and he put that vision to use to improve our entire community.

His career was multifaceted. He was a social worker for Catholic Charities. He served as Assistant Director of Emergency Services at the Department of Human Services.

Mr. Kalayil was also an outstanding and passionate advocate. Among the many organizations he helped build and foster are the Indian Catholic Association of America, the Asian Forum, and the Indo-American Democratic Organization (IADO). Each was designed to help members of the Indian-American and the greater Asian-American community not just thrive individually but become active participants in the broader society.

Philip Kalayil showed us the importance of working together across racial, ethnic and religious lines. He knew that many things were possible if we learned to work and engage together. He was a teacher, a doer and an inspiration.

He was also a devoted family member, and I know that his children—Tom, Sales and Ann, my dear friend—are mourning his loss. I hope that they will take comfort in knowing how much their father is missed and how many lives he touched throughout his life.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE MOORE COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Moore County Chamber of Commerce as we celebrate its 50th Anniversary. Thanks to the hard work of the countless individuals involved with this organization, Moore County has never been a better place to live, work, or visit.

Established in 1967 as the Southern Pines Area Chamber of Commerce, this organization has long stood for the advancement of civic, cultural, and economic prosperity. By engaging with local leaders, the chamber has created a successful model for integrating businesses and the community they serve. Members continually choose to invest their time and money into the development of a better business environment for current and future generations.

There is no doubt in my mind that Moore County is a better place today thanks to their Chamber of Commerce. The hardworking men and women at the Chamber have continued to provide their members with the resources they need to grow and thrive in an ever-changing economic climate. As a result, businesses continue to choose Moore County as the place they want to reside in order to be successful. I look forward to maintaining a close relationship with the Chamber and its members as we work together to create a better future for all folks across Moore County.

Mr. Speaker, please join me today in recognizing the Moore County Chamber of Commerce on its 50th anniversary and wishing them continued success in the years to come.

IN RECOGNITION OF JASON KLUSH, GREATER PITTSBURGH FRIENDLY SONS OF SAINT PATRICK 2017 "MAN OF THE YEAR"

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Jason Klush, Mayor of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On March 17, Mayor Klush will receive the "Man of the Year" Award from the Greater Pittsburgh Friendly Sons of St. Patrick during their 103rd annual banquet.

Jason was elected as Pittston's Mayor in 2009 and re-elected in 2013. He is the youngest mayor in the city's history. Under his leadership, Pittston has seen a revitalization of its downtown and other key neighborhoods, improvements to infrastructure including an \$11 million sewer improvement project, and increased funding and development for the Pittston Memorial Library.

Jason is a graduate of East Stroudsburg University with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with a concentration in Criminal Justice. In addition to serving as Pittston's Mayor, Jason is a foreman and site supervisor for Hadley Construction. He has served on the boards of several non-profits and is a current member of the Northeast Pennsylvania Land Bank Authority, the Greater Pittston Compost Commission, and the Pittston City Festivals Association Board.

It is an honor to recognize Jason for his contributions to his community and I congratulate him on being the Greater Pittston Friendly Sons of St. Patrick "Man of the Year". I wish him all the best in the future.

HONORING TOWN OF BOONTON'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the historic Town of Boonton, located in Morris County, New Jersey, on the occasion of its 150th Anniversary. From humble beginnings, this town's birth from a house and barn has grown to be a thriving community of over 8,300 residents today.

Boonton's history began in 1740 with a simple house and barn—the first house recorded in Boonton. It was originally part of a 231 acre plot that was purchased for £85. Over the years, three families have owned this historic landmark. Each family maintained and built onto the house until it was listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places; Boonton's population steadily grew thanks to an iron forge, which attracted local workers to establish their lives and provide for their families. This forge served as a central source of supplies for the military during the American Revolutionary War.

The town was named "Boone-Towne" after the late Colonial Governor Thomas Boone in the year 1761. In March of 1867, Boonton incorporated as a town by the New Jersey State Legislature. The first of what would be many tests of Boonton's fortitude came in 1876 when the town faced an economic crisis, due to iron deposits found in the Great Lakes. The iron company shut down and workers left the town. The leaders of Boonton were strong and resilient and the town recovered by opening a silk, brass, knife, and many other factories. A diversified economic landscape prevented a depression from happening again.

The Town of Boonton has also shown its resilience in not only handling economic hardship, but also during natural disasters. The blizzard of 1888 hit the town of Boonton hard for 36 brutal hours, covering the town with 15

feet of snow. This was a significant moment in defining the strong character of Boonton.

Over the years, Boonton has grown and thrived into a tightly knit community. It has developed a booming Main Street that portrays its local community through a variety of schools, businesses, houses of worship, and other services meeting the needs of its diverse population. Boonton still attracts more and more people every year and has continuously seen a growing population.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and our colleagues join me in congratulating the Town of Boonton on the occasion of its Sesquicentennial Anniversary.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH CLASS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY'S INDUSTRIAL CONTROL SYSTEMS CYBERSECURITY TRAINING COURSE

HON. RAÚL R. LABRADOR

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. LABRADOR. Mr. Speaker, today, March 17, 2017, the 100th class for the Department of Homeland Security's Industrial Control Systems Cybersecurity training course will be completed in Idaho Falls, Idaho. It is my honor to congratulate the graduates and recognize this milestone for the Idaho National Laboratory. INL hosts this training in support of the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center for DHS where up to date information about current security issues, vulnerabilities, and exploits are provided to government agencies, states, and the private sector.

This course provides hands-on training in discovering who and what is on the network, identifying vulnerabilities, learning how those vulnerabilities may be exploited, and learning defensive and mitigation strategies for control system networks in an actual control systems environment. The training offers the opportunity to network and collaborate with other colleagues involved in operating and protecting control system networks.

The Idaho National Laboratory, Department of Energy and Department of Homeland Security are working together to advance cybersecurity for critical infrastructure. Idaho has a longstanding leadership role to establish cybersecurity best practices and innovative technologies for government and industry partners. Under the guidance of the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center the Industrial Controls Systems Cyber Emergency Response Team in collaboration with Idaho National Laboratory has successfully illustrated the demand and importance of advanced training for cybersecurity professionals within the critical infrastructure sectors through the instruction of over 4 thousand industry professionals and students.

Congratulations to the graduates of the 100th Industrial Control Systems Cybersecurity training course and thank you to these men and women whose hard work and dedication will make our critical infrastructure safer and more secure.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed Roll Call vote numbers 165, 166, 167, 168, and 169. Had I been present, I would have voted Aye on roll call votes number 165, 166, 167. I would have voted Nay on roll call votes 168 and 169.

IN RECOGNITION OF JOSEPH D. BURKE, RECIPIENT OF THE GREATER PITTSBURGH FRIENDLY SONS OF SAINT PATRICK SWINGLE AWARD

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Joseph D. Burke, Esq. Today, Mr. Burke will receive the Swingle Award from the Greater Pittsburgh Friendly Sons of St. Patrick during their 103rd annual banquet.

Joe is a partner at Burke Vullo Reilly Roberts. He has practiced law for thirty-two years focusing on commercial law and civil litigation. Joe is admitted to practice before the United States and Pennsylvania Supreme Courts, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, and the United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. He has been named a Pennsylvania Super Lawyer four times by Thomson Reuters. He has been recognized by the Martindale Hubbel Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers for the past seventeen years. He is a Fellow of the American and Pennsylvania Bar Foundations, as well as the Litigation Counsel of America. He is also a member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Professionalism Committee.

An alumnus of Scranton Preparatory School and Lehigh University, Joe graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics and Government. He received his Juris Doctorate from Delaware Law School of Widener University. While at Widener he was a member of the law review, The Delaware Journal of Corporate Law, and received the 1982 Moot Court Competition Best Advocate Award.

Joe has a long record of service to the community throughout his professional career. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth. He is the former President of the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce. He is a past member of the Board of Trustees of the Scranton Preparatory School and Chair of its Ignatian Identity and Mission Committee. He also served as Co-Chair of the North Penn Legal Services Campaign and for eight years as Lawyers Division Chair of the United Way of Wyoming Valley.

He and his wife Kathleen have been blessed with three children, Elizabeth Davis (Christian), Joseph Jr., and Michael, and two grandchildren, Burke Christian Davis and Whitney Elizabeth Davis. Joe and Kathleen actively support the work of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Foundation, Coaches vs. Cancer, Endure for the Cure, the Cath-

erine McAuley Center, St. Joseph's Center, and Marley's Mission.

It is an honor to recognize Joseph D. Burke, Esq. as the Greater Pittsburgh Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Swingle Award recipient. He is well deserving of praise for his service to Northeastern Pennsylvania.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, this week I missed Roll Call Number 168. Had I been present, I would have voted: Roll Call No. 168—No.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GARRET GRAVES

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 162.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF FALLEN MISSISSIPPI SOLDIER ARMY SERGEANT FIRST CLASS (SFC) CLINT DANIEL FERRIN

HON. TRENT KELLY

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. KELLY of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in memory of Army Sergeant First Class (SFC) Clint Daniel Ferrin who paid the ultimate sacrifice defending our great nation March 13, 2004, during Operation Iraqi Freedom III. SFC Ferrin was killed along with three other soldiers when their Humvee struck a roadside bomb in Baghdad, Iraq.

SFC Ferrin was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 504th Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C. SFC Ferrin grew up in North Ogden, Utah and later moved to Mississippi where he attended his senior year of high school in Picayune. He joined the Army after graduation. SFC Ferrin's father, Dan, says Clint became interested in military service after hearing the stories about his grandfathers who fought in WWII in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army. When he decided to join, SFC Ferrin wanted to be a paratrooper even though he had a fear of heights. He was able to overcome that fear and distinguished himself as a soldier during his 12 years of service.

During his funeral, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints area president said SFC Perrin loved his country, his family, and his God. SFC Ferrin was given a 21-gun salute at the cemetery in front of approximately 100 family members and friends. SFC Ferrin was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and the Army Good Conduct Medal.

"His son Zachary would always tell his friends that his dad was a hero," Dan said.

"He was a very good soldier and a very good dad. I'm so proud of him."

SFC Ferrin is survived by parents, Dan and Rosemary Ferrin; brother, Army Specialist John D. Ferrin; wife Melinda; and their children, Zachary and Madison.

IN RECOGNITION OF BILL JONES, "MAN OF THE YEAR" GREATER WILKES-BARRE FRIENDLY SONS

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Bill Jones of Mountaintop, Pennsylvania as he is honored by the Greater Wilkes-Barre Friendly Sons of St. Patrick "Man of the Year" during their 72nd annual banquet on March 17.

Bill Jones currently serves as President and CEO of the United Way of Wyoming Valley. Since joining the organization in January 2012, he has led the local United Way in making transformational and historic changes in the way the organization serves the community. Under his administration, the United Way has become a leading and passionate voice on critical issues related to childhood poverty in the Wyoming Valley.

Prior to the United Way, Bill served as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania. During his twelve-year tenure he was involved in growing and developing programs that served children and youth, the elderly, the homeless, those with mental illness, and families in poverty. He also spent fifteen years in the banking industry and was Vice President and Community Development Manager for PNC Bank.

Bill is a Summa Cum Laude graduate of Misericordia University and earned his Master of Business Administration degree from Wilkes University. In addition, he graduated "With Distinction" from the Stonier School of Banking at the University of Delaware.

I join with the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in congratulating Bill on becoming their "Man of the Year." I congratulate him on his achievements, and I wish him the very best for the future.

TRIBUTE TO ADAM KOCH

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Adam Koch and his teammate Tyler Cooney, both students at Dallas Center Grimes High School in Grimes, Iowa, for winning second prize in C-SPAN's national 2017 StudentCam competition.

Since 2006, C-SPAN has been partnering with local cable affiliates across the country to work with middle school and high school students to create documentaries on issues important to the nation. For this year's competition, students were asked to address the question: "What is the most urgent issue for the new President and Congress to address?"

Adam and Tyler decided to focus on energy issues and made a documentary titled, "Powerhouse of the Prairie." The short film zeroed in on the important role that wind energy and ethanol production plays, not only in Iowa's economy, but the economy throughout the entire country. I was fortunate enough to contribute to their project by discussing the importance of energy independence as it pertains to our country's national security. Their documentary will premiere on C-SPAN at 6:50 a.m. E.T. on April 7 and will play throughout the day.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud and congratulate Adam and Tyler for earning this outstanding award. The experience and knowledge they gained working on this project will be invaluable for years to come as they move forward with their education. It is because of young Iowans like them that I'm proud to represent our great state in Congress. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Adam and Tyler and in wishing them nothing but continued success.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRENDAN F. BOYLE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on March 2, 2017, I missed roll call votes Nos. 122 through 123 on the floor of the House of Representatives. Had I been present, I would have voted yea and nay, respectively.

RECOGNIZING THE ASIAN TRADE, FOOD FAIR, AND CULTURAL SHOW

HON. LOIS FRANKEL

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Asian Trade, Food Fair, and Cultural Show that will take place this weekend in West Palm Beach, Florida. The Asian Fair has brought our community together to celebrate Asian culture for 24 years now, and I look forward to seeing what this year has in store.

The Bangladesh Association of Florida organizes this annual event to celebrate the contributions of the Asian community in America. This year, 48 countries will be represented through live music, dance performances, and authentic cooking demonstrations.

I'd like to recognize the Bangladesh Association of Florida for their hard work on this event and for their dedication to promoting cultural diversity in our community.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF FALLEN MISSISSIPPI SOLDIER ARMY SERGEANT (SGT) LERANDO J. BROWN, JR.

HON. TRENT KELLY

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. KELLY of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in memory of fallen Mississippi soldier Sergeant (SGT) Lerando J. Brown, Jr., who died while in service to our great nation on March 15, 2008, during Operation Iraqi Freedom III. SGT Brown gave his life while deployed in Balad, Iraq.

SGT Brown, of Gulfport, was assigned to the 288th Sapper Company, 223rd Engineer Battalion, Mississippi Army National Guard based in Houston, Mississippi. At the time of his death, SGT Brown was the 48th Mississippian to die in Iraq since March 2003. SGT Brown served in Iraq beginning in September 2007. He arrived with more than 90 other members of the 288th.

Lieutenant Colonel Tim Powell of the Mississippi Army National Guard said this was Brown's first deployment. SGT Brown's wife, Candice, described her husband as a man who loved to make her laugh. She said SGT Brown constantly told her he loved her through phone calls and e-mails.

SGT Brown's service and sacrifice will always be remembered.

SUPPORTING VT HALTER MARINE, INC. OF PASCAGOULA, MS

HON. STEVEN M. PALAZZO

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House an injustice served upon a Mississippi shipbuilding company in my district by a number of Democratic senators on March 7, 2017 during the Senate debate over H.J. Res. 37, the Congressional Review Act repeal of OSHA's rule implementing the Obama Administration's Fair Play and Safe Workplaces executive order. During the debate, these senators accused VT Halter Marine, Inc. of Pascagoula, MS of disregarding the safety of its workers, citing examples of long-past accidents. I know for a fact that this couldn't be further from the truth.

The company has enlisted the services of safety experts to develop a new safety management system to improve upon its culture of safety. Since 2011, VT Halter has been guided by its 5-Year Safety Strategic Plan. The plan promotes a comprehensive, all hazards management approach to every aspect of the shipbuilding process. Activities include a safety stand-down at all facilities for a full day of re-training; Safety Leadership Training and an OSHA 30-Hour Maritime Course for all key personnel; specific training for new employees; weekly safety meetings; tool tracking systems to ensure proper safety equipment is issued to employees; Confined Space rescue training; safety teams which conduct daily inspection of production areas; and Safety Director attendance at the OSHA 2090 Shipyard Employment, Fall Prevention, and Competent

Person Training program. The company has complied with all OSHA safety directives and reporting requirements, and is in good standing with the agency.

V. Halter has worked diligently to obtain both government and commercial shipbuilding and repair work to maintain jobs for more than 900 working class families in my district. The economic impact of Halter's work ripples throughout the local economy through suppliers and other small businesses, and the company is considered a key player in the shipbuilding industrial base.

The accusations made on the Senate floor appear to be motivated by the desire to embarrass Senate Republicans and the President over the decision to repeal the Obama Administration OSHA regulations. In singling out VT Halter as political cannon fodder, the senators making the accusations have unfairly damaged the reputation of the company and have put its Mississippi workers in a state of confusion and anxiety over their future. The commercial shipbuilding market is in a major down cycle, and the Gulf Coast shipbuilding industry is struggling to find enough work to keep their people employed. By professing to speak on behalf of the workers, these senators have in fact jeopardized the company's ability to sustain these good, high-paying jobs. I've been told that the workers have actually approached Halter's CEO to see if they should circulate a petition to correct the record about Halter's treatment of its workforce. Unlike the Senators in question, I have been to VT Halter Marine and have spoken to these Mississippi workers. VT Halter takes excellent care of its people, striving both to keep them safe and employed, and I am extremely disappointed that certain liberal senators would attempt to construe their safety record just to fit their political aims.

TRIBUTE TO ALISA ROTH

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Alisa Roth, owner of Bloom Works Floral in Council Bluffs, Iowa, for receiving the 2017 Deb Dalziel Woman Entrepreneurial Award presented annually by Iowa's Small Business Development Centers (SBDC).

Since 1999, the Iowa SBDC has been awarding women entrepreneurs who have made a major impact in their communities and changed the direction of their own lives. The award is named in honor of Deb Dalziel, a longtime advocate of women entrepreneurs and director of America's SBDC Iowa from 1987 to 1999.

Established in 2004, Alisa has built Bloom Works Floral into one of Council Bluffs' premier small businesses. In the first 5 years of operation, she was able to grow the business so much that she had to move to larger locations with bigger storefronts on two separate occasions. Her tireless work ethic and dedication to her craft is unmatched, making her a highly respected entrepreneur in Council Bluffs and a top regional authority in her industry.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud and congratulate Alisa for earning this outstanding award. Her tireless work ethic and dedication to her community have had, and will continue to have, a

long-lasting impact. It is because of lowans like her that I'm proud to represent our great state in Congress. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Alisa on receiving this esteemed award and in wishing her nothing but continued success.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRENDAN F. BOYLE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on March 10, 2017, I missed roll-call votes Nos. 153 through 158 on the floor of the House of Representatives. Had I been present, I would have voted yea, yea, yea, yea, yea and nay, respectively.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF MERCED COUNTY FARM BUREAU

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Merced County Farm Bureau, an organization that is dedicated to supporting and advocating for Merced County's agriculture industry.

The organization first began as the Merced County Farmers and later became known as the Merced County Farm Bureau in 1917. The high demand for food production during World War I urged the University of California to help in funding farmers around the Central Valley in their efforts to produce agricultural products faster, sending their advisers to local farms in Merced County. On March 7, 1917, the Merced County Farmers, signed a petition requesting a farm advisor from the University of California for Merced County, through the University of California Cooperative Extension program. However, in order to obtain an advisor, the organization needed to become a Farm Bureau first. And so, after changing the name of the organization and complying with necessary requirements to become a farm bureau, the Merced County Farm Bureau had its first meeting on May 17, 1917.

As a result of having an advisor, scientific innovations began to take form in the production of food, dairy, research support and Labor management, and the positive impacts were experienced throughout the county. It began by supporting policies and legislation that protected the natural resources required for the production of agriculture.

As a non-profit organization, the Merced County Farm Bureau contributes to the community by providing scholarship opportunities to the children of farmers who are pursuing higher education. It also provides a program to young adults in Merced County that facilitate professional development and social networking to farmers, ranchers and individuals who work in agriculture between the ages of 18–35. Additionally the Merced County Farm Bureau keeps their farmers and community informed about local agricultural issues as well as state and national legislation through their Merced County Farm Newspaper. Furthermore, the Merced County Farm Bureau hosts local farmers markets to help support farmers around the Central Valley.

Now 100 years after the Merced County Farm Bureau was created, it has become the 6th largest producing agricultural county in California, greatly contributing in the overall economy of our state and making 90% of California's Sweet Potatoes. Thanks to organizations like the Merced County Farm Bureau, the San Joaquin Valley's agriculture industry has become a significant economic contributor to the state.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Merced County Farm Bureau. The last 100 years have been a testament of their strong commitment and continued support of our community and agricultural producers.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY RHODORA J. DONAHUE

HON. FRANCIS ROONEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my wife Kathleen and I to wish Mrs. Rhodora J. Donahue a very happy 92nd birthday.

We hope Rhodora is celebrating this very special day surrounded by her loved ones. I believe a loving family is the greatest treasure in life and with 13 married children, 82 grandchildren, and 108 great grandchildren, Rhodora has most certainly attained it. I hope you all can join me in wishing her continued health and happiness throughout the year.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RODNEY DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, March 16, 2017, I was ab-

sent from the House due to traffic delays related to motorcade activity. Due to my absence, I did not record any votes for the first vote series of the day. I would like to reflect how I would have voted had I been present for legislative business

Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on Roll Call 162, and Roll Call 163.

Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on Roll Call 164.

TRIBUTE TO TYLER COONEY

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 17, 2017

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Tyler Cooney and his teammate Adam Koch, both students at Dallas Center Grimes High School in Grimes, Iowa, for winning second prize in C-SPAN's national 2017 StudentCam competition.

Since 2006, C-SPAN has been partnering with local cable affiliates across the country to work with middle school and high school students to create documentaries on issues important to the nation. For this year's competition, students were asked to address the question: "What is the most urgent issue for the new President and Congress to address?"

Tyler and Adam decided to focus on energy issues and made a documentary titled, "Powerhouse of the Prairie." The short film zeroed in on the important role that wind energy and ethanol production plays, not only in Iowa's economy, but the economy throughout the entire country. I was fortunate enough to contribute to their project by discussing the importance of energy independence as it pertains to our country's national security. Their documentary will premiere on C-SPAN at 6:50 a.m. E.T. on April 7 and will play throughout the day.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud and congratulate Tyler and Adam for earning this outstanding award. The experience and knowledge they gained working on this project will be invaluable for years to come as they move forward with their education. It is because of young lowans like them that I'm proud to represent our great state in Congress. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Tyler and Adam and in wishing them nothing but continued success.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

The Senate was not in session and stands adjourned until 10 a.m., on Monday, March 20, 2017.

Committee Meetings

No committee meetings were held.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 31 public bills, H.R. 1593–1623; and 4 resolutions, H. Con. Res. 34; and H. Res. 206–208 were introduced.

Pages H2182–83

Additional Cosponsors:

Page H2185

Report Filed: A report was filed today as follows:

H.R. 1101, to amend title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to improve access and choice for entrepreneurs with small businesses with respect to medical care for their employees, with an amendment (H. Rept. 115–43).

Page H2182

Journal: The House agreed to the Speaker's approval of the Journal by a recorded vote of 246 ayes to 143 noes with 2 answering "present", Roll No. 172.

Pages H2153, H2168–69

Providing for the expenses of certain committees of the House of Representatives in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress: The House agreed to H. Res. 173, providing for the expenses of certain committees of the House of Representatives in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress.

Pages H2154–55

Improving the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs: The House passed H.R. 1367, to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, by a yea-and-nay vote of 412 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 171.

Pages H2155–67, H2167–68

Pursuant to the Rule, an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 115–6 shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule.

Page H2156

Agreed to:

Wenstrup amendment (No. 1 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that extends the timeline to implement the fellowship program from 90 days to one year and extends the GAO reporting deadline from one to two years; additionally, it removes the requirement to track a number of hiring effectiveness metrics, changes the establishment of a recruiting database from a "shall" to "may" authority, and stipulates that HR training be accomplished virtually;

Pages H2158–59

Meng amendment (No. 2 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that makes clear that the Inspector General of the VA must report, pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 7412, on at minimum five clinical and five nonclinical VA occupations that have the largest staffing shortages, which then triggers special hiring authorities for the Secretary to address such shortages;

Page H2159

Sewell (AL) amendment (No. 3 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that allows the Secretary to select eligible employees for the Executive Management Fellowship Program who represent or service rural areas, to whatever extent practicable;

Pages H2159–60

Buck amendment (No. 5 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that prevents former political appointees at the VA from receiving non-political,

competitively selected positions at the VA without having to go through the proper selection process;

Page H2161

Shea-Porter amendment (No. 6 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that requires the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to list open mental health positions in the database established under the bill;

Pages H2161–62

Brownley (CA) amendment (No. 7 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that clarifies that “medical facility” referenced in Sec. 10 includes each medical center, domiciliary facility, outpatient clinic, community-based outpatient clinic, and vet center;

Page H2162

Welch amendment (No. 8 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that adds an analysis of succession planning and hiring in rural areas, and requires a study on the ability to hire and recruit veterans in rural areas;

Pages H2162–63

Gottheimer amendment (No. 9 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that adds veterans who are recent graduates and/or recipients of Post-9/11 GI Bill Educational Assistance as a distinct category of individuals who are allowed for excepted service appointments;

Pages H2163–64

Herrera Beutler amendment (No. 10 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that strengthens anonymity protections for employees filling out exit surveys, and requires exit survey data to be compiled at the VISN level to identify and acknowledge regional differences;

Page H2164

Meng amendment (No. 12 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that encourages the transition of military medical professionals into employment with the Veterans Health Administration upon discharge or separation from the Armed Forces;

Page H2165

Bost amendment (No. 13 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement a plan to hire a director for each VA medical center without a permanent director;

Pages H2165–66

O'Rourke amendment (No. 14 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that allows the VA to offer physicians conditional job offers two years prior to the completion of their residency program; requires VA recruiters or similar official to visit each teaching institution with a residency program at least once annually; and

Pages H2166–67

Hanabusa amendment (No. 11 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that requires the total number of employees that voluntarily separated and the percentage of those employees that took the voluntary

exit survey (by a recorded vote of 400 ayes to 8 noes, Roll No. 170).

Pages H2164–65, H2167–68

Rejected:

Hanabusa amendment (No. 4 printed in part B of H. Rept. 115–39) that sought to strike section 6, “Reemployment of Former Employees,” which would allow for the Secretary to appoint former employees at one grade higher than when they last separated, without having to go through the usual competitive application process.

Page H2160

H. Res. 198, the rule providing for consideration of the bills (H.R. 1259), (H.R. 1367), and (H.R. 1181) was agreed to yesterday, March 16th.

Recess: The House recessed at 10:15 a.m. and reconvened at 11:02 a.m.

Page H2167

Meeting Hour: Agreed by unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12 noon on Monday, March 20th for Morning Hour debate.

Page H2173

Quorum Calls—Votes: One yea-and-nay vote and two recorded votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H2167–68, H2168 and H2169. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 9 a.m. and adjourned at 1:53 p.m.

Committee Meetings

No hearings are scheduled.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2017

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on the Judiciary: to hold hearings to examine the nomination of Neil M. Gorsuch, of Colorado, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, 11 a.m., SH–216.

House

Committee on Rules, Full Committee, hearing on H.R. 372, the “Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act of 2017”; and H.R. 1101, the “Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2017”, 5 p.m., H–313 Capitol.

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Full Committee, hearing on ongoing investigation into Russian Active Measures, 10 a.m., 1100 LHOB.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

10 a.m., Monday, March 20

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

12 noon, Monday, March 20

Senate Chamber

Program for Monday: Senate will meet in a pro forma session.

House Chamber

Program for Monday: To be announced.

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