

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to thank all of the speakers here who laid out exactly what this bill does. It is the right thing to do. It is something that needs to move forward.

I would also suggest that, as we approach Veterans Day, one of the best ways we can honor those who gave service to this country is conduct our business in the House of Representatives the way it was done on this piece of legislation: in a bipartisan manner, with common goals, common values, smart thinking that was put into it to move this forward for the care of a fellow citizen, and doing the right thing.

So, for that, I thank everyone involved with this, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 918.

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, in closing, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation. Let's get it through the Senate, as well, and get it on the President's desk, as he supports it.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 918, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS TRANSPLANT COVERAGE ACT OF 2017

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1133) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for an operation on a live donor for purposes of conducting a transplant procedure for a veteran, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1133

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Transplant Coverage Act of 2017".

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION TO PROVIDE FOR OPERATIONS ON LIVE DONORS FOR PURPOSES OF CONDUCTING TRANSPLANT PROCEDURES FOR VETERANS.

Section 101 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note) is amended by adding after subsection (t) the following new subsection:

"(u) TRANSPLANT PROCEDURES WITH LIVE DONORS AND RELATED SERVICES.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), in a case in which a veteran is eligi-

ble for a transplant procedure from the Department, the Secretary may provide for an operation on a live donor to carry out such procedure for such veteran, notwithstanding that the live donor may not be eligible for health care from the Department.

"(2) OTHER SERVICES.—Subject to the availability of appropriations for such purpose, the Secretary shall furnish to a live donor any care or services before and after conducting the transplant procedure under paragraph (1) that may be required in connection with such procedure.

"(3) USE OF NON-DEPARTMENT FACILITIES.—In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary may provide for the operation described in paragraph (1) on a live donor and furnish to the live donor the care and services described in paragraph (2) at a non-Department facility pursuant to an agreement entered into by the Secretary under this section. The live donor shall be deemed to be an individual eligible for hospital care and medical services at a non-Department facility pursuant to such an agreement solely for the purposes of receiving such operation, care, and services at the non-Department facility."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill, H.R. 1133, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1133, as amended, the Veterans Transplant Coverage Act of 2017.

This bill is meant to remove an unnecessary barrier to care for veterans in need of transplants involving a living donor.

Last year, Mr. Charles Nelson, a 100 percent service-connected veteran from Texas, sought a kidney transplant through the Department of Veterans Affairs with Mr. Nelson's nonveteran son, Austin, serving as Mr. Nelson's live donor.

Rather than travel from his home in Texas to VA transplant centers in either Nashville, Tennessee, or Portland, Oregon, Mr. Nelson requested to receive his transplant at the University Hospital in San Antonio using the Choice Program. However, his request was denied by VA because Austin was not a veteran, and, therefore, VA did not believe the Department had the authority to pay for this portion of the transplant procedure with Choice funds.

Mr. Nelson eventually received his transplant in San Antonio using his Medicare benefits, private donations, and personal savings to cover the cost of his and Austin's care.

To prevent any other veterans from being unable to access transplant care

in the community under Choice, H.R. 1133, as amended, would amend the Choice Program to allow VA to pay for any care or services a live donor may require to carry out a transplant procedure for an eligible veteran, notwithstanding that the live donor may not be eligible for VA healthcare.

I thank my friend from Texas, Congressman CARTER, for his dedication to solving this problem for his constituent, Mr. Nelson, and for veterans and families across the country. This is how Congress should work. He is a great representative, and I am really proud to serve with him.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1133, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1133.

And, again, the gentleman was very clear: by allowing the VA to provide healthcare to non-VA eligible donors, veterans can more easily receive life-saving donations from their families and friends. Family members of veterans are often the best match for providing a veteran with a live organ donation and are typically more willing to be a live donor.

Under current law, a veteran can receive only a live organ donation from another veteran receiving the transplant at a VA hospital.

This is one of those pieces of legislation that, I think, when many of us saw it brought forward, makes great common sense. It is the right thing to do. I understand possibly why they put that in there. But all of us know that it is going to be that exact scenario that it is going to be a family member or someone near who is going to want to do the transplant. If the best place to do that for the veteran is at the VA hospital, and they can get them in, it makes great sense to do it.

So I do want to also thank Representative CARTER for bringing this forward.

This is, again, improving care, and making sure that we are focusing on the issues that we can make a difference on.

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER).

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank Mr. BILIRAKIS and Mr. WALZ for rising in support of this.

When Mr. Nelson and his family came to me with this, the first thing I thought was: That is the dumbest thing I have ever heard.

You have a child, waiting to give you a live kidney in a transplant, and he is eliminated as a donor because he is not a veteran. It is hard enough to find live transplants as it is. And common sense by everybody who ever knew anybody who got one knows: the best source is

a family member because it has got the best chance for a match and the best chance for success.

Yet the VA had a limitation that he had to be a veteran. Now, what are the chances of all your family being veterans when all of a sudden you have renal failure and have to have a kidney? They have got to be off the wall, and that is ridiculous.

So, Mr. Speaker, I filed this bill to correct this mess.

My colleague has given a great description of what happened to the Nelsons. But, more importantly, common sense—and I like the mention of that—tells us that you can't eliminate the best pool of donors that a family has because of their lack of being a veteran.

And we all know—we heard Mr. O'ROURKE say previously—we are down to about 1 percent of our Nation actually serves in the military anymore.

So this is a commonsense fix for a commonsense problem.

Mr. Speaker, I am really proud of my staff. They have worked really hard on this. They stayed at it and stayed at it. We got the attention of the VA, and I am happy for their cooperation. I want to thank the committee. They were overwhelmingly supportive on both sides of the aisle. I urged my colleagues to fix a commonsense problem and allow a son to give a kidney to his father at a facility that is most convenient to the family, which is all common sense, so that our veterans, who have given their all for us, have the right to have the best healthcare available to American citizens, and that is what this bill will provide.

There was such a good explanation by my colleagues that I didn't go into the details. But I just want to tell you that when you have a constituent come in with a commonsense problem, we have a duty and a responsibility to fix it because common sense is in short supply in Washington, D.C.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I thank Judge CARTER. Everybody make note of this. Common sense is going to prevail. We are in full support of H.R. 1133.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to vote accordingly, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, in closing, once again, I urge my colleagues to pass this very important bill. I encourage the Senate to pass it as soon as possible so we can get it on the President's desk.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1133, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend the Vet-

erans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for an operation on a live donor for purposes of conducting a transplant procedure for a veteran, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL VETERANS MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM ACT

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1900) to designate the Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus, Ohio, as the National Veterans Memorial and Museum, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1900

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "National Veterans Memorial and Museum Act".

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF NATIONAL VETERANS MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM.

(a) DESIGNATION.—Subject to the condition described in subsection (b), the memorial and museum that is, as of the date of the enactment of this Act, being constructed on an approximately 7-acre area on West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio, bounded by the Scioto River and the Scioto Greenway, shall be designated as the "National Veterans Memorial and Museum".

(b) WITHDRAWAL OF DESIGNATION.—The designation under subsection (a) may be withdrawn no earlier than five years after the date on which the museum opens the public, pursuant to an Act of Congress, if the progress and operation of the museum are found to be unsatisfactory based on the report submitted under subsection (c).

(c) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—As a condition of the designation under subsection (a), the director of the memorial and museum described in that subsection shall submit to Congress a report on the memorial and museum by not later than the date specified in paragraph (2). Such report shall include each of the following:

(A) The projected budget for the memorial and museum for the five-year period beginning on the date the memorial and museum is expected to open to the public.

(B) A description of the outreach conducted by the memorial and museum to veterans across the United States to receive input about the design and contents of the memorial and museum.

(C) A description of the process by which decisions are made about the contents of the exhibits displayed at the memorial and museum.

(D) A description of the organizational structure of the memorial and museum.

(E) A copy of the bylaws and rules of the memorial and museum.

(F) A list of any organizations or entities that have accredited the memorial and museum.

(2) DEADLINE FOR REPORT.—The date specified in this paragraph is the earlier of the following dates:

(A) The date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(B) The date that is 30 days before the date on which the memorial and museum is first open to the public.

(d) EFFECT OF DESIGNATION.—The national memorial and museum designated by subsection (a) is not a unit of the National Park System, and the designation of the national memorial and museum shall not be construed to require Federal funds to be expended for any purpose related to the national memorial and museum.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1900, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1900, as amended.

H.R. 1900, as amended, would designate the Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus, Ohio, as the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. The national designation is appropriate because this will be the only memorial and museum in the Nation that will honor our veterans throughout our Nation's history.

Mr. Speaker, I thank our distinguished ranking member, Mr. WALZ, of course, for working with the bill sponsor; and our chairman, Chairman ROE; and, of course, Mr. STIVERS, who is the bill's sponsor; and me, to ensure that the Veterans Memorial and Museum will maintain the highest standards after it receives the national designation.

H.R. 1900, as amended, will require the museum to provide a report to Congress that would include information on its organizational and financial projections.

The bill specifically states that, after 5 years, if the memorial and museum is not operating satisfactorily, then Congress may withdraw the national designation. We hope that doesn't happen.

Moreover, H.R. 1900, as amended, makes it clear that the museum and memorial is not affiliated with the National Park System, and that the bill does not authorize Federal funds for the museum.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1900, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the manager's amendment to H.R. 1900, as amended, the National Veterans Memorial and Museum Act.

I would also like to say that when I came to Congress, this is how I thought things were supposed to work: citizens