Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment that

prohibits funds made available through this act to implement a new

enrollment fee for TRICARE for Life beneficiaries.

The Department of Defense may have the authority to raise fees and

implement new enrollment fees unless specified by Congress prohibiting

such authority. Last year, through the FY 2012 DOD authorization and

appropriations process, the administration increased enrollment fees

for TRICARE prime beneficiaries for the first time since 1995. My

amendment will ensure the administration does not implement a first

time ever enrollment fee for TRICARE for Life beneficiaries.

For fiscal year 2013, the administration proposed additional fees and

cost-sharing increases, a new annual enrollment fee for TRICARE for

Life, aggressive increases in pharmacy copayments, and a cap of $3,000

per family.

On April 17, 2012, I expressed my opposition to these proposals that

were made by this administration on the House floor to raise such fees

for our service members and veterans. I quoted the President in a speech

he gave about veterans being ``shortchanged.'' Then Senator Barack

Obama said on May 18, 2006: ``When a young man or woman goes off and

serves the country in the military, they should be treated with the

utmost dignity and respect when they come home.'' Mr. President, this

is at least one thing I can fully agree with you on.

Passage of this bill will mark the third consecutive annual decrease

in total DOD funding, including Overseas Contingency Operations, since

FY 2010. I understand budget cuts need to be made and obviously we need

to get our fiscal house in order, but, my colleagues, we owe our

veterans quality health care for their service and their sacrifice. We

promised to take care of our troops when they came home. As a veteran

myself, I can appreciate knowing that our country's support for our

troops is not limited to strictly the battlefield.

It is unconscionable that this administration seeks to raise health

care costs on more than 9.3 million veterans and their families that

are currently eligible for TRICARE when there are other excesses that

can surely be cut. For example, we should limit funds to Pakistan

before giving DOD the option to raise costs on our veterans. We heard

adequately yesterday on Members' opposition to Pakistan for closing

supply routes since November 2011 that are necessary for providing our

troops in Afghanistan necessary supplies and resources. So I ask

Members of this Congress to consider alternative avenues to cut

spending before we require 3.3 million veterans that are eligible for

TRICARE for Life to sacrifice even further.

I'd like to submit for the Record letters of support from the

Veterans of Foreign War, VFW, and the American Legion for my amendment

prohibiting funds from this act to be used to implement an enrollment

fee for the TRICARE for Life program. The Military Association of

America also is in support of this effort.

Mr. Chairman, the administration's proposal to increase health care

costs on our military represents a very serious breach of faith, as it

taxes the oldest cohort of military retirees and their families.

So I conclude by asking my colleagues to support my amendment. By

doing so, we honor the promises made to our brave men and women who

have sacrificed so much for the freedom that we all enjoy.

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

I thank my colleague from Florida.

I just want to say to the distinguished former chairman of the

Appropriations Committee, chairman emeritus, and also the chairman of

the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, that I appreciate his

endorsement. Notwithstanding that, I would say to him that his

acceptance is good, but I think the floor should have a vote on this.