

NAYS—95

Ackerman	Gonzalez	Pascrell
Andrews	Grijalva	Pelosi
Baca	Gutierrez	Peters
Bass (CA)	Hastings (FL)	Pingree (ME)
Becerra	Hinchey	Polis
Brady (PA)	Hinojosa	Price (NC)
Brown (FL)	Holt	Rangel
Capps	Honda	Reyes
Clarke (MI)	Hoyer	Richmond
Clarke (NY)	Jackson Lee	Roybal-Allard
Clay	(TX)	Rush
Cleaver	Johnson (GA)	Sarbanes
Clyburn	Johnson, E. B.	Schakowsky
Cohen	Kaptur	Schwartz
Connolly (VA)	Kildee	Scott (VA)
Conyers	Larsen (WA)	Scott, David
Cooper	Larson (CT)	Serrano
Courtney	Levin	Sires
Crowley	Lewis (GA)	Smith (WA)
Davis (IL)	Lujan	Stark
DeGette	Markey	Thompson (CA)
DeLauro	Matsui	Thompson (MS)
Deutch	McCollum	Towns
Dingell	McDermott	Van Hollen
Doyle	McGovern	Velázquez
Edwards	Meeks	Visclosky
Ellison	Miller (NC)	Wasserman
Engel	Moore	Schultz
Eshoo	Nadler	Waters
Farr	Napolitano	Watt
Fattah	Neal	Yarmuth
Frank (MA)	Olver	
Fudge	Pallone	

NOT VOTING—24

Akin	Hirono	Platts
Brady (TX)	Jackson (IL)	Rivera
Campbell	Johnson (IL)	Ross (AR)
Filner	Johnson, Sam	Ryan (WI)
Forbes	Labrador	Shuler
Gallely	Lee (CA)	Speier
Granger	Lewis (CA)	Tiberi
Green, Al	Lynch	Tsongas

1856

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

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The title was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to prohibit the use of public funds for political party conventions."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated against:

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, on rollcall 586, I was away from the Capitol due to prior commitments to my constituents. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay."

1900

PERMISSION FOR MEMBER TO BE CONSIDERED AS FIRST SPONSOR OF H.R. 5839

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I may hereafter be considered as the first sponsor of H.R. 5839, a bill originally introduced by Representative GEOFF DAVIS of Kentucky, for the purposes of adding cosponsors and requesting reprintings pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII.

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

There was no objection.

PERMISSION FOR MEMBER TO BE ADDED AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 2994

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to be added as a cosponsor to H.R. 2994, the Marine and Hydrokinetic Renewable Energy Promotion Act. The original sponsor is no longer in Congress.

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

There was no objection.

VULNERABLE VETERANS HOUSING REFORM ACT OF 2012

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6361) to exclude from consideration as income under the United States Housing Act of 1937 payments of pension made under section 1521 of title 38, United States Code, to veterans who are in need of regular aid and attendance, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6361

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 "Vulnerable Veterans Housing Reform Act of 2012".

SEC. 2. EXCLUSION FROM INCOME.

Paragraph (4) of section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)(4)) is amended—

(1) by striking "and any amounts" and inserting "; any amounts";

(2) by striking "or any deferred" and inserting "; any deferred"; and

(3) by inserting after "prospective monthly amounts" the following: "; and any expenses related to aid and attendance as detailed under section 1521 of title 38, United States Code".

SEC. 3. UTILITY ALLOWANCES AND DATA.

Section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

"(D) UTILITY ALLOWANCE.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—In determining the monthly assistance payment for a family under subparagraphs (A) and (B), the amount allowed for tenant-paid utilities shall not exceed the appropriate utility allowance for the family unit size as determined by the public housing agency regardless of the size of the dwelling unit leased by the family.

"(ii) EXCEPTION FOR CERTAIN FAMILIES.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), upon request by a family that includes a person with disabilities, an elderly family, or a family that includes any person who is less than 18 years of age, the public housing agency shall approve a utility allowance that is higher than the applicable amount on the utility allowance schedule, except that in the case of a family that includes a person with disabilities, the agency shall approve such higher amount only if a higher utility allowance is needed as a reasonable accommodation to make the program accessible to and usable by the family member with a disability.

"(iii) AUTHORITY TO INCREASE ALLOWANCE.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), in the case of any family not described in clause (ii), a public housing agency may, at the re-

quest of the family, approve a utility allowance that is higher than the applicable amount on the utility allowance schedule. In making such a determination, the agency shall consider (I) the amount of the increase in utility costs for the family, and (II) the difficulty for the family in relocating.";

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

"(2I) UTILITY DATA.—

"(A) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall, to the extent that data can be collected cost effectively, regularly publish such data regarding utility consumption and costs in local areas as the Secretary determines will be useful for the establishment of allowances for tenant-paid utilities for families assisted under this subsection.

"(B) USE OF DATA.—The Secretary shall provide such data in a manner that—

"(i) avoids unnecessary administrative burdens for public housing agencies and owners; and

"(ii) protects families in various unit sizes and building types, and using various utilities, from high rent and utility cost burdens relative to income."

SEC. 4. PILOT PROGRAM FOR GRANTS FOR REHABILITATION AND MODIFICATION OF HOMES OF DISABLED AND LOW-INCOME VETERANS.

(a) GRANT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a pilot program to award grants to qualified organizations to rehabilitate and modify the primary residence of eligible veterans.

(2) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall work in conjunction with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and oversee the pilot program and to ensure that such program meets the needs of eligible veterans.

(3) MAXIMUM GRANT.—A grant award under the pilot program to any one qualified organization shall not exceed \$1,000,000 in any one fiscal year, and such an award shall remain available until expended by such organization.

(b) APPLICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each qualified organization that desires a grant under the pilot program shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and, in addition to the information required under paragraph (2), accompanied by such information as the Secretary may reasonably require.

(2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) a plan of action detailing outreach initiatives;

(B) the approximate number of veterans the qualified organization intends to serve using grant funds;

(C) a description of the type of work that will be conducted, such as interior home modifications, energy efficiency improvements, and other similar categories of work; and

(D) a plan for working with the Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans service organizations to identify veterans and serve their needs.

(3) PREFERENCES.—In awarding grants under the pilot program, the Secretary shall give preference to a qualified organization—

(A) with experience in providing housing rehabilitation and modification services for disabled veterans; or

(B) that proposes to provide housing rehabilitation and modification services for eligible veterans who live in rural areas (the Secretary, through regulations, shall define the term "rural areas").

(c) CRITERIA.—In order to receive a grant award under the pilot program, a qualified organization shall meet the following criteria:

(1) Demonstrate expertise in providing housing rehabilitation and modification services for disabled or low-income individuals for the purpose of making the homes of such individuals accessible, functional, and safe for such individuals.

(2) Have established outreach initiatives that—

(A) would engage eligible veterans and veterans service organizations in projects utilizing grant funds under the pilot program; and

(B) identify eligible veterans and their families and enlist veterans involved in skilled trades, such as carpentry, roofing, plumbing, or HVAC work.

(3) Have an established nationwide or State-wide network of affiliates that are—

(A) nonprofit organizations; and

(B) able to provide housing rehabilitation and modification services for eligible veterans.

(4) Have experience in successfully carrying out the accountability and reporting requirements involved in the proper administration of grant funds, including funds provided by private entities or Federal, State, or local government entities.

(d) USE OF FUNDS.—A grant award under the pilot program shall be used—

(1) to modify and rehabilitate the primary residence of an eligible veteran, and may include—

(A) installing wheelchair ramps, widening exterior and interior doors, reconfiguring and re-equipping bathrooms (which includes installing new fixtures and grab bars), removing doorway thresholds, installing special lighting, adding additional electrical outlets and electrical service, and installing appropriate floor coverings to—

(i) accommodate the functional limitations that result from having a disability; or

(ii) if such residence does not have modifications necessary to reduce the chances that an elderly, but not disabled person, will fall in their home, reduce the risks of such an elderly person from falling;

(B) rehabilitating such residence that is in a state of interior or exterior disrepair; and

(C) installing energy efficient features or equipment if—

(i) an eligible veteran's monthly utility costs for such residence is more than 5 percent of such veteran's monthly income; and

(ii) an energy audit of such residence indicates that the installation of energy efficient features or equipment will reduce such costs by 10 percent or more;

(2) in connection with modification and rehabilitation services provided under the pilot program, to provide technical, administrative, and training support to an affiliate of a qualified organization receiving a grant under such pilot program; and

(3) for other purposes as the Secretary may prescribe through regulations.

(e) OVERSIGHT.—The Secretary shall direct the oversight of the grant funds for the pilot program so that such funds are used efficiently until expended to fulfill the purpose of addressing the adaptive housing needs of eligible veterans.

(f) MATCHING FUNDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A qualified organization receiving a grant under the pilot program shall contribute towards the housing modification and rehabilitation services provided to eligible veterans an amount equal to not less than 50 percent of the grant award received by such organization.

(2) IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.—In order to meet the requirement under paragraph (1), such organization may arrange for in-kind contributions.

(g) LIMITATION COST TO THE VETERANS.—A qualified organization receiving a grant under the pilot program shall modify or re-

habilitate the primary residence of an eligible veteran at no cost to such veteran (including application fees) or at a cost such that such veteran pays no more than 30 percent of his or her income in housing costs during any month.

(h) REPORTS.—

(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit to Congress, on an annual basis, a report that provides, with respect to the year for which such report is written—

(A) the number of eligible veterans provided assistance under the pilot program;

(B) the socioeconomic characteristics of such veterans, including their gender, age, race, and ethnicity;

(C) the total number, types, and locations of entities contracted under such program to administer the grant funding;

(D) the amount of matching funds and in-kind contributions raised with each grant;

(E) a description of the housing rehabilitation and modification services provided, costs saved, and actions taken under such program;

(F) a description of the outreach initiatives implemented by the Secretary to educate the general public and eligible entities about such program;

(G) a description of the outreach initiatives instituted by grant recipients to engage eligible veterans and veteran service organizations in projects utilizing grant funds under such program;

(H) a description of the outreach initiatives instituted by grant recipients to identify eligible veterans and their families; and

(I) any other information that the Secretary considers relevant in assessing such program.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after the completion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that provides such information that the Secretary considers relevant in assessing the pilot program.

(i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) DISABLED.—The term “disabled” means an individual with a disability, as defined by section 12102 of title 42, United States Code.

(2) ELIGIBLE VETERAN.—The term “eligible veteran” means a disabled or low-income veteran.

(3) ENERGY EFFICIENT FEATURES OR EQUIPMENT.—The term “energy efficient features or equipment” means features of, or equipment in, a primary residence that help reduce the amount of electricity used to heat, cool, or ventilate such residence, including insulation, weatherstripping, air sealing, heating system repairs, duct sealing, or other measures.

(4) LOW-INCOME VETERAN.—The term “low-income veteran” means a veteran whose income does not exceed 80 percent of the median income for an area, as determined by the Secretary.

(5) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.—The term “nonprofit organization” means an organization that is—

(A) described in section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; and

(B) exempt from tax under section 501(a) of such Code.

(6) PRIMARY RESIDENCE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “primary residence” means a single family house, a duplex, or a unit within a multiple-dwelling structure that is an eligible veteran's principal dwelling and is owned by such veteran or a family member of such veteran.

(B) FAMILY MEMBER DEFINED.—For purposes of this paragraph, the term “family member” includes—

(i) a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, or sibling;

(ii) a spouse of such a child, grandchild, parent, or sibling; or

(iii) any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with a veteran is the equivalent of a family relationship.

(7) QUALIFIED ORGANIZATION.—The term “qualified organization” means a nonprofit organization that provides nationwide or State-wide programs that primarily serve veterans or low-income individuals.

(8) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

(9) VETERAN.—The term “veteran” has the same meaning as given such term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(10) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—The term “veterans service organization” means any organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated for carrying out this section \$4,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2013 through 2017.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material on this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a cosponsor of H.R. 6361, the Vulnerable Veterans Housing Reform Act of 2012. I strongly urge my colleagues to support its passage.

Put simply, this legislation will ensure that we don't punish low-income disabled veterans who are seeking or receiving housing assistance simply because of their disability benefits.

Currently, if a veteran gets help with in-home care for their disability, that help is incorrectly calculated as income, which increases their housing costs.

For purposes of section 8 and public housing assistance, H.R. 6361 would exempt from a veteran's income his or her service-related disability benefits as well as expenses for in-home aid and care. It also reforms how section 8 and other housing programs calculate utility subsidies, and it awards grants to rehabilitate and modify homes for our disabled and low-income veterans.

As part of our effort to eliminate homelessness among veterans and help low-income veterans, our Financial Services Committee has closely examined the housing barriers facing disabled and low-income veterans. As recently as last week, we heard from veterans like Cassandra Flanagan of Philadelphia, who asked us specifically

to fix how government programs treat disability benefits in their financial assessments. H.R. 6361 would address her request by helping veterans overcome one of the key bureaucratic hassles that make it harder to find a secure and stable place to call home. That's why our legislation has broad, bipartisan support.

On September 12, 2012, the Financial Services Committee passed H.R. 6361 by a unanimous vote. In February, the Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee also gave its approval to similar legislation as part of the Affordable Housing and Self-Sufficiency Improvement Act of 2012, a broader proposal to reform HUD's section 8 and public housing programs.

I'm also pleased that we were able to include in today's bill the language authored by Mr. GREEN of Texas so that additional assistance can be provided to those veterans who need home renovations to accommodate their disability.

While we can never repay our veterans for the selfless sacrifices they've made to defend the liberties we enjoy, we can work to ensure that they have a place to call home. We also can work to ensure that our severely disabled veterans have adequate facilities and living conditions within the comfort of their homes.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans have paid a high price to protect the American Dream, and they should have the opportunity to experience the blessings that dream represents.

I commend my colleague from Nevada (Mr. HECK) for introducing this bill. He's put a lot of work into this. I'd also like to recognize my colleague from Texas (Mr. GREEN) for his tremendous bipartisan work and his contribution to this bill. I also thank Chairman BACHUS for his hard work on this important measure.

Finally, I also would like to thank the American Legion, VetsFirst-United Spinal Association, Easter Seals, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars for their support of provisions in the bill.

With that, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6361, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6361, the Vulnerable Veterans Housing Reform Act.

This bill is aimed at helping some of those who most deserve and need our help, our severely disabled wartime veterans who are living with service-connected disabilities. It is designed to help that relatively small population of veterans who are disabled, impoverished, and in need of constant care due to their service wounds.

They are wounded warriors who now need assistance performing the basic functions of daily life, like the simple things that most of us take for granted and perform without second thought: bathing, feeding themselves, getting dressed. They put their lives on the

line for us, and it is now our turn to see to it that they are afforded every opportunity to live a life of independence and self-sufficiency.

□ 1910

To this end, H.R. 6361 would exempt any expenses related to veterans and benefits from consideration when they are being considered for housing assistance. The fact that the benefits are currently counted as income is an obstacle for many of our military men and women. Let's take a hypothetical case and now look at how things stand now.

A single, severely disabled veteran with no dependents who has an adjusted gross annual income of less than \$12,256 can receive up to an additional \$8,191 in aid and attendance benefit each year to supplement the cost of their medical care. This fix will make it just a little bit easier for our veterans to qualify for the housing assistance they need and deserve. But this bill also makes changes to current utility allowances as part of section 8 public housing assistance. Under this bill, utility allowances would be calculated and capped based on family size rather than apartment size.

Our Financial Services Committee members have been hard at work adding hardship exemptions to protect people with disabilities, the elderly, and families with children by providing them with increased utility allowances, as needed.

I commend my colleagues for their bipartisan cooperation in finding a middle ground and a solution. I also congratulate my good friend and colleague, Congressman AL GREEN, for his contribution to this bill. He works tirelessly on behalf of our Nation's military men and has fought especially hard to get his HAVEN bill to the floor, despite it being folded into this bill.

The HAVEN bill would establish a pilot program to provide grant funding to rehabilitate and modify the homes of low-income or disabled veterans so that wheelchair ramps, repairs, and energy-efficient features can be put in place. Helping repair the homes of our veterans before they become too sick is not just a smart policy; it is our duty. We need to do all we can to keep our veterans self-sufficient and independent, and help them transition back into civilian life as seamlessly as possible.

I will vote "yes" on this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I yield to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HECK), the author of this bill, for such time as he may consume.

Mr. HECK. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 6361, the Vulnerable Veterans Housing Reform Act of 2012.

As stated, this bill would remove an unnecessary barrier that prevents our

disabled wartime veterans from receiving the housing assistance they so critically need. It does this by preventing the Department of Housing and Urban Development from considering our veterans' aid and attendance benefits as income when calculating their eligibility for housing assistance.

The aid and attendance benefit is an enhanced pension program provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to our Nation's wartime veterans who are severely disabled and have little or no income. According to the VA, veterans eligible for the aid and attendance benefit are defined as those requiring the aid of another person in order to perform his or her activities of daily living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, using the restroom, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting themselves from the hazards of their daily environment.

In order to receive this benefit, our severely disabled veterans must first establish their eligibility for a low-income pension. Once eligibility is determined, those low-income disabled vets can receive an additional aid and attendance benefit annually to help defray the cost of their medical care. Now, this is an important point. The aid and attendance benefit is for medical care; it is not discretionary income.

As you can imagine, these veterans struggle daily to keep the lights on, put food on the table, and to keep a roof over their heads. Add to that the exorbitant cost of paying for live-in aid, and it becomes increasingly difficult for them to stay in their homes.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development operates a number of programs that can assist these veterans. However, the current statute requires that the aid and attendance benefit be counted as income when determining eligibility for housing assistance. Mr. Speaker, this makes no sense. The VA provides this benefit to ensure that our low-income disabled wartime veterans have the necessary resources to receive the medical care they need and have earned.

The cost of an assisted living facility can be \$39,600, and the median cost of a room in a nursing home is between \$73,000 and \$81,000 annually. By providing the aid and attendance benefit and keeping the veteran in their home, we are doing them a service and saving taxpayer money. Continuing to count the aid and attendance benefit as income does nothing more than reduce the housing assistance available to our low-income disabled vets.

Mr. Speaker, it's the stated goal of both this House and this administration to reduce homelessness in our veteran population. Passing this legislation will help ensure that we achieve this goal.

H.R. 6361 also includes an important provision authored by my distinguished colleague from the Ninth District of Texas, Congressman AL GREEN. His provision would create a pilot program to provide grants to qualified

nonprofit organizations for the purpose of modifying and rehabilitating homes for our Nation's low-income disabled veterans.

H.R. 6361 was drafted in a bipartisan manner, and this is reflected in the overwhelming support it received when it was reported unanimously by the House Financial Services Committee on September 12, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 6361 will go a long way in providing the services and assistance our low-income disabled vets have earned and deserve. I thank the subcommittee chair, the distinguished lady from Illinois, and all the members of the committee for their support of this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support this critical bill.

Mrs. MALONEY. I would like to compliment the gentleman on his statement and point out that across the country one of the largest groups of people that are homeless are veterans, and this particular bill has the right incentives to direct the housing assistance to our veterans and help to keep them in their homes.

I have no other speakers at this time, so I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I have no further speakers, either, so I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6361, 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.

PROVIDING FLEXIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS FOR BURMA

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6431) to provide flexibility with respect to U.S. support for assistance provided by international financial institutions for Burma, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6431

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

SECTION 1. INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.

Upon a determination by the President that it is in the national interest of the United States to support assistance for Burma, the Secretary of the Treasury may instruct the United States Executive Director at any international financial institution to vote in favor of the provision of assistance for Burma by the institution, notwithstanding any other provision of law. The President shall provide the appropriate congressional committees with a written notice of any such determination.

SEC. 2. CONSULTATION AND NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENT.

(a) Prior to making the determination contained in section 1, the Secretary of State

and the Secretary of the Treasury each shall consult with the appropriate congressional committees on assistance to be provided to Burma by an international financial institution, and the national interests served by such assistance.

(b) The Secretary of the Treasury shall instruct the United States Executive Director at each international financial institution that the United States Executive Director may not vote in favor of any provision of assistance by the institution to Burma until at least 15 days has elapsed from the date on which the President has provided notice pursuant to section 1.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) The term "appropriate congressional committees" means the Committees on Foreign Relations, Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, and Appropriations of the Senate, and the Committees on Financial Services, Foreign Affairs, and Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(2) The term "assistance" means any loan or financial or technical assistance, or any other use of funds.

(3) The term "international financial institution" shall have the same meaning as contained in section 7029(d) of division I of Public Law 112-74.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material into the RECORD on this measure.

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

There was no objection.

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

This afternoon, Congress was finally able to present Aung San Suu Kyi the Congressional Gold Medal. Congress' highest medal was awarded for her courageous and unwavering commitment to peace, to nonviolence, to human rights, and of course to democracy in Burma. I was an original cosponsor of Mr. CROWLEY's legislation that set the stage for today's ceremony.

□ 1920

Of course, that legislation passed years ago, back in 2008, when Aung San Suu Kyi's house was her prison. Many thought, of course, that this day today would never come. That she was able to visit Capitol Hill today to accept this award, meeting with Members of Congress, is a testament of the changes taking place in her important country. The opposition has won seats in Parliament. Media restrictions have been eased. Hundreds of prisoners, including many this week, have been released.

Congress can be proud of the role that it has played in getting Burma to this point. Sanctions were important, but sanctions can't keep up the momentum for democracy in Burma

today. That was the message that Aung San Suu Kyi delivered in Washington. Instead, she emphasized the role that the U.S. can play in helping to build up the institutions that Burma badly needs.

This country, once Southeast Asia's richest country, is now its poorest. Its corrupt and brutal generals have destroyed the economic landscape of Burma. The Burmese people are destitute. Democracy will not thrive in this economic despair.

Isolated for decades, the institutions Burma needs to run an economy are either very weak or they do not exist. International financial institutions could help Burma establish the economic infrastructure needed to reconnect with the world. This assistance also can help the Burmese with their basic needs. Without this in place, the potential for political backsliding is real.

However, several laws on our books direct the U.S. representative at each international financial institution to vote "no" when it comes to any proposal related to Burma. There is no waiver, which is very unusual when it comes to sanctions.

I'd note that a U.S. "no" vote is not a veto. It doesn't stop these institutions from being involved with Burma. It just stops us from being part of the process.

So we have to ask ourselves, when are the interests of the U.S. and the Burmese people best served? When the U.S. is playing a leading role, helping to shape these institutions' involvement with Burma, or are they best served when the U.S. representative is shut out of the room, left with only one option?

This legislation gives more options: yes, no, or abstain. When U.S. support is possible, that gives us leverage. We have great weight at these institutions, even while they are mainly funded by others.

Like other Members, I'm not happy with where Burma is today. I want all political prisoners released. There is too much ethnic violence.

This bill doesn't touch the import ban or asset freezes, of course, and those are targeted at the regime. The Treasury Department should use its authority to target any individual that is undermining progress in Burma.

This legislation is license to bolster reform, where appropriate and where possible, not a seal of approval. Given where Burma is today, it's appropriate that Congress respond in this way to ensure that the U.S. is in a position to continue to press for reforms.

Moving forward, Congress will need to ensure that these financial institutions are pushing stringent transparency and monitoring its impact on human rights. Those goals, which we all share, are best advanced by adopting this legislation.

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

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6431 and yield myself such time as I may consume.