

I know because of the many times that I have worked with refugees in California, trying to help their families away from the oppression, that people still face in Vietnam how important this measure is, and I commend the authors for jumping through I do not know how many legislative hoops to get it on this floor today.

I would also like to bring, because she was not aware it was going to be on the floor any more than I was before I got the call, that the gentlewoman from California [Ms. SANCHEZ] from Orange County and I recently held, with others, a human rights forum and study under the Human Rights Caucus, and the gentlewoman from California [Ms. SANCHEZ] and I learned firsthand from the testimony how important this measure is. And so I am sure I join with others, including my colleague from California, in urging support of this bill.

I thank the gentleman from North Carolina for allowing me to say these few words in support.

Mr. WATT of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CANADY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I do, however, ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WATT of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I will be brief so as not to prolong this debate because I do not think there is anybody who opposes this bill. The bill serves a useful purpose of extending and clarifying an important State Department and INS authority that expired on September 30, 1997. This authority was necessary to allow longtime reeducation camp victims who have been persecuted in Vietnam for their pro-U.S. associations to bring their unmarried children with them to the United States if these children have reached the age of 21 during their incarceration or the long wait for an exit visa from the Communist authorities. A number of these former prisoners of conscience have refused to leave Vietnam unless they can bring their children. These families are trapped in Vietnam until this provision is reauthorized.

The extension of this authority has been endorsed by the Clinton administration, Senators MCCAIN, ABRAHAM, and KENNEDY, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. HYDE], the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN], the gentleman from California [Mr. BERMAN], and many others. As I say, there is no real objection to this bill.

I do want to raise one point, however, that I think can go unnoticed in the waning moments of a congressional

session. This is a matter of immigration policy, and because this bill was just introduced, just dropped within the last minutes, the bill never has had a chance to go through the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims of the Committee on the Judiciary, and so we continue to make somewhat haphazardly immigration policy in this country, and we yesterday on an appropriations bill made exceptions for Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, other people from Communist countries, to be treated as refugees.

Under this bill, we make exceptions for some Vietnamese who obviously are very deserving, and the thing that is troubling is that we keep making these exceptions, all of which we support, but we keep leaving out the Haitians, which a number of people rose on the floor yesterday, especially Representatives from Florida, to try to see why we keep leaving out the Haitians, who really ought to be given an exception similar to the exceptions that we have given, we are giving, under this bill, that we gave under an appropriations bill to the Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and others yesterday.

Why do we keep leaving out the Haitians? And that question cries out for a response even though they are not people who oppose this particular bill. The question still is out there, why can we not find a bill and support for the Haitian people who came to this country under parole of Republican and Democratic Presidents, were given a status, and yet we are not dealing with them, we are ignoring them in the process of passing these bills?

So having expressed the procedural concern that we are haphazardly and kind of case-by-case making immigration policy without this bill having gone through the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims or the Committee on the Judiciary, and having expressed a concern that nobody seems to be paying attention to the plight of the Haitians even though there is a bill which could just as easily be picked up and moved on the floor as this bill is being moved, I encourage my colleagues nonetheless to support this bill.

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

□ 1615

Mr. CANADY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his expression of support for the bill. I would encourage all Members to vote for this important bill, which will ensure that some people will be spared injustice if passed by the House today.

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. CANADY] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3037.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF LEGISLATION TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER SUSPENSION OF THE RULES TODAY

Mr. BATEMAN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to H. Res. 314, I would like to announce that the following suspension is expected to be considered today:

H.Con.Res. 197, calling for the resignation or removal from office of Sara E. Lister, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

ARMY RESERVE-NATIONAL GUARD EQUITY REIMBURSEMENT ACT

Mr. BATEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2796) to authorize the reimbursement of members of the Army deployed to Europe in support of operations in Bosnia for certain out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the members during the period beginning October 1, 1996, and ending on May 31, 1997, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2796

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 "Army Reserve-National Guard Equity Reimbursement Act".

SEC. 2. REIMBURSEMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMY DEPLOYED IN EUROPE IN SUPPORT OF BOSNIA OPERATIONS FOR OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES INCURRED TO TRANSPORT PERSONAL PROPERTY.

(a) REIMBURSEMENT AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of the Army may reimburse an individual described in subsection (b) for expenses incurred by that individual while a member of the Army for shipment of personal property of the individual to or from Europe during the period beginning on October 1, 1996, and ending on May 31, 1997, if the shipment of the personal property, if made on June 1, 1997, would have been covered by a temporary change of station weight allowance for shipment of personal property authorized by the Department of the Army. Such reimbursement shall be made from amounts available as of the date of the enactment of this section for the payment of the temporary change of station weight allowance.

(b) COVERED INDIVIDUALS.—An individual referred to in subsection (a) is an individual who, as a member of the Army during the period beginning on October 1, 1996, and ending on May 31, 1997, was deployed from the United States to Europe in support of operations in Bosnia or reassigned from Europe to United States upon the completion of such deployment, or both, under travel orders that did not authorize a temporary change of station weight allowance for shipment of personal property of the member.

The SPEAKER pro tempore [Mr. SNOWBARGER]. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BATEMAN] and the gentleman from California [Mr. DELLUMS] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BATEMAN].

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2796 would not direct, but would indeed authorize reimbursement for certain out-of-pocket expenses incurred by certain members of the United States Army who were deployed to Europe in support of the Bosnian operations in late 1996.

The bill has been amended from the introduced version to more clearly specify who in the Army is eligible for such reimbursement if the Secretary of the Army elects to exercise its authority.

The Army supports this initiative, and I am not aware of any controversy at this time associated with the bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today, H.R. 2796, is an example of what I and more than 50 of our colleagues consider good governmental legislation. This bill will correct a gross inequity that impacts upon approximately 4,200 of our Army Reserve and National Guard personnel who are deployed in Europe in support of our operations in Bosnia.

It will provide the necessary statutory authority for the Army to reimburse those soldiers, who had to take money out of their pockets to pay for shipment of personnel items, which the Army has paid for in the past and has started to pay for again.

I am especially pleased that this legislation has been developed at the request of the Department, in that it demonstrates their sincere concern for the welfare of the junior grade enlisted personnel who are the intended beneficiaries of this legislation.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be the cosponsor of this bill, and I would like at this time to extend my congratulations to my distinguished colleague, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON], for persisting in this effort. I underscore for emphasis "persisting in this effort."

Mr. Speaker, the distinguished gentlewoman brought this matter to my attention several weeks ago. We were not able to address this matter in the normal course of events in the context of the conference report that was the vehicle for our fiscal year 1998 defense authorization bill, but were able to do it in this context.

Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman, as I said, brought this matter to my attention and worked with great diligence to bring us to this moment. I again congratulate the gentlewoman and loudly applaud her for her efforts on behalf of the 4,200 men and women of our Army Reserves and National Guard.

Mr. DELLUMS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the distinguished gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON].

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I also want to commend both sides of the House, both the majority and the minority on this issue, for allowing this

to come up. I want to pay particular attention to the care and attention and the direction that the gentleman from California [Mr. DELLUMS] gave at this issue, and thank the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BATEMAN] for leading this effort on his side. We would not be here unless there was cooperation on both sides. I want to acknowledge that.

This issue came to me because 125 National Guardsmen in eastern North Carolina had experience going at the direction of their country, serving their country they thought well, but also having to pay for that engagement. What it meant was they had to pay for the shipment of their personal goods back to the United States.

Here before, military personnel would be reimbursed for the shipment of their personal goods. Why? Because there had been an administrative change or policy change within the administration of the Pentagon.

When we brought that to them, they said unless we actually sought legislative remedy, they could not make this correction, which we thought was an issue of fairness for the 125 military personnel in eastern North Carolina. We did it for the whole. So this particular legislation now is going to enable more than 4,200 individuals to be reimbursed, as they should be, for the transfer of their personal goods back home.

I think it is an issue of fairness; I think it is an issue of respect, the respect we have traditionally given our military, that if they incur expenses, certainly we ought to reimburse them.

Also I think it is an issue of respect for our junior personnel, because oftentimes we forget they, too, have expenses that they seem to think are big. \$400 or \$500 may not be big to us, but for junior personnel it is indeed an expense item that they would like to have reimbursed.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone involved in this, all of the members of this committee, because 125 people in eastern North Carolina will be delighted to know now they can be reimbursed. I suspect the 4,200 personnel across the country are appreciative for this Congress correcting what was an injustice to them.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time, and thank the gentleman from California [Mr. DELLUMS] for his leadership.

Mr. DELLUMS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Missouri [Mr. SKELTON].

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the gentlewoman from North Carolina for a matter of paying attention to people she represents and trying to heal their financial reverses as a result of serving our Nation as Members of the National Guard. She not only helps them, but helps National Guardsmen all over the

country. We thank the gentlewoman, from Missouri National Guardsmen, and, I know as well, from other Members across our country.

I have had, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to visit with American National Guardsmen in Europe, in Germany, in Bosnia and in Hungary. They serve well, and they serve ably. In the process they are giving up a great deal. They are away from their homes, they are away from their work, they are away from their family, and they are serving as honorably as anyone in uniform.

For us not to pass this piece of legislation that makes them whole financially and on reimbursement for items they necessarily had to purchase in Europe would be a mistake. So I wholeheartedly support the effort of the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON], and the gentleman from California, as well as the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. DELLUMS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. MCHALE].

Mr. MCHALE. Mr. Speaker, I, too, thank the gentleman from California for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out this is really an extremely important effort on behalf of our Army and National Guard participating soldiers. The gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] has stepped forward today with a piece of legislation that will be very important to 4,206 Army Reserve and National Guard soldiers who, unfortunately, because of an administrative error, were not given the proper reimbursement on the shipment of personal goods.

This really goes beyond the shipment of personal items. The Representative from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] recognizes when these troops deploy to and from an overseas mission, they deserve to get a level of equity which, unfortunately, was not provided in this case.

There are no second-class soldiers in the United States Army. This corrects that inequity. It is, in fact, the Army Reserve-National Guard Equity Reimbursement Act, and I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the legislation.

Mr. DELLUMS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. TAYLOR].

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the long list of people commending the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] for bringing this to our attention.

Over 4,200 reservists will be affected in their pocketbooks by this. They do not make much money. Most of them volunteered to go to Bosnia. Some of them were involuntarily called up. All of them took a pay cut, in all probability, to serve their country. So it is very important that, where we can and

when we can, we see to it that they incur no unnecessary expense in doing so.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] for bringing this to our attention. I want to commend the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BUYER] and the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BATEMAN] for allowing this to come to the floor today. We are definitely doing the best thing for those people in uniform.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to conclude by indicating that I would have liked very much for this matter to have been dealt with in the context of the conference report that accompanied the defense authorization for fiscal year 1998. In that regard, this would, in a few short days perhaps, have been signed into law. But I am pleased we are at least taking this step.

My hope is by the House of Representatives taking this step, we will have sent the appropriate signal to the other body to act with dispatch on this matter that cries out for equity and cries out for action.

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

Mr. BATEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BUYER].

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Readiness for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the legislation to correct these errors with regard to our troops. This is really basically, my colleagues, support-the-troops legislation.

This legislation corrects a problem created earlier this year when, due to an administrative change in Army policy, reservists deployed to Bosnia were forced to pay out of their own pocket to ship their personal goods home at the completion of their tour. Most of the reservists called for the second rotation to Bosnia were affected by this change.

This matter came to the attention of the authorizing Committee on National Security really too late to deal with this issue effectively in the defense bill this year.

I compliment the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] for bringing this to everyone's attention. I am disappointed that the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve affairs, Ms. Sara Lister, would not have brought this immediately to the Committee on National Security's attention. I know she brought this in response to your inquiry, but I wish she had brought it right to the authorizing committee. Perhaps, if she is listening, she is going to get that warning order.

I urge my colleagues to support the legislation. The troops can be reimbursed in a timely fashion for their

selfless service to their country. I agree with the ranking member that hopefully the Senate will take this up immediately.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me add in conclusion my thanks and compliments to the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] for having determined that there was this problem and having brought it to our attention in order that we could address the problem, one which definitely needed to be addressed and which I am happy to have cooperated in having the House hopefully pass in the next minute.

I hope also the Senate will take action on this and the President will sign it in order that we can have the authority for these troops to be paid that which they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BATEMAN] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2796, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1630

AMTRAK REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1997

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 738) to reform the statutes relating to Amtrak, to authorize appropriations for Amtrak, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 738

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; AMENDMENT OF TITLE 49; TABLE OF SECTIONS.

(a) *SHORT TITLE.*—This Act may be cited as the "Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997".

(b) *AMENDMENT OF TITLE 49, UNITED STATES CODE.*—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or a repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 49, United States Code.

(c) *TABLE OF SECTIONS.*—The table of sections for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; amendment of title 49; table of sections.

Sec. 2. Findings.

TITLE I—REFORMS

SUBTITLE A—OPERATIONAL REFORMS

Sec. 101. Basic system.

Sec. 102. Mail, express, and auto-ferry transportation.

Sec. 103. Route and service criteria.

Sec. 104. Additional qualifying routes.

Sec. 105. Transportation requested by States, authorities, and other persons.

Sec. 106. Amtrak commuter.

Sec. 107. Through service in conjunction with intercity bus operations.

Sec. 108. Rail and motor carrier passenger service.

Sec. 109. Passenger choice.

Sec. 110. Application of certain laws.

SUBTITLE B—PROCUREMENT

Sec. 121. Contracting out.

SUBTITLE C—EMPLOYEE PROTECTION REFORMS

Sec. 141. Railway Labor Act Procedures.

Sec. 142. Service discontinuance.

SUBTITLE D—USE OF RAILROAD FACILITIES

Sec. 161. Liability limitation.

Sec. 162. Retention of facilities.

TITLE II—FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Sec. 201. Amtrak financial goals.

Sec. 202. Independent assessment.

Sec. 203. Amtrak Reform Council.

Sec. 204. Sunset trigger.

Sec. 205. Senate procedure for consideration of restructuring and liquidation plans.

Sec. 206. Access to records and accounts.

Sec. 207. Officers' pay.

Sec. 208. Exemption from taxes.

Sec. 209. Limitation on use of tax refund.

TITLE III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

Sec. 301. Authorization of appropriations.

TITLE IV—MISCELLANEOUS

Sec. 401. Status and applicable laws.

Sec. 402. Waste disposal.

Sec. 403. Assistance for upgrading facilities.

Sec. 404. Demonstration of new technology.

Sec. 405. Program master plan for Boston-New York main line.

Sec. 406. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Sec. 407. Definitions.

Sec. 408. Northeast Corridor cost dispute.

Sec. 409. Inspector General Act of 1978 amendment.

Sec. 410. Interstate rail compacts.

Sec. 411. Board of Directors.

Sec. 412. Educational participation.

Sec. 413. Report to Congress on Amtrak bankruptcy.

Sec. 414. Amtrak to notify Congress of lobbying relationships.

Sec. 415. Financial powers.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

(1) intercity rail passenger service is an essential component of a national intermodal passenger transportation system;

(2) Amtrak is facing a financial crisis, with growing and substantial debt obligations severely limiting its ability to cover operating costs and jeopardizing its long-term viability;

(3) immediate action is required to improve Amtrak's financial condition if Amtrak is to survive;

(4) all of Amtrak's stakeholders, including labor, management, and the Federal government, must participate in efforts to reduce Amtrak's costs and increase its revenues;

(5) additional flexibility is needed to allow Amtrak to operate in a businesslike manner in order to manage costs and maximize revenues;

(6) Amtrak should ensure that new management flexibility produces cost savings without compromising safety;

(7) Amtrak's management should be held accountable to ensure that all investment by the Federal Government and State governments is used effectively to improve the quality of service and the long-term financial health of Amtrak;

(8) Amtrak and its employees should proceed quickly with proposals to modify collective bargaining agreements to make more efficient use of manpower and to realize cost savings which are necessary to reduce Federal financial assistance;