

With best wishes, I am  
Sincerely,

MARTHA C. MORRISON  
(For Jeff Trandahl).

#### RETURN SURPLUS TO TAXPAYERS

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

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, today there were reports that Washington is awash in a surplus to the tune of projected \$1 trillion. Well, congratulations to the American taxpayer. There are a lot of folks who would like to take credit for the surpluses. We all know where it is generated from, and that is the hard work of millions of Americans, who get up to work every single morning, sometimes 6, 7 days a week, sometimes 2 or 3 jobs, to generate this surplus.

I would just encourage everybody in Washington to remind themselves of that fact, and that when it comes time to spend that money, that they set aside enough back to the taxpayers so they can spend it on their families and to continue to grow our economy as it has been growing like no time before.

As it relates to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BONILLA) and the San Antonio Spurs, congratulations, but there is also next year for our Knicks fans.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION AND CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION IMPLEMENTATION ACT—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 106-86)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on International Relations and ordered to be printed:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

On November 14, 1994, in light of the danger of the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons (weapons of mass destruction) and of the means of delivering such weapons, using my authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.), I issued Executive Order 12938, declaring a national emergency to deal with this danger. Because the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, I have renewed the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12938 annually, most recently on November 12, 1998. Pursuant to section 204(b) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1703(b)), I hereby report to the Congress that I have exercised my statutory authority to further amend Executive

Order 12938 in order to more effectively respond to the worldwide threat of weapons of mass destruction proliferation activities.

The new executive order, which implements the Chemical Weapons Convention Implementation Act of 1998, strengthens Executive Order 12938 by amending section 3 to authorize the United States to implement important provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, a multilateral agreement that serves to reduce the threat posed by chemical weapons. Specifically, the amendment enables the United States Government to ensure that imports into the United States of certain chemicals from any source are permitted in a manner consistent with the relevant provisions of the Convention.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.  
THE WHITE HOUSE, June 25, 1999.

#### COMMUNICATION FROM THE HON. ANNA ESHOO, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable ANNA ESHOO, Member of Congress:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, June 29, 1999,  
Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. SPEAKER, This is to formally notify you pursuant to Rule VIII of the Rules of the House that I received a subpoena for documents issued by the United States District Court for the Northern District of California.

After consultation with the Office of General Counsel, I have determined to comply with the subpoena to the extent that it is consistent with Rule VIII.

Sincerely,

ANNA G. ESHOO.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken after debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules.

#### VETERANS BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2280) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide a cost-of-living adjustment in rates of compensation paid for service-connected disabilities, to enhance the compensation, memorial affairs, and housing programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to

improve retirement authorities applicable to judges of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2280

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

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1999”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. References to title 38, United States Code.

#### TITLE I—COMPENSATION

Sec. 101. Increase in rates of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation.

Sec. 102. Presumption that bronchiolo-alveolar carcinoma is service-connected.

Sec. 103. Dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses of former prisoners of war.

Sec. 104. Reinstate of certain benefits for remarried surviving spouses of veterans upon termination of their remarriage.

#### TITLE II—MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

Subtitle A—American Battle Monuments Commission

Sec. 201. Codification and expansion of authority for World War II Memorial.

Sec. 202. General authority to solicit and receive contributions.

Sec. 203. Intellectual property and related items.

Sec. 204. Technical amendments.

#### Subtitle B—National Cemeteries

Sec. 211. Establishment of additional national cemeteries.

Sec. 212. Independent study on improvements to veterans’ cemeteries.

#### TITLE III—HOUSING

Sec. 301. Permanent eligibility for housing loans for former members of the Selected Reserve.

Sec. 302. Homeless veterans’ reintegration programs.

Sec. 303. Transitional housing loan guarantee program technical amendment.

#### TITLE IV—COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

Sec. 401. Authority to prescribe rules and regulations.

Sec. 402. Recall of retired judges.

Sec. 403. Calculation of years of service as a judge.

Sec. 404. Judges’ retired pay.

Sec. 405. Survivor annuities.

Sec. 406. Limitation on activities of retired judges.

Sec. 407. Early retirement authority for current judges in order to provide for staggered terms of judges.

#### TITLE V—OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 501. Repeal of certain sunset provisions.

Sec. 502. Enhanced quality assurance program within the Veterans Benefits Administration.

Sec. 503. Extension of Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

Sec. 504. Codification of recurring provisions in annual Department of Veterans Affairs Appropriations Acts.

**SEC. 2. REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, 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 repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

**TITLE I—COMPENSATION****SEC. 101. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.**

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, effective on December 1, 1999, increase the dollar amounts in effect for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation by the Secretary, as specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under sections 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount in effect under section 1162 of such title.

(4) NEW DIC RATES.—The dollar amounts in effect under paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 1311(a) of such title.

(5) OLD DIC RATES.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1311(a)(3) of such title.

(6) ADDITIONAL DIC FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES WITH MINOR CHILDREN.—The dollar amount in effect under section 1311(b) of such title.

(7) ADDITIONAL DIC FOR DISABILITY.—The dollar amounts in effect under sections 1311(c) and 1311(d) of such title.

(8) DIC FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN.—The dollar amounts in effect under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—(1) The increase under subsection (a) shall be made in the dollar amounts specified in subsection (b) as in effect on November 30, 1999.

(2) Except as provided in paragraph (3), each such amount shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 1999, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(3) Each dollar amount increased pursuant to paragraph (2) shall, if not a whole dollar amount, be rounded down to the next lower whole dollar amount.

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons within the purview of section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who are not in receipt of compensation payable pursuant to chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

(e) PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.—At the same time as the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 1999, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in subsection (b), as increased pursuant to this section.

**SEC. 102. PRESUMPTION THAT BRONCHILO-ALVEOLAR CARCINOMA IS SERVICE CONNECTED.**

Section 1112(c)(2) is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(P) Bronchiolo-alveolar carcinoma.”

**SEC. 103. DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR.**

(a) ELIGIBILITY.—Section 1318(b) is amended—

(1) by striking “that either—” in the matter preceding paragraph (1) and inserting “rated totally disabling if—”; and

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

“(3) the veteran was a former prisoner of war who died after September 30, 1999, and who had been diagnosed as having one of the diseases specified in section 1112(b) of this title.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Such section is further amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—  
(A) by inserting “the disability” after “(1)”; and

(B) by striking “or” after “death”; and  
(2) in paragraph (2)—  
(A) by striking “if so rated for a lesser period, was so rated continuously” and inserting “the disability was continuously rated totally disabling”; and

(B) by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”.

**SEC. 104. REINSTATEMENT OF CERTAIN BENEFITS FOR REMARRIED SURVIVING SPOUSES OF VETERANS UPON TERMINATION OF THEIR REMARRIAGE.**

(a) RESTORATION OF PRIOR ELIGIBILITY.—Section 103(d) is amended—

(1) by inserting “(1)” after “(d)”; and  
(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(2) The remarriage of the surviving spouse of a veteran shall not bar the furnishing of benefits specified in paragraph (5) to such person as the surviving spouse of the veteran if the remarriage has been terminated by death or divorce unless the Secretary determines that the divorce was secured through fraud or collusion.

“(3) If the surviving spouse of a veteran ceases living with another person and holding himself or herself out openly to the public as that person’s spouse, the bar to granting that person benefits as the surviving spouse of the veteran shall not apply in the case of the benefits specified in paragraph (5).

“(4) The first month of eligibility for benefits for a surviving spouse by reason of this subsection shall be the month after—

“(A) the month of the termination of such remarriage, in the case of a surviving spouse described in paragraph (2); or

“(B) the month of the cessation described in paragraph (3), in the case of a surviving spouse described in that paragraph.

“(5) Paragraphs (2) and (3) apply with respect to benefits under the following provisions of this title:

“(A) Section 1311, relating to dependency and indemnity compensation.

“(B) Section 1713, relating to medical care for survivors and dependents of certain veterans.

“(C) Chapter 35, relating to educational assistance.

“(D) Chapter 37, relating to housing loans.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 1311 is amended by striking subsection (e).

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall take effect on the first day of the first month beginning after the month in which this Act is enacted or October 1, 1999, whichever is later.

(d) LIMITATION.—No payment may be made to a person by reason of paragraphs (2) and (3) of section 103(d) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), for any period before the effective date specified in subsection (c).

**TITLE II—MEMORIAL AFFAIRS****Subtitle A—American Battle Monuments Commission****SEC. 201. CODIFICATION AND EXPANSION OF AUTHORITY FOR WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL.**

(a) CODIFICATION OF EXISTING AUTHORITY; EXPANSION OF AUTHORITY.—(1) Chapter 21 of title 36, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

**“§ 2113. World War II memorial in the District of Columbia**

“(a) SOLICITATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS.—Consistent with its authority under section 2103(e) of this title, the American Battle Monuments Commission shall solicit and accept contributions for the memorial authorized by Public Law 103-32 (40 U.S.C. 1003 note) to be established by the Commission on Federal land in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor members of the Armed Forces who served in World War II and to commemorate the participation of the United States in that war (hereinafter in this section referred to as the ‘World War II memorial’).

“(b) CREATION OF MEMORIAL FUND.—(1) There is hereby created in the Treasury a fund for the World War II memorial. The fund shall consist of the following:

“(A) Amounts deposited, and interest and proceeds credited, under paragraph (2).

“(B) Obligations obtained under paragraph (3).

“(C) The amount of surcharges paid to the Commission for the World War II memorial under the World War II 50th Anniversary Commemorative Coins Act (31 U.S.C. 5112 note).

“(D) Amounts borrowed using the authority provided under subsection (d).

“(E) Any funds received by the Commission under section 2114 of this title in exchange for use of, or the right to use, any mark, copyright or patent.

“(2) The Chairman of the Commission shall deposit in the fund the amounts accepted as contributions under subsection (a). The Secretary of the Treasury shall credit to the fund the interest on, and the proceeds from sale or redemption of, obligations held in the fund.

“(3) The Secretary shall invest any portion of the fund that, as determined by the Chairman, is not required to meet current expenses. Each investment shall be made in an interest-bearing obligation of the United States or an obligation guaranteed as to principal and interest by the United States that the Chairman determines has a maturity suitable for the fund.

“(c) USE OF FUND.—The fund shall be available to the Commission—

“(1) for the expenses of establishing the World War II memorial, including the maintenance and preservation amount provided for in section 8(b) of the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1008(b));

“(2) for such other expenses, other than routine maintenance, with respect to the World War II memorial as the Commission considers warranted; and

“(3) to secure, obtain, register, enforce, protect, and license any mark, copyright or patent that is owned by, assigned to, or licensed to the Commission under section 2114 of this title to aid or facilitate the construction of the World War II memorial.

“(d) SPECIAL BORROWING AUTHORITY.—(1) To assure that groundbreaking, construction, and dedication of the World War II memorial are carried out on a timely basis, the Commission may borrow money from the Treasury of the United States in such amounts as the Commission considers necessary, but not to exceed a total of \$65,000,000. Borrowed amounts shall bear interest at a rate determined by the Secretary

of the Treasury, taking into consideration the average market yield on outstanding marketable obligations of the United States of comparable maturities during the month preceding the month in which the obligations of the Commission are issued. The interest payments on such obligations may be deferred with the approval of the Secretary, but any interest payment so deferred shall also bear interest.

“(2) The borrowing of money by the Commission under paragraph (1) shall be subject to such maturities, terms, and conditions as may be agreed upon by the Commission and the Secretary, except that the maturities may not exceed 20 years and such borrowings may be redeemable at the option of the Commission before maturity.

“(3) The obligations of the Commission shall be issued in amounts and at prices approved by the Secretary. The authority of the Commission to issue obligations under this subsection shall remain available without fiscal year limitation. The Secretary of the Treasury shall purchase any obligations of the Commission to be issued under this subsection, and for such purpose the Secretary of the Treasury may use as a public debt transaction of the United States the proceeds from the sale of any securities issued under chapter 31 of title 31. The purposes for which securities may be issued under such chapter are extended to include any purchase of the Commission's obligations under this subsection.

“(4) Repayment of the interest and principal on any funds borrowed by the Commission under paragraph (1) shall be made from amounts in the fund. The Commission may not use for such purpose any funds appropriated for any other activities of the Commission.

“(e) TREATMENT OF BORROWING AUTHORITY.—In determining whether the Commission has sufficient funds to complete construction of the World War II memorial, as required by section 8 of the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1008), the Secretary of the Interior shall consider the funds that the Commission may borrow from the Treasury under subsection (d) as funds available to complete construction of the memorial, whether or not the Commission has actually exercised the authority to borrow such funds.

“(f) VOLUNTARY SERVICES.—(1) Notwithstanding section 1342 of title 31, the Commission may accept from any person voluntary services to be provided in furtherance of the fund-raising activities of the Commission relating to the World War II memorial.

“(2) A person providing voluntary services under this subsection shall be considered to be a Federal employee for purposes of chapter 81 of title 5, relating to compensation for work-related injuries, and chapter 171 of title 28, relating to tort claims. A volunteer who is not otherwise employed by the United States shall not be considered to be a Federal employee for any other purpose by reason of the provision of such voluntary service, except that any volunteers given responsibility for the handling of funds or the carrying out of a Federal function are subject to the conflict of interest laws contained in chapter 11 of title 18 and the administrative standards of conduct contained in part 2635 of title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

“(3) The Commission may provide for reimbursement of incidental expenses that are incurred by a person providing voluntary services under this subsection. The Commission shall determine those expenses that are eligible for reimbursement under this paragraph.

“(4) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require any Federal employee to work without compensation or to allow

the use of volunteer services to displace or replace any Federal employee.

“(g) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN CONTRACTS.—A contract entered into by the Commission for the design or construction of the World War II memorial is not a funding agreement as that term is defined in section 201 of title 35.

“(h) EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH MEMORIAL.—Notwithstanding section 10 of the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1010), the authority for the construction of the World War II memorial provided by Public Law 103-32 (40 U.S.C. 1003 note) expires on December 31, 2005.”

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“2113. World War II memorial in the District of Columbia.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Public Law 103-32 (40 U.S.C. 1003 note) is amended by striking sections 3, 4, and 5.

(c) EFFECT OF REPEAL OF CURRENT MEMORIAL FUND.—Upon the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Treasury shall transfer amounts in the fund created by section 4(a) of Public Law 103-32 (40 U.S.C. 1003 note) to the fund created by section 2113(b) of title 36, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

#### SEC. 202. GENERAL AUTHORITY TO SOLICIT AND RECEIVE CONTRIBUTIONS.

Subsection (e) of section 2103 of title 36, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(e) SOLICITATION AND RECEIPT OF CONTRIBUTIONS.—(1) The Commission may solicit and receive funds and in-kind donations and gifts from any State, municipal, or private source to carry out the purposes of this chapter. The Commission shall deposit such funds in a separate account in the Treasury. Funds from that account shall be disbursed upon vouchers approved by the Chairman.

“(2) The Commission shall establish written guidelines setting forth the criteria to be used in determining whether the acceptance of funds and in-kind donations and gifts under paragraph (1) would—

“(A) reflect unfavorably on the ability of the Commission, or any member or employee of the Commission, to carry out the responsibilities or official duties of the Commission in a fair and objective manner; or

“(B) compromise the integrity or the appearance of the integrity of the programs of the Commission or any official involved in those programs.”.

#### SEC. 203. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND RELATED ITEMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 21 of title 36, United States Code, as amended by section 201(a)(1), is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

#### “§ 2114. Intellectual property and related items

“(a) AUTHORITY TO USE AND REGISTER INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY.—The American Battle Monuments Commission may—

“(1) adopt, use, register, and license trademarks, service marks, and other marks;

“(2) obtain, use, register, and license the use of copyrights consistent with section 105 of title 17;

“(3) obtain, use, and license patents; and

“(4) accept gifts of marks, copyrights, patents and licenses for use by the Commission.

“(b) AUTHORITY TO GRANT LICENSES.—The Commission may grant exclusive and non-exclusive licenses in connection with any mark, copyright, patent, or license for the use of such mark, copyright or patent, except to the extent the grant of such license by the Commission would be contrary to any contract or license by which the use of the mark, copyright, or patent was obtained.

“(c) ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITY.—The Commission may enforce any mark, copyright, or

patent by an action in the district courts under any law providing for the protection of such marks, copyrights, or patents.

“(d) LEGAL REPRESENTATION.—The Attorney General shall furnish the Commission with legal representation as the Commission may require under subsection (c). The Secretary of Defense shall provide representation for the Commission in administrative proceedings before the Patent and Trademark Office and Copyright Office.

“(e) IRREVOCABILITY OF TRANSFERS OF COPYRIGHTS TO COMMISSION.—Section 203 of title 17 shall not apply to any copyright transferred in any manner to the Commission.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter, as amended by section 201(a)(2), is further amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“2114. Intellectual property and related items.”.

#### SEC. 204. TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS.

Chapter 21 of title 36, United States Code, is amended as follows:

(1) In section 2101(b)—

(A) by striking “title 37, United States Code,” in paragraph (2) and inserting “title 37”; and

(B) by striking “title 5, United States Code,” in paragraph (3) and inserting “title 5”.

(2) In section 2102(a)(1), by striking “title 5, United States Code” and inserting “title 5”.

(3) In section 2103—

(A) by striking “title 31, United States Code” in subsection (h)(2)(A)(i) and inserting “title 31”;

(B) by striking “title 44, United States Code” in subsection (i) and inserting “title 44”; and

(C) by striking “chairman” each place it appears and inserting “Chairman”.

#### Subtitle B—National Cemeteries

#### SEC. 211. ESTABLISHMENT OF ADDITIONAL NATIONAL CEMETERIES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish, in accordance with chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, a national cemetery in each of the four areas in the United States that the Secretary determines to be most in need of such a cemetery to serve the needs of veterans and their families.

(b) OBLIGATION OF FUNDS IN FISCAL YEAR 2000.—The Secretary shall obligate from the advance planning fund in the Construction, Major Projects account appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2000 such amounts for costs that the Secretary estimates are required for the planning and commencement of the establishment of national cemeteries under this section.

(c) REPORTS.—(1) Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the establishment of the national cemeteries under subsection (a). The report shall set forth the four areas identified by the Secretary for such establishment, a schedule for such establishment, an estimate of the costs associated with such establishment, and the amount obligated from the advance planning fund under subsection (b).

(2) Not later than one year after the date on which the report described in paragraph (1) is submitted to Congress, and annually thereafter until the establishment of the national cemeteries under subsection (a) is complete, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that updates the information included in the report described in paragraph (1).

#### SEC. 212. INDEPENDENT STUDY ON IMPROVEMENTS TO VETERANS' CEMETERIES.

(a) STUDY.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the

Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into a contract with one or more qualified organizations to conduct a study of national cemeteries described in subsection (b). For purposes of this section, an entity of Federal, State, or local government is not a qualified organization.

(b) MATTERS STUDIED.—(1) The study conducted pursuant to the contract entered into under subsection (a) shall include an assessment of each of the following:

(A) The one-time repairs required at each national cemetery under the jurisdiction of the National Cemetery Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure a dignified and respectful setting appropriate to such cemetery, taking into account the variety of age, climate, and burial options at individual national cemeteries.

(B) The feasibility of making standards of appearance of such national cemeteries commensurate with standards of appearance of the finest cemeteries in the world.

(C) The number of additional national cemeteries that will be required for the interment and memorialization in such cemeteries of individuals qualified under chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, who die after 2005.

(D) Improvements to burial benefits under chapter 23 of title 38, United States Code, including a proposal to increase the amount of the benefit for plot allowances under section 2303(b) of such title, to better serve veterans and their families.

(2) In presenting the assessment of additional national cemeteries required under paragraph (1)(C), the report shall identify by five-year period, beginning with 2005 and ending with 2020, the following:

(A) The number of additional national cemeteries required during each such five-year period.

(B) With respect to each such five-year period, the areas in the United States with the greatest concentration of veterans whose needs are not served by national cemeteries or State veterans' cemeteries.

(c) REPORT.—(1) Not later than one year after the date on which a qualified organization enters into a contract under subsection (a), the organization shall submit to the Secretary a report setting forth the results of the study conducted and conclusions of the organization with respect to such results.

(2) Not later than 120 days after the date on which a report is submitted under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall transmit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a copy of such report, together with any comments on the report that the Secretary considers appropriate.

### TITLE III—HOUSING

#### SEC. 301. PERMANENT ELIGIBILITY FOR HOUSING LOANS FOR FORMER MEMBERS OF THE SELECTED RESERVE.

Section 3702(a)(2)(E) is amended by striking “For the period beginning on October 28, 1992, and ending on September 30, 2003, each veteran” and inserting “Each veteran”.

#### SEC. 302. HOMELESS VETERANS' REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 41 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

#### § 4111. Homeless veterans' reintegration programs

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training, shall conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force.

“(b) AUTHORITY TO MONITOR EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS.—The Secretary may collect such

information as the Secretary considers appropriate to monitor and evaluate the distribution and expenditure of funds appropriated to carry out this section, and such information shall be furnished to the Secretary in such form as the Secretary determines appropriate.

“(c) DEFINITION.—As used in this section, the term ‘homeless veteran’ has the meaning given that term by section 3771(2) of this title.

#### “(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section amounts as follows:

“(A) \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2000.

“(B) \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2001.

“(C) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2002.

“(D) \$25,000,000 for fiscal year 2003.

“(E) \$30,000,000 for fiscal year 2004.

“(2) Funds obligated for any fiscal year to carry out this section may be expended in that fiscal year and the succeeding fiscal year.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“4111. Homeless veterans' reintegration programs.”.

#### SEC. 303. TRANSITIONAL HOUSING LOAN GUARANTEE PROGRAM TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.

Section 3775 is amended—

(1) by inserting “(a)” before “During each”; and

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

“(b) After the first 3 years of operation of such a multifamily transitional housing project, the Secretary may provide for periodic audits of the project.”.

### TITLE IV—COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

#### SEC. 401. AUTHORITY TO PRESCRIBE RULES AND REGULATIONS.

Section 7254 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(f) The Court may prescribe rules and regulations to carry out this chapter.”.

#### SEC. 402. RECALL OF RETIRED JUDGES.

(a) AUTHORITY TO RECALL RETIRED JUDGES.—Chapter 72 is amended by inserting after section 7256 the following new section:

#### § 7257. Recall of retired judges

“(a)(1) A retired judge of the Court may be recalled for further service on the Court in accordance with this section. To be eligible to be recalled for such service, a retired judge must at the time of the judge's retirement provide to the chief judge of the Court (or, in the case of the chief judge, to the clerk of the Court) notice in writing that the retired judge is available for further service on the Court in accordance with this section and is willing to be recalled under this section. Such a notice provided by a retired judge is irrevocable.

“(2) For the purposes of this section—

“(A) a retired judge is a judge of the Court of Veterans Appeals who retires from the Court under section 7296 of this title or under chapter 83 or 84 of title 5; and

“(B) a recall-eligible retired judge is a retired judge who has provided a notice under paragraph (1).

“(b)(1) The chief judge may recall for further service on the court a recall-eligible retired judge in accordance with this section. Such a recall shall be made upon written certification by the chief judge that substantial service is expected to be performed by the retired judge for such period, not to exceed 90 days (or the equivalent), as determined by the chief judge to be necessary to meet the needs of the Court.

“(2) A recall-eligible retired judge may not be recalled for more than 90 days (or the

equivalent) during any calendar year without the judge's consent or for more than a total of 180 days (or the equivalent) during any calendar year.

“(3) If a recall-eligible retired judge is recalled by the chief judge in accordance with this section and (other than in the case of a judge who has previously during that calendar year served at least 90 days (or the equivalent) of recalled service on the court) declines (other than by reason of disability) to perform the service to which recalled, the chief judge shall remove that retired judge from the status of a recall-eligible judge.

“(4) A recall-eligible retired judge who becomes permanently disabled and as a result of that disability is unable to perform further service on the court shall be removed from the status of a recall-eligible judge. Determination of such a disability shall be made in the same manner as is applicable to judges of the United States under section 371 of title 28.

“(c) A retired judge who is recalled under this section may exercise all of the powers and duties of the office of a judge in active service.

“(d)(1) The pay of a recall-eligible retired judge who retired under section 7296 of this title is specified in subsection (c) of that section.

“(2) A judge who is recalled under this section who retired under chapter 83 or 84 of title 5 shall be paid, during the period for which the judge serves in recall status, pay at the rate of pay in effect under section 7253(e) of this title for a judge performing active service, less the amount of the judge's annuity under the applicable provisions of chapter 83 or 84 of title 5.

“(e)(1) Except as provided in subsection (d), a judge who is recalled under this section who retired under chapter 83 or 84 of title 5 shall be considered to be a reemployed annuitant under that chapter.

“(2) Nothing in this section affects the right of a judge who retired under chapter 83 or 84 of title 5 to serve as a reemployed annuitant in accordance with the provisions of title 5.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7256 the following new item:

“7257. Recall of retired judges.”.

#### SEC. 403. CALCULATION OF YEARS OF SERVICE AS A JUDGE.

Section 7296(b) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) For purposes of calculating the years of service of an individual under this subsection and subsection (c), only those years of service as a judge of the Court shall be credited. In determining the number of years of such service, that portion of the aggregate number of years of such service that is a fractional part of one year shall be disregarded if less than 183 days and shall be credited as a full year if 183 days or more.”.

#### SEC. 404. JUDGES' RETIRED PAY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (c)(1) of section 7296 is amended by striking “at the rate of pay in effect at the time of retirement.” and inserting the following: “as follows:

“(A) In the case of a judge who is a recall-eligible retired judge under section 7257 of this title or who was a recall-eligible retired judge under that section and was removed from recall status under subsection (b)(4) of that section by reason of disability, the retired pay of the judge shall be the pay of a judge of the court (or of the chief judge, if the individual retired from service as chief judge).

“(B) In the case of a judge who at the time of retirement did not provide notice under section 7257 of this title of availability for

service in a recalled status, the retired pay of the judge shall be the rate of pay applicable to that judge at the time of retirement.

“(C) In the case of a judge who was a recall-eligible retired judge under section 7257 of this title and was removed from recall status under subsection (b)(3) of that section, the retired pay of the judge shall be the pay of the judge at the time of the removal from recall status.”.

(b) COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS.—Subsection (f) of such section is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3)(A) A cost-of-living adjustment provided by law in annuities payable under civil service retirement laws shall apply to retired pay under this section only in the case of retired pay computed under paragraph (2) of subsection (c).

“(B)(i) If such a cost-of-living adjustment would (but for this subparagraph) result in the retired pay of a retired chief judge being in excess of the annual rate of pay in effect for the chief judge of the court as provided in section 7253(e)(1) of this title, such adjustment may be made in the retired pay of that retired chief judge only in such amount as results in the retired pay of the retired chief judge being equal to that annual rate of pay (as in effect on the effective date of such adjustment).

“(ii) If such a cost-of-living adjustment would (but for this subparagraph) result in the retired pay of a retired judge (other than a retired chief judge) being in excess of the annual rate of pay in effect for judges of the court as provided in section 7253(e)(2) of this title, such adjustment may be made only in such amount as results in the retired pay of the retired judge being equal to that annual rate of pay (as in effect on the effective date of such adjustment).”.

(c) COORDINATION WITH MILITARY RETIRED PAY.—Subsection (f) of such section is further amended by adding after paragraph (3), as added by subsection (b), the following new paragraph:

“(4) Notwithstanding subsection (c) of section 5532 of title 5, if a regular or reserve member of a uniformed service who is receiving retired or retainer pay becomes a judge of the court, or becomes eligible thereto while a judge of the court, such retired or retainer pay shall not be paid during the judge's regular active service on the court, but shall be resumed or commenced without reduction upon retirement as a judge.”.

#### SEC. 405. SURVIVOR ANNUITIES.

(a) SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Subsection (a)(5) of section 7297 is amended by striking “two years” and inserting “one year”.

(b) ELECTION TO PARTICIPATE.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended in the first sentence by inserting before the period “or within six months after the date on which the judge marries if the judge has retired under section 7296 of this title”.

(c) REDUCTION IN CONTRIBUTIONS.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended by striking “3.5 percent of the judge's pay” and inserting “that percentage of the judge's pay that is the same as provided for the deduction from the salary or retirement salary of a judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for the purpose of a survivor annuity under section 376(b)(1)(B) of title 28”.

(d) INTEREST PAYMENTS.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended—

- (1) by inserting “(I)” after “(d)”; and
- (2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(2) The interest required under the first sentence of paragraph (1) shall not be required for any period—

“(A) during which a judge was separated from any service described in section 376(d)(2) of title 28; and

“(B) during which the judge was not receiving retired pay based on service as a judge or receiving any retirement salary as described in section 376(d)(1) of title 28.”.

(e) SERVICE ELIGIBILITY.—(1) Subsection (f) of such section is amended—

(A) in paragraph (1), in the matter preceding subparagraph (A)—

(i) by striking “at least 5 years” and inserting “at least 18 months”; and

(ii) by striking “last 5 years” and inserting “last 18 months”; and

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

“(5) If a judge dies as a result of an assassination and leaves a survivor or survivors who are otherwise entitled to receive annuity payments under this section, the 18-month requirement in the matter in paragraph (1) preceding subparagraph (A) shall not apply.”.

(2) Subsection (a) of such section is further amended—

(A) in paragraph (2), by inserting “who is in active service or who has retired under section 7296 of this title” after “Court”;

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking “7296(c)” and inserting “7296”;

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

“(8) The term ‘assassination’ as applied to a judge shall have the meaning provided that term in section 376(a)(7) of title 28 as applied to a judicial official.”.

(f) AGE REQUIREMENT OF SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Subsection (f) of such section is further amended by striking “or following the surviving spouse's attainment of the age of 50 years, whichever is the later” in paragraph (1)(A).

#### SEC. 406. LIMITATION ON ACTIVITIES OF RETIRED JUDGES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 72 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

##### “§ 7299. Limitation on activities of retired judges

“(a) A retired judge of the Court who is recall-eligible under section 7257 of this title and who in the practice of law represents (or supervises or directs the representation of) a client in making any claim relating to veterans' benefits against the United States or any agency thereof shall, pursuant to such section, be considered to have declined recall service and be removed from the status of a recall-eligible judge. The pay of such a judge, pursuant to section 7296 of this title, shall be the pay of the judge at the time of the removal from recall status.

“(b) A recall-eligible judge shall be considered to be an officer or employee of the United States, but only during periods when the judge is serving in recall status. Any prohibition, limitation, or restriction that would otherwise apply to the activities of a recall-eligible judge shall apply only during periods when the judge is serving in recall status.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

##### “7299. Limitation on activities of retired judges.”.

#### SEC. 407. EARLY RETIREMENT AUTHORITY FOR CURRENT JUDGES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR STAGGERED TERMS OF JUDGES.

(a) RETIREMENT AUTHORIZED.—One eligible judge may retire in accordance with this section with respect to each year beginning in 1999 and ending in 2003.

(b) ELIGIBLE JUDGES.—For purposes of this section, an eligible judge is an associate judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims who—

(1) has at least 10 years of service creditable under section 7296 of title 38, United States Code;

(2) has made an election to receive retired pay under section 7296 of such title;

(3) has at least 20 years of service described in section 7297(l) of such title; and

(4) is at least 55 years of age.

(c) MULTIPLE ELIGIBLE JUDGES.—If for any year specified in subsection (a) more than one eligible judge provides notice in accordance with subsection (d), the judge who has the greatest seniority as a judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims shall be the judge who is eligible to retire in accordance with this section in that year.

(d) NOTICE.—An eligible judge who desires to retire in accordance with this section with respect to any year covered by subsection (a) shall provide to the President and the chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims written notice to that effect not later than April 1 of that year, except that in the case of an eligible judge desiring to retire with respect to 1999, such notice shall be provided not later than November 1, 1999, or 15 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, whichever is later. Such a notice shall specify the retirement date in accordance with subsection (e). Notice provided under this subsection shall be irrevocable.

(e) DATE OF RETIREMENT.—A judge who is eligible to retire in accordance with this section shall be retired during the fiscal year in which notice is provided pursuant to subsection (d), but not earlier than 90 days after the date on which that notice is provided, except that a judge retired in accordance with this section with respect to 1999 shall be retired not earlier than 90 days, and not later than 150 days, after the date on which notice is provided pursuant to subsection (d).

(f) APPLICABLE PROVISIONS.—Except as provided in subsection (g), a judge retired in accordance with this section shall be considered for all purposes to be retired under section 7296(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code.

(g) RATE OF RETIRED PAY.—The rate of retired pay for a judge retiring in accordance with this section is—

(1) the rate applicable to that judge under section 7296(c)(1) of title 38, United States Code, multiplied by

(2) the fraction (not in excess of 1) in which—

(A) the numerator is the sum of (i) the number of years of service of the judge as a judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims creditable under section 7296 of such title, and (ii) the age of the judge; and

(B) the denominator is 80.

(h) ADJUSTMENTS IN RETIRED PAY FOR JUDGES AVAILABLE FOR RECALL.—Subject to section 7296(f)(3)(B) of title 38, United States Code, an adjustment provided by law in annuities payable under civil service retirement laws shall apply to retired pay under this section in the case of a judge who is a recall-eligible retired judge under section 7257 of such title, or who was a recall-eligible retired judge under that section and was removed from recall status under subsection (b)(4) of that section by reason of disability.

(i) DUTY OF ACTUARY.—Section 7298(e)(2) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraph (C) as subparagraph (D); and

(2) by inserting after subparagraph (B) the following new subparagraph:

“(C) For purposes of subparagraph (B), the term ‘present value’ includes a value determined by an actuary with respect to a payment that may be made under subsection (b) from the retirement fund within the contemplation of law.”.

**TITLE V—OTHER MATTERS****SEC. 501. REPEAL OF CERTAIN SUNSET PROVISIONS.**

(a) ENHANCED LOAN ASSET SALE AUTHORITY.—Section 3720(h) is amended—  
 (1) by striking “(1)” after “(h)”; and  
 (2) by striking paragraph (2).

(b) PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO LIQUIDATION SALES ON DEFAULTED HOME LOANS.—Section 3732(c) is amended by striking paragraph (11).

(c) INCOME VERIFICATION AUTHORITY.—Section 5317(g) is repealed.

**SEC. 502. ENHANCED QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM WITHIN THE VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) Chapter 77 is amended by adding at the end the following new subchapter:

**“SUBCHAPTER III—QUALITY ASSURANCE****§ 7731. Establishment**

“(a) The Secretary shall carry out a quality assurance program in the Veterans Benefits Administration. The program may be carried out through a single quality assurance division in the Administration or through separate quality assurance entities for each of the principal organizational elements (known as ‘services’) of the Administration.

“(b) The Secretary shall ensure that any quality assurance entity established and operated under subsection (a) is established and operated so as to meet generally applicable governmental standards for independence and internal controls for the performance of quality reviews of Government performance and results.

**§ 7732. Functions**

“The Under Secretary for Benefits, acting through the quality assurance entities established under section 7731(a), shall on an ongoing basis perform and oversee quality reviews of the functions of each of the principal organizational elements of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

**§ 7733. Personnel**

“The Secretary shall ensure that the number of full-time employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration assigned to quality assurance functions under this subchapter is adequate to perform the quality assurance functions for which they have responsibility.

**§ 7734. Annual report to Congress**

“The Secretary shall include in the annual report to the Congress required by section 529 of this title a report on the quality assurance activities carried out under this subchapter. Each such report shall include—

“(1) an appraisal of the quality of services provided by the Veterans Benefits Administration, including—

“(A) the number of decisions reviewed;

“(B) a summary of the findings on the decisions reviewed;

“(C) the number of full-time equivalent employees assigned to quality assurance in each division or entity;

“(D) specific documentation of compliance with the standards for independence and internal control required by section 7731(b) of this title; and

“(E) actions taken to improve the quality of services provided and the results obtained;

“(2) information with respect to the accuracy of decisions, including trends in that information; and

“(3) such other information as the Secretary considers appropriate.”.

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new items:

**“SUBCHAPTER III—QUALITY ASSURANCE****“7731. Establishment****“7732. Functions**

“7733. Personnel.

“7734. Annual report to Congress.”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—Subchapter III of chapter 77 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on the later of October 1, 1999, or at the end of the 60-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SEC. 503. EXTENSION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS.**

Section 544(e) is amended by striking “December 31, 1999” and inserting “December 31, 2004”.

**SEC. 504. CODIFICATION OF RECURRING PROVISIONS IN ANNUAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACTS.**

(a) **CODIFICATION OF RECURRING PROVISIONS.**—(1) Section 313 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsections:

“(c) **COMPENSATION AND PENSION.**—Funds appropriated for Compensation and Pensions are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The payment of compensation benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by section 107 and chapters 11, 13, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title.

“(2) Pension benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 15, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title and section 306 of the Veterans’ and Survivors’ Pension Improvement Act of 1978.

“(3) The payment of benefits as authorized under chapter 18 of this title.

“(4) Burial benefits, emergency and other officers’ retirement pay, adjusted-service credits and certificates, payments of premiums due on commercial life insurance policies guaranteed under the provisions of article IV of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Civil Relief Act of 1940 (50 U.S.C. App. 540 et seq.), and other benefits as authorized by sections 107, 1312, 1977, and 2106 and chapters 23, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title and the World War Adjusted Compensation Act (43 Stat. 122, 123), the Act of May 24, 1928 (Public Law No. 506 of the 70th Congress; 45 Stat. 735), and Public Law 87-875 (76 Stat. 1198).

“(d) **MEDICAL CARE.**—Funds appropriated for Medical Care are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The maintenance and operation of hospitals, nursing homes, and domiciliary facilities.

“(2) Furnishing, as authorized by law, inpatient and outpatient care and treatment to beneficiaries of the Department, including care and treatment in facilities not under the jurisdiction of the Department.

“(3) Furnishing recreational facilities, supplies, and equipment.

“(4) Funeral and burial expenses and other expenses incidental to funeral and burial expenses for beneficiaries receiving care from the Department.

“(5) Administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department.

“(6) Oversight, engineering, and architectural activities not charged to project cost.

“(7) Repairing, altering, improving, or providing facilities in the medical facilities and homes under the jurisdiction of the Department, not otherwise provided for, either by contact or by the hire of temporary employees and purchase of materials.

“(8) Uniforms or uniform allowances, as authorized by sections 5901 and 5902 of title 5.

“(9) Aid to State homes, as authorized by section 1741 of this title.

“(10) Administrative and legal expenses of the Department for collecting and recovering amounts owed the Department as authorized under chapter 17 of this title and Public Law 87-693, popularly known as the

Federal Medical Care Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. 2651 et seq.).

“(e) **MEDICAL ADMINISTRATION AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENSES.**—Funds appropriated for Medical Administration and Miscellaneous Operating Expenses are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The administration of medical, hospital, nursing home, domiciliary, construction, supply, and research activities authorized by law.

“(2) Administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, architectural work, engineering, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department, including site acquisition.

“(3) Engineering and architectural activities not charged to project costs.

“(4) Research and development in building construction technology.

“(f) **GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES.**—Funds appropriated for General Operating Expenses are available for the following purposes:

“(1) Uniforms or allowances therefor.

“(2) Hire of passenger motor vehicles.

“(3) Reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services.

“(4) Reimbursement of the Department of Defense for the cost of overseas employee mail.

“(5) Administration of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992 (10 U.S.C. 1143 note).

“(g) **CONSTRUCTION.**—Funds appropriated for Construction, Major Projects, and for Construction, Minor Projects, are available, with respect to a project, for the following purposes:

“(1) Planning.

“(2) Architectural and engineering services.

“(3) Maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project.

“(4) Services of claims analysts.

“(5) Offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs.

“(6) Site acquisition.

“(h) **CONSTRUCTION, MINOR PROJECTS.**—In addition to the purposes specified in subsection (g), funds appropriated for Construction, Minor Projects, are available for—

“(1) repairs to any of the nonmedical facilities under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department which are necessary because of loss or damage caused by a natural disaster or catastrophe; and

“(2) temporary measures necessary to prevent or to minimize further loss by such causes.”.

(2) Chapter 1 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

**“§ 116. Definition of cost of direct and guaranteed loans**

“For the purpose of any provision of law appropriating funds to the Department for the cost of direct or guaranteed loans, the cost of any such loan, including the cost of modifying any such loan, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 661a).”.

(B) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“116. Definition of cost of direct and guaranteed loans.”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—Subsections (c) through (h) of section 313 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), and section 116 of such title, as added by subsection (a)(2), shall take effect with respect to funds appropriated for fiscal year 2001.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) and the gentleman

from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2280.

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

There was no objection.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2280, the Veterans Benefit Improvement Act of 1999, is an important bill that is strongly supported by veterans and their service organizations. It contains a list of provisions affecting many benefit categories, including the cost of living adjustment for veterans receiving disability compensation and their surviving family members, improvements in the benefits for surviving spouses of former prisoners of war and others receiving dependency and indemnity compensation, and a significant increase in the authorization for the Veterans Homeless Reintegration Program at the Department of Labor.

The bill also makes home loan eligibility for members of the National Guard and Reserve components permanent, as well as requiring the VA to begin planning for four new national cemeteries.

Additionally, H.R. 2280 helps assure that ground breaking for the World War II memorial can take place on Veterans' Day next year by expanding the fund-raising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Mr. Speaker, we must complete this World War II memorial as quickly as possible. For those who have not made a contribution to this very worthy project, I would urge them to do so.

Veterans of World War II are passing on at the astonishing rate of 1,000 a day. We must not allow any further unnecessary delay in the memorial's construction schedule. Without this legislation, another half a million veterans could pass away before construction even begins on our national tribute to their heroic deeds. It has already taken longer to get the memorial project from inception to ground breaking than it did to win the war. I urge my colleagues to support the passage of 2280 as amended, and reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2280, as amended. I want to thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) for his leadership on this important piece of legislation and for his continuing efforts on behalf of this

country's veterans. I also want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits, and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) the ranking Democratic member of the subcommittee, for their hard work in crafting this important legislation.

The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1999 is an excellent bill, providing improvements to a number of veterans benefit programs. I am very pleased some of the provisions in this bill are based on measures that I authored and introduced. H.R. 2280 is yet another example of our ability to work together in a bipartisan fashion to improve the lives of America's veterans and their families. It deserves the support of every member of this body. I urge my colleagues to vote for this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2280, as amended.

I thank the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. STUMP, for his leadership on this important legislation and for his continuing efforts on behalf of the Nation's veterans.

I also thank the gentleman from New York, Mr. QUINN, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits, and the gentleman from California Mr. FILNER, the ranking Democratic member of the subcommittee, for their hard work in crafting this important legislation.

H.R. 2280, the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1999, provides improvements to a number of veterans benefit programs. In addition, it supports the timely construction of the World War II Memorial which will recognize the contributions made by all Americans to the war effort. This measure is deserving of the support of every member of this body.

I am pleased several of the provisions in this bill are based on measures I authored and introduced.

Section 104 of H.R. 2280 is taken from H.R. 708. It will restore eligibility for CHAMP-VA medical care, education benefits and home loan assistance to remarried surviving spouses who lost eligibility for these benefits upon remarriage and whose subsequent marriage has ended. During the 105th Congress, legislation was enacted allowing for reinstatement of eligibility for dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) cash benefits after termination of the remarriage. The present measure completes the restoration of eligibility for all VA benefits to surviving spouses if the subsequent marriage is ended.

I am very pleased that section 211 of H.R. 2280 includes the provisions of my bill, H.R. 1476, the National Cemetery Act of 1999. This section would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish four new national cemeteries, each of which would be established in an area of the country, determined by the Secretary, to be most in need of cemetery space to serve veterans and their families. Although VA statistics show that the demand for burial benefits will increase sharply in the near future, with interments increasing 42% from 1995 to 2010, the Administration's FY 2000 VA budget proposal did not include funding for additional national cemeteries. Unless new cemeteries are established soon, however, VA will not be able to meet the need for burial services for veterans in several metropolitan areas of the country. In response to this situation, I introduced H.R. 1476.

Section 301 includes the provisions of my bill, H.R. 1603, the Selected Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999. This section would provide for permanent eligibility for veterans' housing loans for members of the Selected Reserve who complete six years of service. Last year, Public Law 105-368 extended Guard and Reserve eligibility for VA housing loans, which was to expire this year, through fiscal year 2003.

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States pointed out, however, that this benefit cannot be used as a recruiting incentive because recruits must serve in the Selected Reserve for 6 years before they may participate in the VA housing loan program. Under current law, a recruit enlisting today will not be eligible for a VA loan before the authority for the loan expires. H.R. 1603, by making the home loan eligibility permanent, will give the Selected Reserve the incentive they need to recruit "the best and the brightest."

Section 502 of H.R. 2280 is drawn from H.R. 1214 which I introduced to assure that the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) internal quality assurance activities meet the recognized appropriate governmental standards for independence and internal control. This measure requires VBA to have a quality assurance program which comports with generally accepted government standards for performance audits.

Because of the fundamental importance of accurate and effective claims processing and adjudication by VA regional offices, and the need for effective oversight of regional office claims processing and adjudication by the Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA), in July of 1997, I requested the Government Accounting Office (GAO) to review the quality assurance policies and practices of the VBA. On March 1, 1999, GAO issued its report which determined that further improvement is needed in claims-processing accuracy. In particular, GAO determined that VBA's quality assurance activities do not meet the standards for independence and internal control.

While VBA has made some improvements by developing an accuracy measurement which focuses on VA's core benefit work—rating claims for benefits—further improvements are needed in claims processing. In fiscal year 2000, the VA will pay over \$22 billion in monetary benefits to veterans. Without a mandated program of quality assurance, which meets generally accepted governmental auditing standards for program performance audits, impartial and independent oversight of the quality of claims adjudication decisions will not be assured.

With the establishment of independent oversight of the quality of claims adjudication decisions, veterans can have more confidence in the decisions made by VA and the number of claims which are remanded because of the poor quality of claims adjudication will be reduced. With better initial decisions and fewer remands for re-adjudication, veterans will receive a quicker and a more accurate response. More claims will be adjudicated correctly the first time. This will not occur overnight, but without an independent oversight of the quality of claims adjudication decisions it may never exist.

H.R. 2280 is yet another example of our ability to work together in a bipartisan fashion to improve the lives of our Nation's veterans

and their families. I strongly support all provisions of H.R. 2280 and urge my colleagues to approve this important legislation.

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

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits.

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today also in support of H.R. 2280, the bipartisan Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1999. The bill provides a cost of living adjustment for disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, and other related benefits. The adjustment is computed using the same percentage increase as given to all other Social Security recipients.

In addition, the bill makes a number of needed improvements to programs serving veterans, some of which we want to highlight briefly today during the time we have on the floor.

With respect to burial needs of veterans, in addition to directing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish four badly needed new national cemeteries, the bill would require the Secretary to contract for an independent, comprehensive assessment of VA national cemeteries, including the number of cemeteries that will be needed through the year 2020.

The bill would also authorize the American Battle Monuments Commission to borrow money from the Department of Treasury in order to begin construction of the monument that the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) just spoke about. It is time to remind the American people as well as all the veterans who served the country that they have raised over \$57 million already for this effort.

Mr. Speaker, to me World War II veterans and their generation, as Tom Brokaw has said, is, in fact, the greatest generation. One of the greatest forms of thanks America can give to those veterans would be to build their memorial and to build it now.

In other areas, H.R. 2280 would permanently extend the Home Loan Program to former members of the Selected Reserve and aggressively authorize appropriations to the Department of Labor for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. More specifically here, Mr. Speaker, we remind all Americans and Members of the House that of all the homeless people in this country, fully one-third, almost 33 percent of those homeless people on our streets, are veterans of wars for our country.

H.R. 2280 aims to help many of our almost 300,000 homeless veterans find jobs by authorizing a 5-year increase in the Labor Department funding for this competitively bid, nationwide community-based employment program. It would double the current authorization for all such programs to \$10 million in

fiscal year 2000, and increase that amount by \$5 million per year, until it finally tops out at \$30 million in fiscal year 2004. I know of no group that wants to break the cycle of homelessness more than those who have worn the uniform of our country.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2280 would make improvements to the retirement and survivor annuity programs at the Court of Appeals for veterans claims. This is where our veterans see their claims and their questions about their benefits adjudicated. Our intent here is to encourage staggered retirements since five of the remaining six original appointees will be eligible for retirement within one 11 month period beginning in 2004, and we would like to try to make personnel policy affecting the judges of this court more consistent with those of other Federal judges. These provisions passed the House, of course, last year, but because the Senate did not concur and act, they did not become law.

Mr. Speaker, I believe and others believe that this is a very timely bill and benefits many veterans. H.R. 2280 is the result of a lot of hard work in a bipartisan fashion, for which I thank the members of the full committee, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), but I also want to specifically thank the members of our subcommittee.

First of all, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER), the ranking member of the subcommittee, as well as the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD), the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN), the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES), and the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY), all members of the subcommittee and hard workers when it comes to our job. I appreciate and recognize those unique contributions of all of our Members and urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2280.

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. Filner)

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, as ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Benefits, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2280, the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1999. As the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), the chairman of the subcommittee just indicated, we worked closely together on development of this measure, which includes provisions of bills introduced by Members from both sides of the aisle. This is the way the legislative process ought to work, and the real winners are America's veterans.

The bill, as amended, includes many important provisions. Under this measure, the national cemetery system would be expanded and much needed burial space provided. Construction of the World War II memorial, as we have

heard, would be expedited and certain members of the Selected Reserve would be permanently eligible for VA home loans.

□ 1430

I am particularly pleased that the legislation reauthorizes and increases funding for the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program. Although this provision does not increase the program funding as much or as quickly as it would under the bill I introduced, H.R. 1484, it is a very, very satisfactory compromise.

The graduated funding increase included in this bill will enable the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service to effectively administer the program, and the increased funding will give thousands of homeless veterans the assistance they need to reenter employment.

Let me also take a minute to thank the chairman of the Committee on Small Business, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT), and the ranking Democrat on that committee, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELAZQUEZ), for bringing a later bill on the floor today, H.R. 1568, the Veterans' Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999. The gentleman from Missouri has worked hard to craft this excellent bill, which is similar to H.R. 366, the Veterans' Entrepreneurship and Promotion Act, which I have introduced in the last two Congresses. H.R. 1568, which we will consider later, deserves the full support of all Members of our House.

In closing, the bill under consideration, H.R. 2280, is an excellent bill that will enhance the lives of millions and millions of veterans and their families. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1999.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH), a very valuable member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank my committee chairman and the dean of our delegation from Arizona for yielding me this time; and, indeed, as I see him manage the time on our side of the aisle, I cannot help but note his record of service not only in this institution but in wearing the uniform of this country. He is far too modest and self-effacing to speak of his war record. There was a job to be done and, as a younger man, he stepped forward to do it.

But, Mr. Speaker, our chairman bears living witness to the sacrifice of so many comrades in arms who fought in history's largest war and, indeed, in our greatest struggle to preserve our constitutional republic. And for those veterans and for those of us whom history has not called upon to sacrifice, this legislation provides a suitable, common-sense way to fund and expedite construction of a monument to remember all veterans of World War II.

It is perhaps a comment on Washington, Mr. Speaker, that, as our chairman very capably pointed out in passing, it has taken longer to get to this point in terms of funding this wonderfully proposed monument than it took for us to fight and win that war. Washington, Mr. Speaker, it seems, has a marvelous way of complicating matters. We can step into the elevator here that brings us to the floor and see 16 rules for House elevator operators. That, Mr. Speaker, when the Lord our God only gave us Ten Commandments to follow.

So again we are trying to cut through what that wonderful acronym of that war brought us, a snafu. I will not elaborate any further, Mr. Speaker, noting the decorum of this floor, and move to get this monument in fact created and realized.

But there is something else we should realize. No matter the conflict, no matter the time when men and women have worn the uniform of our country, this legislation also provides a much-needed cost of living adjustment for those veterans who have a service-related disability, for those veterans who depend on those benefits. Indeed, as our Constitution points out in its beautiful preamble, we are to provide for the common defense. But with this legislation, a common-sense, well-crafted, bipartisan piece of work, we help to provide for those who have provided for our common defense.

I would ask my colleagues to support H.R. 2280 as amended.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON).

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, when we were in school we would often sing, "My country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where our fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride," and that is very appropriate, I believe, for the consideration of H.R. 2280, the Veterans' Benefit Improvement Act of 1999.

I am very happy to be a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, under the premier leadership of the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) and certainly the ranking member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), when they deliberated on this piece of legislation, even though it does not include everything that we would like to see in behalf of our veterans. We have sat there and saw that veterans' programs have been the bank that we have been able to draw from to fund other programs, a bank capitalized with worthless currency and of broken promises. This country promised our veterans certain things when they offered themselves, their sacrifice, their families, to preserve the freedom across this land.

So we have taken up the duty of looking after the needs of our veterans. We must also realize that we have an even more important duty that involves teaching and preaching to make the whole Nation understand all that we owe to our veterans.

I am very happy to suggest items that have already been mentioned here today: The cost of living adjustment estimated to be 2.4 percent to the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities; the expansion of the fund-raising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission to expedite the establishment of the World War II memorial in our Nation's capital.

And I might mention that one of our premier actors, Tom Hanks, has been on a crusade in behalf of the World War II memorial, and I hope that from the sunny hills of California that he understands that his message is loud and clear, that this is a salute overdue to the 16 million Americans who answered the Nation's call to duty in World War II, because, Mr. Speaker, fewer than 7 million are alive today, and we lose 1,000 more every day.

This bill also makes eligible members of the Reserves and National Guard who served at least 6 years eligible for housing loans on a permanent basis. It authorizes \$100 million in fiscal years 2000 to 2004 to the Department of Labor for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program and will help homeless veterans find jobs through increased funds for community-based employment programs.

I remember my chagrin when I saw on a national news program that the majority of the homelessness in this Nation is comprised by veterans.

The bill also directs the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish four new national cemeteries.

Mr. Speaker, I would strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support House Resolution 2280.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), one of our World War II veterans and the chairman of the Committee on International Relations.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in strong support of H.R. 2280. I commend the distinguished committee chairman, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), for bringing this measure to the floor, and also the chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), and the subcommittee ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER), for their work on this measure.

This measure authorizes a cost of living adjustment for veterans who receive disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses of prisoners of war who received full disability at the time of death due to service-related injuries and becomes effective in December of this year.

It also restores CHAMPVA medical care, which is a Veterans' Affairs health benefits program that shares the cost of certain health care services and supplies for eligible beneficiaries.

Those eligible include the spouses and children of totally disabled veterans and the survivors of veterans who died as a result of service-connected injuries or illnesses. And I want to commend the committee for undertaking that portion of this measure.

It also expands fund-raising authorities and authorizes \$65 million in loans from the Treasury for the American Battle Monuments Commission to hasten construction of the long overdue World War II memorial. In addition, it authorizes \$100 million for the Labor Department to administer the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. That program uses community resources to help our homeless veterans, and there are too many of them out there this day.

It also addresses a potential future problem for the Court of Veterans Appeals beginning in the year 2004. Five of the six original appointees on this court are going to be eligible for retirement, and this measure allows them to continue. The goal of this provision is to broaden effective measures to help reduce overall workloads and shorten the time veterans must wait for a decision on their appeals.

Moreover, this measure makes permanent the authority of the VA to guarantee home loans for our National Guard and Reserve members. That authority was previously set to expire in September of this year.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a worthy piece of legislation, an appropriate response by this legislative body to the sacrifices made by our Nation's veterans and their families.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES).

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time; and as a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am proud we are considering today H.R. 2280, the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1999.

This bill is truly a product of our concerns and the input and concerns of all the Members of this House, the VA, our veterans service organizations, and the rest of our committee. It improves veterans benefits on many issues of vital importance to our veterans and their families.

Mr. Speaker, this bill recognizes the needs of our aging veterans; and we can all be proud of this bill's provisions that provide for additional borrowing which gives authority for the World War II memorial. This will expedite the construction of this monument and allow for its completion.

In addition, the bill will establish four new cemeteries and requires a complete study to improve and enlarge all of our existing national cemeteries. Our veterans deserve nothing less. And they deserve to be buried with dignity and honor, and their families deserve to have the ability to pay their respects without any further sacrifices.

I am also encouraged that this bill assists our homeless veterans by expanding upon the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. Too many of our brave men and women are out on the streets without shelter and without hope. This bill will expand the outreach of this program.

Let me also say that I am pleased that this bill improves benefits in a number of other areas that reflects on our Nation's commitment to our veterans. A key provision of the bill will provide permanent eligibility of our reservists who spend more than 6 years and will qualify them for VA housing benefits. Also, the bill expands eligibility for surviving spouses of former POWs who are currently disqualified from receiving dependency and indemnity compensation.

The bill, as has been mentioned this morning, will further provide for annual cost of living allowances for those veterans receiving this kind of compensation. All of these provisions will enhance our commitment to our veterans and their loved ones.

In addition, I am pleased we are continuing to work to recognize the circumstances of our atomic era veterans through an additional presumption of service-connected disability for a rare form of cancer.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as a veteran myself and someone that represents over 50,000 veterans in my district, I can tell my colleagues that the delays and errors in the veterans' benefits claims process are very frustrating. The enhanced quality assurance program set forth in this bill will help to address this very serious situation for all our veterans.

Given the courage and the valor of our veterans and the sacrifices that have been made by them for our country, we owe them nothing less. I strongly support this legislation and urge my colleagues and the entire House to join in the passage of this comprehensive veterans legislation.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARR).

(Mr. BARR of Georgia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARR of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the distinguished chairman and ranking member for their work on behalf of our veterans and also thank the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), for the tremendous work that he has done and continues to do, and certainly as reflected in this bill, is doing with regard to so many matters that affect our veterans.

I would like, Mr. Speaker, to address one particular aspect of this bill to which I would urge Members on both sides of the aisle to support, and that is section 211 regarding authorizing the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish a national cemetery in each of the four areas of the country that he deems most in need.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I direct the Members' attention to the greater Atlanta metropolitan area in Georgia. For 21 years, the national cemetery in Marietta, Georgia, which is the only one in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area, has been full; and over those 21 years, Mr. Speaker, the population, both the veterans as well as the civilian population of Atlanta and northwest Georgia, has grown immensely. The population during 1980 to 1996 has grown from 2 million people to well over 7.4 million in the greater Georgia area, and in metropolitan Atlanta the increases have been just as startling.

□ 1445

As well, Mr. Speaker, the increases in our veterans population, which, as other speakers have mentioned today, is unfortunately aging, necessarily so. It has increased dramatically.

Studies have shown, Mr. Speaker, that families of loved ones who have veterans in their family who are entitled to be buried in our national cemeteries will not travel long distances to a national cemetery. The studies have indicated that the furthest that families will be able or willing to go is about 75 miles. There is no national cemetery anywhere near 75 miles from the Greater Atlanta Metropolitan area, Mr. Speaker. And that is why, with the tremendous increase in the veterans population, the tremendous increase in the population generally in west Georgia, it is so essential that we have, as one of those cities, a new national cemetery in Atlanta. There is plenty of land in the area.

I would urge certainly that this particular section of the bill, section 211, which moves us in that direction and which reflects legislation, H.R. 1249, that I introduced earlier this year with the support of the entire Georgia Delegation, including our two senators, Senators CLELAND and COVERDELL. It also reflects the needs and desires of the Georgia delegation.

So I would commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. QUINN), the chairman of the committee, and the ranking member and others for moving this bill forward. I would urge its adoption and would urge particular attention be paid and urge the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, Mr. West, to include Atlanta as one of those four areas.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act, H.R. 2280. This legislation touches on a number of issues important to the veterans community. While, I support the provisions of the bill, I want to take a moment to focus especially on Section 211.

Section 211 directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish, in accordance with Chapter 24 of Title 38, United States Code, national cemeteries in the four areas in the United States, which the Secretary determines to be most in need of such a cemetery to serve the needs of veterans and their families. I believe once the Secretary looks carefully, at this matter he will determine that a national cemetery is a high priority for the Atlanta metropolitan area in the state of Georgia.

On March 24, 1999, I introduced H.R. 1249, with the full support of the entire Georgia delegation, including Senators CLELAND and COVERDELL. This legislation authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery for veterans in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area. Today, with the actions of the House of Representatives, the veterans in Georgia are a major step closer to having a new national cemetery located in the state.

The metropolitan Atlanta area has been at the top of the list for a new national cemetery for 21 years. During this time, the population of the Atlanta metropolitan area has undergone dramatic change. According to the 1980 census, Georgia had a population of nearly five and a half million, over two million of which resided within the metropolitan Atlanta area. By 1996, the population of Georgia had increased two million, to nearly 7.4 million and that of metropolitan Atlanta had exploded to more than three and a half million. Included in this population, are 450,000 veterans in the metropolitan area, and 700,000 state-wide. Clearly, the need for an easily accessible national cemetery has increased significantly in the past several years.

Studies in 1987 and 1994, both titled Report on National Cemetery System in Regard to Public Law 99-576 sec. (4.2), again reiterated the need for a new national cemetery in the metro-Atlanta area. Presently, the National Cemetery System ranks Atlanta as the number one city in need of a national cemetery. There are several reasons why this need has been recognized for the past 21 years. Data regarding veterans, as well as the rapidly changing demographics of Atlanta and north Georgia, create a compelling case for a new facility to be created immediately. Since a consensus among Veterans Administration officials, veterans groups and politicians has been reached, the next step is to choose the most logical and cost-effective site for the project.

There are no open national cemeteries in the state of Georgia. Veterans residing in metropolitan Atlanta, who desire to be interred in a national cemetery, must either go 298 miles to Beaufort, South Carolina; 128 miles to Chattanooga, Tennessee; or 100 miles to Fort Mitchell, Alabama. Studies have shown that veterans and their families rarely choose to be buried in national cemeteries more than 75 miles from their residence. It is also established that surviving spouses visit the grave sites of the deceased located farther than 75 miles from their home, much less frequently than grave sites located closer. In this context, the three aforementioned cemeteries (South Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama) clearly do not adequately serve the veteran population of metropolitan Atlanta.

Currently, there are national cemeteries scheduled to open in the near future in Saratoga, New York; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; and Cleveland, Ohio. Two years ago, a new cemetery opened in Tacoma, Washington near Seattle. Obviously, none of these cemeteries are expected to alleviate the demand for new burial space in the southeastern United States.

The growth in the number of veterans in Georgia, has led to several trends that point to an increased demand in burial space in national cemeteries for the coming years. Currently, the median age of World War II veterans is more than 70 years. These veterans

are passing on at the rate of more than 1,000 per day (some 377,000 per year). This number will continue to increase; and when including all vets, should peak at 620,000 per year by the year 2008. These same studies have shown that the years 2005 to 2015 will continue to exhibit especially high mortality rates among veterans. When factoring in peacetime veterans of the post-Vietnam era as well as Gulf War veterans, mortality rates will continue to remain high well into the next century, at least until the year 2040. On average, ten percent of the veteran population opts to be interred in a national cemetery. Past experience has shown it takes approximately five to seven years to construct one of these sites. Therefore, in considering the above statistics, it is imperative that we immediately begin the process of establishing a national cemetery in metropolitan Atlanta in order to meet the current and certainly the unavoidable demands in the next decade.

When choosing a location for a new national cemetery, two factors must be addressed. First, it should be situated in an area that will serve the greatest number of veterans. Second, it must be cost-effective to taxpayers. As noted previously, veterans tend to choose to be interred within 75 miles of their residence. Atlanta's veteran population of 450,000 is the largest in the nation not served directly by a national cemetery, and establishing a national cemetery in or near a population center with a large amount of veterans is the best way to ensure that the facility will be utilized by veterans. (Instances where this was not done, indicate clearly that veterans and families will not patronize a national cemetery located far from a metropolitan area.)

When developing new cemeteries, the National Cemetery System is also aware of economics of scale. There are many factors, such as land prices and availability that must be considered, and those who administer the Cemetery System certainly try to buy larger plots of land, which will serve for years to come. The cemeteries currently under development are evidence of this, with Saratoga having 273 acres, Chicago 980 acres, Dallas 673 acres, Cleveland 250 acres and Tacoma 158 acres. These sized lots are able to accommodate the net burial acreage plus the amount of additional land required for roads, easements, and drainage. The net burial acreage is arrived at by analyzing the demographic factors of the local veterans population as well as recognizing the standard of 800 burials per acre. In general, the net acreage is then doubled to determine the optimum size of the facility. These larger cemeteries not only meet the demand exerted by the local veterans populations, they also prove to be more cost-effective than smaller facilities.

Consideration of the factors presented here are paramount in the successful choice of a new location for a national cemetery. The first step in rectifying this current and anticipated critical shortfall is to authorize the construction of a new national cemetery in metropolitan Atlanta. With the passage of this bill today we begin to move in that direction. We then need to appropriate the funds, and begin construction; which will likely take up to five years. Time is of the essence. This commitment we ask today will fulfill the promise to the veterans who have for 29 years been without reasonable access to a national cemetery. Even though land in the immediately vicinity of At-

lanta has become heavily developed, there are numerous potential locations suitable for a new national cemetery.

Our nation has a sacred obligation to fulfill the promises we made to our veterans when they agreed to risk and, in many cases, give their lives to protect the freedoms we all enjoy. One such commitment is a military burial in a national cemetery. Establishing a national cemetery in Georgia would provide veterans and their accessibility and the recognition they deserve. This has been a long-awaited process for Georgia veterans. These men and women deserve a proper resting place in their home state.

I want to thank Committee Chairman STUMP and Ranking Democrat LANE EVANS, as well as Benefits Subcommittee Chairman JACK QUINN for all their work on this very important legislation. On behalf of all veterans, and especially the veterans of the state of Georgia, I ask my colleague to support this very important legislation.

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, it is important to point out I think at this time that the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARR) has worked with the full committee and the subcommittee to make sure that this is brought to our attention. We appreciate his efforts all along the way.

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

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2280, the Veterans Benefit Improvement Act.

Veterans have sacrificed to defend our Nation and have earned health care and other benefits through their service. They came forward when America needed them. Now Congress must continue to keep its promises to those who served.

H.R. 2280 keeps our promises to veterans by increasing the Cost of Living Adjustment to millions of disabled veterans. It also restores medical, educational, and housing loans to surviving spouses who have remarried.

Consideration of this legislation is timely since it helps to remind us to commemorate the anniversary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. For 100 years, the VFW has been active not only with veterans programs but also with a host of civic and volunteer activities. During 1997 and 1998, the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary contributed over 12 million hours of volunteer services and donated nearly \$55 million to various community service projects.

I would also like to single out the Heart O' The Hills VFW Post in my district in the Hill Country of Texas. It is one of the oldest and most active in the State. Two weeks ago, it celebrated its 84th anniversary. It is because of the selfless dedication of the veterans in the Hill Country and veterans around

the Nation that we enjoy prosperity and freedom today.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans willingly served to defend our Nation. They were there when we needed them, and now we must be there when they need us.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), the ranking member on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, as well as the gentleman from New York, the chairman of the subcommittee, and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the rest of the members of the committee that have done such a great job in helping formulate this bill and bring it to the floor.

This is a bipartisan bill, and I urge everyone to support it.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member wishes to add his strong support for H.R. 2280, the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act, and would also commend the chairman and ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs for bringing this important legislation to the House floor today.

This Member wishes to express his belief that even more attention needs to be paid to the needs of America's veterans; in fact, these essential benefits must be met to the fullest extent possible. Veterans fought to protect our freedom and way of life. As they served our nation in a time of need, the Federal Government must remember them in their time of need. The people of the United States owe our veterans a great deal and should keep the promises made to them.

It is important to note some of the important provisions of this legislation, including a cost-of-living adjustment for disability compensation, permanent eligibility of housing loans, further authorization of payment of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for surviving spouses, provisions for homeless veterans, and recognizing the 100th anniversary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

While the veterans legislation appearing on the House floor today is commendable and significant for our nation's veterans and their families, it must also be noted that we must continue to give veterans the benefits they need and deserve, including health benefits. As a greater number of veterans, especially World War II veterans, are reaching the stage in life where they need more health care, Congress must insure that there are adequate funds and services available for these veterans, and that the current Veterans Equity Resource Allocation (VERA) formula should be changed since it is very unfair to sparsely settled states like Nebraska, Wyoming, and the Dakotas.

Mr. Speaker, this Member is committed to insuring that veterans receive the benefits they deserve; benefits they have been promised and which the American people support. As additional legislation appears before the House of Representatives, be assured that this Member will continue to support necessary and meaningful veterans legislation.

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2280, the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1999. The provisions of this bill include: a disability compensation cost of living adjustment for fiscal year 2000; permanent housing loan eligibility for veterans

who have served in the selected reserve; expanded authority to solicit and receive contributions for the World War II Memorial; and increased funding for the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force.

H.R. 2280 also incorporates provisions of H.R. 2040 that would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to build four new national cemeteries in areas of the country most in need of such a cemetery. The bill also would require the VA to contract for a study to assess the one-time repairs needed at each national cemetery and the feasibility of making standards of appearance of our national cemeteries commensurate with the finest cemeteries in the world.

On May 20, 1999, the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, which I chair, held a hearing that addressed planning for new national cemeteries and cemetery maintenance. Following the hearing, the Subcommittee issued a report with recommendations for legislation requiring the VA to submit a cemetery construction plan and identify locations for new national cemeteries, based upon demographic priority. The Subcommittee report also recommended increasing the National Cemetery Administration budget by \$6 million for routine and deferred maintenance, and equipment needs. Finally, the report recommended increasing the budget for Arlington National Cemetery by \$3 million for construction and maintenance projects. The Subcommittee's report gives strong support to this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, America's national cemeteries are not adequate to serve the needs of veterans over the next decade. The demand for burial space in national cemeteries will be one of the greatest in the country's history as World War II veterans reach the end of their lives. Unless new national cemeteries are funded and planning for them begins soon, veterans in major population areas will be effectively denied the final honor of burial in a national cemetery.

Funding for maintenance of America's national cemeteries, including Arlington National Cemetery, is insufficient. Unless national cemeteries receive increased funding for their maintenance needs, necessary work will be deferred, and their appearance will not meet public expectations for these national shrines as places of honor for the men and women who have defended our freedom.

I would like to thank Mr. QUINN, chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits, for his cooperation regarding these very important issues for our veterans and for his initiative in moving H.R. 2280 through his subcommittee. I would also like to commend Chairman STUMP of the full committee for his leadership on issues affecting national cemeteries and for his authorship of this important legislation.

This is bipartisan legislation, and I want to recognize the active contributions in the formulation of H.R. 2280 by Mr. EVANS, the full committee's ranking Democrat; Mr. FILNER, the ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Benefits; and Ms. BROWN, the ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to approve this significant veterans legislation.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today the House is considering H.R. 2280, the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1999. I

am particularly pleased this legislation includes the provisions of H.R. 690, legislation I have introduced to add bronchiolo-alveolar carcinoma to the VA's list of diseases that are service-connected due to radiation exposure. I testified on behalf of H.R. 690 before the House Veterans' Affairs Benefits Subcommittee just three weeks ago and I had the opportunity recognize Joan McCarthy, a resident of New Jersey who first brought the need for this legislation to my attention ten years ago.

This bill needs to be enacted as a matter of fairness. The provisions of H.R. 690 included in today's bill essentially state that if you were a veteran exposed to ionizing radiation in a government nuclear test, like those in Operation Wigwam (a nuclear test in Pacific during 1955), and you develop a rare form of lung cancer unrelated to smoking tobacco, our government will take care of you. Sadly, this is not the case today. For the families of veterans and for widows, like Joan McCarthy, the enactment of H.R. 2280 is necessary to ensure that America does not abandon those who suffered and died solely because of their selfless, faithful services in the United States Armed Forces.

Joan's husband, Tom McCarthy, participated in Operation Wigwam, a nuclear test on May 14, 1955 which involved a deep underwater detonation of a 30-kiloton plutonium bomb in the Pacific Ocean, about 500 miles Southwest of San Diego, California.

Tom served as a navigator on the U.S.S. *McKinley*, one of the ships assigned to monitor the Operation Wigwam test. The detonation of the nuclear weapon broke the surface of the water, creating a giant wave and bathing the area with a radioactive mist. Government reports produced by the Defense Nuclear Agency indicate that the entire test area was awash with the airborne toxins from the detonation. The spray from the explosion was described in the official government reports as an "insidious hazard which turned into an invisible radioactive aerosol." Tom spent four days in this environment while serving abroad the U.S.S. *McKinley*.

In April of 1981, at the age of 44, Tom McCarthy died of a rare form of lung cancer, bronchiolo-alveolar pulmonary carcinoma. This is an important point, because Tom was a non-smoker, and this illness is a non-smoking related lung cancer. Indeed, according to the American Cancer Society, 87% of all lung cancers are related to smoking. On his deathbed, Tom told Joan, his wife, about his involvement in Operation Wigwam and wondered about the fate of the other men who were also stationed on the U.S.S. *McKinley* and on the other ships in the area.

As my colleagues on the committee will remember, Congress passed H.R. 690 at the end of the 105th Congress. Unfortunately, our Senate colleagues failed to take up this legislation before Congress adjourned. However, I am happy to report that our former colleague on the committee, Senator TIM HUTCHINSON is sponsoring this legislation on the Senate side and believe that our early consideration of H.R. 690 in the House will help in his efforts in the other chamber. The enactment of H.R. 690 is long overdue and I would like to thank Chairman STUMP, Subcommittee Chairman QUINN, Ranking Member EVANS, as well as the other members of the committee have lent their support as cosponsors of H.R. 690.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 2280 so that the Senate may move expeditiously on this legislation and so that Joan McCarthy and the handful of widows around the United States who have lost their husbands to this cancer may finally receive the recognition and Disability and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits from the VA which they so rightly deserve.

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Veteran's Benefits Improvement Act, H.R. 2280 and urge my colleagues to do the same.

This bill will provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans with service connected disabilities, it will authorize \$100 million to provide homeless veterans with job training, and it will add a form of lung cancer to the list of presumed to be service connected illnesses. All are steps in the right direction for veterans, all are steps we should be taking.

However, I take this opportunity to address a very serious problem facing our veterans. Funding for veterans' health care continues to be cut. The FY 2000 budget allocation is \$66.2 billion, which is \$5.8 billion lower than the FY 1999 enacted levels.

Last month VISNI was on Capitol Hill updating member offices on the financial status of veterans' health care in the region. One glaring fact brought to light during these briefings was that further cuts to the veterans health care budget would mean a reduction in services for our veterans. It is time that we stop this downward trend and begin restoring the necessary funds to provide our veterans with the quality health care they deserve.

Recently, I along with several of my colleagues, wrote to the Chairman and Ranking member of the VA/HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee asking that they provide \$1.2 billion above the current budget resolution to address the medical crisis facing our veterans. I strongly urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2280, the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1999. In addition to providing veterans and their dependents with a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), H.R. 2280 includes a bill that I introduced to assist the surviving spouses of certain former prisoners-of-war. Specifically, the provisions included in H.R. 2280 will allow certain spouses of former POWs to qualify for survivor benefits. These women might not otherwise be eligible for such benefits under current law.

The Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program provides monthly benefits to the survivors of veterans who die of service-connected conditions. Under current law, DIC payments may also be authorized for the survivors of veterans whose deaths were not the result of their service-connected disability. In this case, a spouse only qualifies for DIC benefits if the former POW was rated totally disabled for a period of 10 years or more immediately preceding his death.

There are approximately 20 presumptive service-connected conditions for former POWs who were detained or interned for at least 30 days. Unfortunately, some of these presumptions have been in effect for less than 10 years. This means that a spouse of a former POW may not qualify for DIC benefits if the veteran dies of a non-service-connected condition before meeting the 10 year time requirement.

Even if a presumption has been in effect for 10 or more years, many ex-POWs will not have been rated as totally disabled for the minimum period required at the time of their deaths. This may occur for a variety of reasons. For example, the POW may not have filed a disability claim as soon as the presumption was enacted, or it may have taken a while for his claim to be adjudicated. Alternatively, the POW could have had a lower disability rating that worsened over time.

This issue was first brought to my attention by a very close friend of mine, Wayne Hitchcock. Wayne is the past National Commander of the American Ex-Prisoners of War and is now seriously ill.

After talking to Wayne, I introduced a bill to waive the 10-year time requirement for the surviving spouses of former POWs. H.R. 784, has received strong bipartisan support. To date, the bill has over 100 cosponsors, including 23 members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I would like to thank full Committee Chairman BOB STUMP and Ranking Minority Member LANE EVANS, as well as Benefits Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, JACK QUINN and BOB FILNER, for their strong support of my legislation.

We all know that military service does not take place in a vacuum. Many POWs experience unimaginable horrors. Today, many continue to experience prolonged battles with various illnesses and other disabilities. Consequently, their spouses have spent years caring for them after their release from prisoner-of-war camps. These women deserve DIC benefits.

I am pleased that the House of Representatives is acting on this important issue. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2280.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2280. This Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1999, would give veterans a cost-of-living increase, expand eligibility for compensation and survivor's benefits, and accelerate progress on the World War II Memorial. This package contains a wide range of proposals to improve veteran's benefits.

Some 1,646,700 veterans live in the state of Texas alone. It is through their unwavering devotion to duty and country that our nation has come through two World Wars and numerous costly struggles against the forces of aggression. American veterans have provided the leadership, courage, and even their lives time and time again. These genuine heroes have often been ignored and denied their proper place in America's melting pot. We need to remember that America owes these men and women the best it can offer because they have given us the best they could when America was in need.

I am pleased that this bill will provide a cost of living adjustment to the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

In addition, the bill addresses the burial needs of veterans. It directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish four new national cemeteries. During a recent visit to Arlington National Cemetery, I was moved by the beauty and reverence, which was reflected on this small hillside in Virginia. This bill will ensure that all of our veterans will receive the same compassionate treatment, which has already been shown to those soldiers who now rest in these grounds.

I am also pleased that this bill addresses America's homeless veterans. The measure authorizes \$100 million over five years for the homeless veterans reintegration program. This provision will allow community based employment programs that are working with our homeless veterans to continue their work within the communities they serve.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that all of my colleagues will join me in supporting this bill which continues our nation's efforts to honor the commitment it made to the veterans.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2280, the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1999. I commend the Chairmen and Ranking Members of both the Full Committee and the Benefits Subcommittee for their work. This bill brings together elements on benefits improvements from numerous bills.

It would give veterans a cost-of-living increase expand eligibility for compensation and survivor's benefits, and accelerate progress on the World War II Memorial.

In addition to the approximate 2.4% COLA, this bill would improve the benefits claims for certain surviving spouses. This change is long overdue.

This bill would also enhance the oversight of the claims processing system. We have experienced long delays in Texas and throughout the country, and this bill takes steps at addressing this problem:

Enhancing the quality assurance program of the Veterans Benefits Administration; and

Requiring quality reviews at the Compensation and Pension Service, the Education Service, the Vocational Rehabilitation Service and other programs.

It expands to members of Reserves and National Guard who served at least six years eligible for housing loans on a permanent basis.

I look forward to these elements being included in any package which is ultimately enacted into law.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2280, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. STUMP. 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 and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sundry messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

#### CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the joint

resolution (H.J. Res. 34) congratulating and commanding the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.J. RES. 34

Whereas the organization now known as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was founded in Columbus, Ohio, on September 29, 1899;

Whereas the VFW represents approximately 2,000,000 veterans of the Armed Forces who served overseas in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War, and Bosnia; and

Whereas the VFW has, for the past 100 years, provided voluntary and unselfish service to the Armed Forces and to veterans, communities, States, and the Nation and has worked toward the betterment of veterans in general and society as a whole: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress—*

(1) recognizes the historic significance of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (the VFW);

(2) congratulates the VFW on achieving that milestone;

(3) commends the approximately 2,000,000 veterans who belong to the VFW and thanks them for their service to their fellow veterans and the Nation; and

(4) calls upon the President to issue a proclamation recognizing the anniversary of the VFW and the contributions made by the VFW to veterans and the Nation and calling upon the people of the United States to observe such anniversary with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.J. Res. 34.

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

There was no objection.

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

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

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, H.J. Res. 34 is a joint resolution congratulating and commanding the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

This year marks the VFW's 100th anniversary. The VFW consists of approximately two million veterans of the Armed Services who have served overseas in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Bosnia. They have been very active in community and civic affairs.

Some of their more notable accomplishments are, Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of volunteer work at VA hospitals, Veterans Services officers helping other veterans with their benefits claimed each year, and the Voice of