

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 reference, 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 commending 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 commending 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

Democracy Scholarship program for high school students throughout the Nation.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), the chairman of the committee, in strong support of this resolution that salutes the Veterans of Foreign Wars on the occasion of their centennial anniversary. Throughout its century of existence, the VFW has provided 100 years of extraordinary service to our veterans and their families.

From the Buddy Poppy program to Operation Uplink, the VFW, through its century-long history, has provided support and assistance to men and women who have proudly worn the uniform of the United States.

In recognition of these and countless other good works, the two million members of the VFW are the epitome of the citizen-soldier upon whom this Nation has and continues to rely.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of H.J. Res. 34 and urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this measure.

I am pleased to join with the Chairman of the Committee, the gentleman from Arizona, in strong support of H.J. Res. 34, a resolution congratulating and commending the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States on the occasion of their centennial anniversary. Throughout its century of existence, the VFW has provided 100 years of extraordinary service to veterans and their families.

From the Buddy Poppy program, established in 1922 to raise funds for national veterans' service programs and to provide relief for local veterans and their families—to Operational Uplink, established just three years ago to enable hospitalized veterans and servicemembers stationed around the globe to "phone home"—the VFW, throughout its century-long history, has provided support and assistance to the men and women who have proudly worn the uniform of the United States.

The VFW should also be commended for the work its members have done in their communities across the country. The VFW Community Service Program, the Voice of Democracy essay competition, the VFW Safety Program, and VFW-sponsored youth activities have all contributed to the strength and stability of our great country.

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. GILMAN).

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my strong support for H.J. Res. 34 commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and directing the President to issue an appropriate proclamation recognizing the centennial celebration. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, the gentleman

from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), for bringing this important resolution to the floor of the House at this time.

I take great comfort whenever drawing upon the origins of the VFW and what it has meant to the thousands of veterans throughout our Nation. As a veteran of World War II and a former VFW County Commander, I speak from experience that the VFW is a monumental pillar on which all Americans can lean. It is a true symbol of our unity, our brotherhood, and a testament to our soldiers' finest hours.

Since its founding in September of 1899, the VFW has grown to encompass more than two million veterans. It has assisted veterans in obtaining State and Federal entitlements, monitoring laws and pending legislation, and keeping our veterans up-to-speed on current, pressing foreign issues.

Despite all this, the VFW does much more. Each and every year, VFW members throughout the country are enmeshed in the activities of their communities, lending a helping hand to others, continuing to make a difference long after the wars of yesteryear.

In some of my own posts in my district in New York State, they bring in veterans from veterans' hospitals and entertain them at holiday time when many of their families are no longer near them. They make a difference long after these wars of yesteryear.

The VFW has sponsored both the Boy Scouts of America as well as Special Olympics, while also providing college scholarships to our Nation's young adults. Characterizing the organization's actions as anything less than exemplary is simply an understatement.

It is essential that we take time now to properly celebrate the impact of the VFW and the importance of this 100th anniversary that they are celebrating. In honoring the veterans and their ultimate display of patriotism by sacrificing their lives to this great Nation, we do ourselves justice by rejoicing all that is good in humanity. The VFW deserves our recognition and utmost respect. It is a torch blazing America's path into the future, fueled by their genuine courage and dignity.

It is my deepest hope that this issue receives the full support of all of our colleagues, and I urge my colleagues to see to it that the VFW is duly commemorated on its 100th anniversary.

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 the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation congratulating and commending the Veterans of Foreign Wars on their 100-year anniversary.

As a life member of the VFW and a proud member of the Northeast VFW Post 2451 in El Paso, I can tell my colleagues that the VFW is an outstanding organization. The work that the VFW carries on on behalf of our Nation's veterans is noteworthy and exemplary, as has been cited by a number

of my colleagues. They are outstanding advocates for veterans, veterans' issues, and the issues that concern veterans' families both here in Washington and in the communities that they serve and literally communities throughout our country.

Their forceful testimony before the Committees on Veterans' Affairs each spring and throughout the year is an extremely valuable and noteworthy part of everything that we do for veterans on the Hill. Moreover, I welcome their visit to this Nation's Capitol as an excellent opportunity for all of us here in Washington to obtain their unique insights and to learn of their concerns as we work to maintain our commitment to our veterans.

In addition, the VFW makes a tremendous contribution towards protecting and enhancing veterans' health care and benefits with their part in the preparation of the "independent budget" each and every year. This document is a benchmark in the formulation of the annual veterans' budget, and I want to take this opportunity to say how much all of us in Congress appreciate the recommendations forwarded through this document on their behalf.

Through every generation, the VFW has stood up for our men and women who have served overseas in defense of our Nation and for the basic principles of freedom and liberty.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me say that a century of service, advocacy, and support on behalf of veterans is truly a milestone to commemorate. Let this anniversary serve to remind us all of the contributions of our veterans and never take for granted the sacrifices made on behalf of liberty.

I urge all my colleagues to join in support of this bill and look forward to the quick passage and enactment into law of this resolution recognizing the VFW on their 100th anniversary.

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 myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) for his help in bringing this resolution to the floor in a speedy manner.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that we also owe another great debt of thanks to the VFW and their organization not only for the fine work they do and their patriotic activities, but last year they committed to raising \$7.5 million towards this World War II memorial.

As most of my colleagues know, we have to have \$100 million in the bank before we can turn one shovelful of dirt. And currently we stand at roughly \$60 million. So, once again, I would urge those that have not contributed to do so.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. I rise in support of H.J. Res. 34, which commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and honors the over 2 million men and women

who belong to this organization. I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of this legislation, and thank the gentleman from Arizona, Chairman STUMP, for his leadership in bringing this bill to the floor today.

For 100 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has been representing the interests of the men and women of our armed forces who have served our nation overseas. This group was founded in Columbus, Ohio on September 29th, 1899 by 13 decorated veterans who fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. These men gathered not only to remember those killed during the War, but also to see what they could do for those who remained.

One hundred years later, the VFW has maintained that commitment to helping their fellow veterans, and many others in our local communities. From 1997 to 1998, the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary devoted over 12 million hours to volunteer service, and donated millions of dollars to various programs, including \$2.7 million for college scholarships, \$3 million for breast cancer research and over \$15 million through the "Buddy Poppy" program to help needy veterans.

As a proud member of VFW Post 3401 in Morris Plains, New Jersey, I am very familiar with the contributions of this post, and many others across America, to their communities. I urge all my colleagues in joining me to pay tribute to these men and women who have given so generously of themselves, both in times of peace and in times of war.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.J. Res. 34. This resolution recognizes the historic significance of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and congratulates the VFW on achieving that milestone.

It is fitting that as we near the celebration of our nation's birth that we pause and remember the significant contribution, which the VFW has made to our nation. The VFW has become a national force representing veterans and their families, and in calling upon the government to maintain a strong national defense to prevent future wars. With over 100 years of experience the VFW has served the nation and its veterans in numerous ways.

The VFW has been and continues to be a leader in supporting our troops. Whether in Kosovo or in the heart of Texas the VFW has supported those who serve our nation. Through its use of letters, holiday cards, gift packages, USO shows, public rallies and with free phone cards the VFW has brought comfort and a touch of home to our soldiers serving throughout the world.

Perhaps its greatest contribution to the nation is the recognition and remembrance of the hardships and sacrifices made in the nation's defense. On the national level the VFW has made contributions to the Vietnam Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Women's Memorial, and the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. They have been a major partner in the effort to honor our veterans from World War II with their own memorial on the national mall.

The VFW has closely heeded its motto, which is "Honor the dead by helping the living." The collective experience of our 25 million living veterans encompass the turbulence and progress America has experienced throughout the twentieth century. The nation's

veterans have written much of the history of the last hundred years. They have served this nation without reservation or hesitation during its darker moments.

The VFW has honored this service by establishing the first national veterans service office. This network provides assistance to veterans who need assistance in obtaining benefits, which they deserve from their service to the nation. In addition, this network provides service to many homeless veterans by providing care and counseling.

In pausing to remember the contributions which the VFW has made to the nation and to this nation's veterans, I am reminded of President Lincoln's call "to care for him who shall have borne the battle." I know that the VFW has answered this challenge with dedication and tireless commitment to the 1,646,700 veterans living in Texas and to all the veterans across our nation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to support H.J. Res. 34 and let us honor an organization, which has made such a strong commitment to our veterans.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, as Vice Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I rise today in support of H.J. Res. 34, a resolution recognizing the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is a credit to the VFW that as they celebrate their centennial this year, they continue to be such a strong, successful advocate and service provider for our nation's heroes.

In my own state of New Jersey, the role of the VFW cannot be overstated. Their willingness to speak out about the problems facing our veterans and bringing them to Congress' attention really helps the New Jersey Congressional delegation as it seeks to secure the funding needed for New Jersey's veterans. Having the insights, first hand knowledge, and research data of the VFW and its network of members is critical to our efforts as we prioritize federal programs in Congress and work to give America's veterans the benefits they earned.

Since their founding in 1921, the VFW, with a membership of 63,926 in my state alone, has successfully underscored the principles of love of country, sacrifice in the line of duty, and our collective responsibility as Americans to ensure that our veterans and their dependents are never forgotten.

Today, as we send our young men and women in uniform to Kosovo, Haiti, Korea, Bosnia, and the Persian Gulf, just to name a few places where the United States has sent our troops abroad, the VFW strives to ensure that they are fully supported while in the field, as well as when they return home.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues today to join with me in passing H.J. Res. 34, and I congratulate the VFW on their anniversary. If the next 100 years of service are as successful as the first 100 years, our future veterans will be in good hands.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to commend the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) on this, their 100th Anniversary.

South Texas is home to several proud VFW chapters, making me especially proud to support the legislation and recognize the many accomplishments of the VFW.

This resolution calls upon the President to issue a proclamation recognizing the 100th

anniversary of the VFW, and calls upon the people of the United States to observe the anniversary with appropriate ceremonies and celebrations.

For those VFW members back home, and to all 2 million VFW members across this country, I offer a heartfelt congratulations, and thank you for your service to our nation. We owe you our debt of gratitude.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the joint resolution, H.J. Res. 34.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the joint resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1500

VETERANS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1999

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1568) to provide technical, financial, and procurement assistance to veteran owned small businesses, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1568

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999".

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Sec. 1. Short title.

Sec. 2. Table of contents.

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