

TRIBUTE TO HON. WILLIAM GOODLING, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

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

Mr. FATTAH. Mr. Speaker, I seek the opportunity to join my colleagues in saying a word for our party member, the retiring gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING).

I have had the opportunity to serve with him for a number of terms as he has led the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. His work in regard to improving the life skills and life chances of millions of young people, and in particular his work in developing the Even Start Program and his support for additional resources to be provided in terms of special education, are of particular note.

I join with my colleagues from the State of Pennsylvania and many of us who served with him on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce in wishing the gentleman God speed in his retirement.

THE FIRST LADY SHOULD PUT TAXPAYERS' INTERESTS AHEAD OF PERSONAL AMBITION

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, there appears to be a double standard at the White House. At last count, the First Lady's campaign for the U.S. Senate has cost the taxpayers well over \$1 million. She is flying around the Empire State in grand style using military aircraft, full-time Secret Service protection, not only for herself but also for her campaign aides, and continues to drag her feet in reimbursing the taxpayers.

She has reimbursed the Treasury just over \$6,000 for one 4-day campaign trip in August, but in reality, this trip cost about \$60,000 as they flew around in an Air Force C-20. So far she has only reimbursed the taxpayers \$185,000, about 5 percent of what she owes.

As First Lady, Mrs. Clinton should get the same security and security measures that previous First Ladies have had, but the taxpayers should not be footing the bill for a political campaign for public office.

The First Lady should put the American taxpayers' interests first above a personal desire for power.

ILLEGAL DIAMOND SALES SUPPORT BRUTAL REBEL GROUPS IN SIERRA LEONE

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

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss a very serious situa-

tion in Africa, the situation in Sierra Leone.

Last week, under the leadership of the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), who serves as chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, we had a special meeting or hearing at which we heard from victims of the violence in Africa.

Just as an example, there were two 4-year-old children, both of whom had had an arm chopped off, when they were 2 years old, by the rebels. We also saw a student who had said, please, don't chop off my right hand; I am a student and I have to write with it. They chopped off his right hand. Another gentleman had both arms chopped off. This is the type of violence taking place.

But this is not a political revolution, this is a revolution of bandits who wanted to get control of the diamond mines, and in fact, they have achieved that. They are financing their war with the revenue from the mines.

These so-called "conflict diamonds," which I call bloody diamonds, are fueling the conflict over there, and many of those diamonds are being sold in the United States. We must stop the importation of those diamonds.

Our State Department has to enforce international law, and bring pressure on Charles Taylor of Liberia and others to stop their meddling in the affairs of Sierra Leone. Above all, we must end the conflict.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). 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.

Any record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY AT CARL VINSON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5139) to provide for the conveyance of certain real property at the Carl Vinson Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Dublin, Georgia.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5139

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

SECTION 1. CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN PROPERTY AT THE CARL VINSON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER, DUBLIN, GEORGIA.

(a) CONVEYANCE TO STATE BOARD OF REGENTS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall convey, without consideration, to the Board of Regents of the State of Georgia all right, title, and interest of the United States

in and to two tracts of real property, including any improvements thereon, at the Carl Vinson Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Dublin, Georgia, consisting of 39 acres, more or less, in Laurens County, Georgia.

(b) CONVEYANCE TO COMMUNITY SERVICE BOARD OF MIDDLE GEORGIA.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall convey, without consideration, to the Community Service Board of Middle Georgia all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to three tracts of real property, including any improvements thereon, at the Carl Vinson Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Dublin, Georgia, consisting of 58 acres, more or less, in Laurens County, Georgia.

(c) CONDITIONS ON CONVEYANCE.—The conveyance under subsection (a) shall be subject to the condition that the real property conveyed under that subsection be used in perpetuity solely for education purposes. The conveyance under subsection (b) shall be subject to the condition that the real property conveyed under that subsection be used in perpetuity solely for education and health care purposes.

(d) SURVEY.—The exact acreage and legal description of the real property to be conveyed under this section shall be determined by a survey or surveys satisfactory to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The cost of any such survey shall not be borne by the Secretary.

(e) ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may require such additional terms and conditions in connection with the conveyances under this section as the Secretary considers appropriate to protect the interests of the United States.

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 materials on H.R. 5139.

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.R. 5139 provides for the conveyance of certain real property at the Carl Vinson Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Dublin, Georgia.

Due to changes in the way health care is delivered, the VA has consolidated its health care in the central part of this large campus in Dublin. However, it continues to spend hundreds of hours and tens of thousands of dollars each year to maintain vacant buildings and grounds on this campus.

The State of Georgia has identified two uses for part of this campus. One part would be used to expand the Middle Georgia College, a State-run institution of higher learning. The other

would be used by the State to expand mental health services to residents in the Dublin area.

In addition to ridding itself of the annual maintenance costs, the VA would receive services for veterans and employees from these State-sponsored institutions.

I urge my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 5139.

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 rise in support of H.R. 5139. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) has brought forth a measure that is a good deal for the VA, a good deal for veterans, and a great deal for the State of Georgia. It will allow the VA to gain the benefit from two parcels of land which are no longer needed.

The first parcel will be conveyed to the State Board of Regents to expand Middle Georgia College. The second will go to Middle Georgia's Community Service Board to provide mental health services.

In addition to helping the VA in the cost of maintaining unnecessary grounds and obsolete buildings, the State will also assume the cost of remediation of hazardous materials. In exchange, the VA will be able to provide veterans and its employees with some good new benefits.

Middle Georgia College will provide free tuition and fees to employees, their spouses, and dependents, and to any veteran receiving treatment at the Dublin VA Medical Center. It also offers the VA priority consideration to offer the Board of Regents maintenance and food services. This may allow the VA to develop new funding streams that will allow improved health care services for veterans.

I am pleased to lend my support for this measure, and ask my colleagues to join with me in giving it favorable consideration.

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 Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), the author of the bill, to provide further details on H.R. 5139.

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks today by thanking my colleagues who have been very helpful in bringing this bill to the floor on the suspension calendar.

The gentleman from Arizona (Chairman STUMP) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, have been very helpful to us on this. I thank them and their staffs.

As has been pointed out, Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for the conveyance of property from the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center in Dublin, Georgia, to Middle Georgia College and the Community Service Board of Middle Georgia.

There are many benefits with this transfer of land. The VA obviously is going to be able to save on the cost of renovating several rundown old buildings, as well as the maintenance and upkeep costs on those buildings.

The VA Center employees and patients are going to receive free tuition and fees to the Middle Georgia College, and free mental health counseling at a mental health facility that will occupy one of these buildings that is being transferred.

Probably one of the most important features of this entire bill is that that property that will be transferred to the university system of the State of Georgia is going to be used to build a nursing treatment facility there.

Now, in Middle Georgia it is absolutely a wonderful quality of life, but it is rural Georgia, and they have a very hard time competing for nurses, for example, with the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta and Atlanta, Georgia. This is going to give us a nursing facility right next to the hospital, which is so desperately needed at this particular VA hospital.

In addition to that, and I am very pleased about this, this is a perfect example of the government and private citizens working together to improve the quality of life for all of our citizens.

Part of this property goes to the Community Services Board, and the private citizens of Lawrence County, Dublin, Georgia, have raised over half a million dollars already to renovate one of the buildings that will be used for mental health, which later, after it is finished and completed, will be used for our veterans or their employees. Any of them that need any of these facilities, it will be made available to them.

So I am proud of the people of Lawrence County because they are going to work to do their part to raise the private funds to restore these buildings that at the present time are frankly draining the VA Treasury, and are not helping one veteran in Dublin, Georgia.

This move is going to help a great number of veterans by increasing our nursing staff, by making facilities available to those veterans.

So again, let me thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), and all who have been involved. I encourage each of my colleagues to let us please pass this and let these folks down in Dublin, Georgia, improve the VA Center and improve their mental health and improve their nursing facilities.

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.

I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) for his concurrence in considering this legislation in such a timely manner. I would also like to commend the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) for all his work on this

measure, and for pursuing a new and creative use of VA property to benefit both veterans and the low-income.

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This is a bipartisan measure, and I urge all Members to support it.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). 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. 5139.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HONOR GUARD FOR VETERANS EMPOWERMENT ACT

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 284) to amend title 38, United States Code, to require employers to give employees who are members of a reserve component a leave of absence for participation in honor guard for a funeral of a veteran, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 284

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 "Honor Guard for Veterans Empowerment Act".

SEC. 2. EMPLOYERS REQUIRED TO GRANT LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN HONOR GUARDS FOR FUNERALS OF VETERANS.

(a) DEFINITION OF SERVICE IN THE UNIFORMED SERVICES.—Section 4303(13) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking "and" after "National Guard duty"; and
(2) by inserting before the period at the end "and a period for which a person is absent from employment for the purpose of performing funeral honors duty as authorized by section 12503 of title 10 or section 115 of title 32."

(b) REQUIRED LEAVE OF ABSENCE.—Section 4316 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(e)(1) An employer shall grant an employee who is a member of a reserve component an authorized leave of absence from a position of employment to allow that employee to perform funeral honors duty as authorized by section 12503 of title 10 or section 115 of title 32.

"(2) For purposes of section 4312(e)(1) of this title, an employee who takes an authorized leave of absence under paragraph (1) is deemed to have notified the employer of the employee's intent to return to such position of employment."

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall take effect 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

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).