

right. I am very concerned that should this bill become law it would be permissive, and it would enlarge a practice that really should not have begun to begin with.

So I do not think that we are doing anyone a service here. I think we are doing ourselves a disservice by mixing the military and the political process together. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for taking the bill up at this time.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say in closing that Federal law prohibits political activity on any Federal land, including military land.

In Maryland, we can campaign within 100 feet of the polling place. If that polling place were on a military facility, it would be my understanding that we could not campaign within 100 feet of the polling place.

I do not see voting as a partisan political activity, I see it as a patriotic activity. Campaigning for a specific candidate I see as partisan political activity, which I would not think would be appropriate to go on on a military facility.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the last observation of the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT), which I agree with. Unfortunately, I come to a little bit different conclusion this evening. This is one of the reasons why I oppose it at this time, or oppose passage at this time.

I believe voting is a patriotic act. I believe it is an act, if you will, of self-preservation of a democracy, certainly our democracy. Because free speech is so important, I think the gentleman is quite correct in observing that it is unlikely that commanders would like to have political activity, sign-holding, et cetera, very near a polling place if it was in the middle of a base.

I expect different jurisdictions across the Nation have different rules with respect to how close to a voting booth one can actually politic, but nonetheless, it is unlikely that military bases would find themselves easily resolving those kinds of questions.

My point, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, is that while this is an idea that certainly should receive full discussion and consideration, passing it at this time has not allowed for that. So therefore, again, I reluctantly state my opposition at this time.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill H.R. 5174, a bill to help families and communities that support military bases preserve their voting rights.

I have been very concerned with the decision earlier this year by the Department of Defense to not allow voting booths on military facilities, even though many of these facilities are isolated and in remote areas of our country. The Department refers to a law preventing the presence of troops at election sites, something we can all agree is a good law. Mr. Speaker, that law was never intended to pre-

vent local election officials from asking to set up voting booths in order to let military personnel and people in the community vote. The purpose of that old law was to stop intimidation and abuse of the military in elections.

The men and women who support these bases, not only those in the service, have been used to voting at long established voting booths in some of these military owned buildings. Sometimes in these remote communities, the military owns all the buildings suitable to set up a voting booth. It is unfair that we would stop this from continuing since there are no known instances in which this posed a problem or voting infringement by anyone. Frankly, it is just overzealous lawyering at work in the Department. H.R. 5174 sets this straight.

I am especially pleased that H.R. 5174 does not attempt to force some new mission onto the military. It quietly allows voting booths to continue to be set up on these military facilities. It also gives the proper discretion to the military to continue or discontinue this practice. H.R. 5174 allows the military to keep the status quo of providing this service to our servicemen and their supporters while taking away any fear of breaking the law. I support H.R. 5174 because it helps service personnel, their families, and the people who support these isolated bases to continue to exercise their right to vote.

People in the military work hard enough and suffer hardships by living in isolation. We should not be making it harder for them to vote. We should make it easier.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my bill H.R. 5174, which preserves the voting rights of people in communities who live on or around military bases in remote, rural areas.

Earlier this year the Department of Defense issued a directive that disrupts the traditional role of these bases whose commanders have for years allowed local election officials to set up election voting booths. Lawyers at the Department of Defense have said they are concerned that an old Civil War era law prohibiting troops at election polls could be used to impose criminal sanctions on military personnel who are simply allowing local election officials to set up voting booths. My interest is in protecting those military personnel while allowing the commanders of remote bases to continue to allow the setting up of voting booths. H.R. 5174 does this.

The need to act quickly is great. These bases are sometimes the only facility in a remote and isolated area; indeed, the remoteness is usually what attracted the military to locate the base there in the first place. It is entirely proper that the military should permit these election polls to continue at the commander's discretion. The people in communities that support our military bases sacrifice by living in isolated rural areas. They look to the military for shopping needs at commissaries, recreation needs at rec halls and theaters, and sometimes homes and schools on base. We should not be making it more difficult for them to vote. We should be making it easier.

At the same time, I am very aware that the military must have the final say as to whether an election poll can be permitted on a military base. The very nature of national defense is such that we must not tie the hands of those who are working to protect us. Obviously,

many bases, if not most, are sensitive and should not be open to election operations. That is why I have written H.R. 5174 with great care to allow the presence of election polls on military sites, but the discretion to have them is entirely with the military. H.R. 5174 provides a safe harbor by expressly stating that the military may make a building located on a military installation available for use as a polling place in any Federal, State, or local election.

I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for this bill and preserving the tradition of the military in protecting the voting rights of people in communities that support our military facilities.

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

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests 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 Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5174.

The question was taken.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. 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.

EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR U.S. SERVICE MEMBERS ABOARD HMT ROHNA WHEN IT SANK

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 408) expressing appreciation for the United States service members who were aboard the British transport HMT ROHNA when it sank, the families of these service members, and the rescuers of the HMT ROHNA's passengers and crew.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 408

Whereas on November 26, 1943, a German bomber off the coast of North Africa sunk the British transport HMT ROHNA with a radio-controlled, rocket-boosted bomb;

Whereas 1,015 United States service members and more than 100 British and Allied officers and crewmen perished as a result of the attack;

Whereas hundreds died immediately when the bomb struck and hundreds more died when darkness and rough seas limited rescue efforts;

Whereas many families still do not know the circumstances of the deaths of loved ones who died as a result of the attack;

Whereas more than 900 United States service members survived the attack under extremely adverse circumstances;

Whereas United States, British, and French rescuers worked valiantly to save the passengers and crew who made it off the HMT ROHNA into the sea;

Whereas one United States ship, the USS PIONEER, picked up many of those who were saved;

Whereas because of inadequate record keeping, some survivors of the attack struggled for years to verify the details of the sinking of the HMT ROHNA;

Whereas the men who died as a result of the attack on the HMT ROHNA have been largely forgotten by the Nation; and

Whereas the Congress and the people of the United States have never recognized the bravery and sacrifice of the United States service members who died as a result of the sinking of the HMT ROHNA or the United States service members who survived the sinking and continued to serve the Nation valiantly abroad during the war: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress expresses appreciation for—

(1) the United States service members who died in the sinking of the HMT ROHNA, for the heroic sacrifice they made for freedom and the defense of the Nation;

(2) the United States service members who survived the sinking of the HMT ROHNA, for their bravery in the face of disaster and their subsequent service during the war on behalf of the Nation;

(3) the families of all of these service members; and

(4) the United States, British, and French rescuers, especially the crew of the USS PIONEER, who endangered their lives to save the passengers and crew of the HMT ROHNA.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) and the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today the House undertakes a solemn task. House Concurrent Resolution 408 remembers the loss of 1,015 American soldiers who died when the British troop transport ship HMT ROHNA was tragically sunk off the coast of North Africa on November 26, 1943, during World War II. This resolution recognizes that the sinking of the ROHNA was a major catastrophic event of World War II.

Mr. Speaker, this recognition is long overdue. We owe recognition to the men who gave their lives that day. We owe recognition to the men who survived the sinking and went on to fight bravely in the China-Burma-Indian theater and other combat theaters.

We owe recognition to the families of both groups of men. The high price paid by families is often made worse by the absence of information about their loss caused by the demands for secrecy during war. The sinking of the ROHNA was just such a case. Many of the families of those killed were not aware of

the details of the sinking until recently. When they asked for more information, they found that there were very few records available.

Mr. Speaker, House Concurrent Resolution 408 puts the sinking of the ROHNA in proper perspective by outlining the details of the attack and rescue. The resolution then expresses the gratitude of the Congress and all Americans, recognizing the sacrifices of the men who died and the men who survived the horror of the sinking and went on to carry the fight to the enemy in other battles.

The resolution also thanks the family members of both groups of officers for the sacrifice of their loved ones in the defense of freedom.

Finally, the resolution thanks the crews of the U.S. French and British ships that endangered their lives to save the survivors of the ROHNA.

Mr. Speaker, the sinking of the ROHNA was a horrific event that America must not overlook any longer. We owe this recognition to the men, both living and dead, who suffered during this disaster. They and their families deserve better. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on House Concurrent Resolution 408.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the comments of the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) with respect to this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I join in support of the resolution introduced by my colleague, Mr. METCALF, in expressing the appreciation of the United States to those who were aboard the British transport H.M.T. *Rohna* during World War II.

According to the limited data available, the H.M.T. *Rohna* was transporting American troops and Red Cross workers to Bombay, India, for the China-Burma-India Theater of war. On November 26, 1943, during an air attack, a German bomber launched a guided missile, which sunk the British transport. One thousand, one hundred and thirty eight individuals died as a result of the attack, including one thousand and fifteen American troops. The attack of the H.M.T. *Rohna* was one of the greatest losses of lives during World War II.

Much of the details surrounding the sinking of the H.M.T. *Rohna* are still unavailable. What is known is that more than nine hundred service members survived the attack, because of the brave and heroic actions of the U.S.S. *Pioneer* crew, who rescued many of the survivors. However, it was not until 1995, over fifty years later, a group of survivors, next-of-kin, and rescuers, came together to recognize this historical tragedy.

The resolution before the House today recognizes this devastating disaster and expresses the appreciation of the Congress to the service members who died in the sinking of the H.M.T. *Rohna* for their ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country, expresses admiration of the survivors and the families for their bravery and courage in bringing attention to this catastrophe, and acknowledges the efforts of

the United States, British and French rescuers, especially the crew of the U.S.S. *Pioneer*, to save the passengers and crew of the H.M.T. *Rohna*.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to be on the floor with the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) this evening in recognition of his work in this area.

I want to express to him that it does not surprise me in the least, having gotten to know him over the past few years, that he is concentrating on making sure that those who had not been recognized are given the attention that they deserve.

I think it expresses the kind of person that the gentleman from Washington is, and I, for one, will miss the contributions that he has made, and I am sure will continue to make to this Nation and to his community.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to state my friendship for the gentleman from Washington, my respect for him, and I regret the fact that he has decided to retire and leave us. We will be diminished by the fact that he no longer serves his constituents and the country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF), the author of this bill.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for yielding time to me, and for his gracious words, and I thank the gentleman from Hawaii for his kind words.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) and ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), for working with me to move this resolution to the floor.

Michael Higgins, the Committee on Armed Services staff, was especially helpful, and I appreciate his efforts.

The greatest naval disaster for the United States during World War II was the sinking of the Arizona, when 1,077 were killed. The Arizona has properly been memorialized in the national consciousness.

On November 26, 1943, there was a loss of American military personnel of almost identical magnitude when the British troop transport ship HMT ROHNA was sunk by a radio-controlled rocket-boosted bomb launched from a German bomber off the coast of North Africa.

By the next day, 1,015 American troops and more than 100 British and allied officers and crewmen had perished, but the U.S. troops aboard the ROHNA have been largely forgotten by the country. It was not publicized at the time at all. Hundreds died immediately when the missile struck. The majority died from exposure and drowning when darkness and rough

seas limited rescue efforts. Over 900 did survive.

British, American, and French rescuers worked valiantly to save those ROHNA passengers and crew who made it off the ship into the ocean, and of course a lot of them did not make it off the ship. One of them, the U.S.S. Pioneer, picked up two-thirds of all those who were saved, 606 GIs. Many of those in the water had to endure hours and hours of chilling temperature before being picked up. As the evening moved into the middle of the night and early morning hours, some men were speechless from the cold. Many died deaths of terrible agony.

The United States government had not properly acknowledged this event because inadequate records were kept. Some survivors had to fight for years to prove that the ROHNA even existed, let alone that survivors might be due some recognition.

At a 1996 memorial dedication honoring Americans who died on the ROHNA, survivor John Fievet spoke the following words:

I dedicate this memorial to the memory of those who fell in the service of our country. I dedicate it in the names of those who offered their lives that justice, freedom, and democracy might survive to be the victorious ideals of the world. The lives of those who made the supreme sacrifice are glorious before us. Their deeds are an inspiration; as they served America in time of war . . . yielding their last full measure of devotion, may we serve America in time of peace. . . . I dedicate this monument to them, and with it, I dedicate this society to the faithful service of our country and to the preservation of the memory of those who died, that liberty might live.

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The men who gave their lives for their country on board this ship were heroes who deserve to be recognized as such and not forgotten. The parents of virtually all of them died without ever learning how their sons had died. Their brothers, sisters and wives and children need to hear their story. All Americans need to learn of their bravery and sacrifice. Not only do the victims of the tragic sinking need to be honored, but also their comrades who survived to be sent to the Burma-China-India theater of the war and to serve valiantly there.

On November 11, 1993, Charles Osgood featured the Rohna's story on his widespread radio program. For the first time, a broad cross-section of America got to hear the story of some of its unknown warriors. Osgood revisited the subject 2 weeks later. According to Osgood, and I quote, "It is not that we forgot, it's just that we never knew."

Americans need to know about the Rohna. They need to know about the men who died when the Rohna was sunk, sacrificing their lives in the fight against tyranny. Americans need to know and not to forget. I did not know anything about this until a brother of one of the men who died on the Rohna came to me and told me about it and asked me to get involved.

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

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional requests 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 Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 408.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROMOTION OF ADOPTION OF MILITARY WORKING DOGS

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5314) to require the immediate termination of the Department of Defense practice of euthanizing military working dogs at the end of their useful working life and to facilitate the adoption of retired military working dogs by law enforcement agencies, former handlers of these dogs, and other persons capable of caring for these dogs, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5314

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

SECTION 1. PROMOTION OF ADOPTION OF MILITARY WORKING DOGS.

(a) ADOPTION OF MILITARY WORKING DOGS.—Chapter 153 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 2582. Military working dogs: transfer and adoption at end of useful working life

"(a) AVAILABILITY FOR ADOPTION.—The Secretary of Defense shall make a military working dog of the Department of Defense available for adoption by a person or entity referred to in subsection (c) at the end of the dog's useful working life or when the dog is otherwise excess to the needs of the Department, unless the dog has been determined to be unsuitable for adoption under subsection (b).

"(b) SUITABILITY FOR ADOPTION.—The decision whether a particular military working dog is suitable or unsuitable for adoption under this section shall be made by the commander of the last unit to which the dog is assigned before being declared excess. The unit commander shall consider the recommendations of the unit's veterinarian in making the decision regarding a dog's adoptability.

"(c) AUTHORIZED RECIPIENTS.—Military working dogs may be adopted under this section by law enforcement agencies, former handlers of these dogs, and other persons capable of humanely caring for these dogs.

"(d) CONSIDERATION.—The Secretary may authorize the transfer a military working dog under this section without charge to the recipient.

"(e) LIMITATIONS ON LIABILITY FOR TRANSFERRED DOGS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the United States shall not be subject to any suit, claim, demand or action, liability, judgment, cost, or other fee

arising out of any claim for personal injury or property damage that results from, or is in any manner predicated upon, the act or omission of a former military working dog transferred under this section, including any training provided to the dog while a military working dog.

"(f) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit to Congress an annual report specifying the number of military working dogs adopted under this section during the preceding year, the number of these dogs currently awaiting adoption, and the number of these dogs euthanized during the preceding year. With respect to each euthanized military working dog, the report shall contain an explanation of the reasons why the dog was euthanized rather than retained for adoption under this section."

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

"2582. Military working dogs: transfer and adoption at end of useful working life."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) and the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 5314, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, an article was brought to my attention regarding the plight of one of our finest soldiers, the military working dog. The article delineated the Department of Defense policy regarding the fate of these valiant dogs after completion of service to their country.

I learned that military working dogs remain in their assigned unit until they are 8 to 10 years old. Unfortunately, as the situation currently stands, there is no easy solution for these loyal dogs after their body is no longer able to sustain the workload of their mission.

At this point, the future becomes bleak. In a best-case scenario, the dogs are sent back to Lackland Air Force base, their original training school, where they are used to instruct their human counterparts to become handlers after they have served this final duty, they are kenneled for an undetermined amount of time, and then put down.

In some instances, military working dogs are caged as long as a year until they meet their final outcome. Equally as sad, if no kennel space is available, the less fortunate are terminated directly upon arrival to Lackland.

After learning about the bleak future of military working dogs, not only did