

happened to be a law school classmate of mine in Portland, Oregon.

One morning at 10:30, she was having a hearing on a domestic relations matter two floors below where I was working as a county commissioner. Shots rang out. Candice was dead, along with her assailant who was the husband of the woman she was representing.

This impact had a dramatic ripple effect. It was not just the loss of Ms. Jones' life, but it was a loss for her husband, it was a loss for her brother, friends, and colleagues. Certainly, everybody in that courtroom was scarred by that event.

Madam Speaker, it is hard for me to share even today, not because we were that close particularly. In fact, I knew her brother much better, who was a distinguished and respected faculty member at our college, Professor Leonard DuBoff. But what is hard for me, besides the tragic loss of this woman, was that we as a society, we as a government know we can take steps to reduce gun violence, and we do not.

Over the same period of time that we lost those million gun deaths, we as a society cut the rate of auto death in this country in half. There was not any single magic solution, but there was a determination on the part of citizens and government alike to take simple, common sense steps to improve traffic safety, auto design, and law enforcement.

We can do the same thing to reduce gun violence. Luckily, there are now some States where citizens have taken the matters in their own hands, like my own State of Oregon where there is a measure on the ballot in November that will allow people to close the gun show loophole. I am confident that voters will overwhelmingly, when given this chance, vote affirmatively, as they will in Colorado.

It is strange that at a time when leaders in the Mideast are once again taking risks for peace, in fact, putting their own lives at risk by stepping forward, I am sad that the Republican House leadership will not stand up to the gun lobby and take a small but important step for peace in this country to reduce gun violence.

We have not had a meeting of the conference committee on the juvenile crime bill for the last 15 months. It was last August that it met. It has a provision that would enable us to close the gun show loophole that has already passed the Senate.

This is just but one small step, but it would send a signal that we in the House of Representatives care enough about saving lives of families in this country to take modest political risks to do the right thing.

There is still time yet in this session of Congress to do that, to convene the conference committee, to allow the House of Representatives to vote on closing the gun show loophole, to take a small step to make our communities more livable, our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 39 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. MORELLA) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

All praise and honor to You, Lord God. Each day You shower the United States of America with blessings. Enable us to receive Your gifts graciously.

With gratitude for all we have received, may each of us use our gifts in service to one another. Like good stewards dispensing the grace of God in various ways, may our very diversity give You greater glory.

If any of us is to speak out, let us speak with Your Word. If any of us desires to serve, let it be in the strength You supply.

The speaker needs another to listen. The dispenser of good gifts needs another to receive graciously. May true dialogue and the exchange of gifts be the unfolding of Your power in our midst.

In all things, let us so act that the glory and the power be Yours forever and ever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

DISPENSING WITH CALL OF PRIVATE CALENDAR ON TODAY

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the call of the Private Calendar be dispensed with today.

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

There was no objection.

UNITED STATES SENATOR JOE LIEBERMAN MISSES GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

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

Mr. COMBEST. Madam Speaker, last week, the Democratic candidate for Vice President made a brief stop in Odessa, Texas, in my district. He arrived with an agenda to embarrass our hometown son, Governor George Bush. He tried to cast Odessa in a bad light by making false claims against one of our most ardent businesses, the Huntsman Corporation.

The Huntsman plant is a business anchor to the Permian Basin, employing over 700 hard-working men and women. It is a good corporate citizen and an asset to our community. I am sorely disappointed that their campaign would exploit our town for political gain.

The folks of Odessa and Midland were ready to accommodate their guests. However, the candidate snubbed officials from both cities, including the chambers of commerce, mayors, and even the chairman of the Democratic Party. Our local media was also kept at arms' length. Only the candidate's handpicked media could cover the story, with only biased facts.

We in politics fully understand the staged media events and photo-ops, but the Senator's treatment of these kind folks, whom I am honored to represent, was truly uncalled for and out of line. His visit was a missed opportunity for him to meet the real success story in the Permian Basin, the people.

DRUG CZAR DID NOTHING FOR UNITED STATES BORDERS

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

Mr. TRAFICANT. Madam Speaker, the Drug Czar is retiring to teach national security issues at two colleges. Now, do not get me wrong, I like General McCaffrey. But for years, while truckloads and boatloads of heroin and cocaine were coming across our border, General McCaffrey asked for more money, more cops, more halfway houses, more counselors, and more TV commercials. He did nothing about our borders.

This drug czar lecturing on national security is like Janet Reno teaching a class on treason. Beam me up.

I yield back the fact that, while our soldiers are vaccinating dogs in Haiti, American police departments are training police dogs to sniff out heroin and cocaine in our schools. Think about it.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that she 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 tomorrow.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. STUMP. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill (H.R. 4850) to provide a cost-of-living adjustment in rates of compensation paid to veterans with service-connected disabilities, to enhance programs providing compensation and life insurance benefits for veterans, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2000".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, effective on December 1, 2000, 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, 2000.

(2) Except as provided in paragraph (3), each 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, 2000, 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.

SEC. 3. 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 2001, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in subsection (b) of section 2, as increased pursuant to that section.

Amend the title so as to read: "An Act to increase, effective as of December 1, 2000, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans."

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. Madam 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. 4850.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. STUMP. Madam 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. H.R. 4850 is the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2000.

This is a clean bill providing a cost-of-living adjustment to disabled veterans and their surviving spouses. Current estimates indicate that the increase will be about 3 percent, and veterans will see this increase in their January check.

I urge my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 4850.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4850, as amended. I thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) once again for his leadership on this important legislation and for his continued efforts on behalf of this Nation'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 on this measure.

The importance of this legislation cannot be overstated. It protects the

purchasing power of service-connected disability benefits which our Nation's veterans have earned by virtue of their military service, and it affords similar protection for the recipients of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC).

Under the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2000, effective December 1, a cost-of-living adjustment will be provided for service-connected disability compensation and DIC benefits. This adjustment will be the same as that provided to Social Security recipients.

I call on every Member of this body to support this important legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NEY. Madam Speaker, I commend the following article to my colleagues:

On behalf of all the Veterans, I stand in support of H.R. 4850, the Veterans Cost of Living Adjustments Act of 2000 and urge all my colleagues to do the same. I thank Chairman STUMP for introducing this piece of legislation and giving the House and Senate the opportunity to vote on such a bill.

H.R. 4850 directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the rates of veterans disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, additional compensation for dependents, and the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, effective December 1, 2000.

Not only does the bill give veterans a cost of living adjustment, but this legislation includes a provision that will directly benefit veterans in Ohio attending Ohio University in Athens. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) decided to reverse itself on a long-standing policy issue and eliminate a December veterans educational benefit payment to approximately 360 eligible veterans who are students at Ohio University (OU).

This problem now exists for veterans because of OU's extended break between the fall and winter quarter which runs from the day prior to Thanksgiving until the day after New Years, which averages about 40 days or six weeks of down time. OU is one of only a few public universities that takes such a lengthy break from classes within its academic year. The VA has a policy which suspends benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill to veterans if they experience a break of more than 30 days between enrollment periods.

In years past, the VA approved an exemption from the policy for OU because the university uses the extended break to conserve energy by closing residence halls and academic buildings. Unfortunately, the VA recently ruled that OU will no longer qualify for an exemption. This means that if veterans are going to be paid for the month of December, they must be enrolled.

In order to remedy this situation, H.R. 4850 includes a provision that will authorize the continued payment of monthly educational assistance benefits to veterans enrolled at educational institutions during periods between semesters or quarters if the interval does not exceed eight weeks. This legislation will also correct this problem for veterans around the country who attend other educational institutions that also have a break between classes of over 30 days.

It is not reasonable to punish veterans by withholding their December benefits when they