

they need and deserve. This legislation will increase the compensation our veterans receive to offset the additional cost associated with inflation. This adjustment in compensation is very timely considering the present sluggishness of our economy.

More than 2 million veterans receive disability compensation each month as a result of injuries suffered in the course of military service. Nearly 600,000 spouses, children, and parents of veterans will also receive additional compensation and benefits as a result of H.R. 1683.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1683 is a bill that helps our heroic veterans live more comfortable lives. I support H.R. 1683 and I salute our veterans.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2003, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1683.

The rules were taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of

those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. BOOZMAN. 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.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOOZMAN. 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. 1683.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

SELECTED RESERVE HOME LOAN EQUITY ACT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1257) to amend title 38, United

States Code, to make permanent the authority for qualifying members of the Selected Reserve to have access to home loans guaranteed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to provide for uniformity in fees charged qualifying members of the Selected Reserve and active duty veterans for such home loans.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1257

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 "Selected Reserve Home Loan Equity Act".

SEC. 2. PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR HOUSING LOANS FOR MEMBERS OF THE SELECTED RESERVE.

Section 3702(a)(2)(E) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "and ending on September 30, 2009,".

SEC. 3. UNIFORM HOME LOAN GUARANTY FEES FOR QUALIFYING MEMBERS OF THE SELECTED RESERVE AND ACTIVE DUTY VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (2) of section 3729(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(2) The loan fee table referred to in paragraph (1) is as follows:

"LOAN FEE TABLE

Type of loan	Veteran	Other obligor
(A)(i) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed before October 1, 2011)	2.00	NA
(A)(ii) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2011)	1.25	NA
(B)(i) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed before October 1, 2011)	3.30	NA
(B)(ii) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after October 1, 2011 and before October 1, 2013)	2.15	NA
(B)(iii) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after October 1, 2013)	1.25	NA
(C)(i) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 5-down (closed before October 1, 2011)	1.50	NA
(C)(ii) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 5-down (closed on or after October 1, 2011)	0.75	NA
(D)(i) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 10-down (closed before October 1, 2011)	1.25	NA
(D)(ii) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2011)	0.50	NA
(E) Interest rate reduction refinancing loan	0.50	NA
(F) Direct loan under section 3711	1.00	NA
(G) Manufactured home loan under section 3712 (other than an interest rate reduction refinancing loan)	1.00	NA
(H) Loan to Native American veteran under section 3762 (other than an interest rate reduction refinancing loan)	1.25	NA
(I) Loan assumption under section 3714	0.50	0.50
(J) Loan under section 3733(a)	2.25	2.25"

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Paragraph (4)(A) of such section is amended to read as follows:

"(A) The term 'veteran' means any veteran eligible for the benefits of this chapter."

(2) Paragraph (4) of such section is amended by striking subparagraph (B) and redesignating subparagraphs (C), (D), (E), (F), (G), (H), and (I) as subparagraphs (B), (C), (D), (E), (F), (G), and (H), respectively.

ating subparagraphs (C), (D), (E), (F), (G), (H), and (I) as subparagraphs (B), (C), (D), (E), (F), (G), and (H), respectively.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the gen-

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN).

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the House is considering today H.R. 1257, the Selected Reserve Home Loan Equity Act.

This legislation would save more than \$50 million over 10 years and is similar to a bill the House passed in the 107th Congress, H.R. 2095. This measure makes the VA home loan program for members of the Selected Reserve permanent and reduces the funding fee charged to the Selected Reserve home loan applications to the same amount as that paid by active duty servicemembers.

Under current law, the reservists may participate in VA's home loan program through 2009. In the past decade, however, reservists have been increasingly called upon to participate on active duty for extended periods to support the national defense. Indeed, members of the Selected Reserve have become an integral part of America's total force, and they should be afforded the same home loan benefit as active duty veterans.

The CBO estimates that VA will guarantee 9,000 additional loans a year between 2010 and 2013 due to this legislation. Additionally, H.R. 1257 will provide uniformity in the funding fees charged to members of the Selected Reserve and active duty veterans for VA home loans. Today in most cases a reservist pays three-quarters of a percent higher funding fee than that charged active duty veterans.

This policy exists despite data indicating that the foreclosure rates for members of the Selected Reserve have been almost one-third lower than that of other veterans. Again, Mr. Speaker, with our country relying more and more on reservists, they certainly deserve equality in fees with other veterans.

Finally, this bill would affect the home loan guarantee fees for veterans qualifying for second or subsequent home loans with no downpayment. The fees for veterans who obtain a subsequent VA home loan would be raised from 3 percent to 3.3 percent for loans closed before October 1, 2011, and then reduced to 2.15 percent for loans closed between October 1, 2011, and September 30, 2013. CBO estimates that the bill would save \$4 million in 2004, \$4 million over 5 years, and \$51 million over 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, this bill was unanimously recommended by our committee. I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) for his work in introducing this measure, as well as the chairman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Benefits, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BROWN) and the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD), for considering this bill in a timely fashion.

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 thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman SMITH),

the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BROWN), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD), for their work in bringing H.R. 1257 to the floor. I support this bill because I believe the men and women who are defending this Nation by their service in Selected Reserve should be eligible to obtain a home loan from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Under the current program, the home loan program for the Selected Reserve will expire on September 30, 2009. Since reservists may serve for a minimum of 6 years in order to qualify for this benefit, it is important for Congress to act this year to continue that program.

I believe this is a program that should be made permanent. I believe also that reservists should be charged with the same fee for a home loan as any other veteran. The bill does this. In order to pay for the costs of the bill, the measure contains a slight increase in the fees paid by veterans to use the home loan program a second or additional time without paying any downpayment.

This fee should not be needed; but I recognize that under our current budgetary restraints, it is a necessary part of the bill. Today's members of the Selected Reserve who are fighting for freedom around the world deserve to have a home when they come home. I urge all Members to support this legislation.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS).

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and the ranking member for introducing the Selected Reserve Home Equity Loan Act. I have served as a reservist in the U.S. Army for over 30 years, and I feel that this is an extraordinarily helpful piece of legislation for our reservists that will help hundreds of my colleagues in the Reserve in Connecticut, and literally thousands if not tens of thousands of reservists across the Nation, many of whom are deployed, on active duty, called up on active duty even as we speak here today.

By giving these reservists the opportunity to count on a guaranteed and ensured home loan through the Department of Veterans Affairs, this program promises them the American Dream of owning their own home. What better message for this body and this Nation to send to its deployed reservists than the message that when you come home we wish to extend to you the opportunity of taking a loan and buying a home.

We have come to appreciate the role of the reservists in our national security and in our military now more than ever. When I first joined the Reserves in 1970 after coming off of active duty service in Vietnam, it was rare for a reserve unit to be activated and deployed. In fact, from 1970 to 1990, my military unit was not activated and de-

ployed for any purpose. But in the early 1990s, the deployments began, and members of the unit and finally the unit itself were activated and deployed on a number of occasions. And, in fact, my former unit is currently on active duty as we speak today, and all of its members have been called to active duty and deployed.

This changing role of the U.S. Reserves makes it all the more appropriate that legislation of this sort be crafted to extend these benefits to them. I thank my colleague and ranking member of the Committee on Veterans Affairs for his vision in seeing the importance of this legislation. I also thank my colleague, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), for his work on this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1911, to enhance cooperation and the sharing of resources between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

H.R. 1911 was originally introduced by the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. BOOZMAN.

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health for the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and a member of the Armed Services Committee, I have observed firsthand the need for enhanced sharing initiatives between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. My experience on these two committees has given me a vision of the opportunities afforded by an effective pooling of VA and DOD resources—I was drawn to Mr. BOOZMAN's bill for this very reason.

The new mandate envisioned by this bill would lead to better services for active military servicemembers, reservists, dependents and veterans alike. This could be accomplished by elevating programs and areas of mutual interest of the Departments—such as the Montgomery GI Bill; VA's home loan guaranty program; various memorial affairs activities; general administrative and management systems; common information technology, records keeping and systems of records; and capital infrastructure, among many other possibilities.

This legislation would be of great benefit in seeking to bridge the divide between these two Departments and doing so in the interests of America, our active soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, dependents, veterans and the American people. Passage of this bill would have the additional benefit of conserving taxpayer funds, cutting down on administrative and bureaucratic waste and promoting better services to current and future veterans of our armed services.

I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD).

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

I rise in strong support of H.R. 1257, the Selected Reserve Home Loan Equity Act, and I want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) for their leadership on this issue. H.R. 1257 would make the home loan program for members of the Selected Reserve permanent.

□ 1130

Currently the program is scheduled to expire as of September 30, 2009.

In 1992, the Congress granted eligibility for VA home loans to persons who served in the Selected Reserve, including the National Guard. This benefit is a useful recruiting and retention tool. Mr. Speaker, this legislation would also equalize the fees charged to members of the Selected Reserve and active-duty veterans for VA home loans. Currently, qualifying members of the Selected Reserve are charged a higher funding fee than other veterans. According to VA, members of the Selected Reserve have a lower foreclosure rate than other loan guarantee beneficiaries. This higher rate is not justified.

Mr. Speaker, in recent years our Guard and Reserves have been increasingly called upon to participate on active duty for lengthy periods of time. As the recent military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq clearly demonstrate, the Selected Reserve is an integral part of America's total force. Clearly, reservists have earned the right to receive equal lower fees with other veterans.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 1257. This legislation will assist the many members of the Guard and Reserves living in my home State of Maine. I fully support H.R. 1257 and urge my colleagues to pass this measure.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for yielding time. I will not take the 5 minutes because this bill has been very adequately explained by my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), and, of course, the author of the bill, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), our ranking member and a very close partner on all veterans issues. I want to commend him for this legislation. At a time when there is some partisanship when it comes to veterans issues, as I just made very clear at a press briefing that we had, the gentleman from Illinois and several members of the committee have always gone out of their way to keep the committee as non-partisan as humanly possible. We do work in a very cooperative way. The bill under consideration really builds on the whole total-force concept that whether you be Selected Reserve or active Army or active military, we should not permit any distinction when it comes to home loan fees. This is a very important piece of legislation. I am very proud to be supporting it. I congratulate the gentleman from Illinois on his authorship of this fine bill.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1257, the "Selected Reserve Home Loan Equity Act."

H.R. 1257 amends Title 38 of the United States Code, "to make permanent the author-

ity for qualifying members of the Selected Reserve to have access to home loans guaranteed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to provide for uniformity in fees charged qualifying members of the Selected Reserve and active duty veterans for such home loans."

I support H.R. 1257 because it is a way for this body to thank our Select Reservists the same way we thank the brave veteran men and women who have served their country so valiantly. The Department of Veterans Affairs provides our active and inactive military personnel with various services and benefits. One of the benefits provided is guaranteed home loans at reasonable fees.

Presently, members of the Selected Reserves are eligible for Department of Veterans Affairs loans. However, the current program is scheduled to expire at the end of fiscal year 2009. Moreover, Selected Reservists pay a higher fee on guaranteed home loans than do active duty veterans. H.R. 1257 grants Selected Reservists permanent access to guaranteed home loans just as like veterans. Selected Reservist will also be eligible for the same fee structure as veterans.

Our Selected Reservists are an important part of our exemplary military, and are integral to protecting our homeland and bringing peace throughout the world. Providing our military personnel, including members of the Selected Reserve with access to economically beneficial programs like guaranteed loans is one small way to thank them for their service.

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 1257, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Selected Reserve Home Loan Equity Act.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1257.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. BOOZMAN. 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.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1257.

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

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1904, HEALTHY FORESTS RESTORATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 239 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 239

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 1904) to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to plan and conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risks lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes. The bill shall be considered as read for amendment. The amendment printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered as adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any further amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate on the bill, as amended, with 30 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Agriculture, 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources, and 10 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary; (2) the further amendment printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules, if offered by Representative George Miller of California or his designee, which shall be in order without intervention of any point of order, shall be considered as read, and shall be separately debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent; and (3) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my namesake, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 239 provides for the consideration of H.R. 1904 under a modified closed rule. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate in the House with 30 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Agriculture, 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources,