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MOTION TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES ON H.R. 1588, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004—Continued

□ 2100

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

First let me again thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) for his incredible leadership year in and year out to our servicemen and -women. As the person in this House who has responsibility for overseeing personnel matters, he has been a tremendous leader and I thank him. Our military families are living a better quality of life because of his leadership.

I am very grateful that today we are not disagreeing with the vote on this motion to instruct, while there may be some subtle difference in what the approach should be. In terms of responding to the gentleman's comments, I just say, I would welcome his leadership in helping us work on a bipartisan basis to address any inequities to our servicemen and -women that are single parents. Obviously, a single parent with two children back home that is separated from those children has an additional cost of living. I am not sure either the House or Senate position on this bill really addresses that inequity. I thank the gentleman for pointing out that problem, and I hope we could work together with him on that.

Let me just conclude by saying, Mr. Speaker, why I think clarity is so important, and I do not think the gentleman argues with this at all. Let me read some excerpts from some letters from soldiers in my district where Fort Hood is represented, the only two-division Army installation in America today, an installation that presently has over 18,000 troops deployed to Iraq.

One letter said to me, "Congressman, I am sickened with the flow of information regarding the upcoming cut in sep-

aration pay and hostile fire pay. I keep asking myself, Why? Our government is giving away billions of dollars to help other countries and millions just for information. Yet they are going to cut our benefits by \$225. If anything, our military should be getting paid more, not less."

The second letter, reflecting also the confusion out there across our military families: "Congressman, is it true that the government is trying to make obsolete the family separation allowance and the hazardous duty hostile fire pay that soldiers are receiving while they are overseas? My husband is over in Iraq and he works hard for his country to see that his family has a safe life over here. I'm trying to convince him to reenlist, but with what the government is doing to these soldiers, it's hard to try and convince them that the military is the best way to go."

The letter goes on to talk about the sacrifices of the families. I think it just emphasizes the point that, right or wrong, there is confusion across the country with our military families about whether their separation pay and hostile fire pay is going to be cut in the next several weeks. If the conferees will accept this motion to instruct, then we can get rid of those rumors, get rid of the uncertainty and send a clear message that we do respect our servicemen and -women, their families and their sacrifices with our actions and not just with our words.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to support this motion to instruct, support our troops wherever they might be serving in harm's way. We can thank them tonight with a meaningful commitment to ensure that their pay is not going to be cut in the weeks ahead.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion by the gentleman from Texas, to permanently raise the hazard pay for all members of the U.S. military and family separation pay for those they left behind.

As a former soldier, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, as an American, as a human being . . . I am appalled at the insensitivity of the administration in not adequately providing hazard pay for our soldiers at a time when our mission in Iraq is not yet accomplished. Nor, more importantly, is our mission in the larger war on terror.

I very much understand the dynamic that led us to this place—this nation simply cannot afford the cost to our Nation to wage a worldwide war, and raise taxes on our children through tax cuts now. Our economic policy has become folly in the 21st Century.

But that is a topic for another debate—today my colleague from Texas, Mr. EDWARDS, offers a very important matter for the House to consider. Today conferees are meeting on the Defense Authorization bill and I join my colleague from Texas in urging the conferees to permanently increase hazard pay for our military personnel fighting our wars overseas—and to permanently increase family separation pay.

The administration should be ashamed. This Congress should be ashamed, too, if we do not support the motion by my Texas colleague and follow this issue to the end of the process. For if we only instruct our conferees, yet do not actually change the policy, we will not have done the job.

Mr. Speaker, any member of this chamber would be hard-pressed to find anyone in this nation who disagreed with the prospect of increasing the pay of our soldiers currently dodging bullets in Iraq—and always in danger in Afghanistan and elsewhere. We would also be hard-pressed to find anybody who disagreed with the prospect of offering a supplement to the families of military personnel, who are making do on less salary and are all alone in raising their children and conducting the business of the household—while their loved one is fighting a war we sent them to fight.

We all knew a war would be expensive. The cost of a war is high in the blood of Americans, in the loss to the family income of Reserve and Guard troops called to service, and most directly, in the actual expense of building and maintaining equipment and prosecuting the war.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

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We send young people to war from this branch of government. Let us not abandon them on combat pay. Let us not abandon their families as they live their lives as best they can without their loved ones, and without the salary their loved one brings to the family if they are in the Guard or Reserve.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this motion to stop outrageous plans to cut hazard and separation pay for troops. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think it's appalling that we would balance the budget on the backs of our troops.

It is critical that we make the increase in imminent danger pay and the family separation allowance permanent for our Armed Services and their families and make it available to everyone in imminent danger, no matter where they are serving.

In April, Congress approved a much deserved pay raise for our men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This was the least we could do for those who are risking their lives to secure our freedom.

It wasn't a lot of money—increases of \$75 a month in "imminent danger pay" and \$150 a month in "family separation allowances."

In fact, this was the first raise in "imminent danger pay" in over 10 years, and the first increase in the "family separation allowance" in over 5 years.

Now, as a Member of the Armed Services Committee, I have had the privilege of spending time with military personnel on the day of their deployments.

With 500 men and women of the Marine Corp. 2nd Battalion at Plainview, NY as they left for the Middle East and said goodbye to their families with the brave men and women at the U.S. Navy and Marine Reserve Center in Amityville.

One of my most vivid memories from that day is of a Marine kissing her child and saying, "I'll be back soon."

In her eyes, I saw determination and strength and faith and courage.

Could we ever look another soldier in the eye, if we allow these increases in imminent danger pay and family separation allowance to expire?

The right thing to do is to make the increases permanent. We know that the war on terrorism will be a lengthy one. It will require a deepest commitment.

Just yesterday, another American soldier was killed and another wounded in a bomb attack on their vehicles northeast of Baghdad.

The slain soldier was the 287th U.S. service member to die in the Iraq War. Sadly, we know that he will not be the last.

In the 24 hours before the soldier's death, the Pentagon reported that there had been 14 attacks on U.S. forces. Clearly, no one can ever doubt the bravery of our forces.

They know that sacrifices are necessary in the global campaign against terror. For the first time since the Vietnam War, army personnel are facing the possibility of doing back-to-back combat tours.

To fail to make these benefits permanent is to shortchange the moral contract we have with our soldiers. This is our chance to stand with our troops at home as they fight for our freedom abroad.

Many of our servicemen are already under severe financial stress due to their extended deployment. The effect on reservists and

members of the National Guard has been particularly devastating.

Let's keep our promise to those in uniform. Vote for this motion to instruct the conferees and authorize the necessary funds to help those who are fighting for us, for our families, and our future.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. EDWARDS. 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, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES ON H.R. 1308, TAX RELIEF, SIMPLIFICATION, AND EQUITY ACT OF 2003

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct conferees.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee moves that the managers on the part of the House in the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 1308 be instructed as follows:

1. The House conferees shall be instructed to include in the conference report the provision of the Senate amendment (not included in the House amendment) that provides immediate payments to taxpayers receiving an additional credit by reason of the bill in the same manner as other taxpayers were entitled to immediate payments under the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003.

2. The House conferees shall be instructed to include in the conference report the provision of the Senate amendment (not included in the House amendment) that provides families of military personnel serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other combat zones a child credit based on the earnings of the individuals serving in the combat zone.

3. The House conferees shall be instructed to include in the conference report all of the other provisions of the Senate amendment and shall not report back a conference report that includes additional tax benefits not offset by other provisions.

4. To the maximum extent possible within the scope of conference, the House conferees shall be instructed to include in the conference report other tax benefits for military personnel and the families of the astronauts who died in the Columbia disaster.

5. The House conferees shall, as soon as practicable after the adoption of this motion, meet in open session with the Senate conferees and the House conferees shall file a conference report consistent with the preceding provisions of this instruction, not

later than the second legislative day after adoption of this motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 7(b) of rule XXII, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes we ask ourselves, why would I introduce this motion to instruct the conference committee? Seventeen other times this motion has been here on the floor. And you think, really, would it make a difference? Maybe it will not. But there are a lot of people who live in my district that hope that this one will be successful.

A few months ago, I voted for the \$80 billion bill that included families in my district that have children that really would hope that they too would get the same treatment as those who make 10 or 15,000 more than them, that make above the \$26,000 level that basically were allowed the tax credit of \$400 each. So you wonder if it has been here 17 times, what is going to be magic about the 18th time? If it takes a thousand times, it is important to people who live in the district I represent.

Recent surveys by different groups analyzed different congressional districts. The one that I represent in rural Tennessee is the fourth most rural district in America, which means when you take the folks who live inside an incorporated area and those outside, of the 435, mine is the fourth most rural district in America. I traveled that district through the August recess. I attended 92 different meetings. A lot of the folks that I met with, a lot of folks who came to open meetings that I set aside for constituents to come and visit with their Congressman, this was one of the issues that really was of great concern to them.

But when you talk about being rural, then you look at the folks who work in the district that I represent. We have the third largest base of blue collar workers of any congressional district in America working in the fourth district, somewhat over 40 percent. Generally, you would assume blue collar would be the auto industry or some other industry that would pay higher wages. Yes, we have that in the district as well, but most of the ones I am talking about are individuals who fall in the criteria of the 10 to \$26,000 bracket. They are the lower-wage income earners. They are the ones who get laid off first. They are the ones generally that their employer are not able to provide a health care policy for them.

Many of those had high hopes as they saw us go through this process. There were times that I would be back in the district and they would say, why don't Democrats support a tax cut? What's the problem? Then when I explained to