

to existing buildings or structures, the more relaxed feasibility standards for approving mortgage insurance will allow investors and hospital board members to more comfortably initiate proposed improvements without contemplating an impact on the federal healthcare assistance programs that we have worked so hard to preserve.

Specifically, H.R. 659 will allow for a uniform set of eligibility requirements that will protect FHA insurance funds while also spurring insurance premium revenues which, in turn, translate into improvements to hospital facilities. It will also further the cost reduction goals of the federal regulation scheme. Furthermore, this bill will provide protection for hospitals in states where there is neither "sunset" or state-authorized deregulation by way of the certificate of need (CON) requirements. Most importantly, H.R. 659 will provide significant economic rejuvenation to state and local healthcare communities.

In our troubled economy, it is not surprising that many hospitals struggle to secure its capital. For smaller, rural hospitals, it is almost impossible to do so.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 242 mortgage bond program has been drafted and amended this legislation to help hospitals in this area, but 80 percent of its clients have been from New York and 10 percent from New Jersey, according to the Greater New York Hospital Association. We must ensure that the help reaches areas like the Greater Houston area.

Since its start in 1968, Section 242, which provides Federal Housing Administration insurance to back hospital capital improvement bonds, has secured over 300 hospital loans in 40 states and Puerto Rico. In practice, however, that has meant hundreds of loans in the Northeast and very few elsewhere.

However, the program has recently insured a tax-exempt proposal in Texas, and others are beginning the process. Applications are currently under review in Oklahoma and Wisconsin, and facilities in California, Colorado, and Minnesota will soon turn their interest into action.

Hospitals want Section 242-protected loans, in part, because the lenders have made the application process less cumbersome. The Department streamlined its business processes during the late 1990s to make the program easier for hospitals and their bankers. Therefore, states that don't require certificates of need have become more willing to accept commissioned studies of need and feasibility. As a result, the program is now accessible to many more hospitals nationwide.

Rural hospitals, long cut off from capital, are now using a program that could make a dramatic difference. Under the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program, part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Medicare can designate critical-access hospitals—hospitals that receive cost-based rather than formula-based reimbursements from Medicare for inpatient and outpatient services. That allows the hospitals to recoup capital costs and improve their bottom line. HUD has streamlined the Section 242 process for them by covering financial feasibility studies and working with the hospitals to ensure success by hiring consultants to develop transition plans.

Many rural hospitals were built during the 1950s and 1960s with loans and grants from the Hill-Burton Program (Title VI of the Public

Health Service Act). But appropriations for the program ended in 1974, and since then the hospitals have had trouble getting access to capital.

The loans under Section 242 may be used for construction refinancing, remodeling, or expansion of new and existing facilities. Architect fees, planner fees, title and recording fees, and other costs normally associated with a capital improvement project are also eligible. Also, up to 4.5 percent of the loan amount may be used for financing and placement fees, and 2 percent for working capital.

An FHA-insured mortgage can cover up to 90 percent of the replacement value of the assets pledged as security for the debt. Because the pledged assets include all of the hospitals' assets, not just the current project, the insured mortgage may cover the full costs.

The threshold qualification for the program is a certificate of need (CON) issued or pending for the project. If a state does not have a CON process, HUD will work with the state to establish guidelines for conducting an independent feasibility study.

With respect to the Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas, the Texas Department of Health conducted a feasibility study under guidelines it established in an agreement with the FHA. Pursuant to this agreement, the borrower is responsible for the cost of the feasibility study, which can be paid directly by the borrower or from the mortgage proceeds. During construction, the annual insurance premium is charged on the full amount of the approved mortgage and is capitalized in the loan for the full construction period.

The Section 242 program is of paramount importance because it is a credit-enhancement vehicle that can be of tremendous use to large health systems. This program has distinct applications which can be used by a whole litany of hospitals—community and critical-access hospitals, proprietary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, for the above reasons, I support H.R. 659.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Housing Subcommittee Chairman BOB NEY for introducing this important legislation. This bill is a great example of common sense triumphing over bureaucratic impediments.

The Federal Housing Administration has been helping Americans buy homes for nearly 70 years. This backing helps American families struggling with the costs of homeownership to obtain lower interest rates on their mortgages and for many, may be the difference between securing a home loan or not.

Today we're here to ensure that these same benefits are available for hospitals across the country. In the 1970s, Congress enacted legislation to provide mortgage insurance to hospitals making capital improvements, provided they submitted an approved certificate of need from their state government. Too many hospitals are unable to take advantage of the significant benefits incurred by FHA insurance because their states no longer provide the certificates of need necessary to qualify for FHA-backed mortgages. This bill responds to the changes in state programs over the past twenty years.

By allowing the Department of Housing and Urban Development to craft guidelines for qualifying hospitals without certificate of need programs, this bill will improve healthcare in communities across America. This legislation will build new maternity wards, modernize fa-

cilities and put hospitals in communities that do not have reasonable access to these services locally.

With this bill, we can move toward ensuring that quality, affordable medical care is readily available in rural and urban communities where financing is most needed.

I commend Congressman NEY for his leadership and thank Committee and Subcommittee Ranking Members Congressman FRANK and Congresswoman WATERS for their help and support with this legislation.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 659.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

KOREAN WAR VETERANS RECOGNITION ACT OF 2003

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 292) to amend title 4, United States Code, to add National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day to the list of days on which the flag should especially be displayed.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 292

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 "Korean War Veterans Recognition Act of 2003".

SEC. 2. DISPLAY OF FLAG ON NATIONAL KOREAN WAR VETERANS ARMISTICE DAY.

Section 6(d) of title 4, United States Code, is amended by inserting "National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, July 27;" after "July 4;".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. 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. 292.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, this bill adds the National Korean War Veterans Armistice

Day to the list of days upon which the American flag should especially be displayed. Currently, title 4 of the U.S. Code provides that the flag should be displayed on all days, but specifically mentions 10 permanent Federal holidays on which the flag should be displayed. This bill would amend title 4 to include July 27, the National Korean War Armistice Day.

Nearly 1.8 million American soldiers fought bravely in harsh weather and foreign terrain over the course of 3 years to defend democratic South Korea from an offensive invasion launched by communist North Korea when its armed forces crossed the 38th parallel. On July 27, 1953, an armistice was signed and North Korea withdrew to its side allowing South Korea to remain an independent democratic nation. At the war's conclusion, over 103,000 American soldiers had been wounded, and 36,577 were killed.

The 10 permanent Federal holidays that are currently listed in law serve to recognize the people and events that have shaped the character of our Nation. By adding this day to this list, the bill will ensure that those who fought and died so bravely in the Korean War are recognized for their contribution to our Nation. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly appropriate in the backdrop of the Operation Iraqi Freedom when our young men and women are facing danger in supporting and uplifting the values of this Nation to be able to expand our recognition of all of those who have offered themselves on behalf of the values of this Nation.

I rise to support the Korean War Veterans Recognition Act of 2003, H.R. 292, and I urge my colleagues to support it. The legislation was reported unanimously by the Committee on the Judiciary and deserves support. The bill is very straightforward. It would add the commemoration of the Korean War Armistice designated by Congress as National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day to the list of important occasions on which the flag is specially displayed. These holidays now include the birthdays of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Presidents Washington and Lincoln, Memorial Day, and July 4, among others.

Clearly in the backdrop of the 50th anniversary or commemoration of the Korean war and our tribute over the past year of the United States to the Korean war veterans, it is certainly appropriate to be able to acknowledge and to rephrase the terminology "the forgotten war." Sometimes the Korean war is called the forgotten war. The courageous service and sacrifice of our Korean war veterans must never be forgotten, and I emphasize that. It deserves to be commemorated and honored.

This commemoration deserves to be among those days upon which the flag is especially flown in honor of that service. Again, to all of our service men and women serving now and our veterans, it is certainly our responsibility and challenge to continue to respect you and admire the work and service you have given and to commit to you again as veterans that we will never allow any undermining of our commitment to you for lifetime care. This particular recognition acknowledges the veterans of a war that will not be forgotten. I urge the adoption of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Korean War Veterans Recognition Act and urge my colleagues to support it. This legislation was reported unanimously by the Judiciary Committee and deserves every member's support.

This bill is very straightforward. It would add the commemoration of the Korean War Armistice, designated by Congress as "National Korean War Veterans' Armistice Day," to the list of important occasions on which the flag is specially displayed. These holidays include the birthdays of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Presidents Washington and Lincoln, Memorial Day, and July 4th, among others.

Although sometimes called the "forgotten war," the courageous service and sacrifice of our Korean war veterans must never be forgotten. It deserves to be commemorated and honored. This commemoration deserves to be among those days on which the flag is specially flown in honor of that service.

I urge the adoption of this bill.

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

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY).

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, the bill before the House today makes certain that the heroes of America's forgotten war are not forgotten. It is important because if we look at the Korean War Veterans Memorial here in Washington, D.C., we will see the words "Freedom is not free." We need to remind ourselves that over 36,000 Americans lost their lives in a war that has been essentially simply forgotten by many, many people.

Flying the flag on this day makes a difference because people will look at it, young people will look at it, and they will say why is the flag flying especially today. The flag is flying because it is a reminder and a recognition of the Korean War Veterans Armistice Day. It is a day when we all should stop and remember a tremendously difficult hard-fought war. We had an armistice there, and 1.8 million members of the United States Armed Forces fought bravely to preserve freedom and democracy in Korea; and we need to take time out to honor them.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Chairman SENSENBRENNER) for his leadership and his assistance in bringing this measure to the floor this morning, and I urge all Members to support H.R. 292.

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Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, our Korean war commemoration, which began on June 25, 2000, on the 50th anniversary of the invasion of South Korea, continues through Veteran's Day this year.

This past July 27th held special significance because it marked the 50th anniversary of the Korean war armistice.

Began only 5 years after the end of World War II, the Korean war was, in many ways, the first reminder that America must remain the world's leading force for peace, prosperity and freedom—a responsibility we still hold today.

Called to fight back the brutal forces of communism, 1.8 million Americans courageously participated in the Korean war. The United States suffered over 36,000 dead and over 100,000 wounded in some of the most horrific conditions in the history of warfare. And even today there are still over 8,000 unaccounted for.

The service and sacrifices of our Korean war veterans 50 years ago saved a nation from Communist enslavement and gave South Korea the opportunity to develop and flourish under freedom and democracy.

Sadly, the Korean war is sometimes referred to as the "forgotten war."

Perhaps it was the mood of a nation wanting to return to peace after the Second World War. But for the U.S. men and women who served, and for the families and friends of those who paid the ultimate price, the Korean war can never be forgotten.

By adding the Korean war veterans Armistice Day, July 27, to the list of days on which the United States Flag should be displayed, this Congress is sending a message, loud and clear, that "we will never forget."

All Americans must know, as the words etched on the Korean War Memorial reminds us, that "freedom is not free." It cannot be taken for granted.

Should this great country wish to preserve its freedom, we must pay tribute to those who paid the price for it.

Korean war veterans, I salute you.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 292.

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.

EXTENDING SPECIAL IMMIGRANT RELIGIOUS WORKER PROGRAM

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2152) to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to