

oppose it. I just think it is the right thing to do; and given that fact, there is nothing more that I could say on this matter except let us as quickly as we can pass this bill to the other body and hope they send it to the President for his signature. Let no time go further and lose the opportunity to correct what is a defect in the law and that we have an opportunity to correct.

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

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

I thank my friend for his remarks. Let me say that even today, our police officers and firefighters in the District of Columbia, our Secret Service agents put their lives on the line and one never knows what is around the corner in a job like this. It is difficult recruiting and retaining the best and the brightest for these positions; and to some extent, they look at how we treat current retirees when they decide to sign up and for retention or to join the Department in the first place.

In this particular case, a grave mistake was made at the time of the Balanced Budget Act. It had ramifications of basically taking thousands of dollars away from people who over the last generation laid their lives on the line for the safety of the citizens who run our Nation's capital, our law makers and government institutions.

This legislation is, I think, a modest attempt to try to right that wrong, and I hope that current officers and those that are thinking of going into this understand the high regard in which this Congress holds these individuals and honors the service that they gave this city and this government during their tenure. That is what this equity act is all about. That is why it has strong bipartisan support, and that is why I urge our colleagues in the House to support this legislation today.

Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers at this point, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I have no other speakers here at the present time, but I know there are Members who want to put their statements in the RECORD in support of this legislation, especially those who have played such a fundamental role in advancing this cause and bringing it to our attention.

Mr. Speaker, seeing that they will have an opportunity, I am sure, at the appropriate time, I yield back the balance of our time.

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

I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) for his leadership and again the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), who is a cosponsor with me, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), of course our distinguished Delegate from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON). We thank

all of them for helping to put this together as we hopefully pass this today, send this to the other body for what we hope will be fast consideration and a signature on the President's desk.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleague and good friend from Virginia, Mr. DAVIS, in supporting H.R. 3054, the DC Military Retirement Equity Act. This measure goes a long way in providing a fair solution to an unjust problem.

When I was notified that hundreds of former military service members and retired Firefighters, Police Officers, Secret Service personnel, and U.S. Park Police were having their annuities forcibly reduced due to no fault of their own, it was clear that this was an injustice in need of swift action.

The solution, H.R. 3054, will allow retired and active duty DC Firefighters and Police Officers as well as U.S. Secret Service and Park Police to buy back any military service time in order for them to maintain their monthly annuity. An oversight in the administration of their retirement plans neglected to account for a federal law prohibiting any post 1956-military service from being credited towards a retiree's benefits once that retiree becomes eligible for Social Security.

In the past few months, many retirees have had their hard earned monthly annuities reduced by up to \$600 per month. Future retirees can expect similar reductions, unless we pass this measure. Unlike options given to federal employees under FERS and CSRS, these members were never told about this provision and never offered an opportunity to buy back their time. H.R. 3054 will allow retirees to maintain their monthly annuities and will allow working men, women and their families to accurately plan for their retirement. These dedicated men and women selflessly served their country in the military and continued in their service by protecting our communities. We have a responsibility to ensure that they receive what they have rightfully earned.

I am pleased that Chairman DAVIS, Chairman WELDON, Ranking Member WAXMAN, Ranking Member DAVIS, Congresswoman NORTON and I have been able to work in a bipartisan manner to develop a positive solution to a potentially crippling injustice. I would urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3054.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers, and I yield back any remaining time I have.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3054, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend the Police-men and Firemen's Retirement and Disability Act to permit military service previously performed by members and former members of the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia, the Fire Department of the District of Columbia, the United States Park Police, and the United States Secret Service to count as creditable service for purposes of calcu-

lating retirement annuities payable to such members upon payment of a contribution by such members, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess for approximately 10 minutes.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 38 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess for approximately 10 minutes.

□ 1349

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TERRY) at 1 o'clock and 49 minutes p.m.

#### AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT TO ISSUE POSTHUMOUSLY TO THE LATE WILLIAM "BILLY" MITCHELL A COMMISSION AS MAJOR GENERAL, UNITED STATES ARMY

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2755) to authorize the President to issue posthumously to the late William "Billy" Mitchell a commission as Major General, United States Army.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2755

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

#### SECTION 1. POSTHUMOUS COMMISSION OF WILLIAM MITCHELL IN THE GRADE OF MAJOR GENERAL IN THE ARMY.

(a) AUTHORITY.—The President may issue posthumously a commission as major general, United States Army, in the name of the late William Mitchell, formerly a colonel, United States Army, who resigned his commission on February 1, 1926.

(b) DATE OF COMMISSION.—A commission issued under subsection (a) shall issue as of the date of the death of William Mitchell on February 19, 1936.

#### SEC. 2. PROHIBITION OF BENEFITS.

No person is entitled to receive any bonus, gratuity, pay, allowance, or other financial benefit by reason of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) and the gentleman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HUNTER. 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. 2755, the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity to look back on the life of one of our Nation's great air power visionaries, General William "Billy" Mitchell, a man of immense energy, leadership and foresight. Like many men who strived to change the status quo and turn great institutions to a more enlightened course, he was a man whose contributions were not rewarded during his lifetime. H.R. 2755 corrects that oversight by calling for the President to grant him a commission in the grade of Major General.

I want to, first of all, commend the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) for renewing my interest in this issue and providing this House with a great opportunity to honor an American hero.

From the earliest days of his military career, after enlistment at age 18 in 1898 during the Spanish-American War, Billy Mitchell stood out from the crowd. As a 32-year-old Captain in 1912, he was assigned to the Army General Staff as its youngest member. It was during this time that he began to understand the potential for air power to dominate the battlefield and, interestingly, the potential that we have seen reached so dramatically in this last campaign in the Iraqi theater.

After commanding America's war component during World War I, he returned to become the Deputy Commander of the Air Service in the grade of Brigadier General. It was from this position that he pressed his attack on the Navy and the Army for being insufficiently farsighted regarding air power. His demand to improve air power funding gained instant credibility after his bombers sank the captured German battleship *Ostfriesland* and several other warships in the summer and fall of 1921 in a very public, and for the Navy a very embarrassing, test of the capabilities of bomber aircraft.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, during that test a number of naval leaders were in an observation ship not far from these ships that Billy Mitchell's aircraft were demolishing, and there was a complaint, at least a thought, that perhaps he had directed some of the bombs be dropped not too far away from the observation ship so that the naval leadership could appreciate the full value of air power.

Billy Mitchell continued to make the case for enhanced air power even after he was removed from his position in the Air Service and exiled as a Colonel to be the Air Officer at VIII Corps in Texas. His relations with superiors soured as his rhetoric took on an accusatory tone.

After the crash of the Navy dirigible *Shenandoah* that killed 14 crew members, Billy Mitchell declared senior military leaders as incompetent and guilty of "almost treasonable administration of national defense." That was

the last straw for many in the military, the White House, and the Congress. Billy Mitchell's court-martial for insubordination followed, and he left active duty in 1926 after he was found guilty and sentenced to a loss of pay for 5 years. Even after separation, Billy Mitchell remained in the public eye and continued to be a very effective advocate for air power.

Mr. Speaker, it is an unfortunate reality that the truly visionary people that herald important changes are often outcasts in the system they are trying to change. Our Nation is indeed fortunate that we had a man of Billy Mitchell's courage and leadership working for air power.

Without Billy Mitchell, the combat victories we savor today, that have relied so heavily on air power, may never have happened. It was Billy Mitchell who jump-started an awareness of the importance of the strategic bombing mission that has proven so pivotal in each of America's wars in the 20th century and now in this war on terrorism, the first war of the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, the least that we must do is honor this great man with the promotion he was denied while serving his country. Again, I want to thank the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) for the opportunity to honor Billy Mitchell.

Mr. Speaker, I reviewed Billy Mitchell's writings that he published and gave to all the leadership in the administration in the early 1920s, after he had toured what he considered to be the world's problem areas, where this great man of vision attempted to project and analyze where America's next threat would come from. More than a decade before Pearl Harbor, Billy Mitchell predicted that at some point that American strategic strong point would be struck by a low-level early morning Japanese air attack.

Interestingly, this gentleman of vision not only published his theories but he went out and spent a great deal of time backing them up with observations and putting in lots of time, and he made America aware of the importance of air power. He let us know that we were in the age of air power and that if we did not dominate in air power we would be dominated.

I have always thought we need a Billy Mitchell in this age, in this age of missiles, and that if we do not build an adequate defense against missiles, at some point we will see an enemy missile striking the American mainland and striking our troops in theater.

He was a visionary, Mr. Speaker, a guy who ruffled a lot of feathers, made a lot of people angry, and in the end demolished his own career. Yet he left as a legacy an understanding of the importance of a factor which has been of such major importance of each of the wars in this last century and this first war of this new century and that is the importance of air power. So I would urge adoption of H.R. 2755.

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

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS).

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, for yielding me this time, and I greatly appreciate his accommodation of this piece of legislation, which is, interestingly enough, identical word for word to a similar bill that was introduced on July 16, 1957, by my father when he was serving in the same capacity I am serving in today.

The reason for that is that Billy Mitchell was my mother's uncle. As a young child, I grew up in a household where his name came up often, and he was used as an example of the benefits and actions that could occur if you were courageous and you took chances for the good of your country. Clearly, Billy Mitchell was one of these individuals.

He was a very small, rather diminutive fellow, about five-one or five-two. He always dressed to the nines, with all of his uniforms, and he carried a swagger stick. What he did not have in stature, he made up for in his presentation. And my mother was much the same way, very small but carried a pretty heavy stick.

Billy Mitchell really brought to this country or to the military in this country not only the concept of air power and its importance and significance, which he battled for tirelessly, but he also brought to the fledgling air corps at that time the idea that pilots were going to be brave and courageous and take enormous chances and that they were going to be proud of it. He would show up to fly in uniforms that he created himself, which were a combination of a military uniform and outfits for riding horses, with high boots and so forth, and some of this stuff still exists today in the Air Force. The right stuff, the whole concept of an Air Force pilot, an ace, being brave and courageous and going right to the limit came from Billy Mitchell.

He did, indeed, live three lives in the course of the 56 years he was alive, and he stepped on a lot of toes. He had tremendous courage. He had tremendous initiative. He understood where the military was going in this country, but he lacked tact. There was no question about that. He had the ability to say the wrong things to the wrong people at the wrong time on occasion, including the President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, and a lot of other higher-ups in the military. The result was that, because of his outspokenness about where he thought America air power should be, he was court-martialed.

The chairman has brought to our attention the fact that a good 15 years before Pearl Harbor occurred he predicted almost to the day and the hour when the Japanese would attack. Nobody listened to him. And there is no

better example of that than, if I can quote from the "Billy Mitchell Affair," and this is Franklin Delano Roosevelt as President in 1944, FDR says, "If back in 1940 I had said to the Chiefs of Staff of the Army or the Navy, 'Our next war is going to be in the Aleutians and down in the Southwest Pacific,' they would have all laughed at me. They are the experts at that sort of thing. I am not an expert, said the President. I am just an ordinary American. We can see now that Americans were caught unprepared because we ordinary human beings followed the best advice we had at the time."

□ 1400

It was as if Billy Mitchell had never existed. The reality was he was a visionary in the military, and we have such visionaries today as well. I hope as policymakers here in Congress, we allow these individuals to have the ability to speak their mind and to lead our country, not follow. That is why I am here today supporting the bill that will restore General Billy Mitchell to the rank of major general, a bill that was not supported by the military back in 1957; but thanks to the leadership of the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) we have this bill before us. I urge Congress to pass it and send it to the Senate.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS).

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) and the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) for what they are doing here. It is a long time in coming. I do not quite understand why it took this long. I and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) started the Air Force Caucus here in Congress. It involves both Senate and House Members; and it has been very successful in its advocating air power, what Billy Mitchell was talking about in the very beginning.

When we look at his career and what he did, we can understand the flak that he would run into. We can understand the sort of moral courage that he had to go up against, the infrastructure of the existing services, and try to point out that this new bombing method would not only take out ships, but would have a huge ramification in future wars.

I would say if Billy Mitchell was alive today, he would advocate Star Wars. I think the same kind of logic he thought for air power, he would say we can someday have the ability to stop ballistic missiles from getting out of their sights and causing damage through Star Wars. I bring that in tangentially just because Billy Mitchell had that kind of moral courage to say what he felt.

Today, we are recognizing his superior nature to advocate something that nobody else saw on the horizon. We have had others advocate air power before; but none as specifically and dra-

matically, and putting himself and his career and his reputation into jeopardy. I am very pleased to be on the floor here to advocate and support this bill and to also point out to my colleagues that sometimes all of us will hear about a new technology and new ways of advocating things to help the United States, and we should keep an open mind because, who knows, maybe another Billy Mitchell is advocating the right thing for this country.

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

Mr. Speaker, no Americans were killed by enemy air power in this last conflict in the Iraqi theater nor in the Afghanistan theater, nor in several theaters before that because the United States totally dominated the air. I think it is fair to say that every time every F-18 driver, every F-14 driver, every A-10, and everyone else who flies an aircraft, whether it is an attack bird or recon bird or a transport or a bomber aircraft, carries with them a little bit of the legacy of General Billy Mitchell. A lot of folks make decisions in the Pentagon and take positions for which they are never rewarded. I think it is fitting and proper that we are making this decision even at this late date to recognize this great American.

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

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) for bringing this bill to the floor, and I rise in support of the bill offered by the gentleman from New Hampshire, H.R. 2755, which would authorize the President to posthumously promote the late William "Billy" Mitchell, United States Army, to the rank of major general.

General Billy Mitchell was often called the Nation's air power visionary. He was an outspoken advocate of the importance of strategic air power and its vital role in our Nation's military strategy. Many consider him to be the father of today's United States Air Force.

He was born in 1879 to Wisconsin Senator Colonel John Lendrum and his wife, Harriet Becker, in Nice, France. And he left college before graduating to enlist in the First Wisconsin Infantry for the Spanish-American War. He rose rapidly through the ranks and received a field commission in the Signal Corps, and in 1912 he became the youngest member of the General Staff. It was there that he became interested in aviation, which was at the time assigned to the Signal Corps.

Although Billy Mitchell was 38 years old when he learned to fly by taking private flying lessons, he accomplished much during World War I. For example, he was the first American airman to fly over enemy lines. He was the first American officer under enemy fire, and he was awarded the French Croix de Guerre with Palm, the French Legion of Honor, and commanded the largest

aerial armada in history. He commanded all American combat units in France and was elevated to the rank of brigadier general.

By the early 1920s, General Mitchell began to advocate the creation of the Air Force to be independent of the Army. This was essential, he said, because aircraft would one day cripple the Navy and render battleships obsolete. When his colleagues dismissed this concept, he proved his point at Chesapeake Bay in 1921 by test-bombing and sinking several captured battleships.

In 1925, General Mitchell's relationships with his superiors deteriorated even further, and he was reduced in rank to colonel. It was the tragic crash of the *Shenandoah*, a Navy gas-filled airship which killed 14 Navy crewmembers, which led General Mitchell to issue his famous statement. General Mitchell accused senior leaders in the Army and Navy of incompetence and, as the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) said, "almost treasonable administration of the national defense."

Mitchell was court-martialed, found guilty of insubordination and suspended from active duty without pay for 5 years. Instead, General Mitchell elected to resign, and he retired to a farm near Middleburg, Virginia. But from his retirement, he continued to promote air power and its importance and warned of the dangers posed by other nations, particularly Japan. Nearly 20 years before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, General Mitchell expressed concerns of a possible attack by foreign aircraft against the Philippines and against the Hawaiian Islands. However, he would not live to see his predictions come true in 1941.

Tragically, Billy Mitchell died in New York City on February 19, 1936. It was not until after his untimely death that the Army-Air Force in World War II adopted his ideas and plans. Ten years after his death, Congress awarded Billy Mitchell the Congressional Medal of Honor. Twenty years later, many Americans would learn more about the life of General Mitchell in the 1956 film "The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell."

Decades later, General Mitchell's thoughts and principles on air power continue to guide us all in the air strategy of the United States Air Force, and so it is fitting that we recognize the enormous achievements of General William Mitchell and promote him to major general.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this bill and to provide General Mitchell with the recognition that he deserves.

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

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) for moving this important legislation recognizing a great American, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from

California (Mr. HUNTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2755.

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.

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**PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES FROM PAYING SUBSISTENCE CHARGES WHILE HOSPITALIZED**

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2998) to amend title 10, United States Code, to exempt certain members of the Armed Forces from the requirement to pay subsistence charges while hospitalized, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2998

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

**SECTION 1. PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES FROM REQUIREMENT TO PAY SUBSISTENCE CHARGES WHILE HOSPITALIZED.**

Subsection (c) of section 1075 of title 10, United States Code (as added by section 8146(a)(2) of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2004 (Public Law 108-87)), is repealed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH).

**GENERAL LEAVE**

Mr. MCHUGH. 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. 2998, the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

(Mr. MCHUGH asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, we are here today through the attention, diligence, and concern of a single individual, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG). The very effective and very dedicated chairman of the Committee on Appropriations has brought this, I think, very not just unnecessary but distasteful provision in our laws to our attention, and we are here today under the gentleman's leadership to reverse that.

This is a great example of what we do not know can hurt us, a provision that I do not believe that many Members were aware even existed; but again through the gentleman's attention and

devotion, we are about to resolve and correct it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2998, a bill introduced by the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. YOUNG, to exempt service members receiving medical treatment in military hospitals for combat wounds from being charged for the cost of their meals while hospitalized.

I would like to commend the gentleman from Florida for bringing this bill to the attention of the House. I think it is important that my colleagues understand the personal side of this story because it is so characteristic of Chairman YOUNG.

The need for this legislation became apparent to the Chairman during a visit that he and his lovely wife Beverly made to Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital to provide comfort and support to the personnel wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their families. While visiting with one of the wounded, he was made aware of a legal requirement for hospitalized service members to repay their basic allowance for subsistence to compensate the government for the meals they received.

What Chairman YOUNG immediately recognized was that the authors of the law requiring this payment did not contemplate that service members wounded in combat would be subjected to the same requirement right along with the member who had received routine treatment. He understood that America would not want its combat wounded to be confronted with a food bill when they departed the hospital.

It is the Chairman's nature to look after the welfare of our fighting men and women and to correct injustice when he encounters it. In looking out for the troops, he was also looking out for each member of this House. He knew that the right thing to do was to ensure that those wounded in combat or combat-like activities must not be bothered with a bill for their meals. For that, all the members of the House owe the Chairman a debt of gratitude.

The Chairman first took out his check book and personally paid the bill for the service member who had brought this issue to his attention. He then took action to include a provision in the Defense Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2004 to ensure that an immediate fix was put into place. I am proud to say that today we will follow Chairman YOUNG's leadership and make that temporary fix a permanent change to the law.

Again, I commend Chairman YOUNG for this bill and thank him for his diligence in protecting the interests of our service members.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes on H.R. 2998.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the author and the motivator behind this very worthy piece of legislation.

(Mr. YOUNG of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I appreciate the gentleman for bringing this very important bill to the floor, especially under suspension of the rules.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) is a very dedicated supporter of our military and is an important

member of the Committee on Armed Services. And as chairman of the subcommittee, he does an important job. I know of no one who is more committed to the members of our military than the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) and the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER).

What we are talking about today has to do with soldiers wounded on the battlefield in a military hospital recovering from those wounds who are charged \$8.10 a day for the food they consume while they are in the hospital recovering from wounds received on the battlefield. When I learned about that, I have to tell Members, I could not believe it. So I did a little research, and my research told me this is true. This is the case; this is in the law.

I spoke to the administrators and commanders of the military hospitals at Walter Reed Army Hospital, at the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, at the Hospital at Landstuhl, Germany, and they all said, yes, we have to do this, it is in the law, but it is more trouble than it is worth. They said they are actually embarrassed when they have to hand a soldier, when he left their hospital a bill for the food that he or she consumed while in that hospital recovering from wounds received on the battlefield. That is not right. That is outrageous.

So I introduced H.R. 2998 to repeal that law. Actually, while we were moving the defense appropriations bill, I was able to include that bill in the defense appropriations bill which was signed into law on September 30.

□ 1415

So immediately the problem was fixed but was only fixed for a year because appropriations bills only last for a year. So I asked the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) and the gentleman from New York (Chairman MCHUGH) if they would report this bill to the floor so that we could have a vote on it. I asked for a vote because so many of our colleagues, when they learned of this, were just as outraged as I was, and they asked that we have a vote. So we will ask for a vote on this bill because so many of our Members want to vote for this bill. Nearly 300 of our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, have co-sponsored this legislation.

This is something that really needs to be fixed. It was fixed for 1 year, but this fix makes it permanent. This repealed the law permanently, and we will not be embarrassed again by handing a soldier who is leaving in a wheelchair with both legs amputated or an arm amputated or vision totally destroyed or handicapped for life and we are not going to insult them by asking them to pay \$8.10 a day for the food that they consumed while in that military hospital.

I thank the gentleman very much for bringing this very important bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2998, legislation I introduced to permanently