

and Adult Food Program; in school, through the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs; during out-of-school time, through After School and Summer Programs; and in homeless and domestic violence shelters.

Another way to get more food to hungry kids, particularly kids in working poor families, would be to pass the bill of the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), of which I am a cosponsor, to phase out the reduced price category in school lunch and breakfast.

The 40 cents fee for reduced school price lunch is a major barrier for children of the working poor. While 40 cents may not seem like much money to us, if your income is between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty line and you have more than one child, it is often more than you can afford to spend.

Eliminating the reduced price category would save schools immeasurable time and money, because it would reduce their paperwork burdens and greatly simplify the eligibility program in the process.

Eliminating reduced prices works for schools, it works for hungry kids, and it should be something we start immediately.

Another change for the better would be to improve the nutrition quality of all of the food sold in our schools. Today, one out of every six children is overweight; and childhood obesity raises special concerns. It places children at high risk for disease and conditions previously only associated with adults. Nearly two-thirds of obese 5- to 10-year-olds have at least one additional risk factor for cardiovascular disease. There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of children with Type II diabetes, the form of the disease directly linked to overweight adults.

In addition, childhood obesity is a strong predictor of adult obesity. A recent study found that 77 percent of children with a body mass index greater than the 95th percentile remained obese as adults.

A study just released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that, if current trends continue, obesity will become the leading cause of preventable death by next year; not in the future, next year.

Over-consumption of low nutrition soft drinks and snacks plays a key role in childhood obesity. Yet 43 percent of elementary schools, 74 percent of middle schools, and 98 percent of high schools have vending machines, school stores or snack bars that sell soft drinks, candy, salty snacks and baked goods that are at high risk and high in fat, while, at the same time, not providing healthy snacks as a balance.

We need a good, scientifically-based study on what is a healthy school environment; and then we need to help schools create that environment for their students. The child nutrition bill that we passed last week takes some good first steps with the local wellness

policy and team nutrition, but we need to be doing much, much more.

In addition to that, we should be trying to help all children make healthy eating choices. I certainly do not mean that we or should anyone else should become food policemen or policewomen, but schools can be offered incentives to make healthy foods available, and children can be educated to choose those healthy foods.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is all pretty simple. We are passing this Senate bill to extend these programs from the end of March, which is tomorrow, until June 30. Hopefully, in that time the other body will take up the full reauthorization of these various nutrition programs.

I think the gentlewoman from California stated it correctly in terms of the benefit of those programs. It is my hope, frankly, that they use our bill as the base bill for what they are going to do. I think we are pretty much in unanimous consent in this House that what is in there makes a lot of sense. That is the reason we need to pass this today.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2241, which extends the authorization for the expiring portions of federal child nutrition programs for an additional three months.

The child nutrition programs include the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (or WIC); the Child and Adult Care Food Program; the After School Snack Program; and the Summer Food Service Program.

These invaluable programs—which are responsible for providing nutritious meals to millions of children and adults every day—are due for reauthorization this year. I am pleased to note that the House acted decisively last week to approve comprehensive reauthorization legislation, showing overwhelming support for a bill that includes positive reforms to improve program integrity and ensure services for eligible children. Unfortunately we have not had the opportunity to complete the reauthorization process with our friends on the other side of the Capitol, and for that reason, we are here today seeking to extend the current authorization an additional three months.

This bill contains one provision of particular importance to our Nation's soldiers, sailors and airmen. If this legislation is not approved, the children of Armed Forces members who live in privatized military housing and who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch will lose their school meal subsidies. This would be an insult to these parents who work every day to secure our Nation's freedom.

In addition, this legislation contains a provision that allows for-profit child care centers to continue to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and to continue to provide meals and snacks to centers where at least 25 percent of the children enrolled meet the income eligibility requirements for free and reduced-price lunch.

Parents will always bear primary responsibility for their children's health and nutrition,

but this bill provides assistance for those who are having trouble making ends meet. The overall goal of all of the child nutrition programs is to make sure that low-income children and families have access to low-cost meals and snacks that are safe and nutritious.

The Child Nutrition Improvement & Integrity Act approved by the House last week includes important steps to ensure effective and efficient use of federal resources dedicated to child nutrition programs. The bipartisan bill, authored by Representative MIKE CASTLE (R-DE), would significantly enhance integrity in how the child nutrition programs are administered, and would ensure vulnerable children and families have improved access to nutritional services. I am eager to move forward with the Child Nutrition Improvement & Integrity Act, and I believe the extension before us will allow the Congress to complete a thorough and comprehensive reauthorization process that includes the positive reforms approved by the House last week.

This bipartisan bill is a simple, straightforward tool to make sure we are serving the millions of low-income children who depend upon the programs contained in the Child Nutrition and Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Acts. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the bill before us today and I encourage the House to act once again in a bipartisan show of support for federal child nutrition programs by voting "yes" on S. 2241.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2241.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CASTLE. 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 S. 2231.

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

There was no objection.

REIMBURSING MEMBERS OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FOR CERTAIN TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2057) to require the Secretary of Defense to reimburse members of the United States Armed Forces for certain transportation expenses incurred by the members in connection with leave under the Central Command Rest and Recuperation Leave Program before the program was expanded to include domestic travel.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 2057

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

SECTION 1. REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN TRANSPORTATION COSTS INCURRED BY MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES ON REST AND RECOVERY LEAVE.

The Secretary of Defense shall reimburse a member of the United States Armed Forces for transportation expenses incurred by such member for one round trip by such member between two locations within the United States in connection with leave taken under the Central Command Rest and Recuperation Leave Program during the period beginning on September 25, 2003, and ending on December 18, 2003.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 2057.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER).

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2057, which would retroactively reimburse 38,000 service members for their travel expenses incurred while on R&R, rest and recuperation leave. I would like to recognize and commend the majority for bringing this bill to the floor.

Last year, the United States Army issued a policy that will require both Active and Reserve forces to spend one year boots on the ground overseas. To improve morale and address the concerns expressed by commanders and troops in the field, the Department of Defense established a rest and recuperation program for those service members with 12-months tours.

Initially, the program allowed service members to travel from Kuwait to Germany and Baltimore, Maryland. Subsequently, they expanded that to two other airports, one in Atlanta and one in Dallas; and from these airports service members were then required to pay for their continued travel home.

Subsequent to this, the Department of Defense also established a similar program for our fine men and women on duty as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. As part of this program, these service members were required to pay for the continued flight to their final destination, to their home.

Last year, Congress recognized the unfair burden this policy placed on service members and sought to rectify

it. However, in the course of doing that, the new benefit did not really kick in with the regulations until December 19, 2003. This was 3 months after the program started.

So we have approximately 38,000 troops who had to pay for their own travel expenses from their points of arrival in the United States to home. This amounts to about \$13 million. If my math is correct, that is an average of about \$342 for each one of those service members.

This is a small price to pay to restore fairness amongst the troops for this very important moral effort.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD).

Mr. RAMSTAD. I thank my friend from New Hampshire for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, last year, the U.S. military began employing its first rest and recuperation program, known as R&R, since the Vietnam War. Soldiers who have served 12 straight months in a combat zone qualify for R&R.

Sadly, however, we all remember the televised interviews of combat-weary American soldiers back from Iraq on R&R and stranded at Baltimore-Washington International Airport, unable to afford a plane ticket home.

Sad but true, Mr. Speaker, too many of our brave and battle-fatigued soldiers were unable to get to their hometowns to see their loved ones because same-day airfare was too expensive for many of our troops to afford.

That is why last fall I introduced an amendment with my friend, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE), to make money available to cover troops' travel costs to their hometowns. With the support of the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS), chairman of the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, our amendment was passed and the Pentagon began paying our troops' airfare all the way home.

Unfortunately, though, Mr. Speaker, the Pentagon did not implement this program retroactively, which means the first wave of troops who came back from Iraq for R&R and who managed to scrape up the cash for airfare home are still to this day stuck with the tab to see their families.

So, today, Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 2057, which will cover retroactively the domestic travel costs our brave troops incurred while on R&R leave.

Mr. Speaker, the Ramstad-Moore amendment put the House on record that the Federal Government should cover all travel and transportation costs necessary to return our brave troops home. That is why passage of this bill is so important. Now Congress must finish the job it began last fall, to make sure none of our troops fall between the cracks and are forced to pay their own transportation costs to get home.

Let us show today that we support our troops. Let us cover the costs that

enabled our troops to return home for R&R, briefly reuniting wives and husbands, parents and children and other loved ones.

I urge all my colleagues to support this important bill.

I want to thank the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) of the Committee on Armed Services and the gentleman from New Hampshire (Chairman BRADLEY) for their support of this legislation, as well the gentleman from California (Chairman LEWIS) of the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, for their continued support of covering troop travel costs, and also want to thank the majority leader for allowing this legislation to come to the floor.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD) for his fine words and support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE).

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD) for his remarks and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) as well.

Last September, I heard a National Public Radio story about troops coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq. They were being deposited at Baltimore and Atlanta, and from there forced to pay their own way home or stay in Baltimore and Atlanta. I could not believe this. I checked with my staff and found out it was in fact true.

I drafted a bill which, within 8 days, I think, got 155 Republican and Democrat cosponsors. I teamed up with the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD) who just spoke, and we put our bills together. He had a similar vote which passed by voice vote.

Unfortunately, it only went back, according to the Department of Defense, to December 19. Our intention was clearly that this be retroactive back to the date when this program started, the rest and recuperation, bringing our troops home to be reunited with their families and loved ones for 2 weeks before they went back to Afghanistan or Iraq to finish their tour of duty.

Now, I am very, very pleased that Senate S. 2057, the Senate companion to H.R. 2731 that the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD) and I had, will complete the job; and if the House passes this today, we will in fact ensure that the troops are entitled to be reimbursed for their travel prior to December 19 and will in fact be reimbursed. That is the right thing to do for our troops and country.

We talk so much in this body about how much we value our troops, and it was simply, simply wrong that we would ask those folks coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan to pay their own way back to their homes and then back to the coastal port for deployment again to finish their tour of duty.

There is a little bit of dispute about the number of troops. My figures were 29,000, those of the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) were a bit more,

and there is a little bit of dispute about the cost of the reimbursement for travel for these troops.

But I think the intention of Congress here is very, very clear, and it is really, really nice when Republicans and Democrats can come together and the people out there in the country can see that in fact we are not just talking about supporting our troops, but we are putting our money where our mouth is. It is exactly the right thing to do.

□ 1415

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity in late October and early November to travel to Iraq to visit our troops and to assess the rebuilding of that troubled nation. The first stop, Mr. Speaker, that we made was in Kuwait in the desert at one of the camps, and we saw the actual R&R facility where members of our military were being processed. We had the chance to talk firsthand to people that were about to leave the theater and go home and, boy, let me tell my colleagues, they were very excited, Mr. Speaker, to be able to come home and visit loved ones. We know this was during the time when they had to pay their own way; but, nevertheless, they were pleased to be able to do it.

Then we traveled in and out of Baghdad with members coming on some of the C-130 transport planes. Once again, the same thing, they were very anxious to be able to come home for a couple of weeks and to be able to reunite with their families.

So, Mr. Speaker, I salute our military for authorizing this. Obviously, this legislation corrects an inequity, where those members of our military who wanted to travel home prior to December 19 are now going to be reimbursed for their expenses. Mr. Speaker, as indicated by the previous speaker, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE), this was done in a bipartisan fashion. I salute not only the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER), the gentleman from California (Chairman Lewis), but certainly the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER), the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE), and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS) for their hard work on this very important piece of legislation that will deal with all of our troops fairly and will encourage this type of R&R in the future, which is so important to our troops in so many far-flung areas of the world.

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

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Arkansas for yielding me this time.

On Saturday of last week, I attended the funeral of Sergeant Phipps, who had been killed in Iraq in the line of duty. And, of course, as one could ex-

pect, it was a very solemn period, and there were thousands of people from his community who came to pay their last respects.

It occurred to me as this bill was coming to the floor that individuals should have the opportunity certainly to come home and visit for rest, recuperation, and to see their families and friends while they are alive and healthy.

So I simply came down to urge passage of this legislation and to indicate my support for it and to suggest that all soldiers who give of themselves should have the opportunity to experience interaction with their family.

I thank the sponsors of this legislation, and I urge its strong support.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to thank the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY) for his work on behalf of this bill; along with the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD), the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER), and the gentleman from Missouri (Ranking Member SKELTON) also for their fine work. I think this is a fine bill that will be much appreciated by our men and women in uniform and their families.

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, as a long-time supporter of the military, I was dismayed to learn that U.S. troops were forced to pay their way home from Baltimore-Washington International Airport, while on rest and recuperation leave.

Late last year, Congress enacted legislation, which I supported, requiring the Department of Defense to provide travel and transportation allowances to military personnel serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As of December 19, 2003, the Department began covering these costs. Unfortunately, a number of soldiers who were issued leave beginning on September 25, 2003 were not eligible for travel reimbursement. Today, the Congress has rectified this discrepancy by ensuring that all of our soldiers will be reimbursed for their travel while on leave.

I am well aware of the current demands faced by American soldiers and the sacrifices made by family members and loved ones. American soldiers have always excelled in their military duties and at a time when many of our troops are deployed for a year or more, it is imperative that Congress and the federal government adequately provide for them.

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

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, so I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2057.

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. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. 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.

ESTABLISHING CAMPAIGN MEDALS TO BE AWARDED TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES PARTICIPATING IN OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM OR OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3104) to provide for the establishment of campaign medals to be awarded to members of the Armed Forces who participate in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3104

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

SECTION 1. SEPARATE MILITARY CAMPAIGN MEDALS TO RECOGNIZE SERVICE IN OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM AND SERVICE IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—The President shall establish a campaign medal specifically to recognize service by members of the uniformed services in Operation Enduring Freedom and a separate campaign medal specifically to recognize service by members of the uniformed services in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

(b) ELIGIBILITY.—Subject to such limitations as may be prescribed by the President, eligibility for a campaign medal established pursuant to subsection (a) shall be set forth in regulations to be prescribed by the Secretary concerned (as defined in section 101 of title 10, United States Code). In the case of regulations prescribed by the Secretaries of the military departments, the regulations shall be subject to approval by the Secretary of Defense and shall be uniform throughout the Department of Defense.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share my support for H.R. 3104. I was pleased to join my colleagues, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES), in introducing this legislation last September.

The legislation we are considering today authorizes campaign medals for military personnel who have been participating in the war on terror. Essentially, the legislation would authorize