

consideration the bill (H.R. 22) to reform the postal laws of the United States, with Mr. SIMPSON in the chair.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 22, The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act.

In 1775, Members of the Second Continental Congress established the Post Office Department, the predecessor of the Postal Service and the second oldest federal department or agency in the United States. For the past two centuries, the United States Postal Service has evolved and changed as the United States has grown. Today the Postal Service delivers hundreds of millions of messages each day to more than 141 million homes and businesses. Still, the Postal Service is experiencing economic loss because of the decrease in first class mail volume due to the high usage of e-mail and faxes and the increase in operating costs as the number of addresses to which the Postal Service must deliver are growing everyday.

For the past couple of decades, Members of the House Government Reform Committee have worked together to create legislation to reform the Postal Service. The bill that we have before us today is a compilation of hard work and bipartisan effort that includes a variety of interests such as large financial mailers, mail-dependent small businesses, magazine publishers, postal competitors, unions and consumer organizations. H.R. 22 provides for a comprehensive overhaul of the financial operations, rate structure, and civil service policies that currently govern the United States Postal Service. It is important to note that this bill today is not only a work of bipartisan congressional action, but it is the product of labor unions and management, postal employees and businesses, working together to make compromises to make postal reform a reality.

Protecting collective bargaining rights, ensuring six-day a week postal delivery and demanding that postal workers receive the best federal employee healthcare are all important provisions that were included in this bill to benefit postal workers. H.R. 22 is a tribute to the countless letter carriers and postal employees who have been committed for many years to reforming the USPS. I have spent hours walking mail routes with the letter carriers in my home state of New Jersey. I have seen first hand how dedicated postal employees are to ensuring the timely and safe delivery of mail to their local communities. These letter carriers should be applauded for their service to all Americans.

I am proud to have been a cosponsor of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act and am pleased that my colleagues have finally brought this to the House floor. The United States Postal Service is the knit between communities across America and I ask my colleagues to pass this meaningful postal reform legislation for all Americans.

TRIBUTE TO POSTAL EMPLOYEES

HON. TIMOTHY V. JOHNSON

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the hardworking postal employees around the country and especially

in my district. In the wake of passing the first postal reform bill in three and a half decades, I believe it is only appropriate to acknowledge the hard work and tireless effort of postal employees.

The Postal Service has been around since 1775. It has come a long way since the days of the Pony Express and steamboats and despite the fact that e-mail and online bill paying are becoming increasingly popular, the United States Postal Service remains more vital than ever.

I stand here today to deliver a heartfelt thank you to the men and women of the United States Postal Service. I think sometimes we take their efforts for granted. Their work is not only stressful at times, but it is their efforts in keeping all of our correspondence flowing smoothly that provides the glue that hold our communities together. The closing of a Post Office can be devastating to a small rural community, so I understand the importance of the preservation of this service. I feel strongly that my colleagues and I did a good thing last night when we passed the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act.

I urge all of my colleagues as well as every American to take the time out of the day and thank their local letter carrier or postmaster the next time they see them. In closing, I would like to thank all of the postal employees in the 15th district for their part in strengthening our communities. Their efforts are sincerely appreciated.

SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH FAIRNESS ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 525, the Small Business Health Fairness Act. I am deeply concerned that this legislation will jeopardize valuable patient protections for all Americans. While pooling insurance risks may allow employers to strengthen their bargaining power with insurance carriers and share administrative functions, the methods outlined in this bill would threaten the quality of health plans available to small business employees, and the stability of the market for small businesses without access to trade associations.

This legislation establishes association health plans by removing them from state oversight—including the application of state patient protections and solvency standards. For example, my home state of Rhode Island is one of 15 states to mandate health insurance coverage of a colorectal cancer screening test. My constituents value this protection. But under this legislation, my constituents could find themselves enrolled in association health plans that are not required to follow that and other state laws designed to increase access to preventative care and screenings.

In addition, this bill permits association health plans to offer coverage to specific types of employers, allowing plans to seek memberships with better risks and less costly populations. This “cherry picking”—skimming off the healthiest consumers and leaving the sickest patients uninsured—will force premiums

even higher for the majority of the market. A recent Congressional Budget Office study estimated that costs would decline for the 20 percent of businesses that join AHPs, but would therefore go up for the remaining 80 percent.

Alternatively, the Democratic substitute would provide small business and their employees access to small employer health pools, without the negative features of H.R. 525, by including a number of protections for businesses and their employees. The substitute amendment provides that participating health insurance companies will remain subject to the requirements of state health insurance laws and stipulates that all participating insurers offer benefits equivalent to or greater than the options offered to Federal employees. There are ways to accomplish the goal of increased access to health insurance that do not threaten that patient protections and state laws that Americans have come to rely on.

Small business employers and their workers do need better access to affordable health care coverage, but this misguided bill is not the way to accomplish that important goal. As we look for innovative ways to provide health care to all, we must not sell small business owners and employees short. We must address the health care crisis, and we must do it in a way that does not exacerbate the existing problems. I urge my colleagues to vote against H.R. 525.

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL WILLIAM L. “SPIDER” NYLAND, U.S.M.C.

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize and pay tribute to General William L. “Spider” Nyland, United States Marine Corps, on the occasion of his retirement from active duty. General Nyland has served our great Nation for more than 37 years. The departure of General Nyland marks not only the end of an illustrious career replete with many honors, it also marks the beginning of several initiatives which, by virtue of his strategic vision, dynamic leadership and accomplished diplomatic skills, will ensure that U.S. national strategy is prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

General Nyland was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps under the NROTC program upon graduation from the University of New Mexico in 1968. In addition to attaining a M.S. degree from the University of Southern California, his formal military education includes The Basic School (1968), Naval Aviation Flight Training (NFO) (1969), Amphibious Warfare School (1975), Navy Fighter Weapons School (TopGun) (1977), College of Naval Command and Staff, Naval War College (1981), and Air War-College (1988).

After being assigned to VMFA-531, General Nyland was ordered to Vietnam where he flew 122 combat missions with VMFA-314 and VMFA-115. General Nyland's other tours included Instructor RIO, VMFAT-101; Squadron Assistant Operations Officer and Operations Officer, VMFA-115; and Brigade FORSTAT and Electronic Warfare Officer, 1st Marine Brigade. He also served as Operations Officer

and Director of Safety and Standardization, VMF A-212; Aviation Safety Officer and Congressional Liaison/Budget Officer, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.; and Operations Officer, Marine Aircraft Group-24, 1st Marine Amphibious Brigade. He commanded VMFA-232, the Marine Corps' oldest and most decorated fighter squadron, from July 1985 to July 1987.

General Nyland subsequently served as section chief for the Central Command section, European Command/Central Command Branch, Joint Operations Division, Directorate of Operations (J-3), Joint Staff, Washington, D.C. In July 1990, he assumed command of Marine Aviation Training Support Group (MATSG), Pensacola. Following his command of MATSG he assumed duties as Chief of Staff, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing on July 5, 1992, and assumed additional duties as Assistant Wing Commander on November 10, 1992. He was promoted to Brigadier General on September 1, 1994 and was assigned as Assistant Wing Commander, 2nd MAW serving in that billet until December 1, 1995.

He served next on the Joint Staff, J-8, as the Deputy Director for Force Structure and Resources, completing that tour on June 30, 1997. General Nyland was advanced to 1 Major General on July 2, 1997, and assumed duties as the Deputy Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C. He served next as the Commanding General, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina from July 1998 to June 2000. He was advanced to Lieutenant General on 30 June 2000 and assumed duties as the Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. He next served as the Deputy Commandant for Aviation on 3 August 2001. He was advanced to the grade of General on September 4, 2002 and assumed his current duties shortly thereafter.

General Nyland's personal decorations include: Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal with eight Strike/Flight awards, and Joint Service Commendation Medal.

Throughout his career as a United States Marine, General Nyland has demonstrated uncompromising character, discerning wisdom, and a sincere, selfless sense of duty to his Marines and members of other services assigned to his numerous joint commands. His powerful leadership inspired the Marines to tremendous success no matter the task, and achieved results which will assure the United States' security in this hemisphere and overseas.

General Nyland concludes his illustrious career as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. In this capacity, he has been the principal advisor to the Commandant of the Marine Corps on all decisions of major consequence. His extensive and diverse background in operational and joint planning, professional military education and training, and budgetary and programmatic policy issues have been given wide credibility by decision makers in the Department of the Navy, the Joint Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the United States Congress.

General Nyland has made a lasting contribution to the capabilities of today's Marine Corps and the future shape of tomorrow's Corps. We are grateful for General Nyland's

dedication, sense of duty, advice and counsel. The Marine Corps will miss him, but General Nyland leaves a tremendous legacy for others to follow and emulate. I wish General Nyland and his lovely wife, Brenda, daughters, Brandy and Leslie, and son, Matthew, congratulations and all best wishes as they enter this new chapter of their lives.

COMPELLING SERIES ABOUT VA
FUNDING SHORTFALLS IN
NORTHWEST PAPER

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I am placing an article from the July 25, 2005, Seattle Times newspaper into the Congressional Record because I think it is important that all of my colleagues understand the real world impact underfunding the VA is having on veterans suffering from mental disabilities.

To those who say that VA is adequately funded, I say read this article. Spending on VA mental health care services, adjusted for inflation, is \$630 million below the level in 1996, despite an 11 percent increase in veterans seeking services. During that same 1996-2003 period, overall mental health staffing for the seriously mentally ill declined by 31 percent, and funding for drug and alcohol treatment dropped by 54 percent.

VA mental health professionals have been asked to cut back on the number of sessions offered to veterans on a monthly basis, to cut back on the time allotted for each session, lengthen the time between visits, and drop some patients altogether.

It is unacceptable to treat those who have served our country with such disdain. The President and Congress have found trillions of dollars to provide tax cuts to wealthy individuals and profitable corporations. And Congress and the President will send tens of billions of dollars to foreign governments this year. Clearly there is enough money to adequately provide for our veterans. The President and Congress have simply chosen not to make caring for veterans a priority. That has to change, immediately.

[From the Seattle Times, July 25, 2005]

VA STRAINING TO TREAT POST-TRAUMATIC
STRESS

(By Hal Bernton)

ABERDEEN—During counseling, Vietnam veteran Rod Chenoweth always sits in the same place—a blue fabric couch carefully positioned in a corner to give his body the protective cover of a side and rear wall as he talks about his life.

He recounts an argument that left him seething in anger. He talks about an evening flashback to the grenade that wounded him in the leg and killed his 19-year-old buddy.

Chenoweth says the therapy, paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), has helped pull him back from thoughts of suicide and other self-destructive acts in a life scarred by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—a war injury that ranks among the most common and the most difficult to heal.

Starting in July, Chenoweth's sessions with Aberdeen therapist Jack Dutro have been reduced from twice to once a month, a cut that comes as thousands of Iraq war veterans join those of previous wars in seeking treatment from the strained VA.

"I can understand that the new veterans need to be dealt with," said Chenoweth, 56. "But it's going to be tough. Jack has been a lifesaver."

The agency is required by law to take care of the war wounds of all combat veterans.

But the agency's PTSD experts, in a report delivered last fall to Congress, warned that the VA "does not have sufficient capacity to meet the needs of new combat veterans while still providing for the veterans of past wars."

Internal reports show the VA's mental-health network has been frayed by years of staffing cuts and budgets that failed to keep pace with the growth in patients.

According to an internal review of the agency's budget, delivered to Congress in September, problems have been years in the making:

Between 1996 and 2003, annual spending for treatment of the serious mentally ill increased from \$2.16 billion to \$2.4 billion. But when those budgets were adjusted for inflation in medical costs—the increased costs of salaries and services—spending in 2003 was actually \$630 million below the 1996 level. Meanwhile, the number of veterans seeking those services climbed by 11 percent.

During the same period, overall mental-health staffing for the seriously ill declined by 31 percent.

Drug and alcohol treatment for the seriously mentally ill, often a critical part of the program for those seeking PTSD therapy, has been the hardest hit. Annual funding, adjusted for inflation, dropped by 54 percent nationwide between 1996 and 2003.

"It's been a perfect storm of rising needs and tight resources," said Tom Schumacher, who directs a Washington state effort to assist PTSD veterans.

The Northwest VA network has fared better than most of the nation, avoiding many of the staff cuts that hit other regions.

But the four-state region that includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska also is one of the busiest hubs of treatment. The PTSD patient load alone has increased from 3,194 in 1996 to 4,671 in 2004.

To help manage the crunch, the VA Puget Sound Health Care System earlier this year imposed new restrictions on PTSD therapy for veterans who already have undergone at least six months of treatment.

The VA guidelines now call for no more than once-a-month individual therapy, or twice-a-month group therapy. Those apply to Puget Sound-area clinics and a network of VA-funded private therapists who work around the state.

Dr. Miles McFall, director of PTSD programs at the VA Puget Sound, said that more frequent therapy does not necessarily help, and those in trouble are welcome to check into an inpatient VA hospital clinic.

"Even if money was not an issue, this is what we should be doing," he said. "We care about our Vietnam vets. We're not going to turn our backs on them."

Other therapists say while some veterans can handle less treatment, the more unstable ones may suffer setbacks.

"Some of them are devastated and feel like they have been abandoned one more time," said Jim Shoop, a Mount Vernon counselor. He said his office is reducing service to more than 50 vets with PTSD.

A LIFETIME OF TROUBLE

Soldiers have always suffered from the mental wounds of war.

But the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder only emerged in 1979 in the aftermath of the Vietnam War as tens of thousands of distraught veterans, suffering from flashbacks, sleeplessness, anger and other symptoms, poured into VA hospitals.

By 1988, the VA estimated that 479,000 vets suffered PTSD symptoms.