

it was a recommendation contained in the February 2004 Government Accountability Office report on the Office of Compliance, which stated that allowing these individuals to serve for more time will increase the institutional continuity and therefore potentially the effectiveness of the organization.

I believe that this is a better serving of our institution and that the current executive staff who have the opportunity to serve an additional term so the Congress that way can evaluate and decide how best to move forward with the GAO's recommendation.

I appreciate the gentlewoman's work and her staff on this issue. Again, I think this will better serve us and the Office of Compliance and our constituents and the staff of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3071, a resolution permitting the individuals currently serving as Executive Director, Deputy Executive Directors, and General Counsel of the Office of Compliance to serve one additional term. A February 2004 Government Accountability Office report on the Office of Compliance, concluded that allowing these individuals to serve for longer than one term could increase the institutional continuity and potentially the effectiveness of the organization.

Though the statute originally limited staff to one term, the flexibility to have the executive staff serve for an additional term, may better serve the institution and we must have some way of evaluating the GAO's recommendation. Therefore the current executive staff will have the opportunity to serve one additional term. When their terms have expired the Congress can re-evaluate whether term limits serve the interests of the Office of Compliance and this institution.

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I further reserve my right to object and thank the chairman for his explanation.

I do now join the chairman in support of his request to permit the incumbent Executive Director, the two Deputy Executive Directors, and the General Counsel of the Office of Compliance to serve second 5-year terms.

The Congress passed the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 and created the Office of Compliance as a reform design to ensure that Congress must live under the same laws as everybody else. The Act limited the service of the office board of directors and of its senior staff to single 5-year terms. Last year, Congress unanimously passed legislation allowing the members of board to serve second 5-year terms.

This bill will allow the four incumbent senior staffers who must otherwise leave their posts later this year also for an additional 5 years. In a recent report requested by the House Committee on Appropriations, the Government Accountability Office concluded that this change would enhance the Compliance Office's business continuity. In recent testimony before the Senate appropriations legislative branch subcommittee, the board of directors requested such a change for that reason.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the changes make sense. I urge the House to support the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

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

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the bill, as follows:

H.R. 3071

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

SECTION 1. PERMITTING CURRENT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS, AND GENERAL COUNSEL OF OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE TO SERVE ONE ADDITIONAL TERM.

(a) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—Notwithstanding section 302(a)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1382(a)(3)), the individual serving as Executive Director of the Office of Compliance as of the date of the enactment of this Act may serve one additional term.

(b) DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS.—Notwithstanding section 302(b)(2) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 1382(b)(2)), any individual serving as a Deputy Executive Director of the Office of Compliance as of the date of the enactment of this Act may serve one additional term.

(c) GENERAL COUNSEL.—Notwithstanding section 302(c)(5) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 1382(c)(5)), the individual serving as General Counsel of the Office of Compliance as of the date of the enactment of this Act may serve one additional term.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEY. 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. 3071.

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

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 345 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 345

Resolved, That it shall be in order at any time on the legislative day of Thursday, June 30, 2005, for the Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules. The Speaker or his designee shall consult with the Minority Leader or her designee on the designation of any matter for consideration pursuant to this resolution.

SEC. 2. Upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order, any rule of the House to the contrary notwithstanding, to consider concurrent resolutions providing for adjournment of the House and Senate during the month of July.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

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

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 345 provides that suspensions will be in order at any time on this legislative day. The resolution also provides that the Speaker or his designee shall consult with the minority leader, or her designee, on any suspension considered under the rule. Additionally, the rule provides that it shall be in order, any rule of the House to the contrary notwithstanding, to consider concurrent resolutions providing for adjournment of the House and Senate during the month of July.

Mr. Speaker, the leadership of this House set out a positive and aggressive legislative plan for this week on behalf of the American people. The goal of this plan has been to pass a number of bills that will allow for USAID to foreign nations, transportation and infrastructure improvements for our Nation, improved housing for those in need, and important funding for executive agencies and our judiciary along with the District of Columbia.

I want to particularly commend the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) and his Committee on Appropriations and the staff for sticking to the time table that they laid out at the start of this session. As of today, the House has passed all 11 appropriations bills prior to the July 4 district work period. And I note that the ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations is also on the floor and we certainly appreciate the work that he and his committee members and staff have also put into that. It is a tremendous accomplishment that the House has completed its appropriations work prior to the July 4 work period.

We now await action from the Senate so that we may finish the appropriations process and avoid a cumbersome omnibus funding bill at the end of the year.

This week we have spirited debate, particularly on the previous two appropriations bills, the Foreign Operations appropriations bill and Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill.

I understand that Members on both sides of the aisle have differing viewpoints on how to address these issues, and we have had the opportunity to hear that spirited debate from both sides of the aisle on all of these issues. But some of this legislation that also needs to be considered this week has broad support among Members of both the majority and minority. In an attempt to make sure that this important work is completed by the end of this legislative week, we are here today

to pass a rule to provide a process for consideration of these bills under rules that would require them to pass by a two-thirds majority. This will allow us to consider items in a timely manner and ensure that last minute issues are resolved prior to adjournment for the Fourth of July work period.

This balanced rule provides the minority with the ability to consult with the Speaker on any suspension bill offered, ensuring that input and views are duly considered before any legislation considered under the rule is brought to the floor.

I am proud of the accomplishments of this House over the last weeks and months. I now ask my colleagues to support this rule so that we may continue the work of the American people in a timely fashion this evening. Completing consideration of these suspensions ensures that Congress may accomplish as much as possible before we return to work in our home States and districts and observe our Nation's birthday.

□ 1915

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this balanced rule.

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

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

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM), for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman from Florida has explained, this rule would do two things. It would allow the House to consider legislation under suspension of the rules, and it would waive a provision in the Congressional Budget Act that prohibits the House from adjourning for more than 3 days unless it has completed consideration on reconciliation.

Mr. Speaker, in general, I think far too much of the legislation passed around here is done by suspension, a process that waives all House rules and prohibits all amendments, and even precludes a motion to recommit. Having that said, however, I must add that tonight is somewhat different.

I would ordinarily have more concern about allowing yet another day for considering legislation in this manner, but I do realize that in limited instances, it may be necessary to waive this rule in order to expedite legislation that is truly emergency in nature. It is evident today that two of the four items which are to be considered under suspension are indeed particularly urgent.

One is the temporary extension of the highway bill. Without this legislation, the highway programs will be shut down and significant layoffs will occur. I am hopeful, as I am sure many

of my colleagues are as well, that this will be the last time that we will have to pass a short-term extension of this bill. The conferees must finish their work on the highway authorization bill quickly so we can begin building and repairing our Nation's decaying highways and infrastructure.

The other critical bill before us today is the emergency supplemental bill for veterans medical care. We Democrats attempted to address this emerging veterans crisis earlier this week when we advocated for the Edwards amendment and also in March when the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) brought in a resolution asking for an amendment to be approved by the Committee on Rules to include \$1.3 billion more. They were turned down.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is being flooded with veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, four times as many as had originally been budgeted for. Trying to help 103,000 of our brave men and women with a budget designed to assist just over 25,000 has produced a shortfall in the Veterans Department funds of more than \$1 billion this year, a staggering sum.

The gentleman from Texas' (Mr. EDWARDS) amendment would have filled in a shameful gap between our Nation's professed support for its veterans and its actual action on their behalf; but, Mr. Speaker, the Republican majority in our House was not concerned with this chasm separating rhetoric from reality.

As I said, the Edwards amendment was voted down on a party-line vote. Not a single Republican voted for the necessary health care for our wounded veterans; and on the emergency supplemental bill, as I mentioned before, the Baird-Hooley amendment to provide \$1.3 billion that was in March was not allowed by the Committee on Rules on a party-line vote.

This issue is not about Republicans or Democrats. It is about our soldiers. We have a patriotic duty to uphold our end of the bargain and properly care for the fighting men and women of this country.

This is a sacred bond of trust, a contract that the majority has violated; but my fellow Americans believe that refusing to care for our veterans after having voted to send them to war is the height of hypocrisy, and the public is outraged.

As a result, House Republicans have reversed course. They received the wake-up call. They have come back to the table so we can hammer out the funding we need to care for our troops, as we should have earlier this week and in March.

This is a pattern that has become all too familiar. The majority does something unpopular, the public gets incensed, and the majority backs off. It has happened over and over with the ethics crisis in the House. It happened with the recent Republican attempt to

kill public broadcasting in America; and now less than 7 days later, they are at it again, having to fess up to the fact that their priorities are out of step with the American people, their values are out of the mainstream.

Have they had a change of heart regarding the issue before us? Perhaps, or perhaps they just do not want to go home to July 4th parades in their districts before they have dealt with the tangible and pressing need of the veterans they will be saluting.

Let me say I find it absolutely scandalous that the Veterans Administration failed to tell us of this shortfall.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while I give my friends on the right credit for admitting their error and working to fix it, I regret to report that their proposed solution is just not good enough.

They have proposed increasing veterans spending by \$975 million, which is still \$25 million short of what the Veterans Affairs Department says it needs just this year, and more than half a billion dollars short of what the Senate pledged yesterday. Their bill does nothing to address the issue of veterans funding in 2006, where we are told there will be another more than \$1 billion deficit.

I hope and pray we do not have to have this embarrassing debate again next year and can instead solve this problem now. We should always remember, Mr. Speaker, that it is easy to make the right decision when the whole world is watching, but what defines our character is what we do when no one is watching.

The Members of the majority have repeatedly been coerced by popular pressure into doing what is right when all eyes are on them. Now, both I and my colleagues on the Democratic side implore them to do something more: to summon the courage and the wisdom to do what is right when the only eyes on them are their own.

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

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

I appreciate the gentlewoman's comments and certainly understand the importance that she has placed on us rectifying the situation with regard to veterans funding and as it relates to highway spending.

I am glad that the House by unanimous consent, before we took this rule up, adopted the extension of the existing highway authorization. So I am glad we have taken that off the table. It is precisely the type of immediate action that we need to take before we go home for the district work period.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE).

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the time.

We have actually done some good things for veterans over the last 4 years. I would like to point those out.

We have passed concurrent receipt legislation which we have been trying

to get done for a period of time. Death and survivor benefits have certainly been very helpful to servicemembers over the past 4 years. The VA budget has been increased from \$48 billion to \$68 billion, a 42 percent increase; and nearly 5 million veterans receive health care benefit services this year, which is about 1 million more than 4 years ago. So many good things have happened.

I realize that the current shortfall is really unacceptable and would like to comment that even though this was due to an actuarial miscalculation, certainly was unintentional and certainly is fixable, we do find that some of our rural veterans are really struggling for health care.

Many of these people have to travel long distances; and the older they get and the sicker they get, the more difficult it is to get them health care. They often have to have a friend, a child, drive them down one day. The next day they come back, and it may be for very routine issues such as blood pressure, adjustment of medications and so on.

What I am saying here at this particular time is that this seems to be a neglected group, and oftentimes our rural veterans are the people who really serve our country in the highest number, highest percentages.

What we would like to propose is that legislation that I have introduced, H.R. 1741, the Rural Veterans Access to Care Act, would establish a pilot program to assist highly rural or geographically remote veterans who are enrolled in the VA and are obtaining primary health care at a medical facility closer to home, in other words, their local hospital. If they need to adjust their medications, they can go and check there, and VA reimburses them for that. This would, I think, in some cases save money. It certainly would provide a lot more services for those who badly need the health care.

I would just like to make that comment, and I thank the gentleman for his time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD).

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out two things: first of all, in response to my dear friend from Nebraska, when he mentioned that the majority, or that this body, had passed or fixed concurrent receipt, he neglected to mention that was following a Democratic discharge petition that essentially shamed the majority into doing something that the administration had opposed, the Republican majority had opposed. They finally did it in the late term of the last Congress, just in time for an election; but they still did not put in a permanent fix for it.

When the gentleman talked about the other things that the majority party has supposedly done for veterans, he neglected that just a couple of weeks ago, right here on this floor, the

majority party rejected the gentleman from Mississippi's (Mr. TAYLOR) passionate request that we provide additional TRIO health care access to Guardsmen and Reservists. They rejected that.

So to come here and say look at what all we have done for veterans is mighty hypocritical when you know the full record.

Let me talk about what happened this past March. I have worked in VA hospitals as a clinical psychologist with returning veterans. We had Task Force Olympia coming back to my region, and I said we have got thousands of soldiers coming back and it is a logical, reasonable question to say do we have the resources in place to treat those soldiers and their families when they come back.

I worked with the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY), and we held a whole series of meetings with veterans and their families, and the veterans said, we are not getting the care already that we need. We talked to staff within the veterans hospital, and they told us, we are not meeting the demands of the people already back home, let alone do we have the capacity to meet the demands of thousands coming back.

Based on that information and other information we had gleaned from prior hearings within this Congress, the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) and I offered an amendment to the supplemental appropriations bill to provide \$1.3 billion to make sure that those veterans came back and got the care they needed.

The distinguished gentleman from Florida was part of the Committee on Rules that voted unanimously to not allow that amendment to be brought to the floor. Had we brought that amendment to the floor and passed it as part of the emergency supplemental, we would not be having this debate, veterans would not be waiting in lines, their families would be receiving the services they need, and we would be honoring our commitments to the men and women who served.

Instead, what we are doing now months later is trying to jerryrig something that we could have solved. You have let the veterans and their families down. It is a historical fact. It is a current reality, and it is shameful.

The President in his speech the other night said let us all wave flags on July 4th. We are all for the flag and we are all for our soldiers; but when the rubber meets the road, when the time comes to armor the Humvees, to equip our soldiers, to adequately provide for their health care before they deploy, to take care of them when they come back, you folks are AWOL.

We could do the right thing tonight. We could do the right thing tonight, pass a bill through the House that would immediately be taken up by the Senate and immediately pass and get the money into the system that it needs. We are not going to do that;

and, yet again, we are not going to do the right thing because of the opposition of the majority party which will then somehow claim that they stood up for veterans, and I think that is a disgrace, and it is inaccurate compared to the historical record.

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

The gentleman attempted to give his version of the history. The history speaks for itself.

Concurrent receipts is an issue that was never brought to the floor under the Democratic majority. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), a champion for veterans, filed that bill year after year after year for over a decade. It did not get a hearing until the Republicans took over. It was the Republican majority that passed it. It is under Republican leadership that funding per veteran has nearly doubled.

Where the rubber meets the road, as the gentleman put it, has been in funding and support for America's soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and our veterans; and it is unfortunate that we had this actuarial model problem, but the fact of the matter is this rule allows us to fix it tonight. I hope my colleagues will support that rule. Because of that fact, it is freeing up those funds for our veterans to correct this problem. It is also allowing us to move forward on other issues before we go home for the 4th of July work period.

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) for a unanimous consent request.

(Mr. BAIRD asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks, and include extraneous material.)

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the report from the Committee on the Budget hearing in which the majority denied our efforts to add the \$1.3 billion back in March.

The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The Committee anticipates that the waiver includes: Rule XIII, clause 4 of House rules (requiring a three-day layover of the committee report and requiring the three-day availability of printed hearings on a general appropriation bill); Section 306 of the Congressional Budget Act (prohibiting consideration of legislation within the jurisdiction of the Committee on the Budget unless reported by the Budget Committee); and Section 401 of the Congressional Budget Act (prohibiting consideration of budget-related legislation, as reported, that is not subject to annual appropriations).

COMMITTEE VOTES

Pursuant to clause 3(b) of House rule XIII the results of each record vote on an amendment or motion to report, together with the names of those voting for and against, are printed below:

Rules Committee Record Vote No. 10

Date: March 14, 2005.

Measure: H.R. 1268, Making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes.

Motion by: Mrs. Slaughter.

Summary of motion: To make in order and provide the appropriate waivers to the amendment offered by Rep. Hooley to add \$1.3 billion in funding to the FY06 Supplemental Appropriations bill to provide health care and readjustment assistance to the veterans of Iraq and the War on Terror. Specifically, the amendment would provide \$1.2 billion for the Veterans Health Administration and \$100 million for the reintegration of Army National Guard members being released from active duty.

Results: Defeated 3 to 9.

Vote by Members: Diaz-Balart—Nay; Hastings (WA)—Nay; Sessions—Nay; Putnam—Nay; Capito—Nay; Cole—Nay; Bishop—Nay; Gingrey—Nay; Slaughter—Yea; McGovern—Yea; Hastings (FL)—Yea; Dreier—Nay.

Rules Committee Record Vote No. 11

Date: March 14, 2005.

Measure: H.R. 1268, Making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes.

Motion by: Mr. McGovern

Summary of motion: To make in order and provide the appropriate waivers to the amendment offered by Rep. Tierney to establish a select committee to study, among other things, the bidding, contracting, and auditing standards in the issuance of government contracts; the oversight procedures and forms of payment and safeguards against money laundering; the accountability of contractors and government officials involved in procurement; and the allocation of contracts to foreign companies and small businesses.

Results: Defeated 3 to 9.

Vote by Members: Diaz-Balart—Nay; Hastings (WA)—Nay; Sessions—Nay; Putnam—Nay; Capito—Nay; Cole—Nay; Bishop—Nay; Gingrey—Nay; Slaughter—Yea; McGovern—Yea; Hastings (FL)—Yea; Dreier—Nay.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, all I can say to our Republican friends on the other side of the aisle is: "Welcome Aboard," even if you are a little short and even if you are a little late.

The fact is that for the last 3 years we have had a history of resistance by the majority party in this House to efforts by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) and me to add funding for veterans health care above the amounts that the Republican majority saw fit to provide.

Example: fiscal 2005, the budget resolution. We asked that \$1.3 billion more be made available for veterans health care. We were turned down. In a continuing resolution for fiscal 2005, we tried to add \$2.5 billion for veterans health care. We were turned down.

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As recently as a month ago, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) was called a demagogue by a member of the majority party because he was insisting that the VA estimates were too low and that we needed more money.

Now the VA belatedly admits that they have found a problem. The only problem is even under their story they found it in April and they did not reveal it until now. I would suggest that the VA also has a history of trying to chisel on veterans' benefits. Three years ago, they sent out instructions to

veterans' service officers not to engage in outreach in order to inform veterans what they were entitled to, and we had to scold them day by day on this House floor to try to get them to back off, and they are still being penurious about it.

The sad fact is that tonight what we ought to do is to take what the Senate did. We ought to take the \$1.5 billion that the Senate Appropriations Committee reported out unanimously, every Republican, every Democrat, \$1.5 billion, and they suggested that if we passed that, we could pass it immediately, no need for a conference, and we would be in great shape.

We were told yesterday we should not bother with bringing funding up on the Treasury Transport bill because we wanted to rush bills through that could be signed faster. Well, the best way to get a bill through this place immediately is to take the same number the Senate is taking and pass it.

Let me also simply say that I find amusing this scramble by the majority party leadership to finally get on board in a recognition that veterans need more funding. It was just 6 months ago that the majority party dumped the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) from his chairmanship of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs because he had been too insistent on adding money for veterans' health care. So when he got out of line, you dumped him and you substituted someone you thought would be more compliant with party leadership.

The gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) pointed out to me that this message was on a billboard in a veterans hospital in her district. It reads: "Important: We regret to inform you that, due to budget issues, we can no longer supply meals to patients. Please bring a meal from home if you are going to be in the short-stay unit. We apologize for any inconvenience."

Well, I think this Congress ought to apologize for the inconvenience that they have caused veterans for the past 3 years by refusing to recognize that these budgets are inadequate. We are oh so good at praising the soldiers when the bands are playing and they are going off to war. We have an obligation to be just as enthusiastic in meeting their needs when they come home.

I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and I hope we would vote against the previous question so we can adopt the \$1.5 billion solution which the Senate, on a unanimous basis in the Senate Appropriations Committee, indicated was necessary.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to comment, as the gentleman is aware, that this rule allows us to move that funding as expeditiously as possible. It requires a two-thirds vote from the House to move forward. I am hopeful that he and the rest of his side will support us on this rule so that we can get that fix through. We can then restore the full funding to the veterans that they require.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for his leadership in bringing this rule to the floor that provides for consideration of several suspension bills, including a very important one.

I have heard a lot of bellyaching tonight about what happened before and why we should have done something else, and why did we not do something this way and why did we not do it that way. I suspect that when all the bellyaching is over, that we will have a near unanimous, if not unanimous, vote, at least I hope we do, to provide these resources.

We have a very logical process that we follow. It is according to our rules and according to our traditions. In the Committee on Appropriations we hold hearings in the spring, we take testimony, we provide oversight, we then receive our allocation, and provide the resources every year to meet the needs of our Nation. Again this year, as we did last year, and the year before, and the year before, and the year before, and the year before, the Veterans Administration receives the highest increase of any budget within the entire Federal budget. Year after year after year.

The House has the power of the purse. We set our priorities with the money that we have. Clearly, year after year this budget, the Veterans Administration budget, has been our highest priority. Whether you are a Republican or you are a Democrat, that is the way most Members believe. I feel that. I hear that from my colleagues, both sides of the aisle, members of my subcommittee and members of the full committee. And that is the way we have proceeded. It is not a partisan issue, and I hope we will not make it one tonight. Because at the end of the day, literally, that will be your last vote, and I hope we are all together on it.

What has happened since we had these hearings is that we move rapidly. I think everybody noticed that tonight. The appropriation bills for 2006 are complete. We moved rapidly. But the Veterans Administration has a mid-year annual review, which they had just recently. Ensuing hearings by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, providing oversight, determined that there was a shortfall. The Veterans Administration brought that forward, about \$1 billion, or \$975 million. They also explained that they had a work-around solution, \$600 million out of capital and \$375 million in anticipated reserve that they would utilize to fill that void.

We then held additional hearings, the subcommittee and the Senate authorization committee and the House authorization committee, and what we

have found is that we have an accurate picture now of what that shortfall is. We also have an accurate sense of the Congress that we do not want to work-around solution. We want to provide those resources so that the Veterans Administration does not have to set aside repair and maintenance and acquisition of equipment, MRIs or computers or research equipment or laboratory equipment. We do not want them to have to do that.

So we are going through our normal procedure. And parts of that procedure, when you have to go back and take a look-back at a budget, is a supplemental budget request. This supplemental budget request will be presented for the consideration of the House tonight. The request is to provide that shortfall, \$975 million, to the Veterans Administration to meet the needs to complete 3 more months of this year.

Now, people say, well, \$1 billion, how could they be off \$1 billion? My colleagues, this is a \$30 billion-plus budget. This \$1 billion means they were off by 3 percent, 3 percent, in their estimation. Now, is that unforgivable? Of course not. Is it a mistake? It sure is. And we have a way to resolve that mistake, to fix it, to correct it, and again to show our commitment to our Nation's veterans, especially in a time of war.

We are sending a signal not only to our current veterans, but we are sending a signal to those heroes that are out there in the field today, in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the globe. We want them to know that the commitments we have made to them we will keep, even if it has to be in an extraordinary measure like this.

So I would welcome additional comment. I would welcome the opportunity of those individuals who looked ahead and offered additional resources. But I would ask you to look at the logic of what we are doing. Look at the thread of logic through this whole process. We want to do this right, and I think we have done it right. So let us have the debates tonight. If you feel compelled to say "I told you so," go ahead. But stick with us and vote for this bill and support our veterans in a process that is reliable and is predictable and has a thread of logic all the way through it.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the minority leader.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time and for her leadership on this important issue. I also want to acknowledge the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY). He and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) have been such champions for America's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach this 4th of July, we remember the sacrifice, the vision of our Founding Fathers, the courage, the imagination, and the intellect and values they presented in the Declaration of Independence. Since

then, our country has always been about shared sacrifice in time of war and in time of peace. That is, up until now.

As Americans, we make a simple yet sacred promise to our veterans: You take care of us and we will take care of you. How we repay the service of our veterans speaks volumes about the character of our country. Unfortunately, under Republican leadership, the Congress is failing to keep faith with the veterans who have defended our freedom with their very lives.

Veterans of this country deserve some answers. Why does the Republican leadership in Congress find billions of dollars of tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans but does not find enough money for the veterans who risk their lives for our Nation? Why are veterans' affairs initiatives consistently underfunded and shortchanged, forcing thousands of veterans to wait months for health care? Why did the Bush administration suddenly discover a shortfall when we had been talking about this for months? Democrats and veterans organizations have been saying that the VA has been underfunded for more than 2 years now.

The answer is simple: The shortfall is the direct result of the failed budget policies and misplaced priorities of the Bush administration and the Republican Congress. Republicans here have either been in denial about the plight of our veterans or it simply has not been a priority for them.

This did not have to happen. Veterans across our country did not have to hear that the government had underfunded their health care. Our veterans did not have to give up only part of their patriotism and bravery in defending our Nation. Let today be the day when we begin to enact a GI Bill of Rights, and we can begin by responding to the call from the Senate.

The reason that we are here this evening, and the effect of the motion that is made to the Committee on Rules on the previous question, would say that if we defeat the previous question, the resolution offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) would come to the floor and would fund by \$1.5 billion the needs for veterans' health care.

Senator CRAIG said in a unanimous vote that the appropriators in the Senate voted to authorize the Senate to quickly take up the \$1.5 billion emergency supplemental if the House approves such a measure. So a vote "no" on the previous question says "yes" to bringing up the Edwards resolution, which would immediately send it to the Senate, where they would take it up immediately, pass it, and send it to the President's desk.

Instead, the Republicans are advocating a different position, which is to once again shortchange America's veterans. On a battlefield, Mr. Speaker, the military pledges to leave no soldier behind. As a Nation, let our pledge be that when they return home, we leave

no veteran behind. We can support our veterans with a "no" vote on the previous question, and a "yes" on the Edwards resolution, and a "yes" for our veterans. That would be the appropriate observation of the 4th of July.

Mr. Speaker, I support the President's call for flying the flag on the 4th of July. Let us fly the flag and fund veterans' benefits.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach this Fourth of July, we remember the sacrifice of our Founding Fathers—the courage, the imagination, the intellect, and the values they presented in the Declaration of Independence. And since then, our country has always been about shared sacrifice—when it came to war, and when it came to peace. That is, up until now.

As Americans, we make a simple yet sacred promise to our veterans: "You have taken care of us, so we will take care of you." How we repay the service of our veterans speaks volumes about our national character. Unfortunately under Republican leadership, the Congress is failing to keep faith with the veterans who have defended our freedom with their very lives.

Veterans in this country deserve some answers. Why does the Republican leadership in Congress find billions in tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, but does not find enough money for the veterans who risked their lives for our Nation? Why are Veterans Affairs initiatives consistently underfunded, forcing thousands of veterans to wait months for health care? Why did the Bush Administration suddenly discover a shortfall, when Democrats and veterans have been saying that the VA was underfunded for more than 2 years now?

The answer is simple: this shortfall is the direct result of the failed budget policies and misplaced priorities of the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress.

This did not have to happen. Veterans across our Nation did not have to hear that their government had under funded their health care; our veterans did not give only part of their patriotism and bravery in defending our Nation.

For more than two years, Democrats and veterans' organizations have stood together, calling for adequate funding.

We have sent letters, we have offered amendments, and we have launched a discharge petition to try to force a vote on additional funding for veterans' health care. We have tried time and time again, only to be rebuffed by the Republicans in Congress every step of the way. Vote after vote failed on the party line.

For our latest attempt, we sent a letter, signed by every single Democrat, to President Bush calling for an emergency supplemental to fund VA health care.

It seems that our voices were finally heard. Democrats have made this too hot for the Republicans to handle.

The truth has come out. The Bush Administration and the Republicans in Congress are finally admitting to what we've been saying for 2 years.

And today we have a chance in taking the first step in righting a wrong. The problem is that once again, the Republicans are a day late and dollar short.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has authorized the Senate to quickly take up a

\$1.5 billion emergency supplemental if the House passes the same.

The Chairman of the Senate Veteran's Committee has stated, and I quote, "Clearly there is a disagreement here on the number, but it's clear that we all want to do the right thing for our veterans. We do not want to leave the Department of Veterans Affairs short of funds. Working with our colleagues in the House, I'm sure we can achieve that objective."

The VA desperately needs this funding. And to get it done today the House must pass \$1.5 billion for our veterans.

The ultimate fix would be what veterans and the Ranking Democrat on the Veterans Affairs Committee, LANE EVANS, have been calling for. They are correct, the only way to assure funding for VA health care: make it mandatory.

But let us start today by voting no on the previous question, so we can offer an amendment that would increase the amount for veterans to \$1.5 billion to match the Senate amount.

Caring for our veterans shouldn't be a partisan issue. It should be our number one priority. Our veterans deserve better.

We must fulfill our sacred obligations to those who have worn this Nation's uniform.

My wish is that today's vote will lead to a renewed bipartisan commitment for our veterans.

Let today be the beginning of a new chapter, let today be the day when this government no longer ignores the promises we've made, and provide the support our veterans have earned and deserve.

Let today be the day when we begin ending the Disabled Veterans' Tax for every single veteran.

Let today be the day when we begin fully ending the Military Families Tax.

Let today be the day when we begin to enact a new GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century.

On the battlefield, the military pledges to leave no soldier behind. As a Nation, let it be our pledge that when they return home, we leave no veteran behind.

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD).

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, my friend from New York called this frustration belly-aching. It is not. In my office last month was a wounded veteran from Iraqi Freedom. His leg had been nearly blown off by an IED. He had been repeatedly and routinely denied care just as a default to say "you are not service-connected here." I saw the leg. It was damn near blown off.

Because of shortfalls in funding, the people who have served this country and nearly gave their lives, but did give their limbs, are not getting the care they need. It is more than belly-aching to stand up for them. I would invite the gentleman from New York to do something we do not do very often here. Let us step out of the box and stop the partisan fighting.

Here is the situation here today. If we pass the \$975 million that the ma-

majority is putting forward, there is no way the Senate can conference that before the July 4th recess. The other body has said that if we pass \$1.5 billion in the House, the same bill as theirs, it will be on the President's desk and can be signed and we can do something substantive rather than symbolic before July 4th. What is wrong with doing that for our veterans?

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BAIRD. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, the Senate attached this 2005 funding to an 2006 bill, which will not take effect within the 2005 year. If they take up this bill on a stand-alone basis, the President can sign it tomorrow.

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Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, my understanding is different. The gentleman may be right.

My point is we have tried repeatedly on our side of the aisle to get additional funding for the veterans. We had hearings before the Committee on the Budget. The \$1.3 billion figure that the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) and I tried to add and were defeated by the majority, we did not draw out of thin air. It came from hearings before the Committee on the Budget. Veterans groups, as the gentlemen know, roundly criticized the majority budget as woefully underfunding veterans' needs. This did not come as a surprise. We saw it coming. We tried to tell you it was coming. You denied it repeatedly; and the sad part is for all of our bickering and complaining here, the people who suffered were the soldiers, and they are suffering today. We need to solve this problem.

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

I thank the gentleman from New York for pointing out the flaws in the argument. If we pass the \$975 million tonight, the Senate can take it up tomorrow. The relief is there immediately. It is not a game of political one-upsmanship or the Polk County fair where we have this bidding contest going on.

The \$975 million is out there before the July 4 break. It will be on the Senate's desk for them to take up. That is the responsible approach for this House to adopt at this point in the week as we continue to work through all of our avenues of support to get all of this assistance and help and rehabilitation to the veterans in need.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that if we pass \$1.5 billion, we can do the same thing, take the Senate bill and get it finished tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have been on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for 13 years, and let me say one thing: we do not have a shortage of money here in this Congress. We pass whatever we want whenever we want. The problem is, and I rise on behalf of all of the veterans, the problem is that there is not the will. The veterans are not the priority.

What I said in committee I say on this floor today. We can send \$1.5 billion over to the Senate. They can pick it up, pass it, and tomorrow morning the President will be taking pictures, taking credit for it; but who wins will be the veterans.

I am reminded of the words of the first President of the United States, George Washington, whose words are worth repeating at this time: "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justifiable," and we are going to question that, "will be directly proportionate as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated."

Now let us not sham them. Everybody knows that the veterans need \$3 billion; not \$1 billion, \$3 billion. That is what the independent budget says. The other side of the aisle is not surprised. They know what they need.

Why is it we cannot come together and give them something more than this lip service? You all talk a great talk. Let us all come together and walk the walk for the veterans tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of veterans everywhere. What has been introduced here today is a sham. The emergency supplemental sent over by the President and accepted by the Republican leadership is wholly inadequate. This \$975 million breaks down with money for many needed accounts; however, why should we believe their numbers now?

They lied to us when submitting their budget in February, they lied to us when they came to our committees in April, they did not discuss any issues with the minority members of the Veterans Committee. What do we know that the Senate does not? Why is there more than \$500 million less for veterans in this bill? Why are we still trying to balance the budget on the backs of the veterans?

The 3 surgical operating rooms at the White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont had to be closed on June 27 because the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system was broken and had not been repaired due to the siphoning of maintenance funds to cover the budget shortfall.

The Community Based Outpatient Clinics needed to meet veterans' increased demand for care in the North Florida/South Georgia VA Healthcare System have been delayed due to fiscal constraints. As of April, the Gainesville facility has nearly 700 service-connected veterans waiting for more than 30 days for an appointment. As a result of cost cutting measures to make up for the shortfall in FY 2005, the Portland, Oregon, VA Medical Center is delaying all non-emergent surgery by at least six months. Veterans in need of knee replacement surgery won't be treated because of the budget shortfall.

The goal of the Republicans and President Bush is to delay funding to veterans health. By passing this level of funding, we are guaranteed a conference. That will delay funding. Our veterans cannot wait! Support our Veterans! Defeat the Previous Question and fully fund veterans health care! I am reminded of the words of the first President of the United States, George Washington, whose words are worth repeating at this time:

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country.

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, we are asking young Americans, men and women alike, to fight a war in Iraq, a war in Afghanistan. As we debate funding for veterans tonight, if the Congress is going to err, should we not err a little bit on the side of veterans rather than erring on the side of shortchanging them?

I must say I appreciate the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and his effort in this process to fix a hole in veterans funding that I believe was created by repeated denials of the Republican House leadership at a real cost of providing quality health care for our veterans. It has been going on for 2 years, not 1 or 2 weeks, but 2 years.

I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) for his efforts this week. This bill would move it a step forward. But why in the world would the House Republican leadership refuse to even consider the \$1.5 billion funding level that I think is needed to adequately fund VA health care during a time of war?

Let me put this debate in perspective. Over a year ago, the Republican chairman of the VA committee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), stood up and said in a bipartisan letter to the House Committee on the Budget that if you do not add \$2.5 billion in 2005 to the VA health care budget, we are going to have to cut veterans services during a time of war, and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) said that was wrong, and he was right to say it would be wrong.

How did the House Republican leadership honor the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for standing up for veterans? Did they salute him? No, they fired him. They not only fired him from his position as chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, took him off the Committee on Veterans Affairs' altogether.

Now the same leadership that punished a Member of the House for standing up for veterans during a time of war is asking us on a few minutes' notice to support the funding level for the VA health care crisis that is nearly \$600 million less than that approved on

a bipartisan basis by the United States Senate.

If we are going to err, why not err on the side of veterans? The same people who provided the numbers that put together this bill, it was put together on a partisan basis. I was not approached as ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs to help determine what the number should be.

If this had been done on a bipartisan basis today, perhaps we could have all come up with a number that we all could have agreed upon.

If the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) had his way, I think it would have been done in a bipartisan way. But the decision to make this a partisan bill tonight was made by the same House Republican leadership that chose a year ago to turn its back on veterans when it fired the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for saying we should adequately fund veterans health care.

Let us err on the side of honoring our veterans tonight, not shortchanging them. And the Senate, the other body, has made it perfectly clear that it would take up immediately the bill that we would like to have voted on the House tonight to add \$1.5 billion to VA health care spending for the year 2005.

It is a sad day when Members of this House are punished for standing up for veterans. Let no one on the Republican side of the aisle say these are just Democrats making partisan fights. We have been accused of that for the last 2 years by some who now want to say you were right, our numbers were wrong.

We should come together tonight. I would plead on a bipartisan basis to support the \$1.5 billion funding level for veterans health care that the Senate has already adopted on a bipartisan basis. I would urge the House Republican leadership to stop punishing and intimidating Members of this House who will put their loyalty to veterans above their loyalty to partisanship. Let us do the right thing.

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

The gentleman continues to say this is a partisan issue. I would venture to agree with the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH): the vote on this will be anything but partisan. I would venture to say that the support for restoring the \$975 million mistake that the VA made will be a very broad, bipartisan, nonpartisan vote because I cannot imagine that anybody would stand in the way of that money finding its way into the veterans' hands, and the medical clinics and hospitals that so desperately need it.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) has identified the need as being \$1.5 billion. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) has identified the need as being \$3 billion. The VA and the administration has said it is \$975 million. If we as a House pass

that \$975 million, get it into the hands of the people who need it, if we find between now and the end of the fiscal year, because that is the number that has been stated that is needed for the remainder of the fiscal year, but we will be back here in a week, and if we find that more is needed, without question it would be given again on a broad bipartisan vote.

But we believe that the correct number based on the new actuarial study, based on the request of the Secretary, based on the request of the administration is \$975 million. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) believes it is \$3 billion, but she is only willing to put half of that up by asking for \$1.5 billion. We are willing to fund all that we believe the VA has requested to get them through the remainder of this fiscal year. This is not a partisan issue. This is an issue of huge importance to all of our veterans. I think that all of us on a broad bipartisan basis should pass this rule which allows us to get this money to them.

I want to correct another issue that continues to be repeated by the other side of the aisle. The Senate has not passed a penny for the veterans. It has been reported out of their committee. What we are doing here tonight allows the entire House to act on this appropriations request and get it over there to the Senate as quickly as possible.

As usual, we are ahead of the Senate on this issue, and we are acting as quickly as possible to get them the request the administration has made for the remainder of the fiscal year. It has not been taken up by the Senate. It has not passed out of the Senate, it has only come out of committee. We have put this thing on the fast track to get veterans the help they need.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR).

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, I echo the sentiments of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), who has been a tireless advocate of veterans benefits. I am a veteran and a son of a veteran who has a son who just became a veteran, so I echo the gentleman's sentiments.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our veterans, our troops, and H.R. 3130. Since I was elected, we have buried five soldiers in the Third Congressional District. As we drape our Nation's flag over their coffins, are we supposed to tell their families that our budget prevents them from getting promised benefits? As we celebrate July 4 and march in parades alongside the heroes of World War II, Vietnam, Korea, and the Persian Gulf, are we supposed to tell these veterans that last week's accounting error will prevent them from being seen by a doctor? And that not only will they have to travel 5 hours to see a doctor, but once they get there, they will be turned away?

They did not turn away when we called upon them to serve our country.

They did not turn away from putting their lives on the line for our freedoms. We cannot turn away from them now.

It should not take an emergency or bad press coverage for this administration to care about the health of our Nation's veterans. In a time of war, bringing our troops home safely and taking care of our veterans is our number one priority.

This administration has let our Nation's heroes suffer because of a mismanaged budget. This is absolutely shameful and unacceptable. No one should ever let the troops and veterans be an afterthought. We need to provide this money now. We need to guarantee all future funding for the Veterans Administration so our Nation's heroes never have to suffer from a mismanaged budget again.

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say in response to the comments of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM), he cannot name one Democrat in this House that was approached in putting together this bill dealing with veterans health care. If that is not partisan, I do not know what is.

What were the Republicans afraid of in working with Democrats to come up with a bill to fix the problem that the Republican leadership created? By the way, the same leadership passed a budget resolution this year cutting veterans health care benefits by \$14 billion over the next 5 years. Forgive me if I do not trust that same leadership coming forward with this bill tonight.

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

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Texas is a champion for veterans and has been for years, and I do not take anything away from him on that. But the fact of the matter is that for the last 10 years, veterans funding per veteran has doubled under Republican leadership. The funding overall has continued to grow. It has grown, as the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) pointed out, at the highest rate of any agency in the government. As I said earlier, the vote on this issue will not be a partisan one. Every Member is committed to move this funding to the veterans as quickly as possible.

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

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Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, let me quickly point out that this should come as no surprise. The President's budget for 2005 cut veterans appropriated funding \$248 million below the Congressional Budget Office estimate of what was needed to keep pace for inflation in 2005 and \$13.4 billion below

current services over 5 years. For 2006, the President's budget called the even deeper cuts. Excluding the proposal to impose new and unrealistic fees, it cut funding for veterans appropriated programs \$759 million below current services necessary to keep pace with inflation, \$18 billion below inflation over 5 years.

Democrats have offered alternatives every year on this floor that would have covered the shortfalls the V.A. has identified. In 2005, we offered a budget resolution with \$2.5 billion more than the President requested. In 2006, we offered a budget resolution with \$2.3 billion over the President's request. And every year the outyear funding that we proposed was also substantially more than they proposed, and that is a problem we are not even discussing tonight because consistently what has happened here is there has been a little plus-up in the near term and a flattening out in the long term, and we inherit the consequences and episodes like this.

If we had passed the resolutions that Democrats supported and brought to this floor, we would not be here tonight discussing this bill.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON).

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding me this time.

I always take a keen interest in these debates on veterans' health care issues. I actually work in a veterans' health care facility. I volunteer once a month; I see patients. And I have been doing it for years, and we have seen for years a tremendous explosion in demand for access to our veterans' health care system. And some of it has been generated by this Congress. We relaxed some of the access requirements. Some of it has been generated by the high cost of prescription drugs. A lot of the new patients coming into the system are people who do not have a prescription drug benefit. And, of course, now we have increased demand with the consequence of the war.

And I want to commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM) on this rule. I think it is a good rule, and I want to commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH). He has worked very hard to address this shortfall. And, personally, I think we, as a Congress and as a Committee on Appropriations, need to take a very close look at the bill that we have already passed to address the 2006 needs, and this situation that we are dealing with today, I think, is the right thing for us to do. It is the best thing for our veterans. I know in the State of Florida, where I work and where I live, it has more than doubled, the number of veterans that have come into the system in the last 6 years, and it is truly breathtaking the number of people who are coming into the veterans system on a regular basis.

So I commend the author of this supplemental, and I believe it is the right

thing for us to do for our veterans. We are in a state of war, and we need to send a signal to young people who want to enlist, to people who are serving and the people who have served that the Congress is going to stand with them and we are going to address these needs properly.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD).

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Florida and the gentleman from New York have repeatedly said that this will be a nearly unanimous passage. That may be true because the only thing we can unanimously agree on is the lower number. The Republicans will not agree on the higher number, which is what the veterans need. The Democrats will agree on the lower number because it is all they are really willing to give us. But if they truly cared for the veterans, they would agree with us and we would have unanimous vote on the \$1.5 billion.

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

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

Before I start, I will insert in the RECORD the news release from Senator CRAIG, Committee on Veterans' Affairs chairman, and the New York Times editorial today called "The True Cost of War."

SENATE TO QUICKLY TAKE UP \$1.5 BILLION MEASURE FOR VETERANS IF SENT FROM THE HOUSE

WASHINGTON, DC—The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee retreated its position today that the Department of Veterans Affairs need \$1.5 billion to fill a spending gap for the Department of Veterans Affairs. In a unanimous vote, the appropriators voted to authorize the Senate to quickly take up a \$1.5 billion emergency supplemental if the House approves such a measure.

That action came after the Bush Administration indicated earlier today that the agency needs \$975 million.

"Clearly there is disagreement here on the number, but it's clear that we all want to do the right thing for veterans. We do not want to leave the Department of Veterans Affairs short of funds," said Sen. Larry Craig who serves on the Appropriations Committee and is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "Working with our colleagues in the House, I'm sure we can achieve that objective."

[From the New York Times, Jun. 30, 2005]

THE TRUE COST OF WAR

In anger and embarrassment, Congressional Republicans are scrambling to repair a budget shortfall in veterans' medical care now that the Bush administration has admitted it vastly underestimated the number of returning Iraq and Afghanistan personnel needing treatment. The \$1 billion-plus gaffe is considerable, with the original budget estimate of 23,553 returned veterans needing care this year now ballooning to 103,000. American taxpayers should be even more furious than Congress.

The Capitol's Republican majorities have shown no hesitation in signing the president's serial blank-check supplemental budgets for waging the war, yet they repeatedly ignored months of warnings from Democrats

that returning veterans were being short-changed. One Republican who warned of the problem—Representative Christopher Smith of New Jersey—lost his chairmanship of the Veterans' Affairs Committee after pressing his plea too boldly before the House leadership.

But partisan resistance melted in a flood of political chagrin once the administration admitted the budget error, which was first discovered in April but only now disclosed. The explanation offered—the gaffe was due to using dated formulas based on prewar calculations—left Republicans sputtering all the more.

All wars necessarily involve mismanagement, even successful ones. But there is no excuse for treating the needs of wounded and damaged warriors as a budgetary afterthought. Congressional Republicans were far from innocent victims of administrative ineptitude or deception. After years of approving record tax cuts and budget deficits, they stuck to this year's pre-election script of fictitious "budget tightening" that underestimated inevitable expenses and shortchanged returning veterans with higher health care enrollment fees and drug co-payments. The only comfort for the American public is that unlike many of the war's problems, this one can be repaired, providing partisan combat is suspended in the Capitol.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I am going to be asking Members to vote "no" on the previous question. If the previous question is defeated, I will offer an amendment to the rule that will allow the House to immediately consider H.R. 3136, legislation introduced by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) that provides an immediately desperately needed \$1.5 billion in funding for veterans medical service. This amount is the same level that was approved by the Senate last night and is what is needed to fully care for our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that the White House and the VA were not honest about this shortfall in the first place because if they had been, as the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) said, we would not need to be here tonight. But I think now even the most skeptical of my colleagues in the House realize that our veterans' health care system is in a serious crisis. And while it is encouraging that after feeling the pressure brought to bear by the American people that the Republican leadership has reversed course and agreed to take some action, it is unclear to me why they are providing only \$975 million instead of the full amount needed. How can we believe the same people who told us there was no problem?

Senator CRAIG is asking the leadership of this body to pass a bill and let him have that \$1.5 billion out of here so they can finish work on this in the morning. Clearly, clearly, we must do that for our veterans. Remember, we have a contract with them. When we sent them off to war, we guaranteed that we will meet their needs.

So please vote "no" on the previous question, and we can vote today for full funding of our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the amendment be

printed in the RECORD immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of closing, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), distinguished chairman of the Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations; who has been a champion for veterans funding, who has been there year in and year out. He shepherded, along with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and other Members of this House, the first concurrent receipt bill in the history of this country, double-digit funding increases for veterans, a doubling of funding for veterans over the last decade, a real champion for the veterans.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

After all the speeches and the rhetoric, really the big difference here is the dollar amount. We all realize there is a shortfall. We all support closing the gap. So the issue is \$1.5 billion that the Senate acted on. One Member said it was 3, but I think most people, at least on the opposite side of the aisle, agree that it is \$1.5 billion. We believe it is \$975 million. So everything else really at this point is rhetoric. We just need to try to address that. And I tried for the life of me to figure out where this \$1.5 billion figure came from. I know the Senate is working with that figure, because everything we have heard from the Veterans Administration was that they had a work-around solution to come up with \$600 million out of their capital fund and \$375 million out of their reserve fund to close this gap in different lines of health care within the hospital system, and that would add up to that \$975 million.

The \$1.5 million is still a big question mark, and the only thing I can come up with is that, in a conversation I had with OMB Director Bolten, he mentioned that there may be, they do not know but they are working on it, a shortfall in 2006, in 2006, of somewhere between \$1.1 and \$1.6 billion. And that is 2006. No one, no one, has ever mentioned the fact that there is a shortfall in 2005 of \$1.5 billion. So we have what I think is a number that is provided through a logical process, through testimony in the hearings presented by the head of the health administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary.

This, I believe, is as close to what we can get as what the gap is. Let us support it on a bipartisan basis. Let us support the rule and consider the bill.

The material previously referred to by Ms. SLAUGHTER is as follows:

At the end of the resolution add the following new section:

"SEC. 3. Immediately upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intertention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 3136) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2005 for veterans medical services. The bill shall be considered as read for amendment. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) 60 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

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

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the minimum time for electronic voting, if ordered, on the question of adoption of the resolution.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 216, nays 191, not voting 26, as follows:

[Roll No. 359]

YEAS—216

Aderholt	Conaway	Goodlatte
Akin	Cox	Granger
Alexander	Crenshaw	Graves
Bachus	Cubin	Green (WI)
Baker	Culberson	Gutknecht
Barrett (SC)	Cunningham	Hall
Bartlett (MD)	Davis (KY)	Harris
Barton (TX)	Davis, Jo Ann	Hart
Bass	Davis, Tom	Hastings (WA)
Beauprez	Deal (GA)	Hayes
Biggart	DeLay	Hayworth
Bilirakis	Dent	Hefley
Bishop (UT)	Diaz-Balart, L.	Hensarling
Blackburn	Diaz-Balart, M.	Herger
Blunt	Doolittle	Hobson
Boehlert	Drake	Hoekstra
Bonilla	Dreier	Hostettler
Bonner	Duncan	Hulshof
Bono	Ehlers	Hunter
Boozman	Emerson	Hyde
Boustany	Feeney	Inglis (SC)
Bradley (NH)	Ferguson	Issa
Brady (TX)	Fitzpatrick (PA)	Istook
Brown (SC)	Flake	Jenkins
Brown-Waite,	Foley	Jindal
Ginny	Forbes	Johnson (CT)
Burgess	Fortenberry	Johnson (IL)
Burton (IN)	Fossella	Johnson, Sam
Buyer	Fox	Jones (NC)
Calvert	Franks (AZ)	Kelly
Camp	Frelinghuysen	Kennedy (MN)
Cannon	Gallely	King (IA)
Cantor	Garrett (NJ)	King (NY)
Capito	Gerlach	Kirk
Carter	Gibbons	Kline
Castle	Gilchrest	Knollenberg
Chabot	Gillmor	Kolbe
Chocoma	Gingrey	Kuhl (NY)
Coble	Gohmert	LaHood
Cole (OK)	Goode	Latham

LaTourette
Leach
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel
E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy
Myrick
Neugebauer
Ney
Northup
Nunes
Nussle
Osborne
Otter

NAYS—191

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (PA)
Brown (OH)
Brown, Corrine
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Case
Chandler
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (TN)
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Edwards
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Ford
Frank (MA)
Gonzalez

Oxley
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pombo
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Saxton
Schwarz (MI)
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherwood

Shimkus
Shuster
Simmons
Simpson
Smith (TX)
Sodrel
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Sweeney
Tancredo
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walden (OR)
Walsh
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

Waxman
Weiner
Berman
Boehner
Butterfield
Cardin
Cramer
English (PA)
Everett
Harman
Higgins

Wexler
Woolsey
NOT VOTING—26
Keller
Kingston
Mugrave
Norwood
Oberstar
Paul
Peterson (PA)
Radanovich
Rahall

Wu
Wynn
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Ross
Schiff
Smith (NJ)
Solis
Waters
Wicker

□ 2030

So the previous question was ordered.
The result of the vote was announced
as above recorded.

Stated against:
Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote
No. 359 on H. Res. 345 concerning the
previous question, I was unavoidably detained.
Had I been present, I would have voted "nay".

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No.
359, had I been present, I would have voted
"nay."

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr.
SIMPSON). The question is on the reso-
lution.

The resolution was agreed to.
A motion to reconsider was laid on
the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant
to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair
will postpone further proceedings
today on motions to suspend the rules
on which a recorded vote or the yeas
and nays are ordered, or on which the
vote is objected to under clause 6 of
rule XX.

RECORD votes on postponed questions
will be taken later today.

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE
HOUSE THAT A CHINESE STATE-
OWNED ENERGY COMPANY
COULD TAKE ACTION THAT
WOULD THREATEN THE UNITED
STATES

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to sus-
pend the rules and agree to the resolu-
tion (H. Res. 344) expressing the sense
of the House of Representatives that a
Chinese state-owned energy company
exercising control of critical United
States energy infrastructure and en-
ergy production capacity could take
action that would threaten to impair
the national security of the United
States.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 344

Whereas oil and natural gas resources are
strategic assets critical to national security
and the Nation's economic prosperity;

Whereas the global demand for oil and nat-
ural gas is at the highest levels in history;

Whereas the global excess capacity of oil
production, at between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000
barrels per day, is at its lowest level in the
past several decades, contributing to world
oil prices reaching historic highs of above \$60
per barrel;

Whereas natural gas globally is the fastest
growing component of primary energy con-
sumption, projected to increase by nearly 70
percent by 2025;

Whereas the National Security Strategy of
the United States approved by President
George W. Bush on September 17, 2002, con-
cludes that the People's Republic of China
remains strongly committed to national one-
party rule by the Communist Party;

Whereas China's daily consumption of
crude oil grew by nearly 850,000 barrels in
2004, accounting for more than one-third of
the increase in world demand for oil in 2004;

Whereas China's consumption of crude oil
is expected to grow by an additional 7.5 per-
cent in 2005, and world oil prices are pro-
jected to rise significantly as a result of in-
creasing demand from China for oil;

Whereas notwithstanding the increasing
demand from China for oil, domestic Chinese
output of oil has remained relatively stag-
nant;

Whereas on June 23, 2005, the China Na-
tional Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) an-
nounced its intent to acquire Unocal Cor-
poration, in the face of a competing bid for
Unocal Corporation from Chevron Corpora-
tion;

Whereas the People's Republic of China
owns approximately 70 percent of CNOOC;

Whereas a significant portion of the
CNOOC acquisition is to be financed and
heavily subsidized by banks owned by the
People's Republic of China;

Whereas Unocal Corporation is based in
the United States, and has approximately
1,750,000,000 barrels of oil equivalent, with its
core operating areas in Southeast Asia, Alas-
ka, Canada, and the lower 48 States;

Whereas CNOOC has made various rep-
resentations about its intention to sell oil
developed in the Gulf of Mexico to the
United States, but has not made any com-
mitment to sell other natural gas and oil it
develops into global energy markets instead
of shipping it directly to China;

Whereas a CNOOC acquisition of Unocal
Corporation would result in the strategic as-
sets of Unocal Corporation being preferen-
tially allocated to China by the Chinese Gov-
ernment;

Whereas a Chinese Government acquisition
of Unocal Corporation would weaken the
ability of the United States to influence the
oil and gas supplies of the Nation through
companies that must adhere to United
States laws;

Whereas Unocal Corporation was respon-
sible for the production of energy equivalent
to approximately 411,000 barrels of oil per
day in 2004, which is approximately one-third
of all global excess oil production capacity;

Whereas CNOOC's control of Unocal Cor-
poration's productive capacity would mean
control of approximately one-third of all
global excess oil production capacity;

Whereas the petroleum sector uses a range
of sensitive technologies for exploration
(such as seismic analysis and processing,
downhole logging sensors, and modeling soft-
ware), production, and refining (such as pro-
cessing technologies and equipment), includ-
ing technologies that have "dual-use" com-
mercial and military applications;

Whereas several of the technologies used in
oil and energy production require export li-
censing for export from the United States to
China;

Whereas the CNOOC acquisition of Unocal
Corporation could provide access to Unocal
Corporation's sensitive dual-use technologies
that the United States would otherwise re-
strict for export to China;

Whereas oil companies owned by the Peo-
ple's Republic of China are active in parts of
the world, such as Sudan and Iran, that are
subject to United States sanctions laws, and
the national security of the United States is
threatened by the export of sensitive, export
controlled, and dual-use technologies to such
countries;