

Mr. Speaker, when the President says support our troops, support our troops, support our troops, and then does not provide the adequate funding when those troops come home, we are not doing the job that we should be doing to thank the veterans for their service. It is time to adequately fund the health care budget. It is time to listen to the Independent Budget. It is time for the chairman to listen to those who have been saying this for years. It is time to show proper respect for the veterans who have given us our freedom today.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge everybody to support H.R. 1220, everyone in this body. I do not think there is a reason why anybody should be voting against it. It is a very important piece of legislation. But I would like to echo what the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) has so eloquently stated in his floor remarks.

When I go home and talk to my veterans, they look to me for my help and my support in providing the health care that they so justly deserve and are entitled to. This Congress needs to step up to the plate and do what we know is right. We cannot continue short-changing our veterans. We cannot continue low-balling them, taking the lowest number, when we know it is the highest number that will barely suffice to provide for the health care needs of our veterans.

Our older veterans, Vietnam, Korea, World War II, some left in World War I, these men and women age, and they are continuing to age. We will have hundreds of thousands of veterans from our latest operations across the globe. Let us be farsighted. Let us be prepared for what is coming. And let none of us, none of us, have the temerity or the audacity to state that we did not know what the needs of the veterans were or what they will be confronted with in the near future. Let us all be on the same page, work in a bipartisan way, and let us do what is right for our veterans. And let us pass unanimously H.R. 1220.

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the ranking member of the committee, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), for his work and cooperation on this legislation. I also would like to say to him that he is a champion of Parkinson's Disease, and I am proud of his leadership by example and I am proud of his spirit to live and equally am proud to call him my friend.

I also commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY), the chairman and ranking member on

the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, for their timely work concerning H.R. 1220, ensuring that disabled veterans and their survivors receive their COLA.

I would also like to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), the chairman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, for their hard work on reaching a compromise on the authorization of the demonstration project.

I am equally appreciative of the hard work of the staff directors of the majority and the minority, Art Wu and Len Sitek for their work to improve the bill.

□ 1115

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Veterans Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2005.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1220, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2005.

All too often, our veterans and their dependents are forced to pay unexpected medical fees and sometimes forced to juggle their finances just to make ends meet. By increasing the COLA we would help ease these burdens forced upon our veterans and their dependents. Our veterans deserve and need this assistance now.

This legislation is especially important to me because my Congressional District of El Paso, Texas is home to nearly 60,000 veterans.

These brave men and women have made tremendous sacrifices for our freedom, just as our servicemembers are currently doing in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is our responsibility as Members of Congress to take care of our Nation's heroes so that we can fulfill our promises to our veterans after their service to our country.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee favorably passed H.R. 1220 and I would urge all my colleagues to do the same on the House floor.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1220, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, which will increase, effective December 1, 2005, the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain disabled veterans. As in previous years, these deserving men and women will receive the same cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) that Social Security recipients are scheduled to receive, and as a cosponsor of H.R. 1220, I am pleased that we are acting to provide disabled veterans and their survivors with an annual COLA.

In the 108th Congress, we created an additional Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payment of \$250 a month provided for the first two years of DIC eligibility to surviving spouses with minor children. This new benefit is aimed at easing the transition following the death of the servicemember or veteran. H.R. 1220, as amended, would also increase the amount of this additional assistance by the same COLA.

I am pleased that the amended bill also includes the provisions from H.R. 2988, the Vet-

erans Medical Care Revenue Enhancement Act of 2005. This is a bill that I introduced which authorizes a two-year demonstration project to improve business practices within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) relating to third-party billing collections.

When Congress gave the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the authority to collect payment from insurance companies for the treatment of non-service connected conditions, the funds collected were returned to the U.S. Treasury. At one point, the VA acknowledged that it did a poor job of collecting payments from insurance companies because it had no real incentive to do so. As a result, in 1997 Congress gave VA the authority to retain any third party collections recovered.

Despite improvements in VA's third-party collections, there continue to be weaknesses in the billing and collections processes that impair the VA's ability to maximize the amount of dollars paid by third-party insurance companies. In June, the VA briefed the staff of the Veterans' Affairs Committee that the Department has about \$600 million in outstanding payments that have been billed but not collected from third-party insurers. Collecting these funds would be a significant revenue source for the Department which could improve its ability to provide health care services to our Nation's veterans.

H.R. 1220 creates a modest \$10 million demonstration project to improve the VA's business practices at two sites that have low collections rates. It is our hope that this demonstration project will lead to improved collection practices by the VA.

Finally, H.R. 1220 would permanently authorize six Parkinson's Disease Research Education and Clinical Centers with the VA.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1220.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1220, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BUYER. 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. 1220, as amended, the bill just passed.

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

There was no objection.

MAKING PERMANENT THE AUTHORITY OF THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE TO CONDUCT THE QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT PROGRAM

Mr. TURNER of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the

bill (H.R. 2385) to make permanent the authority of the Secretary of Commerce to conduct the quarterly financial report program, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2385

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

SECTION 1. TEN-YEAR EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF COMMERCE TO CONDUCT THE QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT PROGRAM.

Section 4(b) of the Act entitled "An Act to amend title 13, United States Code, to transfer responsibility for the quarterly financial report from the Federal Trade Commission to the Secretary of Commerce, and for other purposes", approved January 12, 1983 (Public Law 97-454; 13 U.S.C. 91 note), is amended by striking "2005" and inserting "2015".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TURNER. 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. 2385.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee on Government Reform, H.R. 2385 reauthorizes the Secretary of Commerce to conduct the Quarterly Financial Report Program through 2015. The purpose of this bill is to ensure uninterrupted continuation of this well-established and indispensable program. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

The Quarterly Financial Report, or QFR program, has been conducted uninterrupted since its inception in 1947. It provides ongoing, up-to-date statistics on the financial performance of the manufacturing, mining, wholesale and retail trade sectors of our economy. QFR is the sole source for this information.

Many public and private organizations rely on QFR data to make economic policy decisions based upon quality information. For example, the Commerce Department uses QFR data to develop the all-important gross domestic product and national incomes estimates. The Federal Reserve uses QFR data to assess industry debt structure, liquidity and profitability. The Treasury Department uses QFR to estimate corporate tax liability. And the Council of Economic Advisers uses QFR-based reports and analysis to develop economic policy proposals.

In short, the data gathered from the QFR program affects everyone from Wall Street to Main Street. The QFR is the Nation's most current and com-

prehensive source of data on corporate financial activity. Federal Reserve Chairman Greenspan is on record stating that if anything, it would be desirable to expand the program to more sectors of the economy.

Originally, H.R. 2385 would have given the Secretary of Commerce permanent authority to conduct the QFR program. But after consultation with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, we decided to amend the original bill by expanding the sunset clause from 5 years to 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, this is a noncontroversial bill to reauthorize the time-tested QFR program. I urge my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 2385.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2385 as amended. This bill will reauthorize for 10 years the Quarterly Financial Report conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, and I congratulate the gentleman from Ohio (Chairman TURNER) for moving this bill quickly through the committee process.

The reauthorization of this program expires this September, and it is very important that Congress gets this bill to the President before that deadline.

The QFR is critical data collection for economic statistics and policy. It is used by the Bureau of Economic Analysis in constructing the national income and product accounts and in calculating the gross domestic product. Quarterly Financial Report data are also used by the Federal Reserve in tracking the investments and liabilities of households and corporations. Quarterly Financial Report data are used by the Treasury Department in developing economic policy, and by the private sector in planning for the future.

There are two important issues that were considered by our committee in reauthorizing this data collection.

First, the Quarterly Financial Report is a mandatory survey. That means that businesses can be prosecuted if they do not provide the information the Census Bureau requests.

Secondly, like any survey, the Quarterly Financial Report imposes a certain burden on those who provide the information to the government. The Quarterly Financial Report is one of the few mandatory data collections authorized by Congress. The decennial census is mandatory, and is required by our Constitution. The Census Bureau also conducts the American Community Survey as a mandatory survey telling respondents that they are required by law to provide the requested information. That authority does not come from any explicit authorization by Congress, but rather through an interpretation of the law by the Office of Management and Budget.

As representatives of the people, Congress should monitor closely any information collected that carries with it a

penalty for not complying with the request. It is unfortunate that the mandatory authority is necessary for the Quarterly Financial Report. The Census Bureau has assured Congress that without this authority, the quality of the information collected would seriously decline. The Quarterly Financial Report asks businesses to provide detailed information on financial transactions during the quarter. In return, the government and the private sector use this information to form sound economic policy.

According to the Census Bureau, the basic form can take up to 10 hours to complete and the average is almost 4 hours. I believe that is a fair balance of burden and benefit. I am a strong supporter of a Quarterly Financial Report. Through my work on the Joint Economic Committee, I have seen firsthand the importance of the data provided by this survey. At the same time, I take my responsibility as an authorizer seriously. When we reauthorized this program in 1998, it was for 7 years. I appreciate the chairman's willingness to make this authorization for 10 years rather than a permanent authorization. I believe our committee should regularly review programs that place mandatory burdens on the public.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation.

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

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT).

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee on Government Reform, I rise in favor of H.R. 2385, a bill that reauthorizes the Secretary of Commerce to conduct the Quarterly Financial Report program through the year 2015.

This important program provides data essential to calculating all aspects of national economy. Along with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census, I urge support of this necessary legislation.

The Quarterly Financial Report Program is our Nation's most comprehensive source of data on corporate financial activity. For the past 58 years, QFR data has been the basis of estimating the gross domestic product and the national income accounts. Consequently, countless public and private organizations rely on QFR data to make informed economic policy decisions every day.

Since 1983, the U.S. Census Bureau has successfully executed this valuable program. The Census Bureau has put forth laudable efforts to improve the process that provides the timely data. Specifically, the Census Bureau has significantly reduced time required for reporting the data by making it possible for companies to submit their surveys electronically by sending out filing reminders and providing help via the Census Website.

The Census Bureau has done an exceptional job conducting this survey for the Secretary of Commerce. That fact notwithstanding, it is the responsibility of Congress to reauthorize this program after a period of 10 years pending a thorough review on the condition that the Census Bureau continues to effectively administer this necessary economic survey.

Mr. Speaker, this is, in fact, a non-controversial bill to reauthorize the time-tested Quarterly Financial Report Program. Passage of this legislation will ensure an uninterrupted continuation of this program.

I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Chairman TURNER) and the gentleman from Virginia (Chairman TOM DAVIS) for moving this bill through the subcommittee and full committee. I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 2385 and urge its passage.

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

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this legislation and the census in general. It is not only a foundation of facts on which our government and the private sector formulate public policy, it keeps our government fair.

Every 10 years based on census numbers, we redistribute power among the States in order to have a fair representation based on the numbers of people in our country, and it tells us who we are. It tells us about our diversity, it tells us about our growth. It is literally a portrait of our country every 10 years.

This particular report, the Quarterly Financial Report, is a very important part of that portrait. So I rise very strongly in support of this bill and the census in general. I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Chairman TURNER) for moving this bill so quickly.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2385, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to extend by 10 years the authority of the Secretary of Commerce to conduct the quarterly financial report program."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

JOHN F. WHITESIDE JOLIET POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2113) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 2000 McDonough Street in Joliet, Illinois, as the "John F. Whiteside Joliet Post Office Building".

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2113

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

SECTION 1. JOHN F. WHITESIDE JOLIET POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 2000 McDonough Street in Joliet, Illinois, shall be known and designated as the "John F. Whiteside Joliet Post Office Building".

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the "John F. Whiteside Joliet Post Office Building".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DENT. 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. 2113.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2113 introduced by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) names this Post Office in Joliet, Illinois, as the John F. Whiteside Joliet Post Office Building. All 18 Illinois colleagues of the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) have cosponsored this bill, and I am pleased to participate in this bill's consideration today.

John Whiteside was a long time opinion writer for the Joliet Herald News. Upon graduation from Northern Illinois University in 1971, he was hired by the Herald News which was the only newspaper he ever worked for.

For the first decade of his career, he worked as a beat and general assignment reporter. But in 1981, he began writing a daily column in the paper each weekday that became beloved by Joliet residents.

Mr. Whiteside wrote the vast majority of his columns on local matters. The most frequent and passionate topics on which he opined were matters of importance to community veterans and law enforcement officials. An Air Force veteran himself, Whiteside correctly viewed all of our Nation's military service veterans as American heroes.

He, likewise, had tremendous respect for police officers, once championing an attempt to raise funds for a police memorial in Joliet, among other efforts. For his eloquent advocacy over many years, it appears safe to say his subjects admired him, too.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, after battling cancer for 18 months, John Whiteside passed away on January 22, 2005. He was 61 years old. Days after he died, the front page of the Sunday Her-

ald News carried one final John Whiteside column. It was a posthumous article full of life's lessons that he had written in anticipation of his death. It was a touching end to a meaningful career that was cut short by a struggle with cancer.

□ 1130

His struggle was all the more touching because Whiteside had shared tales of his battle with melanoma with his readers from October 2003 through his passing in January 2005. On a personal note, my own father-in-law passed away from that same disease in January of this year, so I have some understanding of what Mr. Whiteside and his family went through. My sympathies go out to his family.

Mr. Speaker, John Whiteside was indeed a memorable resident of Joliet. Readers of the Herald News have spent a few moments with John every Monday through Friday for nearly a quarter of a century. For these reasons, it is fitting that the House would pass this bill to name a post office in his honor in his hometown of Joliet. I urge all my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 2113.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Government Reform Committee, I am pleased to join my colleague in consideration of H.R. 2113, legislation naming a postal facility in Joliet, Illinois, after the late John Whiteside. This measure was introduced by my friend, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER), on May 5, 2005, and unanimously reported by the Government Reform Committee on June 16, 2005. H.R. 2113 enjoys the support and cosponsorship of the entire Illinois State delegation.

John Whiteside worked at the Herald News, a suburban Chicago newspaper, for 34 years as a reporter and columnist. He was well respected in his community as someone who fought for the rights of veterans. As a veteran, one of his most notable achievements was to increase the number of honor guard volunteers for the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois.

Sadly, John Whiteside passed away in January of cancer. Mr. Speaker, I commend my friend and colleague for renaming the Joliet post office after Mr. Whiteside and urge support for this measure.

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

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER).

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 2113, legislation in tribute to John Whiteside which names the Joliet post office in his honor. John Whiteside was a citizen