

is why awareness and education are imperative.

The resolution before the House today, Mr. Speaker, to designate a National Brain Injury Awareness Month, will work toward enhancing public awareness and give this epidemic and its victims a voice.

Former Congressman Jim Greenwood from Pennsylvania and I formed the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force in 2001. Today, that task force, which I chair with my good friend Congressman PLATTS from Pennsylvania, works to further education and awareness of brain injury, its incidence, its prevalence, its prevention and treatment. The task force also supports funding for basic and applied research on brain injury rehab and the development of a cure.

It is my hope that this resolution will encourage Americans to learn more about the long-lasting effects of brain injury and its impact on both the civilian and military communities.

The Traumatic Brain Injury Act is the only legislation that specifically addresses issues faced by people who live with long-term disability as a result of traumatic brain injury. It has successfully provided a foundation for coordinated and balanced public policy for people living with TBI and their circles of support. This law is due to be reauthorized. I look forward to continued congressional support to make it happen.

Another important Federal program, Mr. Speaker, focused on TBI, traumatic brain injury, is the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center. For our Armed Forces, TBI is an important clinical problem in peace and war, and its consequences may extend for many years.

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center was established in 1992 after Operation Desert Storm. Military doctors are naming traumatic brain injury as the result of a blast the signature wound of the war in Iraq.

Because soldiers are now equipped with state-of-the-art body armor, they are living through attacks that troops in past wars were unable to survive. Systemwide, the DVBIC has evaluated over 1,400 military personnel with TBI. Of those troops evacuated to Walter Reed Medical Center, 28 percent had traumatic brain injury.

The DVBIC trains combat medics, surgeons, general medical officers and Reservists in the recognition and best practices of TBI care and provides continuity of care from the battlefield to rehab and back to active duty or civilian life.

Continued congressional support is vital. Traumatic brain injury is a unique issue, an epidemic so vast it is almost overwhelming and so personal its effects defy definition. Passage of this resolution will confirm our commitment to awareness and education and prevention and research.

I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of H. Con. Res. 99, to designate a

National Brain Injury Awareness Month in support of our common goal, the eradication of traumatic brain injury as a debilitating, costly and deadly plague on humankind.

I must say in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that what has happened over the past 5 or 6 years gives us a tremendous amount of hope in developing that part of the brain which has not been injured to compensate for that part which has been injured. We are truly living in great times.

Mr. PLATTS. Mr. Speaker, as a Co-Chair of the Congressional Traumatic Brain Injury Taskforce, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 99. This resolution will help increase awareness for traumatic brain injury (TBI), the leading cause of death and disability among children and young adults in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, few Americans may understand the amount of devastation caused by TBIs every year. This year alone, over 1.4 million people will sustain a traumatic brain injury. Sadly, at least 80,000 of those individuals will remain permanently disabled from the trauma.

Falls, motor vehicle crashes, sports injuries, and violence are among the major causes of TBI, leaving every individual susceptible. Additionally, TBIs can manifest themselves in various ways, from a small behavioral change to complete physical disability, and even death. Brain injuries affect the whole family emotionally and financially, often resulting in huge medical and rehabilitation expenses.

It is now especially important that we promote awareness for TBI because military doctors are naming it the signature wound of the war in Iraq. Thanks to the state-of-the-art body armor with which our men and women overseas are equipped, they are able to survive violent attacks, while still receiving a blunt force to the head. Walter Reed Memorial Hospital found that over 60% of all soldiers wounded in an explosion, vehicle accident, or gunshot to the head or neck, sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury.

Mr. Speaker, because all of our fellow citizens have family, friends and neighbors who could fall victim to TBI at any time, I urge support from my distinguished colleagues for this resolution here today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time and urge the adoption of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 99.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1300

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to

the resolution (H. Res. 245) supporting the goals and ideals of National Nurses Week, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 245

Whereas since 2003, National Nurses Week is celebrated annually from May 6, also known as National Nurses Day, through May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing;

Whereas National Nurses Week is the time each year when the importance of nursing in health care can be demonstrated;

Whereas well-trained health professionals are the cornerstone of the Nation's complex health system;

Whereas registered nurses ("RNs") represent the largest single component of the health care profession, with an estimated 2.7 million RNs in the United States;

Whereas nurses historically have provided hands-on patient care at the bedside, and will continue to do so;

Whereas nurses have a mandate to serve those in need, and to try to ease the suffering of those in pain;

Whereas nurses also are deeply involved in health education, research, business, and public policy;

Whereas nurses bear the primary responsibility for the care and well-being of hospital patients;

Whereas unfortunately, too few nurses are caring for too many patients in our Nation's hospitals;

Whereas according to a report from the Department of Health and Human Services, the United States currently has a nurse shortage of nearly 150,000 RNs and will have a shortage of more than 800,000 RNs by the year 2020;

Whereas cutting-edge technologies are useless without a staff of trained professionals to implement them; and

Whereas nurses are the unsung heroines and heroes of the medical profession: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the important contributions of nurses to the health care system of the United States;

(2) supports the goals and ideals of National Nurses Week, as founded by the American Nurses Association; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to observe National Nurses Week with appropriate recognition, ceremonies, activities, and programs to demonstrate the importance of nurses to the everyday lives of patients.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation, and to insert extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 245, a resolution

supporting the goals and ideals of National Nurses Week.

Nurses are an integral component of the health care system, and it is important that we recognize the over 2.7 million registered nurses for the significant work that they do. For the last 3 years, we have celebrated National Nurses Week. Beginning on May 6, we will once again have the opportunity to truly commend the nursing community for their contributions to our national health delivery system.

I thank Representative EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON for introducing this resolution, and I encourage my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS), who is a nurse and also is one of the most outstanding members of the Commerce Committee specializing in the incredibly good work on public health.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the chairman of the Health Subcommittee and Energy and Commerce, Mr. DEAL from Georgia, and also the ranking member, Mr. BROWN, both of you for your advocacy for nurses and for health care in general; and I also commend my friend and fellow nurse, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON from Texas, for introducing this resolution.

As we observe National Nurses Week May 6 through 12, our goal is to raise awareness about important issues facing the nursing community here in the United States. After all, the priorities of this Nation's nearly 2.9 million nurses do reflect the priorities of everyone when it comes to health care issues.

Nurses serve their patients in the most important capacities. We know that they serve as our first lines of communication when something goes wrong or when we are concerned about health. They check their vital signs and collect our patient histories. They are critical players in the performance of life and death surgery and procedures.

They attentively care for the most vulnerable patients in the ICU and the newborn nurseries and in our senior centers, and they serve as essential first responders in times of disaster.

Beyond that, it is nurses who sit patiently with their patients to educate them about important preventive and follow-through health care. They are there for patients and their families, giving them the moral support needed when faced with an ominous diagnosis. They are the ones who advocate on behalf of patients for quality health care.

Unfortunately, today our Nation is experiencing a crisis, a crisis in the nursing shortage. Currently, it is at 6 percent. That means 6 percent fewer nurses today at work, in hospitals, in public health, in clinics, than is needed for the health and safety of this coun-

try; and that number is surely going to grow unless we make some serious investments now.

For several years in a row, this administration has proposed flat funding of nurse education programs. Without enough nursing educators, those to train the next generation of nurses, we cannot deal with the shortage. At the same time, we are all aware of our budget deficit, which is the reason given for not funding nurse educator programs.

I come back to the fact, educating the next generation of nurses and nurse educators is something that cannot be compromised. I know, Mr. Speaker, that this message is getting through to my colleagues. This year, over 150 Members of Congress in a bipartisan way supported an appropriations request to increase nurse education funding.

To repeat, 150 Members of Congress supported an appropriations request to increase nurse education funding.

But we must build on this momentum now and ensure that funding is increased this year and next year. Investments in nurse education now will mean a greater ability to provide quality health care to Americans in years to come.

Studies have indicated there is a strong correlation between the shortages of nurses and morbidity and mortality rates in our hospitals. Other research studies today in America are revealing that Americans on average are less healthy than people living in other industrialized nations. Just this week, new research specifically revealed the greater incidence in which Americans suffer from illness than their counterparts in England.

Now, it is not my attempt to make assumptions about the reason for this. But I can tell you beyond a doubt that, by increasing our investments in nurses and providing better working conditions for nurses, we can improve the health of all Americans. So I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, support the goals of National Nurses Week.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the sponsor of this resolution, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), a nurse, also very involved in public health issues in Congress.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution supporting the goals and ideals of National Nurses Week, and I am indebted to my colleague from California for her scholarly presentation.

I started my career as a nurse and worked for more than 15 years as a psychiatric nurse, and it helps me here. I was the chief psychiatric nurse at the VA Hospital, Day Treatment Center, as well as the Day Hospital in Dallas, Texas.

Next week, May 6-12, is National Nurses Week; and it is fitting for this body to honor the millions of nurses in America.

Nurses are usually very, very dedicated individuals. In my personal experience, nurses tend to be intelligent, detail oriented. They tend to be ready to act at the spur of the moment, and with knowledge.

Their work touches all aspects of patient care, whether it is in the emergency room, in the operating room, in the doctor's office, at the neighborhood clinic, in the schools, and battlefields. Nurses stand at the forefront of many lines of our health care system, and they must make life and death decisions, often with little advance notice, and they have frequent hands-on contact with the patient.

For these reasons, a caring attitude and compassionate heart are required for the hard work nurses do. In my years as a nurse, I have seen miracles and I have seen tragedies. At the VA, I worked with soldiers fresh from battle, as well as men and women who fought bravely years before. It was an honor to serve America's veterans, each one on his or her individual path to recovery of good health.

Nurses Week is really appropriate, because there hardly is anyone alive who will be born and finish life without contact with a nurse.

We have a severe shortage right now; and I would hope that we would be more open to attempting to get more nurses, American-educated nurses, so that we will not lose the care that the nurses give. They work very hard for their patients. The American public needs to know that Congress recognizes nurses for the great work they do.

I thank the leadership for its support of this bill. I would like to especially thank the two other Members of Congress who also are nurses for their collaboration and united stance in support of issues important to nurses. Both of them have been more active since than I have in nursing. But it is an old saying, once a nurse, always a nurse.

I commend this legislation to my colleagues and urge their support.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I will close and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON and Mrs. CAPPS for their commitment to public health and for bringing this resolution to the floor today.

Our health care system depends on the 2.7 million registered nurses who have dedicated themselves to providing the highest quality of care in our hospitals, in our clinics, in our long-term care facilities and our doctors' offices.

To recognize the dedication of these women and men, we celebrate their accomplishments during National Nurses Week held every year during the week leading up to the May 12 birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

This year, National Nurses Week highlights nurses' strength, commitment and compassion. These qualities are rare, and they help explain why our health care system would falter without the contribution of registered nurses.

Nurses are the center of our efforts to improve the Nation's health. They are at the front lines administering care, educating the public, helping patients and the families cope with the challenges of injury and illness.

Unfortunately, as we hear too often, we are facing a serious shortage of nurses; and that shortage is growing, so much so that the Department of Health and Human Services recently predicted a shortage of more than 800,000 nurses, keep in mind we have 2.7 million nurses today, a shortage of 800,000 nurses by the year 2020.

With fewer and fewer trained hands and minds at the bedside and in the doctor's office, leaving overworked nurses to handle more and more patients, we can only expect the availability of quality health care to decline.

We need to invest in attracting and training a new generation of nurses and to foster retention for those who are already practicing. Resolution 245 honors the goals of National Nurses Week, raises the awareness of the vital role that nurses play in our health care system, and focuses attention on the unmet challenge that we face as the shortage of nurses intensifies.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and ranking member of the Energy and Commerce Committee for bringing this measure to the floor. I thank EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, and I am pleased to support it.

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

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of our time.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, would repeat my expression of appreciation for our colleague, Ms. JOHNSON, for bringing this resolution today and commend all of those in our society who have chosen the field of nursing as their profession and encourage others to do so and follow their example.

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that we honor them by this resolution.

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 Georgia (Mr. DEAL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 245, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material regarding H.R. 4975.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DEAL of Georgia). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

LOBBYING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2006

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 783 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 4975.

□ 1313

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 4975) to provide greater transparency with respect to lobbying activities, and for other purposes, with Mr. BOOZMAN in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I was just listening to the debate on the last bill considered under suspension of the rules, and I saw a wonderful sense of bipartisanship as we were able to pass, I suspect we may have a vote on it, but I know it will pass overwhelmingly, the legislation by our good friend from Dallas, Texas, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON.

It is my hope that, as we proceed with this very important issue, that that same sense of bipartisanship can prevail. Because I believe that it is absolutely essential to dealing with the challenge that lies ahead.

Mr. Chairman, as you know very well, recent scandals involving elected representatives from both political parties have underscored the very urgent need for us to reform ethics and lobbying rules.

□ 1315

The American people and Members of Congress are very correctly incensed about this. I believe that it is absolutely outrageous some of the things that we have seen from both political parties over the past several months.

Action, common-sense action, Mr. Chairman, is absolutely needed, and that is why I am very proud that Speaker Dennis Hastert 4 months ago stepped up to the plate and said this is exactly what we need to do, is we need to take strong action.

Republicans and Democrats have worked together tirelessly on this issue over the past 4 months. The goal is to strengthen and reform House rules, as well as that 1995 Lobbying Disclosure Act which we very proudly put into place when we won the majority back in 1994.

Our aim, our goal, is a Congress that is effective, a Congress that is ethical, and a Congress that is worthy of the public trust. Now, I know that the American people should understandably have a healthy skepticism towards this institution. That is what Thomas Jefferson wanted. But, at the same time, it is very important that we do what we can to enhance the level of trust that the American people have in their elected representatives.

We know right after this began, at the beginning of this second session of the 109th Congress, we stepped right up and were able to take very bold action to bring about reform. On our very first day of legislative business we voted to level the playing field by ending the access to the House floor and gym by former Members of Congress who are registered lobbyists. This rule change was supported by 379 of our 435 Members.

At the beginning of the last month, we took a second step in the name of balance and fairness. In another bipartisan vote, the House closed an enormous loophole in campaign finance regulations. Integrity in our elections was a key focus of our reform efforts, and the 527 Reform Act makes sure campaign finance laws apply across the board.

Now we are considering the comprehensive reform package, H.R. 4975, the Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006. Mr. Chairman, this legislation seeks to uphold the highest standards of integrity when it comes to Congress' interaction with outside groups.

I am very proud of the process and the results of this multi-month effort that we have seen. Anyone, anyone, Democrat and Republican alike, outside groups, academics, anyone who wanted to offer any suggestion, any proposal at all, make any comment on any part of the legislation has had that opportunity. This has been a very thorough and, again, a very bipartisan process.

Mr. Chairman, we already conducted a very spirited and worthwhile debate just last Thursday when we were considering the rule that allows us to consider this legislation; and, from that debate, it was very clear to me that there is a lot of confusion over H.R. 4975. Frankly, Mr. Chairman, as I have read editorials for a wide range of publications here in this town and across the country, there is an awful lot of confusion as to what this bill actually does. So I thought that I would take just a moment to summarize for our friends here in the House and for anyone who might be following this, any editorial writer out there, I would like to summarize what this legislation will and will not do.

Mr. Chairman, this legislation will enhance transparency and accountability in Congress through increased disclosure and tighter rules. No matter what anyone says, Mr. Chairman, this legislation does increase transparency