

Any safety issues raised by the Spill and the current remediation efforts, both independently and in interaction with other pollutants in the Creek.

The extent to which the current remediation efforts are sufficient, and any new technologies or approaches that could accelerate product recovery and/or improve the scope of the remediation.

I would like to express my thanks to Chairman YOUNG, Mr. OBERSTAR, Chairman LOBIONDO, and Mr. FILNER for their willingness to work with me on this very important yet often overlooked issue. The country will benefit from renewed Federal attention on this oil spill, the largest in the country.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my Democratic colleagues in the New York City delegation, all of whom signed a letter to conferees urging that this study be included in the conference report. I would especially like to commend Mrs. VELÁZQUEZ, who represents the people of Greenpoint. She and I have worked together closely on this initiative.

Additionally, I would like to thank both the Democratic and Republican staff of the Transportation Committee and the Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation. In particular, Ward McCarragher and John Cullather of Mr. OBERSTAR's staff and Fraser Verrusio and John Rayfield of Mr. YOUNG's staff were very helpful.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the conference report on the bill, H.R. 889.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2006

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4843) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2006, the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4843

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, effective on December 1, 2006, increase the dollar amounts in effect for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation by the Secretary, as specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount in effect under section 1162 of such title.

(4) NEW DIC RATES.—The dollar amounts in effect under paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 1311(a) of such title.

(5) OLD DIC RATES.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1311(a)(3) of such title.

(6) ADDITIONAL DIC FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES WITH MINOR CHILDREN.—The dollar amounts in effect under section 1311(b) of such title and paragraph (1) of section 1311(f) of such title (as redesignated by subsection (e) of this section).

(7) ADDITIONAL DIC FOR DISABILITY.—The dollar amounts in effect under sections 1311(c) and 1311(d) of such title.

(8) DIC FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN.—The dollar amounts in effect under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—

(1) BASE FOR INCREASE.—The increase under subsection (a) shall be made in the dollar amounts specified in subsection (b) as in effect on November 30, 2006.

(2) PERCENTAGE OF INCREASE.—Except as provided in paragraph (3), each such amount shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2006, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(3) ROUNDING.—Each dollar amount increased pursuant to paragraph (2) shall, if not a whole dollar amount, be rounded down to the next lower whole dollar amount.

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons within the purview of section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who are not in receipt of compensation payable pursuant to chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

(e) DESIGNATION CORRECTION.—Section 1311 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by redesignating the second subsection (e) (added by section 301(a) of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-454; 118 Stat. 3610)) as subsection (f).

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

At the same time as the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2006, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in subsection (b) of section 2, as increased pursuant to that section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from In-

diana (Mr. BUYER) and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4843, as amended, is one of the more important bills the committee brings to the floor each year.

On April 6 of this year, the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, chaired by Mr. MILLER of Florida, took testimony on H.R. 4843. The subcommittee then marked this bill on June 8 and reported the bill favorably to the full committee by unanimous voice vote. The full committee reported the bill, as amended, on June 22.

H.R. 4843, as amended, would provide a cost-of-living adjustment, a COLA, to disabled veterans and certain survivors in the same amount given to Social Security recipients. All veterans who receive disability compensation and qualified survivors would receive the adjustment beginning December 1 of this year. Congress has acted on COLA legislation every fiscal year since 1976.

More than 2.6 million veterans receive service-connected disability compensation. These benefits are paid monthly and range from \$112 for a 10 percent disability to \$2,393 for a 100 percent disability. Additional monetary benefits are available for our most severely disabled veterans, as well as those with dependents.

Spouses of veterans who died on active duty or as a result of a service-connected disability may also be entitled to monetary compensation. The amount of the dependency and indemnity compensation is \$1,033.

Additional amounts are paid to survivors who are housebound or in need of aid and attendants or have minor children. Currently, about 340,000 surviving spouses and children are receiving survivors' benefits.

The amendment to the bill by Ms. BERKLEY would also provide a COLA to the dependency and indemnity compensation transitional benefit. Established in Public Law 108-454, transitional DIC is a 2-year benefit; and it is intended to ease the family's transition following the death of a service member or veteran.

The Congressional Budget Office is projecting a 2.2 percent COLA increase, but it may be higher or lower depending upon the changes in the Consumer Price Index. The exact percentage will be calculated as of September 30, 2006.

The cost of providing a COLA is assumed in the administration's budget baseline; therefore, it will be budget neutral. Additionally, H.R. 5385, the Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill of 2007 fully funds a veterans' COLA effective December 1, 2006.

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to thank Chairman BUYER, Ranking Member LANE EVANS, subcommittee Chairman JEFF MILLER and our subcommittee Ranking Member, Ms. BERKLEY, for their work on this bill. In particular, I want to thank Ms. BERKLEY for her amendment, which was offered during our markup and which received unanimous bipartisan support.

H.R. 4843, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006, will help our service-disabled veterans and their survivors maintain the purchasing power of their benefits in 2007. Ms. BERKLEY's amendment assures our Gold Star Wives with young children that the value of their benefit will not continue to erode as it did during this current year.

Unfortunately, many do not fully recognize that the benefits we pay to men and women who have borne the battle, their widows, widowers, and children are a continuing cost of war. Indeed, the VA is currently paying benefits to survivors of Civil War veterans. We have a moral obligation to the men and women who put on the uniform and are harmed in the service of the Nation that we will compensate them for the harm which occurs. We have many examples where this is not being done, because, although costs increase, the benefit has remained static. The least we can do for the young families of our deceased veterans is to provide them the full value of the 2-year transitional benefit they receive.

Although we will not know the exact percentage by which the benefit is to be increased until the Consumer Price Index is calculated in October, I expect this bill will help VA beneficiaries maintain the value of their benefits.

□ 1430

No amount of money can ever compensate our veterans for the loss of their health or the families for the loss of a loved one. Nonetheless, it is critical that the monetary value of these benefits, which partially compensate for such losses, is not reduced merely by the passage of time.

In 2004, over 28,000 veterans in New Mexico received disability compensation or pension payments from the VA. Many New Mexico family members of veterans and their survivors also receive VA cash benefits. The action we are taking here today will help the veterans in my congressional district who depend on these VA benefits.

H.R. 4843, as amended, will receive my full support; and it deserves the support of all Members of the House.

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN), a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee who has been a fighter for our Nation's veterans.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support

this bill to increase the veterans compensation, or COLA. It is important to pass this legislation to support those who have put their lives on the line to protect the freedom this country holds so dear.

This money is very important to veterans living on fixed incomes and very little outside support. The COLA increase is tied to the Social Security COLA, which could change depending on the Consumer Price Index.

While many of the beneficiaries of the increase are veterans of past wars, the disabled from the current war, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, will benefit also.

Those injured in the current war are surviving once fatal injuries at greater numbers than anytime in the past. The rates of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation affected by the COLA will help those recovering to have a better quality of life and help them to become contributing members of society.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks and that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4843, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I would also like the Members to note that last year when we came to the floor, we thought that the COLA was going to be about 2.7 percent. Once they did the adjustment on the CPI, it ended up being about 4.1 percent. I don't know what it is going to be this year. That was a huge change. Even though we are saying approximately 2.2, I don't know what it is going to be.

I would like to thank LANE EVANS and BOB FILNER for their work. I would also like to thank Mr. MILLER and Ms. BERKLEY. I would like to thank Mr. UDALL and Ms. BROWN. Also, I thank them in appreciation for the timely fashion in which they moved this bill through the committee and now onto the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006.

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 4843, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006.

This is a good bipartisan bill.

It will help to ensure that the real value of the benefits earned by our veterans does not decrease as prices rise.

These benefits are critical for many veterans and their families to help make ends meet.

Veterans and their families need to know that the purchasing power of their earned benefits will not decrease over time.

This legislation also includes a provision similar to my bill, H.R. 1573.

Last Congress, in response to a VA evaluation, we passed legislation to provide an increase of \$250 to the monthly DIC, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, benefit for surviving spouses with children under 18 for the first 2 years of eligibility.

While I believe that we should make this benefit permanent, especially in light of the brave men and women giving their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan; the provision in today's bill is extremely important and will ensure that this benefit maintains its value over time.

I want to thank Ms. BERKLEY for her amendment in Committee to include this provision.

This is a good bill that will help veterans and their families across the country and I urge my colleagues to support it.

I hope that this is the first of many bills that we will now move forward to improve the benefits and quality of care provided to our veterans and their families.

I congratulate Chairman MILLER of Florida for introducing this important bill, and I thank full committee Chairman STEVE BUYER and full committee Ranking Member LANE EVANS for moving this legislation forward.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4843, as amended, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006.

On March 2, 2006, as Chairman on the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, I introduced H.R. 4843 with SHELLEY BERKLEY, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, and STEVE BUYER and LANE EVANS, Chairman and Ranking Member, respectively, of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. On June 22, 2006, the full Committee adopted an amendment offered by Ms. BERKLEY to provide the annual adjustment to a two year transitional benefit offered under the dependency and indemnity compensation program.

Each year since 1976, Congress has provided a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to the benefits provided to our Nation's disabled veterans and their survivors. The purpose of the annual COLA is to ensure that Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) cash benefits retain their purchasing power and are not eroded by inflation.

The Committee is following its longstanding practice of setting the COLA by reference to the yet-to-be-determined Social Security increase. In February 2006, the Administration projected a 2.6 percent increase; as of May 2006, the Congressional Budget Office is projecting the COLA to be 2.2 percent. However, it may be higher or lower depending on changes in the Consumer Price Index. The exact percentage will be calculated as of September 30, 2006, and the COLA will go into effect on December 1, 2006.

As Chairman BUYER indicated, this is one of the more important pieces of legislation the Veterans' Affairs Committee brings to the floor each year, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. BUYER. I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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. 4843, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 35 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m.

□ 1834

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire) at 6 o'clock and 34 minutes p.m.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the pending business is the question of agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal of the last day's proceedings.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

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 further 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 tomorrow.

CONGRATULATING THE MIAMI HEAT FOR WINNING THE 2006 NBA CHAMPIONSHIP

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 887) congratulating the Miami Heat for winning the 2006 NBA Championship.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 887

Whereas on June 20, 2006, the Miami Heat defeated the Dallas Mavericks, the Western Conference Champions, in 6 games to win the 2006 National Basketball Association (NBA) Championship;

Whereas Dwyane Wade, of the Miami Heat, was named the 2006 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player;

Whereas the Miami Heat defeated the Chicago Bulls in 6 games in the first round of the NBA playoffs;

Whereas the Miami Heat defeated the New Jersey Nets in 5 games in the second round of the NBA playoffs;

Whereas, in the third round of the NBA playoffs, the Miami Heat defeated the Detroit Pistons, their archrival and the defending Eastern Conference Champions, in 6 games;

Whereas the "White Hot" Miami Heat fans sold out the American Airlines Arena and cheered on their hometown team;

Whereas the Miami Heat remained persistent and continued to believe in themselves throughout the playoffs;

Whereas the Miami Heat are the first team since 1977 to win 4 NBA Finals games consecutively after losing the first two games, and in doing so, the Miami Heat made one of the most stunning turnarounds in NBA history;

Whereas the Miami Heat became just the third team in the history of the NBA Finals to win a series after losing the first two games, and the first team in the history of the NBA Finals to do so after losing the first two games by double-digit margins;

Whereas this is the first NBA championship title for the Miami Heat, which has long been one of the most outstanding basketball programs in the Nation;

Whereas Pat Riley, the head coach of the Miami Heat, has cemented his legacy as one of basketball's all-time great head coaches by winning his fifth NBA championship title;

Whereas, in game 3 of the NBA Finals, the Miami Heat were losing by 13 points on their home floor with only 6 minutes 30 seconds left;

Whereas the Miami Heat came back with the tenacity of Dwyane Wade and won game 3 of the NBA Finals by 2 points;

Whereas Micky Arison, owner and Managing General Partner of the Miami Heat; Pat Riley, Head Coach and President of Basketball Operations; Randy Pfund, General Manager; Eric Woolworth, President of Business Operations; and Andy Elisburg, Senior Vice President of Basketball Operations, have shown a positive commitment to the Miami Heat franchise by successfully acquiring, assembling, and maintaining a team of high-quality, winning players;

Whereas "15 strong" brought the first NBA championship title to the City of Miami;

Whereas the Miami Heat team of skilled players, including Derek Anderson, Shandon Anderson, Earl Barron, Michael Doleac, Udonis Haslem, Jason Kapon, Alonzo Mourning, Shaquille O'Neal, Gary Payton, James Posey, Wayne Simien, Dwyane Wade, Antoine Walker, Jason Williams, and Dorell Wright, contributed extraordinary performances during the regular season, the NBA playoffs, and the NBA Finals;

Whereas veteran Michael Doleac, and future stars Jason Kapon, Wayne Simien, Dorell Wright, Earl Barron, and Matt Walsh, helped shape the Miami Heat by preparing the starters for the postseason, giving the starters tough practices and quality scrimmages;

Whereas Shandon Anderson and Derek Anderson added to the Miami Heat's experience base by bringing their knowledge and NBA Finals experience from runner-up finishes in Utah and San Antonio, respectively;

Whereas, in game 6 of the NBA Finals, James Posey hit a big 3-pointer to put the Miami Heat up by 6 points with only 3 minutes left to play;

Whereas Alonzo Mourning, returning from a nearly career-ending kidney illness and kidney transplant, came up with 6 rebounds and 5 monster blocked shots to turn the tide in game 6 of the NBA Finals;

Whereas Gary Payton, having consistently shown his greatness on two near-championship NBA teams, hit a 21-foot jumper to save and seal a comeback victory for the Miami Heat in game 3 of the NBA Finals;

Whereas Jason Williams shot a team-high 34 percent from the three-point line and led the Miami Heat in assists during the NBA Finals, while directing the Miami Heat offense from the point guard position;

Whereas Antoine Walker, the Miami Heat's second-highest scorer in the NBA Finals, scored 14 points and kept the Miami Heat in important point-scoring opportunities by pulling down 11 big rebounds in game 6 of the NBA Finals;

Whereas Udonis Haslem, playing with a badly injured shoulder, showed the heart of a champion by contributing 17 points, 10 rebounds, and 2 steals, one of which was with time winding down;

Whereas Shaquille "Shaq" O'Neal came to the Miami Heat and on July 21, 2004 said, "I want ya'll to remember this day, because we're going to do it again in June. I'm going to bring a championship to Miami. I promise you.";

Whereas Shaq delivered over 1,100 points, 104 blocks, 113 assists, and 541 rebounds in the regular season, adding another 83 points, 5 blocks, 17 assists, and 33 rebounds in the NBA Finals for his fourth NBA championship title;

Whereas Dwyane Wade scored 42, 36, 43, and 36 points in the Miami Heat's NBA Finals victories, leading all scorers;

Whereas, in the NBA Finals, Dwyane Wade had the Miami Heat's second-highest rebound total, with 47; the second-highest number of assists, with 28; the second-highest number of blocks, with 6; the highest free throw percentage, at 77 percent; and the highest point total from the free-throw line, with 75; all in route to his first NBA Finals Most Valuable Player award;

Whereas the Miami Heat coaching and support staff, including Head Coach Pat Riley; Assistant Coaches Bob McAdoo, Keith Askins, Erik Spoelstra, and Ron Rothstein; Assistant Coach/Advance Scout Bimbo Coles; Strength and Conditioning Coach Bill Foran; Athletic Trainer Ron Culp; and Assistant Trainer Jay Sabol, exhibited exemplary leadership and guidance to the team;

Whereas the Miami Heat have not only been players on the court, but have also been instrumental role models to the south Florida community;

Whereas the Miami Heat organization has a positive civic impact on the south Florida community through the Miami HEAT Family Outreach Charitable Fund, Heat Academy, Heat Scholarships, Miami Heat Read to Achieve, Miami Heat Fun-Raiser, Miami Heat Wheels, Shoot For the Stars Books and Basketball Summer Clinics, Heat Youth Basketball, and the Miami Heat Learn to Swim Program; and

Whereas the Miami Heat fans are a part of this championship by supporting the team and giving the team the energy, strength, love, and passion to compete each and every season: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) congratulates—

(A) the Miami Heat for winning the 2006 National Basketball Association (NBA) World Championship and for their outstanding performance during the 2005–2006 NBA season; and

(B) Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade for winning the 2006 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player Award;

(2) recognizes and praises the achievements of the Miami Heat players, coaches, management, and support staff whose hard work,