

his wife, Beverly, who regularly go out and visit our wounded troops, and I went out to the Walter Reed Army Hospital. I had the opportunity to see a number of these courageous men who have sacrificed and have been wounded. And I couldn't help but think of it, as I came back and went to the Rules Committee last night and saw this attempt being made, which they have done, to tie the Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill to the Veterans bill, as nothing but pure politics which undermine the ability for us to get what these brave men and women who have fought on behalf of the cause of freedom need.

This is wrong. We have got to end it right now. Bring a clean bill to this floor.

SAY "THANK YOU" TO OUR VETERANS BY ADOPTING A STAND-ALONE VETERANS FUNDING BILL

(Mr. GOODE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOODE. Madam Speaker, I rise to thank the men and women in the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard for serving our Nation in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world. They are honorably and bravely fighting terrorists overseas in order to protect American families at home.

One way we can say "thank you" to these brave men and women is to adopt a Veterans appropriations bill, stand-alone, with a unanimous or near unanimous vote. It does not need to be wrapped up into something else. We need to send a loud and clear "thank you" to our veterans in a veterans-only bill. Let's do it. Let's vote it up and say a great "thank you" before Veterans Day to our veterans.

HOLDING VETERANS FUNDING HOSTAGE CREATES A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT

(Mr. BLUNT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BLUNT. Madam Speaker, the House passed the Military Construction-Veterans bill on June 15, over 140 days ago. The Senate passed a bill on September 6, sent it over to the House, and immediately appointed conferees.

The minority appointed their conferees. But up to now, we have never had conferees appointed on this bill, which means this bill that the President has announced he would sign could have become law before October 1. It means that military families, veterans, and retirees could be receiving the benefits of up to \$18.5 million every single day since October 1.

This tactic of holding veterans funding hostage creates a dangerous precedent. What controversial, unrelated policies could go on this bill in the future?

Madam Speaker, let's stop this practice today before it starts.

STOP THE POLITICAL GAMES; PROVIDE FUNDING FOR OUR TROOPS AND OUR VETERANS

(Mr. MICA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MICA. Madam Speaker and my colleagues, this is the first time I have come out for a 1-minute address, and I think it is necessary that I also voice my disapproval with what is happening.

Right now the Congress of the United States is at an 11 percent approval rating. And, unfortunately, the actions dealing with our veterans and military appropriations measures is going to, I think, further erode public confidence in this body.

Right now in what is going to play out in the next number of hours, our military and our veterans, unfortunately, will be held hostage. Unfortunately, too, our veterans and our military are going to suffer from this, all in an attempt to try to, I guess, embarrass the President of the United States. But in turn we will be embarrassing, and further eroding confidence in, this House.

We need to work together to pass in a bipartisan effort the funding for our troops and our veterans and stop the political games.

EARMARKS IN THE LABOR-HHS-VETERANS FUNDING APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT

(Mr. FLAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLAKE. Madam Speaker, people may wonder why we are doing this, combining these two bills, the Veterans bill and also Labor-HHS. It is easy to see when you look at it.

There are some 150 pages of earmarks in this conference report, including nine air-dropped earmarks. Now, these are earmarks that weren't considered by either the House or the Senate. They were simply air-dropped into the bill that we have no opportunity to amend out. We have violated our own rules. We are violating our own rules to do this: \$1 million for the Thomas Daschle Center for Public Service and Representative Democracy. We are spending \$1 million in this bill, air-dropped into the bill, with no opportunity to amend it out, a center for public service and representative democracy at a university somewhere named for a former Member of Congress.

This simply isn't right. This isn't right. We shouldn't be doing this. This institution deserves far better than we are giving it.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. LORRETTA SANCHEZ of California). 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.

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT BASIC PAY FOR MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES SHOULD BE INCREASED

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 162) expressing the sense of Congress that Congress and the President should increase basic pay for members of the Armed Forces, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 162

Whereas the United States continues to rely extensively upon the members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard who are deployed overseas and stationed at military support installations within the United States;

Whereas members of the Armed Forces, regardless of branch of service or whether serving in an active or a reserve component, have carried out their mission objectives with valor, distinction, and steadfast dedication to the cause of liberty and democracy;

Whereas more than 1,600,000 members of the Armed Forces have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, and many of these members have served multiple deployments;

Whereas there are more than 3,000,000 family members and other dependents of the members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty and in reserve components;

Whereas nearly 50 percent of the members of the Armed Forces, who are deployed away from their permanent duty stations, have left families with children behind;

Whereas over 50 percent of the members of the Armed Forces who are currently deployed in Iraq are married;

Whereas military families have persevered in the face of challenges and continue to provide critically important comfort and care and numerous other contributions to their loved ones deployed overseas or stationed within the United States;

Whereas there currently is a 4 percent gap between the pay increases provided to members of the Armed Forces and the pay increases provided to private sector employees; and

Whereas it is in the national interest of the United States to offer to the members of the Armed Forces comparable pay to that which the civilian sector provides in order to retain highly qualified men and women in uniform and to faithfully reward their valiant service to the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring). That it is the sense of Congress that—

(1) Congress and the President should increase basic pay for members of all components of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine

Corps, and Coast Guard by 3.5 percent, effective January 1, 2008; and

(2) Congress and the President should increase the basic pay for members of all components of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard during fiscal years 2009 through 2012 by at least ½ of 1 percent more than the raise calculated under the Employment Cost Index (ECI).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the concurrent resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today for a simple yet important purpose. I rise alongside my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to say that we support a 3.5 percent pay increase for the brave men and women of our Armed Forces.

Madam Speaker, when I was serving in Baghdad, I fought alongside Specialist Juan Arevalo, or "RV" to his friends and fellow paratroopers. RV is a quick-witted and fearless Texan who had the trust of everyone in our brigade and would say things to make us laugh or make us think, even during war.

We used to joke that RV signed up for active duty in the Army without even knowing that soldiers got paid. The joke was that he was so innocent, he thought the only compensation he received was training, housing, and three square meals a day. Serving in Iraq and making just over \$15,000 a year, RV told everybody he was the richest man in Iraq.

Even though RV would have worked for free in our military, he shouldn't have to, and neither should the families who depend on their loved ones overseas.

More than 1.6 million soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of them multiple times. These are the brave men and women whose pay we seek to raise today, a pay raise that is long overdue.

Madam Speaker, there are more than 3 million family members who count on someone serving on active duty in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today we fight not just for those soldiers but for their families as well.

Our resolution points out that there is currently a 4 percent pay gap between members of the Armed Forces and those in civilian life. At a time when our Armed Forces are stretched

so thin, we need to offer more comparable pay to the private sector to retain the most qualified service men and women. Our resolution also gives thanks for their valiant service to our Nation.

Madam Speaker, this is a common-sense measure. But, unfortunately, our President has called this pay increase "unnecessary." And yet 2 weeks ago President Bush said, "America should do what it takes to support our troops." The President criticizes the spending priorities of this Congress but stands in the way of a pay increase for our troops.

I say the President should do what it takes to support our troops. This pay raise is long overdue and it is necessary, and President Bush's opposition to it is simply unconscionable.

Madam Speaker, with a 3.5 percent pay increase, we aren't talking about a lot of money. But for a private in Iraq making less than \$16,000 a year in basic pay, that small increase would make all the difference in the world. For enlisted men with bills to pay and young children to support, several hundred dollars a year more is a big deal.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for his courageous support, Chairman MURTHA, Chairman OBEY, Chairman SNYDER, as well as Chairwoman DAVIS and Chairman SKELTON for their leadership on this issue.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank Mr. MURPHY for his service to this Nation and for introducing H. Con. Res. 162.

Throughout the history of this great Nation, men and women have chosen to put on the uniform and defend the principles upon which this country was built. The dedication of our men and women to our Nation should never be overlooked, and we, as a Congress, should encourage the next generation of Americans to do the same.

□ 1115

However, there exists an inequity in pay between those who serve in our Armed Forces and those in the civilian sector.

For several years, the civilian pay increase rate has remained 4 percent, which Congressman MURPHY mentioned, above that of the military. It is time to end this inequity. H. Con. Res. 162 will help bring this inequity to a close by calling on Congress to voice their support for our servicemembers.

This Nation relies on our military to defend its citizens against enemies both foreign and domestic, and have done so with honor and integrity; but they do not fight these battles alone. Our military families provide them much-needed support in these difficult times. As was said earlier, nearly 40 percent of the members of the Armed Forces who are deployed leave their

families and children behind them. There are more than 3 million family members and dependents of those serving on active duty and in the Reserve.

For far too long, Congress has not made this a top priority. That is why I join with my colleague, Representative PATRICK MURPHY, and all of those in both parties who want this to be a number one issue for those in uniform and their families. Matching the increase is not sufficient. We must close the gap.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my friend and colleague, the gentlelady from New Hampshire. There is no greater advocate in the House of Representatives than Ms. SHEA-PORTER, a proud Member, and a fellow member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 162. By doing this, I rise in strong support of our men and women who deserve a pay raise.

As part of the Defense authorization, the House passed a 3.5 percent pay increase for our troops, half a percent larger than the President's budget. This means an E-4 would earn \$200 a year difference in this, just \$200 a year difference, but the President opposed this increase, calling it unnecessary. I don't think it's unnecessary to provide a decent wage for the brave men and women who sacrifice for our country. I once lived on military pay, and I can assure you that a decent wage is a requirement for military men and women and their families.

I find it ironic that the President thinks a pay raise for our troops is unnecessary, but he thinks it is necessary to pay contractors billions of dollars with no accountability at all. The President keeps sending our troops back again and again, and the President should at least be willing to give them a decent paycheck to do this job.

Madam Speaker, standing up for our troops must also mean standing up for their families. More than half of all servicemembers who are deployed to Iraq are married, and more than 40 percent of them have left children behind. While a half percent increase may seem small, when you're caring for a family, every little bit of support helps. This is not only the right thing to do for our troops; it's the right thing to do for our national security.

There is currently a 4 percent pay gap in pay between the military and the private sector. If we want to make sure that our armed services can recruit and retain the best, most talented, most highly qualified people, we need to provide them with comparable pay. This is especially critical now when we face new and emerging threats from around the world. And the Army began this year with the lowest number of recruits signed up for basic

training since the end of the draft in 1973.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution, supporting our national security, and supporting our troops and their families by giving them the pay increase they have earned.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I now yield 3 minutes to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KAGEN).

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, as a cosponsor of this resolution, I rise in strong support of its passage.

Next week, on Veterans Day, our Nation will pause to honor the many sacrifices made by veterans who have served in the defense of our country. And I appreciate the attention of our House leadership that they have given to this resolution and to our veterans who have served with incredible honor, with incredible skill and courage.

H. Con. Res. 162 recognizes the value of their dedicated service and begins to address the economic sacrifice of veterans as they endure their economic pain.

Because we rely on a voluntary citizen Army, we are now more indebted to those who have foregone higher pay elsewhere in civilian employment, especially as the value of our United States dollar continues to decline.

As Congressman MURPHY personally understands, our military has historically been underpaid. Service men and service women receive much less than they could earn in the private sector. And like my colleagues, I believe their pay must reflect their sacrifices.

This resolution calls upon Congress to fairly increase basic pay by 3.5 percent. We all understand that we must begin to pay all of our Nation's debts, and this resolution is a good first step in doing so.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, this is the last speaker on our side. And I now yield 3 minutes to my friend and colleague, a fellow Blue Dog, the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. JOE DONNELLY.

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 162, which reemphasizes our support for giving a pay raise for our Armed Forces this year.

This administration insisted in its defense budget request that military servicemembers should get no more than a 3 percent increase. However, in May, the House passed a needed 3.5 percent across-the-board increase in pay for our brave men and women. Unfortunately, the administration has deemed this extra half point unnecessary.

I strongly disagree with this assessment. And I can tell you that our servicemembers who defend this country both at home and abroad don't find this increase unnecessary. For a young soldier who may be earning \$20,000 a year, that extra half percent totals \$100, but that \$100 could make all the

difference in the world when that soldier has bills to pay and a family to take care of.

I believe America's servicemembers deserve this extra half percent increase. They put their lives on the line for us daily, for which we can never fully repay them for their service, but a 3.5 percent salary increase is a good start; and it is a small token of this Nation's gratitude.

Passing this resolution sends a strong message that this increase is not only the necessary thing to do, but it's the right thing to do as well.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, again, I want to thank Congressman MURPHY.

The stress of war on our men and women and their families is enormous. We cannot do much to help with the stress of war, but Mr. MURPHY's resolution can help the military family as they try to balance their own budget. So thank you, Mr. MURPHY, for this legislation, this resolution.

And with that, Madam Speaker, I hope that each and every Member will vote in support of this resolution.

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

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Thank you to my colleague, Mr. WALTER JONES. I appreciate that. I appreciate the gentleman's service for the citizens of our country and the citizens in North Carolina.

We owe it to those protecting our Nation and fighting for our rights to make sure that we support them and their families who are waiting at home.

This pay raise may mean less than \$1,000 for some enlisted men and women, but for those with bills to pay and young children to feed, several hundred dollars is a big deal.

Madam Speaker, I strongly support this pay raise, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. By passing this bill, we tell our troops that we support them, and send a message to the President that this pay raise is not only necessary, it's our responsibility.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to echo the vital message of this resolution.

Earlier this year, the House of Representatives passed the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Authorization bill with overwhelming bipartisan support. Included in that bill is a 3.5 percent pay raise for the men and women who wear our country's uniform.

While we will never be able to fully repay the debt we owe to our troops and their families for their service and sacrifice on behalf of our Nation, this pay raise is the very least that we can do in recognition of their commitment to our country.

Today our servicemembers and our military families are answering their call to duty with dedication and honor, despite lengthy deployments and little time at home. I recently returned from visiting our troops in Iraq—including the Iowa National Guard 833rd Engineer Battalion based in my District. What I heard overwhelmingly from our servicemembers is

that they take pride in serving their country but are concerned about the hardship placed on their families at home. The 833rd was redeployed to Iraq after only 14 months at home. These citizen soldiers have paid a high price in their civilian and family lives in order to serve their country. The pay raise provided by the Defense Authorization bill is well deserved and a token of the appreciation of a grateful Nation.

Unfortunately the Administration has deemed the .5 percent added by Congress to its request for a 3 percent raise to be "unnecessary." I, and many others in this Congress, say it is necessary. I am a cosponsor of this resolution because I strongly believe we have a responsibility to provide for our servicemembers both on the battlefield and throughout their lives.

This resolution also highlights the importance of a provision in the Defense Authorization bill that provides the families of fallen soldiers with a \$40 per month special survivor indemnity allowance in relief of the "Military Families Tax." The Administration also opposes this provision. Its opposition is once again misplaced. This tax is unfairly placed on more than 60,000 survivors of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

I am proud that as a Freshman Member of the House Armed Services Committee, I helped shape a Defense Authorization bill that recognizes the dedication and honor of our troops. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and to send a strong message that the United States Congress recognizes the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform and is committed to providing lifelong support to our servicemembers and our military families.

Madam Speaker, at this time 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 Pennsylvania (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 162, as amended.

The question was taken.

The Speaker pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY. Madam 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 motion will be postponed.

HEROES EARNINGS ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF TAX ACT OF 2007

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3997) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide earnings assistance and tax relief to members of the uniformed services, volunteer firefighters, and Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows: