

the SCHIP portion of Rhode Island's model RITE Care program. As a proud Representative of Rhode Island and a longtime supporter of SCHIP, I cannot stress enough how important this program is to the health and well-being of our children, expectant mothers and parents alike. Although this was not the outcome that I and many of my colleagues originally envisioned for SCHIP, this extension is crucial for States like Rhode Island that are facing tremendous budgetary shortfalls.

Madam Speaker, access to quality, affordable healthcare is integral to the prosperity of every American. While I am pleased that this Congress was able to reach a compromise to provide temporary relief for our country's most important safety net programs, I believe that we have the potential to do so much more. Health care providers that have pledged to continue serving the aging, disabled, and low-income citizens deserve more than stopgap measures and temporary relief. This Congress has an obligation to take meaningful action to reform and stabilize the Medicare provider payment system, as well as to ensure the continued strength and success of our Medicaid and SCHIP programs. To that end, I will continue to work in a bipartisan manner with my colleagues in an effort to guarantee that these issues are properly addressed in this and future Congresses.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation and the critical services provided by Medicare, Medicaid, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). This legislation ensures continued access to our nation's health care system for our most vulnerable citizens—children, seniors, the poor, and the disabled. It also extends incentives that allow health care providers to maintain practices in rural areas. These federal efforts are critical to maintaining healthy and productive communities across the country, and particularly in North Carolina's 2nd District.

North Carolina's citizens are at risk when reimbursements to physicians fall below the cost of providing care, and doctors must shut their doors or turn away patients because they cannot afford to attend to them. North Carolina's citizens are at risk when children go without care, and untreated illnesses or foregone preventative care reduces the health and productivity of those who will build our future. North Carolina's citizens are at risk when Congress fails to act to preserve benefits that they depend on.

The health of Americans and the future health of America depend upon the availability of and access to health care. I applaud our leaders in the House and Senate for working in a bicameral, bipartisan manner to craft this legislation so that our doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers can continue their service to keep our citizens healthy.

This legislation improves physician quality and access by averting the planned 10 percent cut in physician payments and extending the Medicare physician quality reporting system. It continues Medicare policy that provides a measure of fairness to the payment system for rural providers so that they can continue providing valuable services to individuals in rural parts of the 2nd District and across the country. I am hopeful that when Congress returns in 2008, we make extending these provisions on a long-term basis a priority so that providers can plan to remain in our communities for the long-term.

As the only former State schools chief serving in Congress, my life's work has been to provide for a better future for the next generation, and health care is critically important to that effort. This legislation averts the threat that States will run out of funds for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP. North Carolina's Health Choice, which serves over 250,000 needy children, will now be able to plan enrollment for the next year, whereas without this legislation it would have run out of money next March. While I am disappointed that this legislation does not enable the coverage of additional children, we owe it to the children currently served by SCHIP to ensure that they are continuously covered and can get the health care they need when they need it. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the future to fulfill the vision of health access for all children.

Madam Speaker, a lack of access to health care has impact beyond the individual who suffers a sickness without treatment. Untreated illnesses have long-term consequences, and ensuring access to health care contributes to a healthy and productive society and heads off expensive treatments down the road. This legislation is necessary to keep providers in our communities, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the legislation before us that will help both seniors and children alike receive the health care that they deserve, and continue our national investment in combating chronic disease.

I am particularly pleased to see that the legislation includes an extension of the Special Diabetes Program, which affords critical research funding to research into type one diabetes. Every year, thousands of parents receive the tragic news that their child will have to bear the burden of juvenile diabetes. With this news comes the realities of a life permanently changed by a disease for which we currently have no cure.

As I have shared with the House before, I am one of these parents. Nearly a decade ago, my wife and I learned that my son Nick would have to face the challenge of type one diabetes. We have been blessed and fortunate that Nick has lived an active and normal life. His successes are in large part thanks to the insulin pump he wears and other innovations that help type one diabetes patients manage their disease.

While Nick and so many other children have been able to manage their disease, they still worry about their future. It is the obligation of Congress to work towards finding a cure. The Special Diabetes Program provides the guarantee of continued, groundbreaking research into this disease. The yields of this research hold unquestioned promise for a better future.

I am disappointed that the extension of the program prescribed in this legislation is only one year. An overwhelming bipartisan group of my colleague in both the House and Senate expressed support for a longer extension of the program. Unfortunately, those who carry the weight of type one diabetes were casualties of partisan warfare over other, unrelated issues.

I look forward to working with my colleagues next year to ensure a longer renewal of this legislation. Congress has an obligation to lead the charge against this disease. I know that we can meet this challenge if we work together.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2499.

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. BARTON of Texas. 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.

AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY PROJECT, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1396) to authorize a major medical facility project to modernize inpatient wards at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 1396

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

SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY PROJECT, ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out a major medical facility project for modernization of inpatient wards at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Atlanta, Georgia, in an amount not to exceed \$20,534,000.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

I want to thank all the Congress colleagues from Georgia, especially my Atlanta colleagues Mr. JOHNSON and Mr. LEWIS, and especially the Senator from Georgia, Senator ISAKSON, for making sure this is on the floor today.

The poor state of a lot of the infrastructure of the Veterans Affairs is well-known.

Through what we call the CARES process, the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services, the department found that the existing inpatient wards at the Atlanta VA Medical Center are far below community standards.

This renovation project will go a long way to address the American with Disabilities Act accessibility requirements, the needs of women veterans, particularly as they relate to privacy issues, and the improvements in efficient functional design.

These deficiency corrections are long overdue, and we think they will be met

here. These infrastructure improvements to utility systems will include the plumbing, electrical, fire and safety concerns on the inpatient floors.

With the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is even more important that the VA is able to provide the best health care available in the most updated and modern facilities.

In fiscal year 2005, this project received \$20.5 million, and S. 1396 provides the reauthorization of this project to move forward.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I want to thank the ranking member, Mr. BUYER, for his cooperation. I know that he has great respect for the CARES process and would like to consider all of the facilities in one construction bill. We are pledged to do that early next year, but I think this is an obvious need at this moment, and I look forward to working with the ranking member to make sure we meet the needs of VA infrastructure across the whole country, and we intend to work together and do that early next year.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I also want to thank our committee chairman, Mr. FILNER, for working with me in a true bipartisan manner to expeditiously bring S. 1396 to the floor before we adjourn this year. I'd also like to thank the leadership of both parties for bringing this to the floor before we adjourn.

This bill would authorize \$20.5 million for the Department of Veterans Affairs to carry out a major medical facility project to modernize patient wards at the VA Medical Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

The President's budget submission for VA for fiscal year 2008 identified this project as the Department's number one major construction authorization request. Without this authorization, the VA would be unable to move forward with this needed project to update and improve patient services for veterans at the Atlanta VA Medical Center.

I also want to thank Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON for his efforts to pass this legislation in the Senate, and for the efforts of Senator SAXBY CHAMBLISS, who I've also personally spoken with. Both of these Senators have an interest in this project. I'd also like to recognize my good friends, PHIL GINGREY and TOM PRICE, who both introduced a companion bill earlier this year, and for their work and advocacy on this legislation, to also include my colleagues NATHAN DEAL, JACK KINGSTON, JOHN LINDER and PAUL BROWN.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I also want to thank Chairman FILNER and Mr. BUYER, Senators ISAKSON and CHAMBLISS, but also my Democratic colleagues. The chairman mentioned those, JOHN LEWIS, HANK JOHNSON,

DAVID SCOTT and others, but TOM PRICE and I introduced this bill, H.R. 4143, many months ago, but we had unanimous support of the Georgia delegation on both sides of the aisle, and as we should, Madam Speaker, because this is the VA's number one priority for authorization in fiscal year 2008 veterans budget. So I am very pleased.

I know this is the 11th hour, but thank goodness, because of the leadership on both sides of the aisle and in both bodies, this is coming to fruition.

As Chairman FILNER pointed out, there are ADA requirement issues. There are patient privacy issues. There are female veterans issues. So this is a hugely important project, and I thank my colleagues for making this happen.

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

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE).

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding and for his leadership, and I want to thank the chairman as well for his leadership, commend my colleagues in the United States Senate, Senator ISAKSON and Senator CHAMBLISS, for their assistance on this as well, and thank my physician colleague from Georgia, Congressman GINGREY, for assisting in moving this forward, also.

As a physician, I clearly understand and appreciate the need for facility improvements at the facility in Decatur, in Atlanta, Georgia. I recognized that during my training, Madam Speaker, when I did some of my training at the VA hospital in Decatur, and that was nearly 30 years ago, so it's high time that we finally get around to providing the resources to improve the infrastructure within the VA facility in Atlanta, in Decatur.

I had the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to visit the VA hospital last week and delivered some Christmas cards, holiday cards to our veterans who were there, had a wonderful tour of the facility, and some of it had undergone significant refurbishment and improvement. Some of it had not.

There are many wonderful men and women who are working diligently there to provide the highest quality care for our veterans. That will be facilitated by the work that this bill will allow, and so I'm pleased to stand with my colleagues in support of this bill and urge its adoption.

Mr. FILNER. I'm prepared to yield back when the gentleman from Indiana yields back.

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I also would like to mention the work of LYNN WESTMORELAND, also of Georgia, and once again, I think the clashes over the years between Mr. FILNER and myself are legend.

We had a very good discussion yesterday. So I want all of our colleagues to know that Mr. FILNER and I sat down. We had a good lunch. We had very good substantive discussions about a way forward, and we've come to the floor with this bill in a bipartisan manner.

We both recognize as we go into next year that the construction bill will be one of the top priorities for both of us to work together. It is very unusual to sever any construction projects out of a bill. I don't care whether it's the MilCon bill or out of the VA construction bill; this is highly unusual what we're doing here today.

But Mr. FILNER and I are going to work together in a bipartisan manner for the greater interests of veterans in this country, and we're going to use this bill as a springboard to greater things.

In the end, I also want to reiterate my comments. Senators CHAMBLISS and ISAKSON are strong supporters of our men and women in uniform and our Nation's veterans during their distinguished careers both in the House and the Senate.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 1396.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, again, I thank Mr. BUYER for his comments. Putting this bill on the floor as quickly as we did shows what can happen when we work together. I'm looking forward to that mutual discussion of priorities. We are pledged to deal with this aging infrastructure of the VA. It has got to be remedied as quickly as possible, and we're both committed to working to do that.

So I urge my colleagues to support S. 1396.

Mr. BROWN of Georgia. Madam Speaker, as a young man, I came to believe that it was simply my duty as a citizen to serve in our Nation's Armed Forces. So, it was just a natural thing for me to volunteer for service back in the early 60s. I joined the Marines, later also served as a medical officer in the Navy, and finally took a billet in the Georgia Air National Guard.

My military experiences, I believe, helped make me a better man. It certainly gave me an understanding of military life, and first-hand knowledge of the needs facing military personnel, military families, and our veterans. Those insights guide me as the Congressman for Georgia's 10th Congressional District.

The Federal Government must fulfill its promises to our veterans. We must give them the very best quality health care that is available anywhere in this country. It's important not only to the current veterans but also to the troops that are on active duty today, as well as the volunteers that we need to recruit to serve their country in the military.

As a medical student in Augusta, GA, and during my residency training, I worked in a number of VA hospitals. This experience gives me a unique perspective toward the veterans' needs, which most Members of Congress are not privileged to have. Consequently I have a tremendous desire to get the Federal Government to fulfill the promises it has broken to our

national heroes, the veterans. This bill is a step in that direction.

It is critical that the VA facilities in our Nation are modern, best equipped, and able to give the kind of care that our veterans deserve.

This bill will help to do that by giving veterans in Georgia and the Southeast a modern, up-to-date facility.

I am very sure that keeping the United States the freest Nation in the history of the world means that we must maintain the most powerful military on Earth.

As a member of Congress my priorities regarding military issues are these:

1. Provide our troops with the best training and the best technology.

2. Provide adequate compensation and benefits.

3. Do everything I can to help promote high morale and esprit de corps.

4. Support the spouses and children of military personnel.

5. Improve medical care for our wounded warriors and our veterans.

6. Keep the commitments made to our veterans regarding benefits.

I want to take just a moment of your time to provide you with an update on what I have done since I won the Special Election and was sworn into office last July:

1. Co-sponsored H.R. 3793 Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act of 2007 requiring the secretary of Defense to continue to pay to a member of the armed forces who is retired or separated from the armed forces due to a combat-related injury certain bonuses that the member was entitled to before the retirement or separation and would continue to be entitled to if the member was not retired or separated.

2. Co-sponsored H.R. 1110 amending the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums.

3. Co-sponsored H. Res. 111 establishing a Select POW and MIA Affairs Committee.

4. Co-sponsored H.J. Res. 67 supporting a base defense budget that at the very minimum matches four percent of gross domestic product.

5. Co-sponsored H. Res. 784 recognizing and honoring, in community post offices, the service of men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces deployed overseas.

6. Co-sponsored H.R. 1808 designating the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Augusta, GA, as the 'Charlie Norwood Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.'

7. Supported and spoke in favor of this bill S. 1396 to authorize a major medical facility project to modernize inpatient wards at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Atlanta, Georgia

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill as well as any future bills that will give veterans the kind of health care they deserve.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1396.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the

rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1145

OFFICER JEREMY TODD CHARRON POST OFFICE

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1896) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 11 Central Street in Hillsborough, New Hampshire, as the "Officer Jeremy Todd Charron Post Office".

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 1896

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

SECTION 1. OFFICER JEREMY TODD CHARRON POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 11 Central Street in Hillsborough, New Hampshire, shall be known and designated as the "Officer Jeremy Todd Charron Post Office".

(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 "Officer Jeremy Todd Charron Post Office".

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

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

As a member of the Government Reform Committee, I join my colleague in the consideration of Senate 1896, legislation naming a postal facility in Hillsborough, New Hampshire, after the late Officer Jeremy Todd Charron. This measure was sponsored by Senator JOHN SUNUNU, Republican of New Hampshire, on July 30, 2007, and unanimously reported by our committee on October 23, 2007.

A member of the New Hampshire Police Department, Officer Charron died in the line of duty, gunned down while questioning two individuals. He passed away on August 24, 1997. Naming a postal facility after Officer Charron is a fitting way for the Hillsborough community to honor his memory.

Madam Speaker, I urge swift passage of this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Jeremy Todd Charron was a dedicated protector of both his State and country. An intense, goal-oriented young man, he aspired to be a marine since the second grade. After graduating high school, Jeremy fulfilled that dream and joined the Marine Corps, where he proudly served his country for 4 years.

After his enlistment term ended, Jeremy's passion to serve his community and protect others led him to join the Epsom Police Department with the goal of ultimately becoming a State trooper.

Tragically, on August 24, 2007, after attending two fellow officers' funerals, Jeremy was gunned down while questioning two suspicious individuals. Despite his fatal wounds, Jeremy fought back. He returned fire until he collapsed, forcing his killers to flee and steal a nearby truck that was identified by police and ultimately led to their capture.

Leadership was a trait of Jeremy's throughout his short life, whether on the soccer field or as high school class president. He was also known as someone who would defend those who were unable to defend themselves.

Jeremy Charron proved his dedication to honorably serving others, both in the military and as a law enforcement officer who ultimately sacrificed himself in order to keep his community safe.

On this, the 10th anniversary of the death of Jeremy, it would be fitting to name the Hillsborough, New Hampshire, postal facility in his honor. So I join my colleague from Illinois in asking all Members to support the naming of this post office to honor this American hero.

Mr. HODES. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of S. 1896, which would designate the U.S. Post Office located at Central Street in Hillsborough, New Hampshire, as the "Officer Jeremy Todd Charron Post Office." Officer Charron, "who died at the young age of 24, served the people of New Hampshire admirably, and this bill would be a fitting tribute to his courage and sacrifice to the Granite State.

Jeremy was a graduate of Hillsborough-Deering High School, where he was elected to be the president of his senior class. After graduating high school, he served in the United States Marine Corps from 1992 to 1996 and went on to attend the New Hampshire Police Academy.

Six weeks after graduating from the academy, in the early morning of August 24, 1997, Officer Charron noticed a suspicious car parked in Webster Park in Epsom. When the two people inside stepped out of the car, Officer Charron was fired upon three times, with one round entering his unprotected left side.

Although mortally wounded, Officer Charron was able to return fire. He struck the vehicle several times even as the car fled from the scene before succumbing to his wounds. The