

interested in transitioning to become business owners, while the Small Business Sustainability Initiative will promote the development and implementation of energy-efficient and clean energy improvements and technology. And an Affordable Health Care Initiative will help small business owners provide affordable health care insurance options to their employees, as the chairwoman mentioned.

As I also spoke about, a second program which this legislation will address is SCORE, which provides entrepreneurs with free counseling assistance by former executives. SCORE provides a valuable service to small businesses, and I believe it will be even stronger with a provision to actively recruit volunteer mentors who will then provide a greater reflection of the social and economic diversity of those who will utilize SBA services, such as women and underrepresented minorities.

I urge all my colleagues to support this important bill, which will greatly enhance the business development resources available to America's small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield such time as he may consume to my good friend Mr. LATHAM.

Mr. LATHAM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for yielding me time, and I congratulate the committee and the chairman for bringing this piece of legislation forward.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2359, the Small Business Administration Entrepreneurial Development Programs Act.

I am especially pleased that the Small Business Committee included legislation that I introduced earlier this Congress, H.R. 731, the National Small Business Regulatory Assistance Act, into this broad legislative package. This National Small Business Regulatory Assistance Act utilizes one of SBA's most effective programs, the Small Business Development Center program. Generally the SBDCs support small businesses with financial, management, and marketing activities. My legislation, included in section 207 of H.R. 2359, creates a pilot program through the SBDCs that will provide free confidential counseling on regulatory compliance and help small businesses gain access to regulatory information and resources.

The research done by the Small Business Administration demonstrates that small businesses with less than 20 employees pay more than \$7,600 per employee to comply with Federal regulations each year, while large firms pay 45 percent less per employee. Adjusted for inflation, the annual cost of Federal regulations faced by America's small businesses in 2004 was over \$875 billion.

The fact of the matter is many small business owners have neither the time

nor the expertise to sort through hundreds of pages of regulations in the Federal Register. Small business owners often learn of their failure to comply with Federal regulations or even that new Federal regulations have been imposed only after a penalty has been assessed. The current system denies small businesses access to regulatory compliance assistance and further weakens the opportunity for America's small businesses to compete with larger firms both domestically and internationally.

The Small Business Regulatory Assistance Act represents a win-win for America's small businesses. Not only will the SBDCs help small business owners understand what they must do to comply with Federal regulations but also how they may do so in a most cost-effective manner.

Again, I would like to thank the committee for including this legislation in the bill, and I urge my colleagues to support the overall bill.

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

Today's entrepreneurs are facing countless challenges. SBA's entrepreneurial development programs must be modernized to provide small businesses with the ability to deal with the economic conditions of today.

Mr. SESTAK's legislation, the SBA Entrepreneurial Development Programs Act of 2007, makes much-needed updates to the agency's programs so that they are better able to assist entrepreneurs and enable small firms to remain a driving force in our economy.

H.R. 2359 has the support of the NFIB, who, in addition to supporting it, has made it one of their key votes for the 110th Congress.

Again I want to thank Mr. SESTAK and also Mr. CHABOT, the ranking minority member, for working in a bipartisan manner to move this legislation and other bills that will be moved today. I want to thank the staff that worked on this bill. From the majority staff, Michael Day, Adam Minehardt, Nicole Witenstein; from Representative SESTAK's staff, Clarence Tong; and from the minority staff, Barry Pineles.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote for H.R. 2359.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2359, the SBA Entrepreneurial Development Programs Act of 2007. I commend our colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) for sponsoring this legislation. I also commend our colleague from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ), Chairwoman of the Committee on Small Business, and the members of the Committee on Small Business for their initiatives to strengthen America's small businesses and for bringing to the House chamber today four important bills aimed at improving programs and services administered by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

H.R. 2359 would reauthorize certain entrepreneurial development programs and aid small businesses across our country in receiving enhanced assistance from Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs). H.R. 2359 would also expand the services available

through SBDCs to include assistance aimed to help businesses prepare for and respond to economic disruptions caused by natural and manmade disasters, regulatory burdens, and increased costs. By ensuring that the SBDC core programs remain robust and authorizing new programs that are designed specifically to meet evolving needs of small business owners and operators, this bill will help SBDCs sustain a reputation as trusted and valued sources of technical assistance for our country's entrepreneurs.

This legislation would further make important changes to the Small Business Administration Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) Program. These changes will help ensure that SBA clients from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds can benefit from advice, counseling and mentoring from executives from similar, disadvantaged backgrounds. This bill would require the SBA to increase its efforts to recruit such executives to participate in the SCORE Program.

The SBDC and SCORE programs have been remarkably successful. This bill will help ensure that those excellent programs are as responsive as possible to the evolving needs of our country's small businesses. I urge my colleagues' support for this bill.

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

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, 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 gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2359.

The question was taken.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. 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.

SBA VETERANS' PROGRAMS ACT OF 2007

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2366) to reauthorize the veterans entrepreneurial development programs of the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2366

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "SBA Veterans' Programs Act of 2007".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—OFFICE OF VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Sec. 101. Office of Veterans Business Development.

TITLE II—VETERANS ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES

Sec. 201. Veterans Assistance and Services program.

TITLE III—EXPANDING VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTERS

Sec. 301. Increasing the number of outreach centers.

Sec. 302. Independent study on gaps in availability of outreach centers.

TITLE I—OFFICE OF VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**SEC. 101. OFFICE OF VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.**

Section 32 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (e); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (b) the following:

“(c) PARTICIPATION IN TAP WORKSHOPS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Associate Administrator shall increase veteran outreach by ensuring that Veteran Business Outreach Centers regularly participate, on a nationwide basis, in the workshops of the Transition Assistance Program of the Department of Labor.

“(2) PRESENTATIONS.—In carrying out paragraph (1), a Center may provide grants to eligible entities located in Transition Assistance Program locations to make presentations on the opportunities available from the Administration for recently separating veterans. Each such presentation must include, at a minimum, the entrepreneurial and business training resources available from the Administration.

“(3) REPORTS.—The Associate Administrator shall submit to Congress progress reports on the implementation of this subsection.

“(d) WOMEN VETERANS BUSINESS TRAINING RESOURCE PROGRAM.—The Associate Administrator shall establish a Women Veterans Business Training Resource Program. The program shall—

“(1) compile information on resources available to women veterans for business training, including resources for—

“(A) vocational and technical education;

“(B) general business skills, such as marketing and accounting; and

“(C) business assistance programs targeted to women veterans; and

“(2) disseminate the information through Veteran Business Outreach Centers and women’s business centers.”.

TITLE II—VETERANS ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES**SEC. 201. VETERANS ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES PROGRAM.**

Section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(n) VETERANS ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES PROGRAM.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A Small Business Development Center may apply for an additional grant to carry out a veterans assistance and services program.

“(2) ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM.—Under a program under paragraph (1), the Center shall—

“(A) create a marketing campaign to promote awareness and education of the services of the Center that are available to veterans, and to target the campaign toward veterans, disabled veterans, military units, Federal agencies, and veterans organizations;

“(B) use technology-assisted online counseling and distance learning technology to overcome the impediments to entrepreneurship faced by veterans and members of the Armed Forces; and

“(C) increase coordination among organizations that assist veterans, including by es-

tablishing virtual integration of service providers and offerings for a one-stop point of contact for veterans who are entrepreneurs or small business owners.

“(3) MINIMUM AMOUNT.—Each grant under this subsection shall be for at least \$75,000.

“(4) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—A grant under this subsection may not exceed \$250,000.

“(5) FUNDING.—Subject to amounts approved in advance in appropriations Acts, the Administration may make grants or enter into cooperative agreements to carry out the provisions of this subsection.”.

TITLE III—EXPANDING VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTERS**SEC. 301. INCREASING THE NUMBER OF OUTREACH CENTERS.**

The Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall use the authority in section 8(b)(17) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 647(b)) to ensure that the number of Veterans Business Outreach Centers throughout the United States increases—

(1) by at least 2, for each of fiscal years 2008 and 2009; and

(2) by the number that the Administrator considers appropriate, based on existing need, for each fiscal year thereafter.

SEC. 302. INDEPENDENT STUDY ON GAPS IN AVAILABILITY OF OUTREACH CENTERS.

The Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall sponsor an independent study on gaps in the availability of Veterans Business Outreach Centers across the United States. The purpose of the study shall be to identify the gaps that do exist so as to inform decisions on funding and on the allocation and coordination of resources. Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the study.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVID DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

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

There is no question our Nation’s veterans have made great sacrifices for this country. Many traveled long distances, spent lengthy amounts of time away from their families, and have been in harm’s way to ensure our safety.

To date, more than 135,000 troops have come home from Iraq and Afghanistan. These men and women are increasingly turning toward small business ownership. Congressman BUCHANAN’s legislation, the Small Business Administration Veterans Programs Act of 2007, ensures that service men and women will not only have the opportunity to pursue entrepreneurship but to succeed at starting their own firms.

While many have the American dream of owning a business, veterans face unique challenges when working to start or maintain their firms. For this sector of the population to be successful in their small business endeavors, there needs to be assistance available in local communities. They cannot be expected to return home knowing all of the necessary and available tools to start a business. Outreach efforts to these aspiring entrepreneurs need to be increased and information must be accessible. The Small Business Administration Veterans Programs Act of 2007 makes these resources available.

Service men and women contributing to economic growth is not a new trend. After World War II, the GI bill provided the opportunity of a college education to this Nation’s veterans. By 1956 there were 7.8 million World War II veterans that had participated in an education or training program. The impact that that single piece of legislation had on this Nation’s economy was great.

Much like ensuring the right to a college education, as the GI bill did, H.R. 2366 expands business ownership. It provides specific assistance for aspiring business owners. Starting a business after leaving military service provides an opportunity for returning veterans to not only begin a new career but to secure their livelihood. Enabling this to be a viable option for some of the most dedicated individuals in our country spurs economic development in local economies, demonstrates our commitment to their aspirations of entrepreneurship, and represents true patriotism.

I strongly urge support of this legislation.

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

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

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the request to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 2366, the SBA Veterans Programs Act of 2007. I would like to thank Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ for working in a cooperative, bipartisan manner to bring this bill, authored by Mr. BUCHANAN, a freshman member of the committee, to the House floor.

No one can debate the sacrifice that America’s veterans have made and continue to make in defense of our country. While the repayment of that debt may never occur, we can certainly provide them with the needed assistance to prosper in civilian life. H.R. 2366 is a modest contribution to repaying the debt and helping them make a smooth transition into civilian life.

The bill recognizes that veterans learn a variety of critical skills. Recruitment advertisements for the armed services highlight the various technical skills that they can obtain through the military. These skills clearly are valued in civilian companies. In addition, the military inculcates its members with other important skills such as leadership, decision-

making, teamwork, and the drive to win. All of these are critical to success as a small business owner.

The military does not teach its members how to take these skills and transfer them to starting a business. They require additional training to understand the key components of operating their own business without first having to serve a sort of “apprenticeship” working with others.

In 1999 Congress recognized that more services should be directed to help the 25 million veterans start and grow their small businesses. Those efforts succeeded because a number of small businesses owned by veterans have grown to 14 percent of all small businesses.

Despite this success more must be done to assist our veterans in the start-up and operation of their businesses. Outreach must improve to ensure that veterans wishing to start their own businesses will have the training and advice needed to transfer their skills to entrepreneurship.

The technical advice and assistance are not limited to veterans leaving the service. Reservists who operate their own small businesses have their own unique set of operational problems associated with their call-up to duty. They may not know how long their call-up will last, and they may need assistance in ensuring that they have in place a plan to operate their businesses while they are on Active Duty.

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H.R. 2366 represents an effort to expand the focus of the SBA entrepreneurial assistance programs to our veterans. Of most significant importance is the need to create more Veteran Business Outreach Centers. These centers operate as cooperative agreements between the Small Business Administration and the non-profit entities. These centers provide entrepreneurial development services, such as business training, counseling, mentoring and referrals. They also conduct entrepreneurial business development workshops focusing on self-development and self-employment. Counseling services may range from development of business plans to identifying government procurement opportunities.

There are only four Veteran Business Outreach Centers. To serve our military men and women, more are obviously needed, and title III requires the establishment of two more centers in each of the next two fiscal years.

Another important element of the bill is the recognition of the changing nature of the military with a greater involvement of women. Title I of the bill requires the administrator to establish within the Office of Veterans Business Development a program to provide assistance to women veterans. Given the rapid expansion and success of women-owned businesses, it makes sense to ensure that the needs of women veterans are met when they seek to start and operate small businesses.

Our fighting men and women are the best in the world. Let us help them become the best entrepreneurs in the world by enacting H.R. 2366.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON), a member of the Small Business Committee.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2366.

By now, every American should know who our Greatest Generation is. Our Greatest Generation was made up of the returning heroes of the Second World War. This generation was responsible for one of the greatest periods of economic growth in our Nation's history, leading to the creation of the lone superpower which now has become the world's leader in almost every conceivable category. But it is because we empowered our returning veterans with educational, business and social opportunities which helped create an environment in which success was attainable for those who wanted it. The Greatest Generation went on to become small business owners and operators, driving the very engine which is critical for the sustained economic growth of our Nation.

We are now witnessing the emergence of another great generation, a generation of volunteer warriors who have sacrificed so much in defense of our Nation's interest. We would be negligent if we did not grant to this generation the same opportunities to succeed as we have done with past generations. That is why I support H.R. 2366, and I move for its passage.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. I would like to yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BUCHANAN) as much time as he may consume.

Mr. BUCHANAN. I would like to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Tennessee, for yielding, and also the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

I would also like to commend Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ and Ranking Member CHABOT for their proving that leadership and bipartisanship is alive and well in the United States Congress. The Madam Chair has worked very hard on this bill, and I appreciate her effort.

Mr. Speaker, my bill, H.R. 2366, would create an important program within the Small Business Administration that gives our veterans not just a chance in a business enterprise but provides them with all the help and assistance a grateful Nation can offer.

This legislation is intended to help veterans through grants, information services and contacts with professionals in their field of endeavor. This Federal program will enhance the ability of a veteran to become an entrepreneur in his or her own right.

My bill puts an emphasis on providing veterans with market research, financial options and technological training important to become a successful small business owner.

H.R. 2366 not only expands the number and the scope of Veteran Outreach Centers, it ensures the opening of more doors and opportunities for our women veterans. Assisting our veterans returning from combat has been an area long overlooked, and it is high time we did something about it.

I am encouraged by the unanimous consent that this bill received in the committee and by the spirit of bipartisanship that is symbolic of its passage. Today, the House will pass a bill that will help individuals make an important transition from a veteran to a small business entrepreneur.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2366.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the motion is withdrawn.

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR EARMARK REFORM

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules be discharged from further consideration of the resolution (H. Res. 491) providing for earmark reform, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. TAUSCHER). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, reserving the right to object, I would simply ask my very distinguished Chair for an explanation of exactly what it is that we're doing here.

I am happy to yield to the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules under my reservation, Madam Speaker.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

What this measure does is absolutely guarantee that any earmark in a conference report that has not been passed in the House will be subject to a point of order even though the Rules Committee may have protected against all points of order.

Mr. DREIER. If I may, under my reservation, Madam Speaker, I would just like to make sure that we have in place a provision now, as was agreed on last week, that will ensure that the rights of Members, when it comes to raising a point of order, are maintained when it comes to appropriations bills.

I would say, Madam Speaker, that I believe this is a very good start. My personal preference would have been that we could have gone back to the provision that we had last year to allow the same kind of protection for earmarks when it comes to both authorization and tax bills. And I hope very much, Madam Speaker, that we are going to have an opportunity to work together. I look forward to working with the distinguished Chair of the