

AmeriCorps positions in which individuals have access to a vulnerable population.

□ 1445

The regs also prohibited individuals from serving in these positions if they were registered sex offenders.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the administration for taking these steps to protect vulnerable populations being served by the national service programs. But I believe that we should go further and provide more protection.

First, this motion to recommit would codify the corporation's regulations, ensuring that these protections are not subject to the whims of future administrations. Despite current efforts, program audits conducted by the Office of the Inspector General have detected a disturbing pattern of noncompliance with criminal background check provision requirements. In some cases, programs have failed to conduct checks.

Just as disturbing, however, other programs have failed to retain the documentation providing this background check information that was conducted for members working with youth and other vulnerable persons.

Second, this motion to recommit would expand on the corporation's efforts by including, and I emphasize that, including all federally funded national service provision positions, not just those within the foster grandparents and senior competitive programs or just those AmeriCorps programs dealing with specific populations.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in addition to prohibiting registered sex offenders from serving in these positions, this motion to recommit would include those individuals convicted of murder as well.

Mr. Speaker, our message is clear with this motion to recommit: if you are a program receiving assistance under these national service laws and are accepting participants to serve in federally funded programs and positions within your program, we expect you to screen those potential participants to ensure that they are not, and I emphasize again, not registered sex offenders or convicted murderers. And if you wish to serve in federally funded national service positions, some of which include as their reward an education award that exceeds that which is received by low-income students through the form of a Pell Grant, you are not welcome if you have committed these crimes.

Mr. Speaker, some people would ask, Why do we include these crimes? We believe that these crimes are so egregious that they demand Federal action. But also we hope that by requiring criminal history background checks, programs will have increased information with which they can exercise good judgment. It only seems to make sense. To repeat myself, we also hope that by requiring criminal background checks, programs will have the increased infor-

mation from which they can exercise good judgment in deciding who deserves the rewards that come with federally funded national service positions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this motion to recommit, which would provide the Education and Labor Committee further time to deliberate on this important topic. This motion expresses a loud and clear message that the House of Representatives believes that those in need who are served by programs supported with assistance under these laws should be assured that they will not be placed in harm's way when approaching these programs for help.

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. As I understand the motion, Mr. Speaker, it is to codify the regulations that were finalized in November of last year that the Department has proposed for background checks and protection of the programs; is that correct?

Mr. KUHL of New York. If the gentleman will yield, that is one aspect of the motion. It goes farther than that.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think we agree with you, and I would ask if the gentleman would accept a unanimous consent request to change "promptly" to "forthwith" so we could vote on it now and report the bill out.

Mr. KUHL of New York. Mr. Speaker, I recently sat and listened to the debate on the prior attempt to bring a motion to recommit on a significant issue, that being the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. If the gentleman would amend his unanimous consent request to include that so we might have a vote, I would be happy to.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I reclaim my time.

I just want to say that this is unfortunate, because this is an amendment that we would agree to. It embodies the regulations supported by the Bush administration. It affects a program that has huge bipartisan support in all of our communities, that the President is in support of and is looking for the opportunity to sign this bill. But the gentleman insists upon making his motion in the form of "promptly," so that the bill has to go back to committee, which makes everything much more complicated in terms of the passage of this bill.

Mr. KUHL of New York. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. KUHL of New York. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the appropriations for these particular programs don't expire for another several months.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I reclaim my time and would just say that this amendment was never offered in committee, it was never taken to the Rules Committee. This is sort of a "gotcha." But, unfortunately, it dramatically impacts the timetable for this bill.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 2 of House Resolution 1015, further proceedings on the bill will be postponed.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, March 5, 2008.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: This is to formally notify you, pursuant to Rule VIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, that I have been served with two administrative subpoenas for documents issued by the Merit Systems Protection Board.

After consulting with the Office of General Counsel, I have determined that compliance with the subpoenas is consistent with the privileges and rights of the House.

Sincerely,

DANIEL P. BEARD,
Chief Administrative Officer.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate the positions I would have taken on votes missed because I was unavoidably detained in my district, and, lastly, I was unavoidably detained at a meeting with the Dialogue on Diversity.

On rollcall vote No. 90, H.R. 816, I would have voted "aye"; rollcall vote No. 89, I would have voted "aye"; rollcall vote No. 88, I would have voted "aye"; rollcall vote No. 87, I would have voted "aye"; rollcall vote No. 86, I would have voted "aye"; rollcall vote No. 85, I would have voted "aye"; and to the Inslee-Sarbanes amendment No. 11 to H.R. 2857, I was unavoidably detained with Dialogue on Diversity today and I would have voted "aye."

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that my positions on these legislative initiatives be placed in the appropriate place in the RECORD.

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I wonder in view of the truncated schedule that we have had this afternoon, if anyone on the majority side knows if we might be bringing up the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, the FISA Act, the bipartisan Senate bill that was passed

that we certainly have time to deal with this afternoon. I wonder if anyone might be able to let us know if we are bringing that up this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, continuing to reserve, I know it certainly is an important issue. We have had communications from 25 State attorneys general.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the unanimous consent request.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The request is withdrawn.

□ 1500

AIR FORCE TANKER DECISION

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, even before the Air Force announced its decision on a new tanker, serious questions were being raised about the fairness of the process and the justification of the outcome. Barely a week later, it is becoming increasingly clear that the United States Air Force has called an air strike on U.S. jobs, U.S. companies, and a level playing field. That is grounds for a reduction in rank. You can't tell Boeing you want a 767-size tanker, then change your mind, and then deny them the ability to fairly compete with the Triple-7. As it stands, the Airbus won't even fit in our hangars. Maybe the biggest reason the Air Force has an aging tanker fleet is because it has a prehistoric process that ought to be rendered extinct like the dinosaurs.

This is about fairness, this is about selecting the right company to keep America strong, and it so happens the right company is Boeing. Boeing offers the best people, the best plane, and the best deal, but the Air Force shot them down with a botched decision that outsources our national defense to foreign companies. If they won't admit their mistake, Congress should do it for them. The U.S. tanker decision should be grounded because it is unsafe to fly.

H.R. 2857

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the chairman of the Education Committee for capturing the spirit of America in H.R. 2857, Generations Invigorating Volunteerism Education Act. I thank my colleague Congresswoman MCCARTHY for introducing the legislation, and again say that there have been so many success stories that all of us could cite by referring to AmeriCorps, Vista, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America.

This bill, of course, that we have just been debating works to ensure that

volunteers and the organizations that support them will receive the resources that they need to continue their vital work. Many of them engage with other nongovernmental organizations or nonprofits. Some of them work with Habitat for Humanity. Many of them you will find in the Nation's urban and rural schoolhouses. You will find them as role models. You will find them as those who get on the front line when there is Hurricane Katrina or Rita. You find them in institutions such as Texas Southern University and Texas A&M.

This is an important legislative initiative. I am delighted to have had an amendment added to this bill and I am delighted to be one of the supporters of this bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I was detained in my district on February 28 and March 4 and missed the following rollcall votes:

Rollcall vote No. 90, I would have voted "aye";

Rollcall vote No. 89, I would have voted "aye";

Rollcall vote No. 88, I would have voted "aye";

Rollcall vote No. 87, I would have voted "aye";

Rollcall vote No. 86, I would have voted "aye";

Rollcall vote No. 85, I would have voted "aye."

Today, I was detained as well with the Dialogue on Diversity, and therefore on the Inslee-Sarbanes amendment to H.R. 2857, I would have voted "aye."

THE SAFE COMMISSION ACT: A BIPARTISAN WAY FORWARD

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, in January, Moody's Investors Service released its annual report which concluded that the United States triple-A bond rating is at risk.

We should care that respectable credit rating agencies are projecting that the United States will be on par with Estonia by the year 2015, Poland and Mexico by 2020, and below investment grade, junk debt, by 2025.

Our Nation cannot continue on its current financial path. The Cooper-Wolf SAFE Commission Act would put everything on the table, tax policy, entitlements, and other Federal programs, to provide a bipartisan way forward on this issue. Over 70 Members from both sides of the aisle, Republican and Democrat, are already cosponsoring the bill.

We must work together to rein in spending. We cannot continue to avoid a responsibility to future generations, to our children and our grandchildren, by passing on a broken system in the form of unfunded Social Security and Medicare obligations and unsustainable spending.

[From the Financial Times, Jan. 11, 2008]

U.S.'s TRIPLE-A CREDIT RATING 'UNDER THREAT'

(By Francesco Guerrera, Aline van Duyn and Daniel Pimlott)

The U.S. is at risk of losing its top-notch triple-A credit rating within a decade unless it takes radical action to curb soaring healthcare and social security spending, Moody's, the credit rating agency, said yesterday.

The warning over the future of the triple-A rating—granted to U.S. Government debt since it was first assessed in 1917—reflects growing concerns over the country's ability to retain its financial and economic supremacy.

It could also put further pressure on candidates from both the Republican and Democratic parties to sharpen their focus on healthcare and pensions in the run-up to November's presidential election.

Most analysts expect future administrations to deal with the costs of healthcare and social security and there is no reflection of any long-term concern about the U.S.'s financial health in the value of its debt.

But Moody's warning comes at a time when U.S. confidence in its economic prowess has been challenged by the rising threat of a recession, a weak dollar and the credit crunch.

In its annual report on the U.S., Moody's signalled increased concern that rapid rises in Medicare and Medicaid—the government-funded healthcare programmes for the old and the poor—would "cause major fiscal pressures" in years to come.

Unlike Moody's previous assessment of US government debt in 2005, yesterday's report specifically links rises in healthcare and social security spending to the credit rating.

"The combination of the medical programmes and social security is the most important threat to the triple-A rating over the long term," it said.

Steven Hess, Moody's lead analyst for the U.S., told the Financial Times that in order to protect the country's top rating, future administrations would have to rein in healthcare and social security costs.

"If no policy changes are made, in 10 years from now we would have to look very seriously at whether the U.S. is still a triple-A credit," he said.

Mr. Hess said any downgrade in the U.S. rating would have serious consequences for the global economy. "The U.S. rating is the anchor of the world's financial system. If you have a downgrade, you have a problem," he said.

Moody's did once threaten to cut the rating of some of the U.S. Treasury's debt when Congress refused to pass the president's budget in the mid-1990s. Other large economies, notably Japan in the 1990s, have had to suffer the symbolic blow of losing their top-notch credit rating.

Last year, David Walker, comptroller general of the U.S., caused controversy when he compared America's current situation with the dying days of the Roman empire and warned the country was on "a burning platform" of unsustainable policies.

Medicare and Medicaid spending, which has risen sharply over the past few decades and now accounts for about 45 per cent of total federal spending, up from about 25 per cent in 1975, has long been a source of concern.

Last month, Peter Orszag, director of the Congressional Budget Office, which advises Congress on the federal budget, said the issue was "the central fiscal challenge" facing the US.

Most presidential candidates have vowed to reform the healthcare system but many of