

Minister Benazir Bhutto. The horrific murder of Prime Minister Bhutto is a chilling reminder that extremist forces are continually trying to undermine democracy and freedom. Today, we stand with the democrats in Pakistan and throughout the world to oppose tyranny and terrorism.

Benazir Bhutto was the first woman elected to lead a Muslim state and served twice as Prime Minister of Pakistan. I had the distinct honor and privilege to meet her when she spoke to members of the House International Relations Committee during the mid-1990's in an ornate ceremonial room just one floor below this rostrum. Her accomplishment paved the way for other women leaders to seek and win top offices throughout the developing world. Bhutto's dedication to democracy in Pakistan is closely tied to the time she spent as a student in the United States. In fact, she credits her exposure to America as a driving force behind her push for a free Pakistan.

Former Prime Minister Bhutto was also no stranger to the good people of Illinois' 16th Congressional District. In 2002, she spoke to an overflow audience at Rockford College about the link between promoting democracy and defeating extremist terrorists. I know I speak for the people of northern Illinois in expressing our heartfelt gratitude that she visited Rockford. Bhutto's speech was inspirational and enlightening. I enclose for the RECORD the article titled, "Ex-Premier Pushes U.S. to Aid Democracy Fight" from the Rockford Register Star, published on September 20, 2002, discussing Bhutto's historic remarks at Rockford College.

Pakistan must continue its journey to political reform and democracy. The United States must stand with those who advocate for the fundamental freedoms that were bestowed onto all of us by our creator. Let's not forget Bhutto's legacy and stand with the people of Pakistan in this dark hour.

[From the Rockford Register Star, Sept. 20, 2002]

EX-PREMIER PUSHES U.S. TO AID DEMOCRACY FIGHT

ROCKFORD.—Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Thursday that people of her country support her battle to bring democracy to Pakistan. She wants President Bush to help.

The deposed leader—who at age 35 became the first female prime minister in the Muslim world—continues her efforts, made more important in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Bhutto remains critical of the regime of Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who has controlled the country since 1999. She is an author and active in the Pakistan People's Party, the country's largest, pro-democracy party.

"I support democracy in Pakistan and, with the war on terrorism, there is a new commitment to bringing democracy to the Muslim world and the empowering of the Muslim people based on fundamental human rights," she said.

Bhutto planned to share this message later Thursday night with a sold-out crowd at Maddox Theatre at Rockford College. Additional crowds were seated in the Cheek Theatre and dance studio to watch a live television feed of Bhutto's presentation.

Bhutto's visit kicked off the 2002-03 Rockford College Forum Series, a program of speakers and workshops focused on the politics and culture of Islam.

Bhutto acknowledged that she hasn't met with Bush about bringing democracy to her

home country but "other U.S. officials" assured her that the United States remains committed to fostering democracy in Pakistan.

"I want President Bush to say 'Look, you've been our ally, and we want to help bring democracy because democracy doesn't promote terrorism,'" she said.

Her determination to see Pakistan become a democracy began after she completed her education at Radcliffe College and Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, in the late 1970s.

Bhutto was born June 21, 1953, in Karachi, Pakistan. In 1977, at age 24, she returned home and took up the struggle to restore democracy and human rights in the country as a leader of the Pakistan People's Party.

Bhutto faced imprisonment and exile while guiding the resistance to Pakistan's military regime.

Her government was replaced by opposing political forces in 1990, but Bhutto was again elected prime minister in 1993 and served until 1996, when the government was overthrown by a military coup.

"My leadership was of different vision than the conservatives. It was dictatorship vs. democracy."

Jeff Hendry, chairman of the forum series committee, said Bhutto's visit was "huge, especially now with all the news in that part of the world."

In her speech: "she will deal with the international political climate and deal more with what the U.S. can do and should be doing to bring democracy to Pakistan as well as the strategic importance of the region," he said.

WHAT SHE SAID

The Register Star asked Benazir Bhutto:

Is Osama bin Laden dead? "It's 50-50, and it's anybody's guess. I thought for a while if he was dead, there had to be certain funeral ceremonies done for the soul, but maybe he was killed and nobody knew. He could be playing dead and he could pop in the next five years. But if he's hiding, it would probably be in the mountains of Afghanistan."

How the people of Pakistan view the United States: "Pakistan has mixed feelings toward the U.S. It's like a love-hate relationship. They see it as a land of opportunity and power and to them, they feel they are powerless. They like the power the U.S. has, but they hate their own powerlessness."

Have the Pakistani people been treated differently in the United States since the terrorist attacks? "I have respect largely in the area of academia. I have talked to students who have said Americans came to them and asked 'Are you OK?' Other stories I hear from big cities are of hate crimes and of some men who have shaved their beards off in fear of being targeted. But President Bush is right when he says Pakistan is safe here. I hear others say, 'We are Americans, and please accept us as the way we are.'"

Mr. ACKERMAN. Having no additional speakers, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 912.

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. ACKERMAN. 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.

PROVIDING FOR CONCURRENCE BY HOUSE WITH AMENDMENT IN SENATE AMENDMENT TO H.R. 4253, MILITARY RESERVIST AND VETERAN SMALL BUSINESS REAUTHORIZATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2008

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 921) providing for the concurrence by the House in the Senate amendment to H.R. 4253, with an amendment.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 921

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution the bill (H.R. 4253) entitled "An Act to improve and expand small business assistance programs for veterans of the armed forces and military reservists, and for other purposes", with the Senate amendment thereto, shall be considered to have been taken from the Speaker's table to the end that the Senate amendment thereto be, and the same is hereby, agreed to with the following amendment:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted by the amendment of the Senate, insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title.
- Sec. 2. Table of contents.
- Sec. 3. Definitions.

TITLE I—VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Sec. 101. Increased funding for the Office of Veterans Business Development.
- Sec. 102. Interagency task force.
- Sec. 103. Permanent extension of SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs.
- Sec. 104. Office of Veterans Business Development.
- Sec. 105. Increasing the number of outreach centers.
- Sec. 106. Independent study on gaps in availability of outreach centers.
- Sec. 107. Veterans assistance and services program.

TITLE II—RESERVIST PROGRAMS

- Sec. 201. Reservist programs.
- Sec. 202. Reservist loans.
- Sec. 203. Noncollateralized loans.
- Sec. 204. Loan priority.
- Sec. 205. Relief from time limitations for veteran-owned small businesses.
- Sec. 206. Service-disabled veterans.
- Sec. 207. Study on options for promoting positive working relations between employers and their Reserve Component employees.
- Sec. 208. Increased Veteran Participation Program.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term "activated" means receiving an order placing a Reservist on active duty;

(2) the term “active duty” has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 10, United States Code;

(3) the terms “Administration” and “Administrator” mean the Small Business Administration and the Administrator thereof, respectively;

(4) the term “Reservist” means a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, as described in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code;

(5) the term “Service Corps of Retired Executives” means the Service Corps of Retired Executives authorized by section 8(b)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(b)(1));

(6) the terms “service-disabled veteran” and “small business concern” have the meaning as in section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632);

(7) the term “small business development center” means a small business development center described in section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648); and

(8) the term “women’s business center” means a women’s business center described in section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656).

TITLE I—VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

SEC. 101. INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE OFFICE OF VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Office of Veterans Business Development of the Administration, to remain available until expended—

(1) \$2,100,000 for fiscal year 2008; and

(2) \$2,300,000 for fiscal year 2009.

(b) FUNDING OFFSET.—Amounts necessary to carry out subsection (a) shall be offset and made available through the reduction of the authorization of funding under section 20(e)(1)(B)(iv) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 631 note).

(c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that any amounts provided pursuant to this section that are in excess of amounts provided to the Administration for the Office of Veterans Business Development in fiscal year 2007, should be used to support Veterans Business Outreach Centers.

SEC. 102. INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE.

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

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

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

“(c) INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this subsection, the President shall establish an interagency task force to coordinate the efforts of Federal agencies necessary to improve capital and business development opportunities for, and ensure achievement of the pre-established Federal contracting goals for, small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans and small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans (in this section referred to as the ‘task force’).

“(2) MEMBERSHIP.—The members of the task force shall include—

“(A) the Administrator, who shall serve as chairperson of the task force; and

“(B) a senior level representative from—

“(i) the Department of Veterans Affairs;

“(ii) the Department of Defense;

“(iii) the Administration (in addition to the Administrator);

“(iv) the Department of Labor;

“(v) the Department of the Treasury;

“(vi) the General Services Administration;

“(vii) the Office of Management and Budget; and

“(viii) 4 representatives from a veterans service organization or military organiza-

tion or association, selected by the President.

“(3) DUTIES.—The task force shall—

“(A) consult regularly with veterans service organizations and military organizations in performing the duties of the task force; and

“(B) coordinate administrative and regulatory activities and develop proposals relating to—

“(i) improving capital access and capacity of small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans and small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans through loans, surety bonding, and franchising;

“(ii) ensuring achievement of the pre-established Federal contracting goals for small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans and small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans through expanded mentor-protégé assistance and matching such small business concerns with contracting opportunities;

“(iii) increasing the integrity of certifications of status as a small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans or a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans;

“(iv) reducing paperwork and administrative burdens on veterans in accessing business development and entrepreneurship opportunities;

“(v) increasing and improving training and counseling services provided to small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans; and

“(vi) making other improvements relating to the support for veterans business development by the Federal Government.”.

SEC. 103. PERMANENT EXTENSION OF SBA ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS BUSINESS AFFAIRS.

(a) ASSUMPTION OF DUTIES.—Section 33 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657c) is amended—

(1) by striking subsection (h); and

(2) by redesignating subsections (i) through (k) as subsections (h) through (j), respectively.

(b) PERMANENT EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY.—Section 203 of the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (15 U.S.C. 657b note) is amended by striking subsection (h).

SEC. 104. OFFICE OF VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

Section 32 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b) is amended by inserting after subsection (c) (as added by section 102) the following:

“(d) 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 Veteran Business Outreach Center may provide grants to entities located in Transition Assistance Program locations to make presentations on the opportunities available from the Administration for recently separating or separated veterans. Each presentation under this paragraph shall include, at a minimum, a description of the entrepreneurial and business training resources available from the Administration.

“(3) WRITTEN MATERIALS.—The Associate Administrator shall—

“(A) create written materials that provide comprehensive information on self-employment and veterans entrepreneurship, including information on resources available from the Administration on such topics; and

“(B) make the materials created under subparagraph (A) available to the Secretary of Labor for inclusion in the Transition Assistance Program manual.

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

“(e) WOMEN VETERANS BUSINESS TRAINING.—The Associate Administrator shall—

“(1) compile information on existing 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 compiled under paragraph (1) through Veteran Business Outreach Centers and women’s business centers.”.

SEC. 105. INCREASING THE NUMBER OF OUTREACH CENTERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall use the authority in section 8(b)(17) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(b)(17)) to ensure that the number of Veterans Business Outreach Centers throughout the United States increases—

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

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

(b) LIMITATION.—Subsection (a)(1) shall apply in a fiscal year if, for that fiscal year, the amount made available for the Office of Veterans Business Development is more than the amount made available for the Office of Veterans Business Development for fiscal year 2007.

SEC. 106. INDEPENDENT STUDY ON GAPS IN AVAILABILITY OF OUTREACH CENTERS.

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

SEC. 107. 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 a grant under this subsection to carry out a veterans assistance and services program.

“(2) ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM.—Under a program carried out with a grant under this subsection, a small business development 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, service-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 establishing virtual integration of service providers and offerings for a one-stop point of contact for veterans who are entrepreneurs or owners of small business concerns.

“(3) AMOUNT OF GRANTS.—A grant under this subsection shall be for not less than \$75,000 and not more than \$250,000.

“(4) 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 II—RESERVIST PROGRAMS

SEC. 201. RESERVIST PROGRAMS.

(a) APPLICATION PERIOD.—Section 7(b)(3)(C) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)(C)) is amended—

(1) by striking “90 days” and inserting “1 year”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following: “The Administrator may, when appropriate (as determined by the Administrator), extend the ending date specified in the preceding sentence by not more than 1 year.”.

(b) PRE-CONSIDERATION PROCESS.—

(1) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term “eligible Reservist” means a Reservist who—

(A) has not been ordered to active duty;

(B) expects to be ordered to active duty during a period of military conflict; and

(C) can reasonably demonstrate that the small business concern for which that Reservist is a key employee will suffer economic injury in the absence of that Reservist.

(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall establish a pre-consideration process, under which the Administrator—

(A) may collect all relevant materials necessary for processing a loan to a small business concern under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) before an eligible Reservist employed by that small business concern is activated; and

(B) shall distribute funds for any loan approved under subparagraph (A) if that eligible Reservist is activated.

(c) OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense, may develop a comprehensive outreach and technical assistance program (in this subsection referred to as the “program”) to—

(A) market the loans available under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) to Reservists, and family members of Reservists, that are on active duty and that are not on active duty; and

(B) provide technical assistance to a small business concern applying for a loan under that section.

(2) COMPONENTS.—The program shall—

(A) incorporate appropriate websites maintained by the Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Defense; and

(B) require that information on the program is made available to small business concerns directly through—

(i) the district offices and resource partners of the Administration, including small business development centers, women’s business centers, and the Service Corps of Retired Executives; and

(ii) other Federal agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

(3) REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and every 6 months thereafter until the date that is 30 months after such date of enactment, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the status of the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include—

(i) for the 6-month period ending on the date of that report—

(I) the number of loans approved under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3));

(II) the number of loans disbursed under that section; and

(III) the total amount disbursed under that section; and

(ii) recommendations, if any, to make the program more effective in serving small business concerns that employ Reservists.

SEC. 202. RESERVIST LOANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator and the Secretary of Defense shall develop a joint website and printed materials providing information regarding any program for small business concerns that is available to veterans or Reservists.

(b) MARKETING.—The Administrator is authorized—

(1) to advertise and promote the program under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act jointly with the Secretary of Defense and veterans’ service organizations; and

(2) to advertise and promote participation by lenders in such program jointly with trade associations for banks or other lending institutions.

SEC. 203. NONCOLLATERALIZED LOANS.

Section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(G)(i) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator may make a loan under this paragraph of not more than \$50,000 without collateral.

“(ii) The Administrator may defer payment of principal and interest on a loan described in clause (i) during the longer of—

“(I) the 1-year period beginning on the date of the initial disbursement of the loan; and

“(II) the period during which the relevant essential employee is on active duty.”.

SEC. 204. LOAN PRIORITY.

Section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)), as amended by this Act, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(H) The Administrator shall give priority to any application for a loan under this paragraph and shall process and make a determination regarding such applications prior to processing or making a determination on other loan applications under this subsection, on a rolling basis.”.

SEC. 205. RELIEF FROM TIME LIMITATIONS FOR VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES.

Section 3(q) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632(q)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(5) RELIEF FROM TIME LIMITATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Any time limitation on any qualification, certification, or period of participation imposed under this Act on any program that is available to small business concerns shall be extended for a small business concern that—

“(i) is owned and controlled by—

“(I) a veteran who was called or ordered to active duty under a provision of law specified in section 101(a)(13)(B) of title 10, United States Code, on or after September 11, 2001; or

“(II) a service-disabled veteran who became such a veteran due to an injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the active military, naval, or air service during a period of active duty pursuant to a call or order to active duty under a provision of law referred to in subclause (I) on or after September 11, 2001; and

“(ii) was subject to the time limitation during such period of active duty.

“(B) DURATION.—Upon submission of proper documentation to the Administrator, the extension of a time limitation under subparagraph (A) shall be equal to the period of time that such veteran who owned or controlled such a concern was on active duty as described in that subparagraph.

“(C) EXCEPTION FOR PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO FEDERAL CREDIT REFORM ACT OF 1990.—The provisions of subparagraphs (A) and (B) shall not apply to any programs subject to the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 661 et seq.).”.

SEC. 206. SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS.

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives a report describing—

(1) the types of assistance needed by service-disabled veterans who wish to become entrepreneurs; and

(2) any resources that would assist such service-disabled veterans.

SEC. 207. STUDY ON OPTIONS FOR PROMOTING POSITIVE WORKING RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND THEIR RESERVE COMPONENT EMPLOYEES.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study on options for promoting positive working relations between employers and Reserve component employees of such employers, including assessing options for improving the time in which employers of Reservists are notified of the call or order of such members to active duty other than for training.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the study conducted under subsection (a).

(2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall—

(A) provide a quantitative and qualitative assessment of—

(i) what measures, if any, are being taken to inform Reservists of the obligations and responsibilities of such members to their employers;

(ii) how effective such measures have been; and

(iii) whether there are additional measures that could be taken to promote positive working relations between Reservists and their employers, including any steps that could be taken to ensure that employers are timely notified of a call to active duty; and

(B) assess whether there has been a reduction in the hiring of Reservists by business concerns because of—

(i) any increase in the use of Reservists after September 11, 2001; or

(ii) any change in any policy of the Department of Defense relating to Reservists after September 11, 2001.

(c) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(1) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 208. INCREASED VETERAN PARTICIPATION PROGRAM.

Section 7(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(32) INCREASED VETERAN PARTICIPATION PROGRAM.—

“(A) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph—

“(i) the term ‘cost’ has the meaning given that term in section 502 of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 661a);

“(ii) the term ‘pilot program’ means the pilot program established under subparagraph (B); and

“(iii) the term ‘veteran participation loan’ means a loan made under this subsection to a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans of the Armed Forces or members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

“(B) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Administrator shall establish and carry out a pilot program under which the Administrator shall reduce the fees for veteran participation loans.

“(C) DURATION.—The pilot program shall terminate at the end of the second full fiscal year after the date that the Administrator establishes the pilot program.

“(D) MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION.—A veteran participation loan shall include the maximum participation levels by the Administrator permitted for loans made under this subsection.

“(E) FEES.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The fee on a veteran participation loan shall be equal to 50 percent of the fee otherwise applicable to that loan under paragraph (18).

“(ii) WAIVER.—The Administrator may waive clause (i) for a fiscal year if—

“(I) for the fiscal year before that fiscal year, the annual estimated rate of default of veteran participation loans exceeds that of loans made under this subsection that are not veteran participation loans;

“(II) the cost to the Administration of making loans under this subsection is greater than zero and such cost is directly attributable to the cost of making veteran participation loans; and

“(III) no additional sources of revenue authority are available to reduce the cost of making loans under this subsection to zero.

“(iii) EFFECT OF WAIVER.—If the Administrator waives the reduction of fees under clause (ii), the Administrator—

“(I) shall not assess or collect fees in an amount greater than necessary to ensure that the cost of the program under this subsection is not greater than zero; and

“(II) shall reinstate the fee reductions under clause (i) when the conditions in clause (ii) no longer apply.

“(iv) NO INCREASE OF FEES.—The Administrator shall not increase the fees under paragraph (18) on loans made under this subsection that are not veteran participation loans as a direct result of the pilot program.

“(F) GAO REPORT.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date that the pilot program terminates, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate a report on the pilot program.

“(ii) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under clause (i) shall include—

“(I) the number of veteran participation loans for which fees were reduced under the pilot program;

“(II) a description of the impact of the pilot program on the program under this subsection;

“(III) an evaluation of the efficacy and potential fraud and abuse of the pilot program; and

“(IV) recommendations for improving the pilot program.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the

gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, this body has heard time and again of the courage, discipline and selflessness with which our veterans serve this Nation. What is less well known, however, are the contributions that veterans make to our Nation's economy.

Last month, 407 Members of this House voted to pass H.R. 4253. This bill represented an important step toward a comprehensive update of the Small Business Administration's veterans assistance programs, programs which remove barriers to veterans' self-employment and provide veteran entrepreneurs with support for growth and expansion. Again, I wish to commend Congressman JASON ALTMIRE and Congressman VERN BUCHANAN for their leadership on this legislation.

Not long after this body passed H.R. 4253, the Senate took up the legislation and offered a number of changes. The resolution we are considering today provides for the concurrence in the Senate amendment and makes additional changes of our own.

The amendment in this resolution does two things. First, the amendment makes technical revisions to clarify language in the bill. Second, the amendment removes a nongermane provision that was inserted by the Senate amendment to H.R. 4253.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, the number of returning veterans will only increase. Our support for veterans, however, does not end with their deployment. We must continue to work to support these budding entrepreneurs as they reach for the American dream of business ownership. I believe the underlying bill is a major step towards realizing this goal, and I strongly support this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Today, Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the request to suspend the rules and pass House Resolution 921, which agrees to the Senate amendment to H.R. 4253, the Military Reservist and Veterans Small Business Reauthorization Opportunity Act of 2007, subject to an amendment.

I would like to thank Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ for working in a cooperative and bipartisan manner to bring this resolution to the floor, which,

again, incorporates a number of provisions of a bill authored by Mr. BUCHANAN from Florida, a freshman member of the Small Business Committee.

The provisions of this resolution are substantially similar to those contained in H.R. 4253 passed by the House in the last session. For the sake of brevity, interested parties can refer to the December 5, 2007 CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for that statement.

The resolution makes necessary technical changes to the Senate amendment. The House bill required the establishment of an interagency task force to improve business advice given to veteran-owned small businesses. This resolution restores the requirement that the interagency task force include the advice from veteran service organizations. It makes no sense to try and improve veterans services to veterans without actually consulting them.

Reservists have their own set of operational problems, especially if they own a business or are a key employee in a small business. These Reservists are making a sacrifice to the health of their business in order to protect the liberty and freedom of all Americans. The least we can do is provide the small businesses owned by or employing these Reservists sufficient access to advice and capital to enable their businesses to survive during their absence. The resolution before us today does just that.

In particular, the resolution ensures that small communities where a Reservist-owned business is a major source of employment will have access to economic injury disaster loan funds from the SBA to pay employees and meet other expenses while the owner is on active duty. Small communities that rely on one employer should not have to suffer because the owner of a business has elected the noble obligation to serve our country in uniform.

Finally, the resolution adopts a modified form of the reduction in costs for guaranteed loans made to veterans under SBA's 7(a) loan program. I commend the chairwoman for taking an approach that helps veterans obtain loans without unduly increasing costs to the American taxpayer or other borrowers under the 7(a) loan program.

No one can dispute 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 be fully compensated, we can never fully pay back those that have served this country so honorably in uniform, we can certainly provide them with the needed assistance to prosper in civilian life. Today's resolution will do that. I want to thank the chairwoman again for working to make this possible and thank Mr. BUCHANAN for his leadership on this issue.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I would now like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, a lead sponsor of the bill, Mr. JASON ALTMIRE, as much time as he may consume.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, last month the House and the Senate passed the Military Reservist and Veterans Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act to expand business opportunities for veterans and Reservists. And after Senate action, today we will vote again to pass this legislation that I introduced to ensure veterans and Reservists are afforded every opportunity for economic success at home given their sacrifices abroad.

Starting and maintaining a small business can be challenging for anyone, and unfortunately veterans often face unique obstacles as a result of their military service. The unemployment rate among veterans is more than twice that of the national average, and nearly 40 percent of Reservists lose income when they are deployed.

While Congress has taken action to provide Federal agencies with resources to encourage entrepreneurial opportunities for veterans, I believe that more can still be done to relieve the burden that is placed on small business owners during and after deployment.

At a time when our veteran population continues to grow, it is more important than ever for us to afford our brave men and women in uniform every opportunity for success. The Military Reservist and Veterans Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act provides the SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development with the resources necessary to expand entrepreneurial opportunities for veterans and Reservists and improve existing programs to help keep small businesses afloat while their members are deployed.

The amendment we will consider today makes minor changes to the bill we passed in December, but the intent remains the same. This legislation increases funding for the SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development, improves programs designed to help relieve the burden placed on small business owners during and after deployments, facilitates the coordination of all Federal agencies to focus attention on expanding opportunities for veteran-owned businesses, makes the SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs permanent, and increases the number of veterans business outreach centers across the country.

Madam Speaker, there is no question that veterans have a unique ability to thrive as entrepreneurs. They have the skill and the drive necessary to run successful businesses. But more must be done to help them fulfill their goals and their needs.

I strongly support this legislation, which I introduced, and I ask my colleagues for their support of the Military Reservist and Veterans Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act, and urge the Senate to quickly take up and pass this important legislation.

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Lastly, Madam Speaker, I would thank the gentleman from Florida, my

good friend, Mr. BUCHANAN; the ranking member, Mr. CHABOT, for their help in working through these issues. And hopefully now, with the work of the chairwoman, we can have a bill that can pass both Chambers and move to the President's desk.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, I would just like to commend two freshman Members. I think this is another example that shows bipartisanship on the Small Business Committee, to the credit of the chairwoman, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE), a freshman Member, and Mr. BUCHANAN, a freshman Member from Florida, working together to benefit veterans and small businesses in this country. So I think I'd like to see that spirit illustrated in the rest of the Congress, and I want to thank again Mr. ALTMIRE and Mr. BUCHANAN.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to Mr. BUCHANAN.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the ranking member for yielding me the time, and I rise in support of the resolution.

I'd also like to thank my fellow freshman, Congressman ALTMIRE, and I want to thank the chairman of our Small Business Committee, because she has been very bipartisan from day one. She's been very helpful to me, and I think, frankly, this is what the country is looking for. So I want to thank the freshman Congressman. I think this is a very powerful thing.

Also, I just wanted to say that I know there's a Senate compromise, and a number of provisions in that are important to me.

This resolution incorporates legislation I introduced in May and the House passed in June, creating an important program within the Small Business Administration. This will give our veterans not just a chance at success in a small business enterprise, but provide them with the help and assistance a grateful Nation can offer.

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

The measure puts an emphasis on providing veterans with the market research, financial options, and technological training important to becoming a successful small business owner.

This legislation not only expands the number but the scope of Veteran Outreach Centers. It ensures the opening of more doors in terms of that and the opportunity for women veterans. Assisting our women returning from combat has been an area long overlooked, and it's high time we did something about it.

I know in my personal situation, I went in as an 18-year-old in the Air National Guard. At 23, I had a chance to get in business for myself, for a kid that grew up in a blue-collar family,

and I've lived that American Dream, being self-employed for 30 years. I want to make sure that our veterans have that same opportunity today for all the sacrifices they are making.

I'm excited today that the House will pass a resolution that will help individuals make an important transition from a veteran to a small business entrepreneur, and we are one step closer to having this important legislation signed into law.

I urge my colleagues to suspend the rules and support the resolution.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I have no additional speakers, but I reserve the right to close.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, we yield back the balance of our time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I just want to take the opportunity again to thank Ranking Member CHABOT and Mr. BUCHANAN and Mr. ALTMIRE and also the staff from the Democratic side and the Republican side for working in a bipartisan manner to help achieve this goal of providing the tools necessary for the veterans who are returning home.

With that, I strongly urge my colleagues to vote for H. Res. 921.

Madam Speaker, 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 agree to the resolution, H. Res. 921.

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. 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.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2768, SUPPLEMENTAL MINE IMPROVEMENT AND NEW EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT OF 2007

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 918 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 918

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2768) to establish improved mandatory standards to protect miners during emergencies, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to