

limited. As of June 1, 2008, there were only eight recovery coordinators working with 80 patients. Less seriously wounded veterans do not have access to the FRCP. Instead, they must attempt to navigate the complex system using medical centers, patient advocates, benefit counselors, OEF and OIF coordinators, transition patient advocates and vet center counselors.

H.R. 2192, as amended, would create the Office of the Ombudsman within the VA to oversee patient advocacy work and coordinate assistance for our Nation's veterans. The office would be tasked with identifying trends across the system in patient issues and complaints that would allow improvements to VA policies, practices and procedures. The office would also serve as the arbiter of last resort for complaints and issues that cannot be resolved at local or regional levels.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 2912.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As we all know, our Nation owes its very existence to the brave men and women who have served in our Armed Forces. The freedoms and liberties that we cherish today were attained and protected through their sacrifice. These patriotic citizens have earned and should be provided the highest quality health care available.

I want to thank the leaders of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Chairman FILNER, Ranking Member BUYER, as well as Subcommittee on Health Chairman MICHAUD and Ranking Member MILLER for their bipartisan efforts in developing the bill before us today. I also want to thank Mr. HODES for introducing this legislation to establish an Office of Ombudsman within Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 2007, following the disclosure of problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the President established a Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes and a Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. My predecessor in Congress, Senator Dole, co-chaired this commission.

The recommendations of this commission compelled the VA to initiate a variety of measures to better assist veteran patients and their families. Such initiatives included appointing patient counselor advocates at each VA medical center, providing coordinators for returning OEF and OIF veterans, providing transition patient advocates and establishing the Joint Federal Recovery Coordinator program to assist seriously wounded servicemembers.

H.R. 2192, as amended, would establish a centralized office to monitor the performance of these employees and provide veterans with a single point of contact for assistance with problems that cannot be resolved at the local level. The office would also track patient issues and complaints throughout

the system and provide recommendations for improvements in policies, practices and procedures.

I support H.R. 2192, as amended, to ensure that our veterans receive the highest quality health care available, and I urge my colleagues to support it as well.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to yield 3 minutes to the author of H.R. 2192, a tremendous friend of veterans, not only in New Hampshire, but across this country, Congressman PAUL HODES.

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished colleague. I also would like to thank Chairman FILNER, Ranking Member BUYER, as well as Subcommittee Chairman MICHAUD and Ranking Member MILLER, for their strong bipartisan leadership in helping to bring this bill to the floor today.

This bill would establish an Office of the Ombudsman in the Department of Veterans Affairs to help our veterans cut through the red tape of the vast Veterans Administration bureaucracy to get the health benefits they have earned. After serving their country with honor and distinction, the last thing our veterans need is to fight the VA back home. Yet, unfortunately, many veterans have told me stories of drowning in bureaucracy at the VA. The good news is there are lots of numbers to call; the bad news is there are lots of numbers to call.

This bill was filed in response in part to the story of one of my constituents who was one of those soldiers trapped between active duty and veterans status. He was on active duty, but stuck at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, without knowing where to turn.

Chris was in a Humvee which had been blown up with by an IED. His arm was shattered in 13 places. He had metal fragments implanted in his head. He was suffering from a traumatic brain injury. Fortunately, he turned to us and we were able to work with his family and fiancee to advocate for him. He ultimately got the treatment he needed and was honorably discharged. Last week, I saw Chris and his new wife and new baby. He is working in Newport, New Hampshire, as an auto mechanic and owns his own home. He will likely need continuing treatment in the VA system.

This legislation will help veterans like Chris get the care and treatment they deserve, especially during the transition from active duty to the VA system. Our veterans who sacrificed for their country need help navigating that VA medical system. I wish it weren't so, but it is. Under this bill, veterans and their families will have advocates in the VA.

Let's honor our veterans by providing them with the advocates they need and deserve and support the creation of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2192, as amended, to establish an Ombudsman within the Department of Vet-

erans Affairs. The extraordinary sacrifices of members of the armed forces have preserved our Nation's liberty and way of life. This bill will help ensure that these brave men and women, who took an oath to defend America, receive the highest quality health care available.

I want to commend the leaders of the Subcommittee on Health, Chairman MIKE MICHAUD and Ranking Member JEFF MILLER, for their bipartisan efforts in developing this bill. I also want to acknowledge Mr. HODES for introducing this legislation to help meet the needs of our veterans.

In 2007, our Nation was outraged when unacceptable conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center were exposed in a news article. In response, President Bush established the Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes and the Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. Based upon recommendations from these blue-ribbon commissions, VA initiated various programs to better assist VA patients and their families. Such programs included: appointing patient advocates at each VA Medical Center, providing coordinators for returning OEF/OIF veterans, providing Transition Patient Advocates, and establishing the joint Federal Recovery Coordinator Program to assist seriously wounded service members.

H.R. 2192, as amended would establish a centralized office to monitor the performance of these employees, and provide veterans with a single point of contact for assistance with problems that cannot be resolved at the local level. The office would also track patient issues and complaints throughout the system and provide recommendations for improvements in policies, practices and procedures.

I support H.R. 2192, as amended, to ensure that our veterans receive the highest quality health care available. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2192, as amended.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2192, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HARE. Mr. 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 H.R. 2192, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

**UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE PARALYMPIC PROGRAM ACT OF 2008**

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4255) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide assistance to the Paralympic Program of the United States Olympic Committee, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4255

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

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “United States Olympic Committee Paralympic Program Act of 2008”.

**SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

(a) **FINDINGS.**—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) In 1998, Congress enacted the Olympic and Amateur Sports Act Amendments of 1998 (33 U.S.C. 101 note), which amended chapter 2205 of title 36, United States Code, and included a statement that the purpose of the Act was “to encourage and provide assistance to amateur athletic programs and competition for amateur athletes with disabilities, including, where feasible, the expansion of opportunities for meaningful participation by such amateur athletes in programs of athletic competition for able-bodied amateur athletes”.

(2) The United States Olympic Committee manages and administers the Paralympic Program for physically disabled athletes.

(3) In 2005, the United States Olympic Committee entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expand the Paralympic Program to provide special training and rehabilitation to disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces as part of their rehabilitation and return to an active lifestyle.

(4) The Paralympic Program has a significant positive effect on the quality of life of such veterans and servicemembers, including helping to improve the mobility, vitality, and physical, psychological, and social well-being of disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces who participate in the program and reducing the incidence of secondary medical conditions in those participants.

(5) Because of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, the number of disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces has increased substantially and it is therefore necessary to expand the scope and size of the Paralympic Program to provide rehabilitative services through sports to disabled veterans and members of the Armed Forces.

(b) **PURPOSE.**—The purposes of this Act are as follows:

(1) To promote the lifelong health of disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces through regular participation in physical activity and sports.

(2) To develop a system that promotes disabled sports from the local level through elite levels by creating partnerships among organizations specializing in supporting, training, and promoting programs for disabled athletes.

(3) To provide training and support to local organizations to provide Paralympic sports training to disabled veterans and disabled mem-

bers of the Armed Forces in their own communities.

(4) To provide support to the United States Olympic Committee for the Paralympic Program to increase the participation of disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces in sports as part of their rehabilitation.

**SEC. 3. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE TO UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE PARALYMPIC PROGRAM.**

(a) **PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED.**—Subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 521 the following:

**§ 521A. Assistance for United States Olympic Committees Paralympic Program**

(a) **AUTHORIZATION TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE.**—The Secretary may make grants to the United States Olympic Committee to plan, develop, manage, and implement the Paralympic Program for disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces.

(b) **OVERSIGHT BY SECRETARY.**—As a condition of receiving a grant under this section, the United States Olympic Committee shall permit the Secretary to conduct such oversight of the use of grant funds as the Secretary determines is appropriate.

(c) **APPLICATION REQUIREMENT.**—(1) Before the Secretary may make a grant to the United States Olympic Committee under this section, the Committee shall submit to the Secretary an application that describes the activities to be carried out with the grant, including information on specific measurable goals and objectives to be achieved using grant funds. The application shall include a detailed description of all partnerships referred to in paragraph (2) at the national and local levels that will be participating in such activities and the amount of grant funds that will be made available for each of such partnerships.

(2) **PARTNERSHIPS.**—Partnerships referred to in this paragraph are agreements between the United States Olympic Committee and national organizations with significant experience in the training and support of disabled athletes and the promotion of disabled sports at the local and national levels. Such organizations include Disabled Sports USA, Blaze Sports, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Disabled American Veterans. The agreements shall detail the scope of activities and funding provided by the United States Olympic Committee to the partner.

(d) **USE OF FUNDS.**—(1) The United States Olympic Committee, with the assistance and cooperation of the Secretary and the heads of other appropriate Federal and State departments and agencies and partnerships referred to in subsection (c)(2), shall use a grant under this section to recruit, support, encourage, schedule, facilitate, supervise, and implement the activities described in paragraph (3) for disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces either directly or by supporting a program described in paragraph (2).

(2) A program described in this paragraph is a sport program that—

(A) promotes basic physical activity, games, recreation, training, and competition;

(B) is approved by the Secretary; and

(C)(i) provides services and activities described in paragraph (3) for disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces; and

(ii) may also provide services and activities described in paragraph (3) for individuals with disabilities who are not veterans or members of the Armed Forces, or both; except that funds made available to carry out this section may not be used to support those individuals with disabilities who are not veterans or members of the Armed Forces.

(3) Activities described in this paragraph are—

(A) instruction, participation, and competition in Paralympic sports;

(B) training and technical assistance to program administrators, coaches, recreational therapists, instructors, Department employees, and other appropriate individuals; and

(C) coordination, Paralympic classification of athletes, athlete assessment, sport-specific training techniques, program development (including programs at the local level), program-specific medical and personal care support, sports equipment, supplies, program evaluation, and other activities related to the implementation and operation of the program.

(4) A grant made under this section may include, at the discretion of the Secretary, an amount for administrative expenses, but not to exceed ten percent of the amount of the grant.

(5) Funds made available by the United States Olympic Committee to a grantee under subsection (c) may include an amount for administrative expenses, but not to exceed ten percent of the amount of such funds.

(e) **OUTREACH REQUIREMENT.**—The Secretary shall conduct an outreach campaign to inform all eligible veterans and separating members of the Armed Forces with physical disabilities about the existence of the Paralympic Program and shall provide for, facilitate, and encourage participation of such veterans and separating servicemembers in programs under this section to the extent possible.

(f) **COORDINATION.**—The Secretary shall ensure access to and use of appropriate Department facilities by disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces participating in the Paralympic Program to the maximum extent possible and to the extent that such access and use does not adversely affect any other assistance provided to veterans.

(g) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated \$8,000,000 annually to carry out this section.

(h) **SEPARATE ACCOUNTING.**—The Department shall have a separate line item in budget proposals of the Department for funds to be appropriated to carry out this section. Funds appropriated to carry out this section shall not be commingled with any other funds appropriated to the Department.

(i) **LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.**—Except as provided in subsections (d)(4) and (d)(5), funds appropriated to carry out this section may not be used to support or provide services to individuals who are not disabled veterans or disabled members of the Armed Forces.”.

(b) **CLERICAL AMENDMENT.**—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 521 the following new item:

**521A. Assistance for United States Olympic Committees Paralympic Program.**

(c) **DEADLINE FOR MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may not award a grant under section 521A of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), until the United States Olympic Committee has entered into a memorandum of understanding or cooperative agreement with the Secretary regarding implementation of the Paralympic Program. Such agreement shall be concluded not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SEC. 4. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE OF NATIONAL VETERANS SPORTS PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS.**

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE OF NATIONAL VETERANS SPORTS PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS.**—Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

**§ 321. Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events**

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is in the Department an Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events. There is at the head of the Office a Director, who shall report directly to the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs of the Department.