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No. 129—Part II

House of Representatives

EXTENDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and passing the bill, H.R. 674.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 674.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL CAMPUS SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 1288, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

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 agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1288, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2008 NCAA BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on

suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 1151.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

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 agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1151.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTING FOSTER YOUTH TO THE WORKFORCE THROUGH INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 1332.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

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 agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1332.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2009

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1384 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 6599.

□ 1958

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 6599) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009, and for other purposes, with Mr. POMEROY in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. EDWARDS of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, this funding bill sends a clear message to America's veterans, servicemembers, and their families that Congress recognizes and appreciates their service to this country and the sacrifices they have made on its behalf.

Those are not my words. Those are the words of the Veterans of Foreign Wars stated just 6 days ago.

The Disabled American Veterans said this bill "provides the means to serve and care for sick and disabled veterans, to provide housing facilities for military families, and to fund the activities of several other agencies that affect veterans, a most generous and necessary act."

The American Legion said this bill effectively addresses every aspect of the VA budget. H.R. 6599 addresses improvement and increased funding for medical care, mental health care, medical research, long-term care, rural health care options, both construction, major and minor, nonrecurring maintenance, and claims adjudication.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Mr. Chairman, the words expressed by these respected veterans organizations, which represent millions of men and women who have honorably served our Nation in uniform, are more important than any words I could express on this floor tonight. I want to salute the members of these organizations and the many other veterans and military family groups for the key role they have played in shaping this bill. Even more importantly, I want to salute our servicemen and -women, our veterans and their families for having defended our Nation in time of war and in time of peace and for ensuring that our Nation never forgets the sacrifices of those who have served past, present and future.

This bill, Mr. Chairman, is about a lot more than just programs and budgets. It's about respect, respect for those who have answered our Nation's call to duty—everyday fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters from every generation, from every race and from every religion. Because of their service and sacrifice, we live in a safer, better world.

This bill is about the moral responsibility of keeping our promises to those who have kept their promises to serve. It's about honoring the unsung heroes and heroines in our Nation's defense and the spouses and children of our servicemen and -women. These great Americans might not ever put on a military uniform, but they serve our Nation every day through their personal sacrifice. When one's loved one has been deployed overseas, there are no makeup days for missed births, birthdays and graduation ceremonies. No price tag could measure the value of missed baseball games, school events and the simple, everyday joys of a family's being together.

This bill is about the young father I met just 2 weeks ago at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He lost both of his legs in combat in Iraq. As he sat there, talking to me with his young son in his lap, I could not help but be overwhelmed by the lifelong sacrifice this father had made to try to make the world a safer place for my two young sons and for all children. This bill is about seeing that that loving father does not have to give up the dreams he has for his child.

The humility of this bill, Mr. Chairman, is our knowing that we could never fully repay the debt of gratitude we owe this soldier and all who have served our Nation in uniform. Yet we know it is the right thing to do to honor these great Americans, not just with our words on Veterans' Day but with our deeds every day—with better health care, housing, education, and daycare. That is what this bill is all about. Let me be specific.

Overall, this bill totals \$72.7 billion in discretionary spending. That is \$3.4 billion more than the President's request and \$8.8 billion more than the last fiscal year in 2008. Especially given

our Nation is at war, I believe our troops, our veterans and their families have earned every single dime of this funding. I'm disappointed that the administration has said that its lower budget request is adequate. It is not.

Just today, the DAV, the AMVETS, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the VFW have said this: "We concluded the President's budget request for 2009 was about \$3 billion short of the actual and equitable needs of veterans. We are shocked to learn the administration is insisting that the VA has been given sufficient funding for next year in its original budget submission."

The bill provides \$47.7 billion in discretionary funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is \$2.9 billion more than the President's request and \$4.6 billion more than fiscal year 2008.

What does this mean to millions of veterans who need the VA health care system?

First, based on a Bush administration policy adopted in 2003, veterans have been told in some parts of the country that making \$28,430 a year makes them too wealthy to qualify for VA health care. I think that policy is wrong and unfair to many veterans who cannot simply afford health insurance with an income level so far below the national average. That is why this bill raises the number priority 8 veterans eligible for VA care by 10 percent.

Second, with \$4 a gallon gasoline, we increase the mileage reimbursement rate for veterans driving long distances to VA hospitals and clinics from 28½ cents to 41½ cents. Until this Congress acted last year, that rate had been locked in at 11½ cents since 1979 when gasoline prices were less than \$1 a gallon.

Mr. Chairman, this increase in gas mileage reimbursement to our veterans may not seem like a big deal to some, but to many veterans, that is the difference between their being able to afford to drive to a VA hospital to get the care they desperately need or not being able to do so.

Third, for Iraq and Afghan war vets as well as for veterans from all past conflicts, this bill ensures that a minimum of \$3.8 billion, \$900 million more than last year, will be spent on mental health care services. The mental wounds of war often outlast the physical wounds of combat, and it is past time that we adequately fund mental health research and care so our veterans can rebuild their lives once they return home.

Fourth, to help veterans in rural areas and members of the Guard and Reserves living so far away from VA facilities, we provide \$200 million to increase access to local health care providers.

I thank our ranking member, Mr. WAMP, for his strong leadership on this important provision, among many others.

Fifth, no soldier, no veteran—not one—should ever again have to live in

the demeaning conditions that some saw at Walter Reed's annex 18 last year. They deserve better than that, and that is why we provide \$300 million to address the backlog and non-recurring maintenance at our VA hospitals. In addition, we fund \$1.9 billion for much needed construction at VA hospitals and clinics.

Sixth, none of us should rest until there is not one homeless veteran anywhere in our country. That is why we provide in this bill \$40 million more in order to help these homeless veterans receive the medical services and job training that they need. We want them to have not only the dignity of a roof over their heads, but we want them to have real hope for rebuilding their shattered lives.

Seventh, the bill provides the Veterans Benefits Administration with enough funding to hire an additional 2,100 claims processors. It's not right. It's simply not right for veterans to have to wait on average nearly 6 months to have their claims processed. For many veterans, including combat wounded veterans, that wait means that they don't get the benefits that they earned through their military service and, for many of them, the benefits they desperately need to pay their monthly bills.

There is much more in this bill for veterans, from better prosthetics for amputees to research for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Two things are not in this bill—the administration's ill-advised proposals to increase prescription drug copays for veterans by 88 percent and the idea to charge a \$250 VA health care enrollment fee for our vets. Making drugs less affordable would hurt veterans' health and would require many of them to seek more expensive hospital care. I believe, for one, that our veterans have already paid an enrollment fee for VA health care. They did it when they put on our Nation's uniform.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to keeping our promises to veterans, this bill supports important quality of life and training improvements for our servicemen and -women and their families. It provides \$24.8 billion for military construction, family housing and the Base Realignment and Closing program, known as BRAC. This is \$400 million above the President's request.

This will mean better housing and improved health care and modernized hospitals for our military families. For single moms and dads at home with their children while their spouses are in harm's way overseas, this bill will provide quality, affordable daycare for their children. For thousands of our single soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, it will mean the end of old, outdated barracks and a place they can be proud to call their home. We specifically added \$200 million to the administration's budget request so they can begin to replace woefully inadequate training barracks. This will send a clear message that our Nation respects

the decision of 18-, 19- and 20-year-old military recruits, their decision to sign up to serve our country.

Honoring our troops, our veterans and their families is a meaningful way that is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do. In an all-volunteer military force, the best in the world, we simply cannot expect to attract and to retain the best and brightest if we do not provide quality housing, health care and education for military troops and their families and if we do not keep the promises that we have made to our veterans.

The bottom line is this: This bill is about maintaining a strong national defense and military readiness and about respecting with word and deed those who defend us and our freedom.

Mr. Chairman, let me end by thanking those who made this bill possible. I would begin by thanking Speaker PELOSI, who has kept her promise that the new Congress would truly honor our veterans and our servicemen and -women in an historic way. Under her dedicated leadership, we have increased veterans' funding in less than 2 years by more than what Congress did in the previous 12 years, including a new 21st-century GI education bill that passed just a few weeks ago. In my 18 years in Congress, I've served with no Speaker of either party who has done as much for veterans as has Speaker PELOSI.

Her legacy will benefit millions of veterans for generations to come.

I want to thank Congressman DAVE OBEY, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and Congressman JOHN SPRATT, the chairman of the House Budget Committee. It was their strong personal leadership combined with the work of Speaker PELOSI that made it possible for us to pass last year the largest increase in VA health care benefits in the 77-year history of the VA.

As a Democrat, I'm proud that the budget resolutions passed last year and this year made a commitment to unprecedented increases in veterans' health care and benefits. Those resolutions authorized the funding for our subcommittee's work.

Let me be very clear. The 2009 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill is a bipartisan accomplishment.

I want to pay special tribute to our subcommittee ranking member, Mr. WAMP of Tennessee. Through 19 hearings, his deep and genuine commitment to our troops and to our veterans was evident to every one of us privileged to serve with him. His ideas and input and commitment to always putting the interests of our troops and veterans above partisanship made this bipartisan bill possible. His leadership made this bill a much better bill, and for that I salute him.

Let me also express my gratitude to all of the members of our subcommittee, Republicans and Democrats alike. Each one of them made valuable contributions to this bill. Veterans and our troops are the beneficiaries of their hard work.

A special thanks is owed to Mr. LEWIS of California and to Mr. YOUNG of Florida. They didn't just help shape this bill. Their dedicated, lifelong leadership on behalf of all of those who have served in uniform is what public service should be all about.

I thank you, sir.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to a staff that is second to none anywhere in the Congress—to the majority staff led by subcommittee clerk Carol Murphy, Tim Peterson, Mary Arnold, Walter Hearne, and Donna Shahbaz and John Conger on my staff, and the minority staff led by Martin Delgado, Liz Dawson and Kelly Shea, and Amanda Schoch from Mr. WAMP's staff. Also, a special thanks to Mr. Rob Nabors, the clerk of the full Appropriations Committee.

I thank you all for the professionals you are, for the hard work you do and for reminding all of us that, when it comes to supporting our troops and veterans, we can and we must work on a bipartisan basis.

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2008 (H.R. 6599)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2008 Enacted	FY 2009 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
TITLE I - DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE					
Military construction, Army.....	3,936,583	4,615,920	4,801,536	+864,953	+185,616
Rescission.....	-8,690	---	-51,320	-42,630	-51,320
Total.....	3,927,893	4,615,920	4,750,216	+822,323	+134,296
Military construction, Navy and Marine Corps.....	2,198,394	3,096,399	3,280,809	+1,082,415	+184,410
Rescission.....	-10,557	---	---	+10,557	---
Total.....	2,187,837	3,096,399	3,280,809	+1,092,972	+184,410
Military construction, Air Force.....	1,159,747	934,892	976,524	-183,223	+41,632
Rescission.....	-10,470	---	-17,681	-7,211	-17,681
Total.....	1,149,277	934,892	958,843	-190,434	+23,951
Military construction, Defense-Wide.....	1,609,596	1,783,998	1,614,450	+4,854	-169,548
Rescission.....	-10,192	---	-3,589	+6,603	-3,589
Total.....	1,599,404	1,783,998	1,610,861	+11,457	-173,137
=====					
Total, Active components.....	8,864,411	10,431,209	10,600,729	+1,736,318	+169,520
Military construction, Army National Guard.....	536,656	539,296	628,668	+92,012	+89,372
Military construction, Air National Guard.....	287,537	34,374	142,809	-144,728	+108,435
Military construction, Army Reserve.....	148,133	281,687	282,607	+134,474	+920
Military construction, Navy Reserve.....	64,430	57,045	57,045	-7,385	---
Military construction, Air Force Reserve.....	28,359	19,265	30,018	+1,659	+10,753
Rescission.....	-3,069	---	---	+3,069	---
Total.....	25,290	19,265	30,018	+4,728	+10,753
=====					
Total, Reserve components.....	1,062,046	931,667	1,141,147	+79,101	+209,480
=====					
Total, Military construction.....	9,926,457	11,362,876	11,741,876	+1,815,419	+379,000
Appropriations.....	(9,969,435)	(11,362,876)	(11,814,466)	(+1,845,031)	(+451,590)
Rescissions.....	(-42,978)	---	(-72,590)	(-29,612)	(-72,590)
North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program.....	201,400	240,867	218,867	+17,467	-22,000
Family housing construction, Army.....	424,400	678,580	646,580	+222,180	-32,000
Rescission.....	-4,559	---	---	+4,559	---
Total.....	419,841	678,580	646,580	+226,739	-32,000
Family housing operation and maintenance, Army.....	731,920	716,110	716,110	-15,810	---
Family housing construction, Navy and Marine Corps....	293,129	382,778	382,778	+89,649	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Navy and Marine Corps.....	371,404	376,062	376,062	+4,658	---
Family housing construction, Air Force.....	327,747	395,879	395,879	+68,132	---
Rescission.....	-15,000	---	---	+15,000	---
Total.....	312,747	395,879	395,879	+83,132	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Air Force...	688,335	599,465	594,465	-93,870	-5,000
Family housing operation and maintenance, Defense-Wide	48,848	49,231	49,231	+383	---
Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund.....	500	850	850	+350	---
Homeowners assistance fund.....	---	4,500	4,500	+4,500	---
=====					
Total, Family housing.....	2,866,724	3,203,455	3,166,455	+299,731	-37,000
Appropriations.....	(2,886,283)	(3,203,455)	(3,166,455)	(+280,172)	(-37,000)

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2008 (H.R. 6599)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2008 Enacted	FY 2009 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
Rescissions.....	(-19,559)	---	---	(+19,559)	---
Chemical demilitarization construction, Defense-Wide..	104,176	134,278	134,278	+30,102	---
Base realignment and closure:					
Base-realignment and closure account, 1990.....	295,689	393,377	473,377	+177,688	+80,000
Base realignment and closure account, 2005.....	7,235,591	9,065,386	9,065,386	+1,829,795	---
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Total, Base realignment and closure.....	7,531,280	9,458,763	9,538,763	+2,007,483	+80,000
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Total, title I.....	20,630,037	24,400,239	24,800,239	+4,170,202	+400,000
Appropriations.....	(20,692,574)	(24,400,239)	(24,872,829)	(+4,180,255)	(+472,590)
Rescissions.....	(-62,537)	---	(-72,590)	(-10,053)	(-72,590)
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
TITLE II - DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS					
Veterans Benefits Administration					
Compensation and pensions.....	41,236,322	43,111,681	43,111,681	+1,875,359	---
Readjustment benefits.....	3,300,289	3,086,944	3,086,944	-213,345	---
Veterans insurance and indemnities.....	41,250	42,300	42,300	+1,050	---
Veterans housing benefit program fund program account (indefinite).....	17,389	2,000	2,000	-15,389	---
(Limitation on direct loans).....	(500)	(500)	(500)	---	---
Credit subsidy.....	-108,000	-246,000	-246,000	-138,000	---
Administrative expenses.....	154,562	157,210	157,210	+2,648	---
Vocational rehabilitation loans program account.....	71	61	61	-10	---
(Limitation on direct loans).....	(3,287)	(3,180)	(3,180)	(-107)	---
Administrative expenses.....	311	320	320	+9	---
Native American veteran housing loan program account..	628	646	646	+18	---
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total, Veterans Benefits Administration.....	44,642,822	46,155,162	46,155,162	+1,512,340	---
Veterans Health Administration					
Medical services /1.....	27,167,671	34,075,503	30,854,270	+3,686,599	-3,221,233
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	1,936,549	---	---	-1,936,549	---
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Subtotal.....	29,104,220	34,075,503	30,854,270	+1,750,050	-3,221,233
Medical support and compliance /1.....	3,442,000	---	4,400,000	+958,000	+4,400,000
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	75,000	---	---	-75,000	---
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Subtotal.....	3,517,000	---	4,400,000	+883,000	+4,400,000
Medical facilities.....	3,592,000	4,661,000	5,029,000	+1,437,000	+368,000
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	508,000	---	---	-508,000	---
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Subtotal.....	4,100,000	4,661,000	5,029,000	+929,000	+368,000
Medical and prosthetic research.....	411,000	442,000	500,000	+89,000	+58,000
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	69,000	---	---	-69,000	---
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Subtotal.....	480,000	442,000	500,000	+20,000	+58,000

1/ The budget request proposes to combine funding
for medical services and medical administration

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2008 (H.R. 6599)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2008 Enacted	FY 2009 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
Medical care cost recovery collections:					
Offsetting collections.....	-2,414,000	-1,879,000	-2,544,000	-130,000	-665,000
Appropriations (indefinite).....	2,414,000	1,879,000	2,544,000	+130,000	+665,000
Total, Veterans Health Administration.....	37,201,220	39,178,503	40,783,270	+3,582,050	+1,604,767
Appropriations.....	(34,612,671)	(39,178,503)	(40,783,270)	(+6,170,599)	(+1,604,767)
Emergency appropriations.....	(2,588,549)	---	---	(-2,588,549)	---
National Cemetery Administration					
National Cemetery Administration.....	166,809	180,959	240,000	+73,191	+59,041
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	28,191	---	---	-28,191	---
Total, National Cemetery Administration.....	195,000	180,959	240,000	+45,000	+59,041
Departmental Administration					
General operating expenses.....	1,471,837	1,699,867	1,801,867	+330,030	+102,000
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	133,163	---	---	-133,163	---
Subtotal.....	1,605,000	1,699,867	1,801,867	+196,867	+102,000
Information technology systems.....	1,859,217	2,442,066	2,492,066	+632,849	+50,000
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	107,248	---	---	-107,248	---
Subtotal.....	1,966,465	2,442,066	2,492,066	+525,601	+50,000
Office of Inspector General.....	72,599	76,500	87,818	+15,219	+11,318
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	7,901	---	---	-7,901	---
Subtotal.....	80,500	76,500	87,818	+7,318	+11,318
Construction, major projects.....	727,400	581,582	923,382	+195,982	+341,800
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	341,700	---	---	-341,700	---
Subtotal.....	1,069,100	581,582	923,382	-145,718	+341,800
Construction, minor projects.....	233,396	329,418	991,492	+758,096	+662,074
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	397,139	---	---	-397,139	---
Subtotal.....	630,535	329,418	991,492	+360,957	+662,074
Grants for construction of State extended care facilities.....	85,000	85,000	165,000	+80,000	+80,000
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	80,000	---	---	-80,000	---
Subtotal.....	165,000	85,000	165,000	---	+80,000
Grants for the construction of State veterans cemeteries.....	32,000	32,000	45,000	+13,000	+13,000
Contingent emergency (P.L. 110-161).....	7,500	---	---	-7,500	---
Subtotal.....	39,500	32,000	45,000	+5,500	+13,000
Total, Departmental Administration.....	5,556,100	5,246,433	6,506,625	+950,525	+1,260,192
Appropriations.....	(4,481,449)	(5,246,433)	(6,506,625)	(+2,025,176)	(+1,260,192)
Emergency appropriations.....	(1,074,651)	---	---	(-1,074,651)	---
Administrative Provisions					
Sec. 230 VA Medical Services (P.L. 110-28).....	-66,000	---	---	+66,000	---
Sec. 230 Construction Major Projects (P.L. 110-28)....	66,000	---	---	-66,000	---
Sec. 234 VA General Operating Expenses.....	-6,000	---	---	+6,000	---
Sec. 234 State Approving Agencies.....	6,000	---	---	-6,000	---
Total, title II.....	87,595,142	90,761,057	93,685,057	+6,089,915	+2,924,000
Appropriations.....	(83,903,751)	(90,761,057)	(93,685,057)	(+9,781,306)	(+2,924,000)
Emergency appropriations.....	(3,757,391)	---	---	(-3,757,391)	---
Rescissions (emergency appropriations).....	(-66,000)	---	---	(+66,000)	---

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2008 (H.R. 6599)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2008 Enacted	FY 2009 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
(Limitation on direct loans).....	(3,787)	(3,680)	(3,680)	(-107)	---
Discretionary.....	(43,107,892)	(44,764,132)	(47,688,132)	(+4,580,240)	(+2,924,000)
Mandatory.....	(44,487,250)	(45,996,925)	(45,996,925)	(+1,509,675)	---
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
TITLE III - RELATED AGENCIES					
American Battle Monuments Commission					
Salaries and expenses.....	44,600	64,570	55,470	+10,870	-9,100
Foreign currency fluctuations account.....	11,000	---	17,100	+6,100	+17,100
Total, American Battle Monuments Commission.....	55,600	64,570	72,570	+16,970	+8,000
U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims					
Salaries and expenses.....	22,717	23,975	73,975	+51,258	+50,000
Department of Defense - Civil					
Cemeterial Expenses, Army					
Salaries and expenses.....	31,230	31,230	31,230	---	---
Armed Forces Retirement Home					
Operation and maintenance.....	55,724	63,010	63,010	+7,286	---
General fund appropriation.....	800	---	---	-800	---
Total, Armed Forces Retirement Home.....	56,524	63,010	63,010	+6,486	---
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Total, title III.....	166,071	182,785	240,785	+74,714	+58,000
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Grand total.....	108,391,250	115,344,081	118,726,081	+10,334,831	+3,382,000
Appropriations.....	(104,762,396)	(115,344,081)	(118,798,671)	(+14,036,275)	(+3,454,590)
Rescissions.....	(-62,537)	---	(-72,590)	(-10,053)	(-72,590)
Emergency appropriations.....	(66,000)	---	---	(-66,000)	---
Contingent emergency appropriations.....	(3,691,391)	---	---	(-3,691,391)	---
Rescissions (emergency appropriations).....	(-66,000)	---	---	(+66,000)	---

Mr. EDWARDS of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BISHOP of Georgia) having assumed the chair, Mr. POMEROY, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 6599) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1, 2008, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 4, 2008

Mr. MCGOVERN, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-816) on the resolution (H. Res. 1399) providing for proceedings during the period from August 1, 2008, through September 4, 2008, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2009

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1384 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 6599.

□ 2016

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 6599) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009, and for other purposes, with Mr. POMEROY in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) had 14½ minutes remaining and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) had 30 minutes remaining.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, oftentimes in life it's more important what you do with your second chances than what you do the first time around. Neither Chairman EDWARDS, who spoke so eloquently in a comprehensive way about this bill and his commitment to our veterans, our men and women in harm's way and their families—neither he nor I took

advantage in our younger years of serving in the uniform of our Armed Forces. However, fate has it that we would have a second opportunity to serve by serving those who are serving us, past and present, through this bill; making sure that those great American patriots, past and present, have what they need—and are entitled to and deserve because of their commitment to this great Nation.

It is the highest compliment of my professional life to serve as the ranking member of this subcommittee. I want to thank Chairman LEWIS—former Chairman LEWIS, now Ranking Member LEWIS—for this privilege because without him and his support I wouldn't be here. I want to thank Mr. WICKER, who was the ranking member of this subcommittee last year, and I want to thank whoever helped him become a Senator to open up this subcommittee opportunity for me, and for Chairman EDWARDS, who, as you just saw on the House floor, is a class act, with a true commitment to the men and women in uniform and a determination to do whatever is necessary to honor their commitment.

And I can report today, as I did at the full committee, that when I go home and people ask me in 2008, in my new position, are we honoring our Nation's veterans and the men and women in uniform serving in an asymmetrical war on two fronts in Iraq and Afghanistan, with head trauma and IED injuries and amputations—double, triple, extraordinary injuries—stress from unfair deployments, unsustainable deployments, stress on the family, are we honoring our commitment to them? And I don't think a few years ago, regardless of party, that the answer to that question was yes. We had problems at Walter Reed, we had problems at Fort Stewart, we had problems across the board.

We still have many challenges. The deployment ratios have got to continue to improve. But I can tell you in this bill there is a bipartisan commitment to honor their commitment. And I believe we are making great progress at ensuring our men and women in uniform and their families have what they need and deserve, and when they come home as veterans, that we take adequate care of them—not adequate, but responsible care of them. And I think we're making great progress.

I want to thank the majority for doing something that people in the hinterland wouldn't even understand, but they put the Military Construction bill back in with the Veterans bill where it belongs. When I served on the subcommittee 10 years ago, this was not the case.

But when the Military Construction bill funds quality of life needs and child care centers and polytrauma centers and housing needs, the veterans piece being in with it in the same bill allows the continuum of care to come together so that we can look at the whole picture from today's men and

women in harm's way and what their quality of life needs are—which is number one for us—all the way through the end of their life as a veteran with our VA system. It needs to all be together.

That was an amazing success, bringing Military Construction and Veteran's Care back together—my hat's off to the Speaker for doing that, first and foremost, for Chairman EDWARDS for his leadership, and for Chairman OBEY for his commitment.

I do agree that over the 100 hearing hours Chairman EDWARDS and I had a hands-on with these amazing Americans, we produced a work product, this bill—at roughly \$48 billion for the VA and \$25 billion for the military construction needs around the world—that is very strong, and an encouragement to all those in harm's way today and those that have been in harm's way in the past.

I will say that the President's budget request for veterans was a record level. Now, the chairman said that it wasn't enough, and I agree with that. And we did increase it by \$3 billion, but it was at a record level. So today there is an encouraging bipartisan proliferation to see who can do more for our Nation's veterans. And that's a good thing for our Nation's veterans, that we're in competition to see who can do more for the men and women coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan and those that have served in the past.

But I was blown away over the last few months with the quality of the servicemembers and veterans. First, we hear from the chiefs of the respective services, the top enlisted personnel, the commanders from around the world, like the Commander of CENTCOM, who is now General Petraeus, with two wars under his command in Iraq and Afghanistan, we hear from all these leaders about the needs on the ground and what investments they need the Congress to make for them to do their job successfully. And then from the military families, that talk about the stress felt when we had a 15-month in, 1 year out deployment, now it's back to 1-1, it's going to 2-1. We need to get to 3-1 to make it sustainable, meaning 1 year in theater fighting, 3 years back in a noncombat station. This is so important that we work towards these objectives and that we honor this commitment.

Now, on the subcommittee, we've got extraordinary support. Former chairman of the full committee, who will speak in a minute, BILL YOUNG from Florida, sits with us every hearing, hands on, fully engaged. ANDER CRENSHAW from Jacksonville, Florida, who will also speak, JOHN CARTER, from Texas, KAY GRANGER from Texas on the Republican side. I want to compliment not just Chairman EDWARDS, but SAM FARR, the vice chairman; who was really engaged, and a man who understands the world; he does an outstanding job.

You mentioned all the staff, I won't repeat their names, but both sides of