

thank both the gentleman from Florida as well as the author, Todd Tiahrt, on their efforts in this area.

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 Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4169.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1730

COMMENDING THE PEOPLE OF WASHINGTON FOR SHOWING THEIR SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 790) commending the people of the State of Washington for showing their support for the needs of the State of Washington's veterans and encouraging residents of other States to pursue creative ways to show their own support for veterans.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 790

Whereas every day, American men and women risk their lives serving the country in the Armed Forces;

Whereas it is important to many Americans to be able to donate money directly to causes about which they care;

Whereas it is important for residents to have a tangible way to demonstrate their support for veterans;

Whereas despite Government funding for the Nation's veterans, many important needs of veterans remain unmet;

Whereas citizens in the State of Washington have banded together in a grassroots effort to create a Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit;

Whereas any financial institution in the State of Washington can choose to offer a Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit;

Whereas the Bank of Clark County has become the first institution to offer these Certificates of Deposit;

Whereas the Governor of the State of Washington and the Washington State Veterans Affairs Department have expressed the State's support for this program;

Whereas when a person buys a Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit from a participating financial institution, half of the interest is automatically donated to the State of Washington's Veterans Innovation Program to address the unmet needs of the State of Washington's veterans and their families;

Whereas the Veterans Innovation Program provides emergency assistance to help current or former Washington National Guard

or Reserve service members cope with financial hardships, unemployment, educational needs, and many basic family necessities; and

Whereas the Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit will be officially launched on November 8, 2007: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends the people of the State of Washington for showing their support for the needs of the State of Washington's veterans; and

(2) encourages residents of other States to pursue creative ways to show their own support for veterans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my distinguished colleague, Congressman BRIAN BAIRD of Washington, for drafting this resolution which calls on the States to create innovative ways to supplement State and Federal programs created to assist our Nation's veterans. I would also like to commend the Washington delegation for the strong bipartisan support they demonstrated in introducing this resolution.

This resolution establishes a certificate of deposit in participating financial institutions that would automatically donate 50 percent of the accrued interest to the State of Washington's Veterans Innovation Program. Providing this avenue to invest in our veterans will help ensure that the needs of our Nation's heroes are available when they need them.

I strongly support the resolution and encourage all States to follow the enthusiasm and support for our veterans. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of House Resolution 790.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 790, a bill commemorating the people of the State of Washington for showing their support for the needs of the State of Washington's veterans and encouraging residents of other States to pursue creative ways to show their own support for veterans. This resolution was introduced by my distinguished colleague from Washington (Mr. BAIRD).

It was particularly inspired by the Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit, an insured account created through the grassroots efforts of citizens in Washington State to benefit military veterans and their families. The Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit was officially launched on November 8, 2007.

When an individual purchases a Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit from a participating financial institution, half of the interest is automatically donated to the State of

Washington's Veterans Innovation Program. The Veterans Innovation Program was created to provide emergency assistance to help current or former Washington National Guard or Reserve servicemembers simply cope with financial hardships, unemployment, educational needs, and many other basic family necessities.

The initiative of the citizens of the State of Washington in creating this program is to be commended. Throughout the years, young men and women across this great Nation have answered the call to duty and taken up arms in defense of our freedom and that of others in this world. We should recognize the service of these veterans and encourage others to honor them by simply passing this bill today.

I would like to thank Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for bringing this resolution so quickly to the floor for consideration today.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Washington, BRIAN BAIRD.

Mr. BAIRD. I thank my friend and colleague from Texas and the gentleman from Florida as well. I want to commend Chairman FILNER for his support as well.

I am very, very pleased today to recognize the efforts of my constituents, who joined together with many others from across Washington State to unite in a common endeavor, to help our veterans and their families. The desire of Washington residents to help our veterans has led to the creation of the Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit in November of last year.

As my friends have described earlier, anyone wishing to show their personal support for our veterans can do so in a simple way: They can simply invest in a 6-month Veterans Family Fund Certificate of Deposit. After the 6 months, as mentioned earlier, half of the interest earned on the certificate goes back to the individual who invested, but the other half of the interest is donated as a charitable contribution to the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Innovation Program.

The Department of Veterans Affairs will use the new funding to provide assistance to veterans and their families in areas where none is otherwise available through the State or Federal Government. This will include direct grants for emergency financial assistance and efforts to promote the long-term financial stability of Washington State's veterans. Speaking personally, as someone who worked in the VA system as a clinical psychologist, I can tell you how valuable this sort of flexible individualized assistance can be to helping our veterans and families.

Last year, Congress stepped up to the plate and provided significant increases in funding for our Nation's veterans, but this is a creative way for the average citizen to show his or her support for the brave men and women who

have served in the Armed Forces. This program was entirely citizen-driven, and it demonstrates the power of interested individuals who come together to make a difference.

I would like to particularly acknowledge Jane Jacobsen, who was the first to come up with the idea for the program, and Mike Worthy of the Bank of Clark County who made his institution the first to participate in the program and has already sold more than \$300,000 in CDs, including one which I was happy to invest in myself. I also want to acknowledge John Lee, the director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, who has supported the project from the very start. And, in particular, I want to give special recognition to the outstanding Governor of the State of Washington, Governor Christine Gregoire, who has been a key supporter and advocate for this program from its infancy.

I am joined in this effort by the entire Washington delegation on this resolution to commend the people of our State for showing their support for the needs of our veterans, and we encourage residents of other States to pursue similar creative ways to show their support for veterans. Again, I thank the Chair, I thank the gentleman from Texas and the gentleman from Florida for their time, and urge passage of this resolution.

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

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to recognize the Congressman from Rhode Island, Mr. PATRICK KENNEDY, for such time as he may consume.

Mr. KENNEDY. I too want to join in support of this resolution and commend my colleagues from Washington State, particularly my colleague BRIAN BAIRD.

I have always thought, and I have talked to the Bank of America about this and have an appointment with former Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin to discuss a Veterans Visa. We all have credit cards and we all have the affinity cards. They sell us cards where they have the affinity, where you get your bonus miles with American Airlines, you get your bonus miles if you use your card with a particular institution and so forth.

I figure Americans, when they use their credit card, could send their bonus miles or the equivalent of those to veterans, and they would be happy to lay down their credit cards, whether it be American Express or Visa or whatever, with a big red, white and blue credit card. And someone say, what kind of credit card is that, that it's that color? And they say, That's the Veterans Visa. That means all those bonus miles that would have gone to me being able to get a little extra bonus vacation or whatever is going to go to help our Nation's veterans. And I will tell you, I think there would be a lot of Americans out there who would be more than happy to be

able to show their patriotic sense of duty when they are going around, especially those who are very comfortable and sitting in the business board rooms of this country doing business transactions all across this country and are sitting comfortably home while our young men and women are overseas fighting for this country, to be able to lay down that Veterans Visa card and have those affinity dollars go to those veterans groups. I think we could send that directly to the very great organization in New York, the Fisher Foundation which has a grade A transparent ruling for all the dollars that it sends to the Intrepid Organization and to the poly-trauma centers and all the vet centers across the country.

I think this is a terrific notion of the certificate of deposits, having a percentage of those interest payments going to veterans, and I think this is one that I am hoping to get started as well. And it follows on the same concept that you are working on here in Washington State. I hope to take your concept that you are doing in Washington State and bring it to my State of Rhode Island. I commend you on it, and I just want to salute you for the work that you are doing out in Washington State.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. BAIRD. I would just like to thank you for supporting this initiative and would in turn support your proposal.

What this comes out of is citizens saying, Look, we've got young men and women, and as many people know in this conflict, it's not just young men and women, it's people of all ages overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan and throughout the country. And when they come back home, we want to show them our support. It's a fine thing and a proper thing that we would wave a flag and say thank you for your service. But sometimes people need more than just a thanks. Sometimes they need the ability to visit a loved one; sometimes they need a home repaired; sometimes they need a little bit of help financially to go to school. And the kind of program that we are putting forward today allows over and above what we are already providing through our VA services to average citizens to provide support for doing just that. It sounds like that is what you are seeking to do, Mr. KENNEDY. I commend you for your efforts and look forward to working with you.

Mr. KENNEDY. I likewise thank the gentleman.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the author, Mr. BRIAN BAIRD of Washington.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their re-

marks and include extraneous materials on House Resolution 790.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 790 and to acknowledge the dedication and support provided to Washington State veterans by the Veterans Family Fund and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

As someone who is privileged to represent thousands of veterans and their families, I believe that we owe the men and women who have served our country an enormous amount of gratitude and respect.

People who have never served in uniform frequently ask me how they as individuals can support veterans beyond simply displaying a flag on Veterans' Day. Today, I am proud to say that the Veterans Family Fund, in coordination with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, has provided a way for all citizens to directly show their support for our veterans year-round, and provide financial assistance to those veterans and their families who need a bit of extra support.

The program is simple, and requires only a modest financial commitment. When taking out a "Veterans Family Fund" Certificate of Deposit for at least 6 months, individuals pledge that half of the interest earned by the certificate will be donated to benefit veterans and their families, while the investor receives the other half of the interest, and a tax deduction for their contribution. The contributions are managed and disbursed to veterans and their families who are in need by the Veterans Innovations Program, operated by the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Veterans Family Fund is an independent organization founded by local citizens to help all Washington State veterans. I would like to take a moment to specifically acknowledge the members of the Veterans Family Fund Steering Committee, who made this program possible: Jane Jacobsen, Executive Director, Confluence Project; Michael C. Worthy, CEO, Bank of Clark County; Robert Friedenwald, Colonel (retired), U.S. Army; Betsy Henning, Principal, Alling Henning Associates; and John Lee, Director, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

I encourage other States to look at the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Veterans Family Fund, as a model of creativity and innovation in providing support for our veterans at the local level. I commend their work and ask my colleagues to support the resolution.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 790.

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. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the

Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL SALUTE TO HOSPITALIZED VETERANS WEEK

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 963) supporting the goals and ideals of National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 963

Whereas February 11–15, 2008, has been designated by the President as National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week;

Whereas the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans week each year is an opportunity to thank a special group of men and women, the more than 98,000 veterans of the United States Armed Forces, who are cared for every day in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers, outpatient clinics, domiciliarys, and nursing homes;

Whereas at the 155 VA hospitals across the Nation, there are veterans who face the physical and mental wounds of combat every day, long after their military service has been completed;

Whereas we can never fully repay our debt of gratitude to the veterans, but will thank and support them with our words and deeds;

Whereas Mike Vogel, motion picture actor and star of the newly-released "Cloverfield", will lead the VA's annual patient recognition program as the national spokesperson, inviting the public to visit and honor hospitalized veterans during National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week; and

Whereas Mike Vogel will be the youngest celebrity to lead the National Salute, bringing youthful energy to the program at a time when the number of young combat veterans under the care of the VA is growing, and as the VA is looking to younger generations of Americans to replenish an aging volunteer force: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Program and its efforts to pay tribute to and express appreciation for hospitalized veterans, to increase community awareness of the role of VA medical centers, and to encourage citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and become involved as volunteers;

(2) encourages citizens who live near a VA hospital or clinic to take time this week to visit and thank our veterans; and

(3) will continue to work with veterans service organizations to support our veterans with words, actions, and financial assistance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

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

Mr. Speaker, throughout the Nation's history, we have relied on the patriotism, valor, courage and unself-

ishness of those who wear the uniform of the Armed Forces. With this service comes the real possibility of receiving an injury in answering the call to duty. The global war on terrorism is no exception. To date, over 31,000 servicemen and -women have been wounded in action and nearly 4,000 killed.

For 30 years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has designated the week of February 14 as the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week. The goals of the program are to pay tribute and express appreciation to hospitalized veterans, to increase community awareness, and to encourage individuals to become involved at their local VA as volunteers.

The VA's Voluntary Service is the largest volunteer program in the Federal Government. Over the past 60 years, VA volunteers have donated more than 689 million hours of service worth an estimated \$12.9 billion. In fiscal year 2007, 85,428 active volunteers contributed a total of more than 11.6 million hours of service, equal to 5,574 full-time employees, worth \$218 million.

Let's not forget those who have fought for this country in their time of greatest need. Join me in recognizing and paying tribute to the hospitalized veterans. I challenge each and every person to go visit their local VA medical center and brighten the smile on a veteran's face.

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

I also rise today in support of H. Res. 963, supporting the goals and ideals of National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week, and for other purposes. I would like to thank my colleagues Mr. RODRIGUEZ and Mr. MILLER of Florida for sponsoring this timely piece of legislation.

The President has designated this week, February 11 through 15, as National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week. This week provides the American people the opportunity to thank a special group of men and women, the more than 98,000 veterans of the United States Armed Forces, who are cared for every day by the Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, outpatient clinics, domiciliarys, and nursing homes across this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution specifically shows the support of the United States House of Representatives for the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Program and its efforts to pay tribute to and express appreciation for these hospitalized veterans. The resolution also seeks to increase community awareness of the role of VA medical centers, and to encourage citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and become involved as volunteers. The resolution also encourages citizens who live near a VA hospital or clinic to just take time to visit and thank our veterans personally.

During my visits with veterans at the Gainesville, Florida VA Medical Center

and my trip this past year to Ramstein to visit the troops at the hospital, I have also been inspired by the courage and honor that is displayed by these heroes. You will walk away feeling a whole lot better than when you came in, because you're so proud of what they've done.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this resolution assures our Nation's veterans that we in Congress will continue to work with veterans service organizations to support our veterans with words, actions, and financial assistance.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 963.

I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1745

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, let me conclude and extend my thanks to Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for not just bringing this resolution to the House floor but also the two previous bills. These reinforce Congress' commitment to serving America's veterans.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. 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. Res. 963.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week.

The Department of Veterans Affairs facilities care for over 98,000 veterans every day.

The veteran organizations in my district are extremely active in visiting and volunteering to help hospitalized veterans being treated in the surrounding medical facilities.

I would like to recognize the contributions of our local Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and Disabled American Veterans posts, as well as the Korean War Veterans, Vietnam War Veterans, the Polish Legion of American Veterans and the Brooksville Elks Lodge. The efforts of these groups pay tribute and express the appreciation of a grateful nation, not only to hospitalized veterans but to every man and woman that has ever worn the uniform.

The contributions of volunteers go a long way, but we in Congress need to reaffirm our commitment to providing veterans with the facilities they need to get the care they deserve.

I am pleased to see that in this year's budget the President included \$120 million for the new VA Medical Facility in Orlando, FL, on the Lake Nona site. This new facility will provide acute care, complex specialty care and advanced diagnostic services through a hospital, an outpatient clinic, a 118-bed nursing home, and a 60-bed domiciliary.

I was also pleased that the President's budget included funding for the expansion of the Tampa Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center.