

Imagine being the sole breadwinner in your house and not knowing your annual salary until well after that year started. As you are forced each year to guess, you might alternate between underspending and overspending, between scrimping and splurging.

Now imagine that rather than the head of a small family, you were the VA.

The VA—despite its size and its undeniably important mission to fulfill our Nation's most sacred promise—has received its appropriation after the start of the fiscal year in 18 out of the last 21 years, including, now, this fiscal year.

The VA employs well over 250,000 staff nationwide, with more than 222,000 of those employees directly supporting the VA's health care system serving 5.6 million unique patients. Last year, the Veterans Health Administration spent approximately \$43.5 billion on medical care and research. These numbers make the VA the second largest agency in the federal government after the Department of Defense, and make the VHA both the Nation's largest health care delivery system as well as its largest provider of health care education and training.

The late appropriations and insufficient budgets have meant restricted access for many Veterans. When funding is short, late, or unpredictable, it is our Veterans who pay the price.

Veterans in Greater Arizona are keenly aware that we need more medical facilities and the claims backlog is keeping many Veterans from the benefits they have earned. But once inside the VHA, there is no denying that the quality of service is very good. Numerous third party sources, including both the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Annals of Medicine*, have concluded that the quality of care in the VA health care system is among the best available publicly or privately in the Nation.

However, its sheer size has amplified the problems stemming from late appropriations, which lead to rationed care, waiting lists and Veterans being turned away from service.

As Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans return and Veterans from prior conflicts continue to age, the number of those who need care will only increase, and the situation will become more critical.

It is heartening, then, that those who support the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act are also increasing in number. General Eric Shinseki, voiced his support for advance appropriations shortly after becoming the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The American Federation of Government Employees, which represents many of the federal employees who work for the VA, also supports the bill, as does the Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform—a coalition of eleven Veterans service organizations representing millions of Veterans, service-members, spouses and survivors.

In my short time on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, we have made great strides toward a budget that lives up to the sacrifices of our Veterans. We voted to increase the budget for the VA by \$5.6 billion—an increase of 11.7% for Veterans health care and other programs. We ensured that Veterans are given their fair share of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, providing \$1.4 billion for maintenance at VA medical facilities, construction of Veterans' ex-

tended care facilities, and Veteran cemetery repairs, as well as providing one-time payments of \$250 to disabled veterans.

However, we still struggle to provide sufficient, timely, and predictable funding for our Veterans. When the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act arrives at the floor of the House, I would urge all Members of the Arizona delegation and from all across the Nation to support it to ensure Veterans can get the care they have earned.

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

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 agree to the resolution, H. Res. 804.

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. FILNER. 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.

AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1717) to authorize major medical facility leases for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2010, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1717

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

SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION OF FISCAL YEAR 2010 MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following fiscal year 2010 major medical facility leases at the locations specified, in an amount not to exceed the amount shown for that location:

- (1) Anderson, South Carolina, Outpatient Clinic, in an amount not to exceed \$4,774,000.
- (2) Atlanta, Georgia, Specialty Care Clinic, in an amount not to exceed \$5,172,000.
- (3) Bakersfield, California, Community Based Outpatient Clinic, in an amount not to exceed \$3,464,000.
- (4) Birmingham, Alabama, Annex Clinic and Parking Garage, in an amount not to exceed \$6,279,000.
- (5) Butler, Pennsylvania, Health Care Center, in an amount not to exceed \$16,482,000.
- (6) Charlotte, North Carolina, Health Care Center, in an amount not to exceed \$30,457,000.
- (7) Fayetteville, North Carolina, Health Care Center, in an amount not to exceed \$23,487,000.
- (8) Huntsville, Alabama, Outpatient Clinic Expansion, in an amount not to exceed \$4,374,000.
- (9) Kansas City, Kansas, Community Based Outpatient Clinic, in an amount not to exceed \$4,418,000.

(10) Loma Linda, California, Health Care Center, in an amount not to exceed \$31,154,000.

(11) McAllen, Texas, Outpatient Clinic, in an amount not to exceed \$4,444,000.

(12) Monterey, California, Health Care Center, in an amount not to exceed \$11,628,000.

(13) Montgomery, Alabama, Health Care Center, in an amount not to exceed \$9,943,000.

(14) Tallahassee, Florida, Outpatient Clinic, in an amount not to exceed \$13,165,000.

(15) Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Health Care Center, in an amount not to exceed \$26,986,000.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2010 or the year in which funds are appropriated for the Medical Facilities account \$196,227,000 for the leases authorized in subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I rise in support of S. 1717, a bill to authorize 15 major medical facility leases for the Department of Veterans Affairs' fiscal year 2010 budget. The bill would also authorize \$196 million to allow the VA to carry out these leases in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, the VA operates the largest direct health care delivery system in America. Providing timely access to high-quality health care to veterans is the work of the VA. It provides these services through their sizable inventory of buildings and properties that include 153 medical centers, 755 outpatient clinics, and 230 vet centers. This bill provides the VA the ability to move forward without delay on the execution of important leases. Veterans who have been anticipating new clinics opening up in their communities will not be disappointed if we act on time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee for taking the lead and moving this bill so quickly. I urge support of the legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1530

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 1717, a bill to authorize major medical facility leases for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2010 and other purposes.

S. 1717 would allow for new and expanded veterans' medical facilities throughout the United States. New VA outpatient facilities would be opened in Atlanta, Georgia; Butler, Pennsylvania; Birmingham, Alabama; Fayetteville, North Carolina; Huntsville, Alabama; Kansas City, Kansas; Loma Linda, California; and Montgomery, Alabama. These new facilities will provide the ability to handle larger veteran populations and deliver expanded

services in modern state-of-the-art facilities.

This bill would also authorize the replacement of VA outpatient facilities in Anderson, South Carolina; Bakersfield, California; Charlotte, North Carolina; McAllen, Texas; Monterey, California; and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. It would also allow for the expansion of the outpatient facility in Tallahassee, Florida, my State. This would ensure that these locations can continue to provide veterans with effective, quality care. S. 1717 would ensure that VA medical facilities can deliver the highest quality of service, the key, to veterans by providing the authorization for these projects.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support S. 1717 and the benefits it would provide to veterans with medical facility leases across the country. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill.

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

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to Dr. DEAL from Georgia.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Senate 1717.

As a veteran, I recognize the sacrifice our men and women in uniform are making on behalf of our country to defend our Nation and protect our liberties. But, unfortunately, notable deficiencies in capacity are limiting access to health care which many of our veterans desperately need.

This bill includes authorization of approximately \$5.1 million to establish an outpatient clinic for veterans throughout the metropolitan Atlanta area and across Georgia to improve access to care, particularly as the strain exists on existing VA facilities, and it will continue to increase that strain as servicemembers return home. This new facility will work in support of the Atlanta VA Medical Center, which is located in Decatur, Georgia.

Currently, over 630,000 veterans live within the Atlanta VA catchment area, and that number will continue to grow. Estimates further indicate that the number of outpatient visits in the area will grow by 120 percent by 2025, with a dramatic 170 percent surge in mental health visits.

The Atlanta Specialty Care Clinic lease, which this bill provides for, will provide an opportunity to serve our veterans in a contemporary facility, ensuring that maximum safety and security are going to be addressed. This facility will enhance the VA's ability to provide some of the highest-in-demand services in ophthalmology, podiatry, and dermatology, while allowing the existing areas at the Decatur VA facility to be expanded to address mental health services and traumatic brain injury.

I have introduced a similar piece of legislation in the House, H.R. 3704, which also authorizes the establish-

ment of this much-needed facility. Over 17,000 unique patients representing 88,000 outpatient visits per year will benefit by this much-needed addition to our already strained system.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans deserve no less than our best, and I remain committed to ensuring that our servicemembers receive the health care that they deserve.

I thank the gentlemen for their support of this legislation.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I have no speakers running for Governor or Senator, so I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), a member of the VA Committee.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. I thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) for bringing this legislation to the House floor today. I'm here in support of it.

In particular, I am pleased with a provision that's included in this bill that authorizes a new community-based outpatient clinic, or CBOC, to be located in Johnson County, Kansas.

As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and former chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, I have been an advocate for establishing a CBOC in our State. These VA clinics bring health care services closer to veterans who have served our country. During my time in Congress, I have helped open five other outpatient clinics in our State: Hays, Dodge City, Salina, Junction City, and Hutchinson. Especially in my own congressional district where there is no VA hospital, these health facilities have proven to be invaluable. These clinics are a successful part of a larger success story of our country's efforts to raise the standards of care for veterans.

Veterans in Johnson County, Kansas, deserve timely access to medical care, and I've been working to make sure that the VA recognizes this. Johnson County is our State's most populated county, so it's unusual in a sense for me to be here talking about them, but located in the suburbs of Kansas City, this area is home to hundreds of thousands of veterans. The VA patient workload in future years for this region is expected to increase significantly. And unless the capacity is created to care for these veterans, timely access will be threatened.

With the passage of this legislation, I'm pleased the VA can move forward on this clinic to provide quality medical care for northeast Kansans who've sacrificed in service to our country. The new outpatient clinic will mean closer medical services and less wait times for a large number of Kansas veterans who currently travel across the State line to Missouri for health care. With over 44,000 square feet authorized, this sizable clinic will provide comprehensive outpatient services, includ-

ing mental health as well as radiology, laboratory services, and a pharmacy.

I want to thank the VISN in Kansas City and KC VA Medical Center for their foresight on this project and for their efforts to see that it's completed by the year 2012. I thank the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE) for his efforts, and I encourage my colleagues in this House to support this legislation.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), who has been an incredible advocate for, I think, a unique approach to serving the veterans in his area in Monterey, California.

Mr. FARR. I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 1717.

This bill authorizes funds to lease 15 major medical facilities across the country. These are facilities that the VA desperately needs to meet the growing demand for outpatient health care, for veteran health care. In my district alone, hundreds of veterans are forced to drive up to 2 hours to a VA hospital in Palo Alto for outpatient care. I know that many of these districts share the same situation. The bottom line is the VA is unable to meet our current needs through its traditional construction system. We must take action to ensure our veterans are receiving the health care they deserve.

The leasing program in this bill allows funds known as the Health Care Center Facilities program to use private-sector money. This innovative approach to funding construction and maintenance of VA hospitals is just the type of idea we need to plug these holes in service. In some ways the lease program builds off a similar program that the armed services use for residential community housing, essentially housing for men and women in uniform. The lesson from these programs is clear: we need to leverage private-sector investment for government benefits.

The health care needs of our returning and aging veterans will only continue to increase, and it is essential for the VA to meet this demand with modern, efficient, and accessible veterans' health facilities. In my district I have been working with the VA and with DOD, Department of Defense, officials to build a joint outpatient clinic for veterans and active and retired military servicemembers. This bill contains the lease authority for that joint VA/DOD clinic at the former Fort Ord. This clinic will serve more than 80,000 veterans and active and retired military servicemembers on the Monterey Peninsula.

There is a glaring need to provide care for our veterans. This bill will accomplish that. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, to thank those that have been involved at the committee level to bring it to the floor, and to expand health care options for all our veterans.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the ranking member of

the Appropriations Committee, Mr. LEWIS.

Mr. LEWIS of California. I very much appreciate my colleague's yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this legislation because it will greatly benefit the thousands of veterans in my district and the greater Inland Empire.

With the passage of this bill, the Jerry Pettis Veterans Medical Center will begin the process of establishing a new health care center. This new 271,000-square-foot facility will directly benefit veterans of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties by increasing access to care, expanding services, and reducing wait times.

I would like to thank the staff of the Jerry Pettis VA Hospital for their very hard work and the fine service they're providing to veterans in our region.

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, this bill contains needed authorizations requested by the VA, and it is important that we move this legislation forward quickly.

I urge my colleagues to support S. 1717.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. 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 S. 1717.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I think the importance of this bill and its quick passage has been proven by all the speakers.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1717. Within this request is funding for the Veterans Health Care Center in Charlotte, NC.

We currently have a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic that cannot meet the demands of our growing veteran population. Based on VA numbers, our veteran population is slated to increase 31 percent between 2007 and 2025.

This new Health Care Center will help the VA expand its service offerings in our area, and offer new ones which means that our veterans will not have to travel out of our area for the services they need.

We cannot thank our men and women in uniform—and their families for the sacrifices they make in defending our country. However, with this new Health Care Center in Charlotte, we can ensure that they are taken care of in a matter which fits their dedication and service.

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

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, S. 1717.

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.

REX E. LEE POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3547) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 936 South 250 East in Provo, Utah, as the "Rex E. Lee Post Office Building".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3547

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

SECTION 1. REX E. LEE POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 936 South 250 East in Provo, Utah, shall be known and designated as the "Rex E. Lee Post Office Building".

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Rex E. Lee Post Office Building".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) and the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over the United States Postal Service, I am proud to present H.R. 3547 for consideration. This legislation designates the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 936 South 250 East Street in Provo, Utah, as the "Rex E. Lee Post Office Building."

The measure before us was introduced on September 10 by my friend and colleague, Ranking Member JASON CHAFFETZ of Utah, and it was favorably reported out of the Oversight Committee on September 24, 2009, by unanimous consent. In addition, this measure enjoys the full support of the Utah House delegation.

Since it is the legislation sponsored by my friend, I will allow him to fill in the details.

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

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

I rise in support of the H.R. 3547, a bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 936 South 250 East Street in Provo,

Utah, as the "Rex E. Lee Post Office Building".

□ 1545

I happen to know Mr. Lee, as he served as the president of Brigham Young University. He was a great and amazing human being. All too often in our society we hope that our kids will emulate somebody of significance, and Rex Lee was certainly that kind of person.

He was a joy. He was full of life at every step and one of the smartest people you could ever meet. In fact, he had many dealings with the Supreme Court. In fact, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said this about the passing of Rex Lee: "He inspired all of us with his courage in the face of a terminal illness. Knowing him was one of the greatest privileges of my life. Remembering him will be one of the easiest."

Amazing words from an amazing person.

In 1960, Rex Lee graduated with a BA from Brigham Young University. He served as the student body president. In 1963, Rex graduated first in his class from the University of Chicago Law School, and from law school he went on to serve as a law clerk for Byron White, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

From Washington, D.C., he returned to his home in the State of Arizona as a partner in the Phoenix law firm of Jennings, Strouss & Salmon. While there, Rex argued his first case in the United States Supreme Court just 4 years after graduating from law school.

In 1972, Rex returned to Brigham Young University to become the founding dean of the J. Reuben Clark Law School. From 1975 to 1976, he served as an assistant Attorney General in charge of the civil division in the United States Department of Justice; and from 1981 to 1985, Mr. Lee served as Solicitor General of the United States of America.

In 1986, Mr. Lee retired as Solicitor General and returned to Brigham Young University. He was diagnosed with cancer shortly thereafter. Mr. Lee practiced law with Sidley & Austin law firm and returned to teaching constitutional law at the George Sutherland Chair of Law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School.

Mr. Lee was then named the 10th president of Brigham Young University on May 12, 1989, and served in this capacity until December of 1995, just 2½ months before he passed away.

All told, he argued 59 cases before the Supreme Court and won 23 of the 30 cases he argued as the Solicitor General. In fact, he was preparing for his 60th case just months before he passed away.

He's known throughout the community in Utah for his great humility, for his great contribution to the United States of America. In fact, five Supreme Court Justices attended a memorial service for Rex Lee: Byron White, Justices John Paul Stevens,