

H. RES. 461

Whereas in 2003, Sentinels of Freedom, based in San Ramon and Danville, California, was established;

Whereas the mission of Sentinels of Freedom is to provide life-changing opportunities for men and women who served in the United States Armed Forces and who have suffered severe injuries;

Whereas the Sentinels of Freedom Scholarship Foundation was created to benefit qualified veterans severely injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001;

Whereas Sentinels of Freedom provides four-year scholarships that help veterans to become self-sufficient;

Whereas scholarship recipients receive support to enroll in school, find and maintain a job, and obtain housing;

Whereas Sentinels of Freedom organizes teams of local volunteers that provide mentoring and moral support for scholarship recipients;

Whereas Sentinels of Freedom has excelled in providing assistance to veterans; and

Whereas thanks to Sentinels of Freedom, 39 veterans have benefitted from scholarships and many more will in the coming years; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) honors Sentinels of Freedom;

(2) commends Sentinels of Freedom's dedication and commitment to the brave men and women who have served the United States; and

(3) praises Sentinels of Freedom for its extraordinary work for the well-being of the Nation's veterans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

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

Mr. Speaker, I stand in full support of House Resolution 461 to honor the Sentinels of Freedom Scholarship Foundation.

Sentinels of Freedom is an organization that provides support and opportunities to selected veterans with injuries sustaining 60 percent or higher levels of disability in all branches of our military post-9/11. They provide significant support in assisting our veterans to readjust back to civilian life and prosper in their hometowns or new communities.

Each of the past recipients of the Sentinels of Freedom scholarship has an inspiring story of recovery. Many of them have lived through injuries which they were not expected to survive and further endured many surgeries and months of recovery. For example, Army veteran Jake Brown accepted the first Sentinels of Freedom Scholarship in 2004. Crushed by a tank while serving in Germany, he was in a coma for 10 days and was not expected to live, but now he is back in his hometown and he is thriving.

Jake returned to his hometown of San Ramon, California, with his wife and currently works for UPS, where he has earned two promotions. He is also on the dean's list at Diablo Valley College. He has dreams of ultimately at-

tending UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business. Despite having life-altering physical handicaps, veterans like Jake Brown are grateful to be alive and continue to prosper in their communities.

As Mike Conklin, chairman and CEO of Sentinels of Freedom, describes, the program is not a charity but rather an investment in the life of a person who has served our Nation and has earned the right to achieve his or her part of the American Dream.

As our veterans return home from war, it is fitting to have House Resolution 461 before us today. I am grateful to have the Sentinels of Freedom and other organizations that assist our wounded veterans and shed light and let them achieve their dreams.

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

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

I rise in support of H. Res. 461, a resolution honoring the Sentinels of Freedom and commending the dedication, commitment, and extraordinary work of the organization.

The bills we have passed this year will make enormous strides in helping our Nation's veterans improve their lives.

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However, the Federal Government cannot do this job alone. It is through the work of organizations like the Sentinels of Freedom that our injured veterans can get back on the road to self-sufficiency.

Started by the father of three Army Rangers after one of his sons was wounded in Iraq in 2003, this 2- to 4-year life scholarship program is meant to assist veterans with severe service-related injuries who have the aptitude, attitude, and drive to become independent and successful members of society. The scholarship recipients are called "sentinels" in honor of their sacrifice and commitment to guarding America's freedoms. Over 32 service-members have joined the Sentinels of Freedom program. These sentinels are flourishing because of the help and assistance they have received from volunteers in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and fellow committee member Mr. McNERNEY of California for introducing this legislation to honor the work and dedication of the Sentinels of Freedom, as well as to thank the many volunteers working with this organization all across the country to help our injured service-members move back into society.

I would also like to thank Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for moving the bill so quickly to the floor for consideration.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H. Res. 461.

Mr. Speaker, having no further speakers, again, I urge the passage of this very important resolution; and I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may

have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on House Resolution 461.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I, too, urge my colleagues to unanimously support this resolution.

I want to thank Mr. McNERNEY from California for the inspiring story of Jake and for bringing this piece of legislation to the floor—again, absolutely appropriate the week before Veterans Day.

I have no further requests for time, and I yield back all remaining time, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 461.

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.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 509) to authorize a major medical facility project at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Walla Walla, Washington, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 509

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

SECTION 1. MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY PROJECT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER, WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON.

(a) AUTHORIZATION FOR MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY PROJECT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out a major medical facility project for the construction of a new multiple specialty outpatient facility, campus renovation and upgrades, and additional parking at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Walla Walla, Washington, with the project to be carried out in an amount not to exceed \$71,400,000.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2009 for the Construction, Major Projects account, \$71,400,000 for the project authorized in subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DRIEHAUS). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. WALZ. I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 509, a bill to authorize a new outpatient clinic at the Jonathan M.

Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington.

This bill would authorize appropriations of \$71 million for the VA's construction and major projects account in fiscal year 2009. This funding would be used to design and construct a 65,000-square-foot outpatient clinic which will serve nearly 70,000 veterans in the Walla Walla area.

It has been a long journey since July 2003 when the VA was trying to close the Walla Walla facility. There have been challenges along the way, especially with the CARES Commission's decision in February of 2004, which formally recommended closing this facility.

However, we managed to do right by our veterans in the Walla Walla area by removing this facility from the VA's facility closure list and by getting the VA to include the construction of an outpatient clinic at the Walla Walla VA Medical Center in the fiscal year 2009 major construction priority list.

All of this would not have been possible without the leadership, hard work, and advocacy of Senator MURRAY.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to personally thank Senator MURRAY for introducing this bill and to thank Chairman AKAKA of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for moving the bill forward. I know how incredibly important it is to our veterans, especially to those in more rural areas, to get the care they need, so I strongly support the passage of S. 509.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 509, a bill to authorize a major medical facility project at the Department of Veterans Affairs' medical center in Walla Walla, Washington.

S. 509 would facilitate the construction of a new outpatient clinic building, consolidating the administrative and support functions that are currently spread across Walla Walla's 88-acre campus. This new outpatient clinic building will allow for the integration of primary and specialty care as well as for mental health and ancillary services into a single state-of-the-art facility.

S. 509 has the full support of the Washington delegation. It is important to note that funding for this bill has already been appropriated. The funding must now be authorized so that we can move forward with the proposed improvements to the Walla Walla facility.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support S. 509 and the improvements it will provide to veteran's medical care, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support the bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. We have no further speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he might consume to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN).

Mr. WALDEN. I want to thank my colleague from Arkansas.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of S. 509, which would authorize the VA to construct this new, multiple specialty outpatient clinic building as the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington.

Now the Walla Walla VA Medical Center serves more than 65,000 veterans in a 14-county area that spreads over northeastern Oregon, southeastern Washington and central western Idaho. It's an integral part of the VA's Northwest health care network and has long established itself as a very important resource for veterans and the veterans community.

Now, the construction of this outpatient clinic, along with campus renovations, upgrades and additional parking, will help this facility better serve our men and women who have worn our uniform. This investment in the Walla Walla VA Medical Center will cement its place as a provider of health care to veterans in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho by providing them with a modern facility that will improve quality-of-care delivery and that will continue to allow them to provide the best care possible.

Since 2003, when the VA's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services, or CARES, Commission released its draft recommendation for the closure of this facility, veterans have rightfully raised concerns about the future of VA-delivered health care in this very rural region of our country. These veterans face the real possibility of having to drive hundreds of more miles to receive even the most routine care at the next closest VA facilities, which are located in Boise, Idaho; in Portland, Oregon; or in Spokane, Washington.

Like others in 2003, I voiced my strong concerns regarding the proposed realignment through a letter to then-Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony Principi, and I submitted testimony to the CARES Commission. Through concerted efforts by area veterans, local advocates and elected officials, former-VA Secretary Jim Nicholson fully realized the importance of the care provided in this facility and reversed the commission's decision.

Today, the Walla Walla VA Medical Center continues to make a name for itself through the quality of care that it provides to our veterans. I was there in December of 2008, and I had the opportunity to meet with the new director of the Walla Walla VA Medical Center, Mr. Brian Westfield, and to receive an update on the facility, which has recently expanded its reaches into my congressional district through the opening of a very important clinic, a community outpatient clinic in La Grande, Oregon.

Last fall, the VA approved \$71.4 million to design and construct this new, multiple specialty outpatient clinic in Walla Walla. The legislation we con-

sider today would authorize that project. It is my hope that, with the completion of this clinic, the Walla Walla VA Medical Center will continue its tradition of providing quality care to the men and women who have given so much in service to our Nation.

So I thank you again for the opportunity to speak in favor of Senate bill 509. I thank Senator MURRAY for bringing this forward, and I thank members of both the Oregon and Washington delegations and of the Idaho delegation for their support. I look forward to the passage of this legislation.

Mr. WALZ. We have no further speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. I just want to thank, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Oregon for sharing with us and for showing us that this is not only bipartisan but that it is also a tri-State effort to get this done. So I think that further illustrates the importance.

I would like to thank our committee chairman, BOB FILNER, and Ranking Member STEVE BUYER for moving the bill forward for consideration. I urge all of my colleagues to support S. 509.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on S. 509.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I, too, urge my colleagues to unanimously support this.

I want to thank the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) for so eloquently and clearly stating the need for this. Our rural veterans need this. This would have been a mistake to not extend this facility, and I appreciate your hard work to get this done.

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize this critical bipartisan legislation which authorizes the construction of a new outpatient clinic at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Walla Walla, Washington.

After listening to the concerns of the providers within the facility, local civic leaders, veterans and constituents, it is clear this facility is vital to making a number of services available to our veterans who are at risk of receiving a lower quality of health care if they are forced to seek services outside of the facility.

Veterans seeking health care rely heavily on the Walla Walla facility because of the geographic and climactic challenges in the region. This facility provides care to 65,000 veterans over 14 different counties in Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Northeastern Oregon covering 42,000 square miles. More than 11,000 veterans use this facility. We expect this number to increase as more service men and women return from deployments.

The staff at the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center work hard for the

veterans our region. However, they are in desperate need of a new, modern facility that will facilitate the quality of care our deserving veterans require.

In February 2008, I asked Secretary James Peake to allocate these funds before 2010, rather than the 2012 original plan. Last fall, the VA approved \$71.4 million to design and construct a new multiple-specialty outpatient facility at the Walla Walla VAMC. However, authorization was still needed for the project. This bill gives construction the necessary green light.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting the veterans who are served by the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center.

Mr. MINNICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lend my strong support to Senate bill 509. This bipartisan legislation will authorize the construction of a new outpatient clinic at the VA Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington. The Walla Walla VA hospital provides vital medical care to thousands of veterans from Idaho and a new state-of-the-art facility will allow the hospital to provide expanded services to the members of our armed forces.

As more of our troops continue to return home from their deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is crucial that they receive the timely and effective care they deserve. And with Veterans Day just around the corner, this is an excellent opportunity to honor those who have sacrificed so much for our country. I urge my colleagues to join me in passing this important legislation.

I thank Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for their strong leadership and continued commitment to improving the lives of veterans.

Mr. WALZ. With that, Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 509.

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. WALZ. 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.

MAX J. BEILKE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTPATIENT CENTER

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3157) to name the Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Alexandria, Minnesota, as the "Max J. Beilke Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3157

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

SECTION 1. NAME OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTPATIENT CLINIC, ALEXANDRIA, MINNESOTA.

The Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Alexandria, Minnesota, expected to open in September 2009, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the "Max J. Beilke Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic". Any reference to such outpatient clinic in any law, regulation, map, document, record, or other paper of the United States shall be considered to be a reference to the Max J. Beilke Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. WALZ. I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my support of H.R. 3157, a bill to name a VA outpatient clinic in Alexandria, Minnesota, in memory of Master Sergeant Max J. Beilke.

Master Sergeant Beilke served in the United States Army for 22 years, and he retired from service in 1974. On September 11, 2001, Max Beilke was at the Pentagon. Mr. Beilke was killed in the terrorist attack on the Pentagon on that day. After a lifetime of military service, Sergeant Beilke was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. He was awarded the Defense of Freedom Medal and the Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

While in the Army, Mr. Beilke played a vital role in evacuating U.S. troops from Saigon and is officially listed as the last U.S. combat soldier to leave Vietnam on March 29, 1973, at the end of the Vietnam War.

Max Beilke served overseas in Germany, Korea and Vietnam and was an ROTC instructor at St. Thomas Military Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota. While in the service, Sergeant Beilke earned a bachelor of arts degree in business administration by attending night school at the University of Maryland. He later earned a master's of arts degree in personnel management in 1977 from Central Michigan University.

Sergeant Beilke retired from active duty in 1974, but remained dedicated to the service of our soldiers, to the veterans and to their families. The driving force of Mr. Beilke's life was caring for soldiers and their needs. He was instrumental in getting Congress to pass the TRICARE for Life program for military retirees. For this, he was named a TRICARE hero. From 1984 until September 11, 2001, Mr. Beilke served as deputy chief of the Army Retirement Services, and was an active member of the Army Chief of Staff Retiree Council.

Master Sergeant Max Beilke left behind his wife, two daughters, and three grandsons. Master Sergeant Beilke was a true friend to thousands of Army retirees and was of one of Alexandria, Minnesota's and this country's most distinguished heroes.

In recognition of his commendable service to our soldiers and veterans alike, H.R. 3157 is supported by State and local dignitaries from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the United Veterans Legislative Council of Minnesota, and the Department of the Army.

H.R. 3157 would name the new Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Alexandria, Minnesota, as the Max J. Beilke Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic. Naming a VA facility for Master Sergeant Beilke, a hero and a strong advocate of veterans, is the proper and honorable thing to do.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3157, a bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Alexandria, Minnesota, as the Max J. Beilke Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic.

I also want to thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) for bringing this very important legislation forward.

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Master Sergeant Max J. Beilke, United States Army, served 22 years' active duty and was stationed overseas in Germany, Korea, and Vietnam. Master Sergeant Beilke was officially listed as the last U.S. combat soldier to leave Vietnam on March 29, 1973.

Following his retirement from active duty in 1974, Master Sergeant Beilke continued his commitment to U.S. servicemembers and veterans by working with Congress to pass the TRICARE For Life program for military retirees. For his services, Master Sergeant Beilke was named a TRICARE Hero and continued his efforts by working on legislation to create a veterans survivors benefit program.

It was while working on this bill at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, that Master Sergeant Beilke was killed in the terrorist attack that struck that day. For his dedicated services to the United States military and veteran populations, Master Sergeant Beilke was awarded the Defense of Freedom Medal from the Department of Defense and Meritorious Civilian Service Award from the Department of the Army, both posthumously.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H.R. 3157 in recognition of the service and sacrifice made by Master Sergeant Max Beilke for his country.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this very important bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman and my neighbor from Minnesota, Mr. PETERSON, someone who understands the needs of rural Minnesota and our rural veterans as well as anybody in this