

measure will allow taxpayers to receive a reasonable return on their investment as well as to promote creativity and ingenuity among the designers and inventors working with the VA on these grants.

The Specially Adapted Housing Program has been a tremendous help to many veterans, and it is expected to fund 1,250 projects in 2010. This bill will expand and improve this program, and it is a wise investment in our veterans.

I thank Chairman FILNER for noting the working relationship that I have with the distinguished ranking member, Mr. BOOZMAN of Arkansas. When he once chaired the subcommittee, we worked together then and continue to work today on a whole host of programs, particularly housing for our disabled veterans in light of the current needs of veterans and their families.

I want to thank Mr. BOOZMAN for sponsoring this important bill, and I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 1170, as amended.

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

Mr. Speaker, on February 25, 2009, I, along with Congresswoman STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN, introduced H.R. 1170, which would amend chapter 21 of title 38, United States Code, to establish a grant program to encourage the development of new, assistive technologies for specially adapted housing. H.R. 1170, as amended, would authorize the VA to use up to \$2 million per year to provide grants of up to \$200,000 to expand research and development in the areas of adaptive technologies that can be used in the VA's Specially Adapted Housing Program.

The goal of VA's specially adapted housing benefit is to enable severely disabled veterans to live in a home with modifications that make daily life and daily living easier—typical adaptations or structural modifications such as ramps, wider halls and doors, grab rails, and lower counters. Yet there are many emerging technologies that lend themselves well to improving the livability of adapted homes. Some examples of possible home modifications are voice recognition and voice-commanded operations, integrated computer-managed functions, alternative human computer interfaces, living environment controls, adaptive feeding equipment, fall prevention devices, and recreation assistance equipment.

Finally, the bill includes a provision that is a result of funding an R&D program. Under this authorization, the VA would retain a 30 percent interest in any patents evolving from the grant.

I truly appreciate Congresswoman HERSETH SANDLIN in working with me on this very important bipartisan legislation.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN, committee Chairman FILNER, and Ranking Member STEVE BUYER for moving this bill forward in a timely manner, as well

thanking our staffs. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1170, as amended.

With that, having no other speakers, I yield back my time.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I just want to conclude by telling the House that, recently, we had a committee meeting to learn more about how new technologies can augment the VA's ability to efficiently meet the adaptive needs of our veterans and improve the healing process. We have a new Secretary of the VA, who has committed himself to transformation. We have a new Deputy Secretary, Mr. Gould, who comes from IBM and who understands how a big organization can innovate. That's going to be an important part of the VA's moving into the 21st century. This is a part of that.

I thank Mr. BOOZMAN for introducing it. I thank Chair HERSETH SANDLIN for working with him to move this along. I recommend that everybody vote for H.R. 1170.

I yield back the balance of our 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, H.R. 1170, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### MANDATORY VETERAN SPECIALIST TRAINING ACT OF 2009

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1088) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a one-year period for the training of new disabled veterans' outreach program specialists and local veterans' employment representatives by National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1088

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

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Mandatory Veteran Specialist Training Act of 2009".

#### SEC. 2. ONE-YEAR PERIOD FOR TRAINING OF NEW DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS AND LOCAL VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTATIVES BY NATIONAL VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES INSTITUTE.

(a) ONE-YEAR PERIOD.—Section 4102A(c)(8)(A) of title 38, United States Code is amended by striking "three-year period" and inserting "one-year period".

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(1) APPLICABILITY TO NEW EMPLOYEES.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to a State employee assigned to perform the duties of a disabled veterans' outreach program specialist or a local veterans' employment representative

under chapter 41 of such title who is so assigned on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) APPLICABILITY TO PREVIOUSLY-HIRED EMPLOYEES.—In the case of such a State employee who is so assigned on or after January 1, 2006, and before the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall require the State to require, as a condition of a grant or contract under which funds are made available to the State in order to carry out section 4103A or 4104 of title 38, United States Code, each such employee to satisfactorily complete the training described in section 4102A(c)(8)(A) of such title by not later than the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 1088.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, this legislation was introduced by Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN of South Dakota. She has demonstrated her commitment to our Nation's veterans for many, many years. Her work as Chair of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, with Mr. BOOZMAN, always bears fruit. H.R. 1088 is one of those bills.

I yield to the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN) as much time as she may consume to explain the bill.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the chairman once again.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1088, the Mandatory Veteran Specialist Training Act of 2009, which the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee passed on March 19 and which the full committee approved on May 6.

I want to thank again Chairman FILNER, the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. BUYER, and once again the distinguished ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. BOOZMAN, for their leadership and for, again, their bipartisan support of this bill, which I introduced on February 13, 2009.

The bill would amend title 38 to reduce from 3 years to 1 year the period during which disabled veterans' outreach program specialists or local veterans' employment representatives with the Department of Labor must complete the specialized veterans' employment training program provided by the National Veterans' Training Institute. The National Veterans' Training Institute program is designed to give those specialists the correct skill set that can help veterans so that they can

help veterans with a wide variety of employment services such as transition assistance and case management.

□ 1245

Through several oversight hearings held by the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity that we have held throughout the 110th and 111th Congresses, we learned it was taking on average 2.5 years before individuals were completing the National Veterans Training Institute Program. This fact, therefore, leaves untrained specialists who don't have the necessary skills trying to help veterans with their employment needs. So this bill takes an important step in the right direction to providing better employment assistance to those who have bravely served their country.

Again, I thank Chairman FILNER for his support of this important bill, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, providing first-class employment services to veterans is the most basic way to ensure they can support themselves and their families, and that is why I rise in strong support of H.R. 1088, the Mandatory Veteran Specialist Training Act of 2009. This measure would amend title 38 of the United States Code to provide for a 1-year period for the training of new disabled veterans' outreach program specialists and local veterans' employment representatives by the National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute.

H.R. 1088 was introduced by our distinguished colleague, the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN, on February 13, 2009. Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to work with Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN in the 109th Congress to begin the process of improving the training levels of State and employment service staff. We did that because there was a significant backlog of untrained staff and we needed to give States adequate time to train their veterans' employment staff that were paid for with Federal funds. Together, we passed legislation to require State employment services to send their disabled veterans' outreach program specialists—or DVOPS—and local veterans' employment representatives through basic job placement training within 3 years.

States have had sufficient time to meet the initial training backlog, and we should now require that employment specialists be trained within a shorter period of time to ensure veterans' employment staff is trained properly and promptly after being hired by the State employment service.

Again, I appreciate Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN for bringing this forward. I think it's an excellent bill.

Having no other speakers, I want to thank committee Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member STEVE BUYER,

along with our staffs, and urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1088.

With that, I yield back my time.

Mr. FILNER. I, again, thank the chair and the ranking member, and I urge all of my colleagues to unanimously support H.R. 1088, and I yield back the balance of our 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, H.R. 1088.

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.

#### VETERANS EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS REALIGNMENT ACT OF 2009

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1089) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the enforcement through the Office of Special Counsel of the employment and unemployment rights of veterans and members of the Armed Forces employed by Federal executive agencies, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1089

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

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Employment Rights Realignment Act of 2009".*

#### SEC. 2. ENFORCEMENT THROUGH OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL OF VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT OR REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO EMPLOYERS THAT ARE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE AGENCIES.

*(a) ENFORCEMENT OF RIGHTS THROUGH OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL.—Section 4322 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—*

*(1) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the following new subsection (a):*

*"(a)(1)(A) A person described in subparagraph (B) may file a complaint with the Secretary, and the Secretary shall investigate such complaint.*

*"(B) A person described in this subparagraph is a person who claims that—*

*"(i) such person is entitled under this chapter to employment or reemployment rights or benefits with respect to employment by an employer other than an employer that is a Federal executive agency; and*

*"(ii) such employer has failed or refused, or is about to fail or refuse, to comply with the provisions of this chapter.*

*"(2)(A) A person described in subparagraph (B) may file a complaint with the Special Counsel established by section 1211 of title 5.*

*"(B) A person described in this subparagraph is a person who claims that—*

*"(i) such person is entitled under this chapter to employment or reemployment rights or benefits with respect to employment by an employer that is a Federal executive agency; and*

*"(ii)(I) such employer has failed or refused, or is about to fail or refuse, to comply with the provisions of this chapter; or*

*"(II) such employer or the Office of Personnel Management has failed or refused, or is about to fail or refuse, to comply with the provisions of this chapter.";*

*(2) by striking subsections (d) and (e) and inserting the following new subsections (d) and (e):*

*"(d)(1) The Secretary shall investigate each complaint submitted pursuant to subsection (a)(1). If the Secretary determines as a result of the investigation that the action alleged in such complaint occurred, the Secretary shall attempt to resolve the complaint by making reasonable efforts to ensure that the person or entity named in the complaint complies with the provisions of this chapter.*

*"(2) If the efforts of the Secretary with respect to any complaint filed under subsection (a)(1) do not resolve the complaint, the Secretary shall notify the person who submitted the complaint of—*

*"(A) the results of the Secretary's investigation; and*

*"(B) the complainant's entitlement to proceed under the enforcement of rights provisions provided under section 4323.*

*"(e)(1) In the case of a complaint filed under subsection (a)(2), the Special Counsel shall investigate the complaint. If the Special Counsel determines as a result of the investigation that the action alleged in such complaint occurred, the Special Counsel shall attempt to resolve the complaint by making reasonable efforts to ensure that the person or entity named in the complaint complies with the provisions of this chapter.*

*"(2) If the efforts of the Special Counsel with respect to any complaint filed under subsection (a)(2) do not resolve the complaint, the Special Counsel shall notify the person who submitted the complaint of—*

*"(A) the results of the investigation by the Special Counsel; and*

*"(B) the complainant's entitlement to proceed under the enforcement of rights provisions provided under section 4324."*

*(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Such title is further amended—*

*(1) in section 4322(b), by striking "Such complaint" and inserting "Each complaint filed under subsection (a)";*

*(2) in section 4323(a)—*

*(A) in paragraph (1), by striking "section 4322(e)" and inserting "section 4322(d)(2)"; and*

*(B) in paragraph (3)(A), by striking "section 4322(a)" and inserting "section 4322(a)(1)";*

*(3) in section 4324—*

*(A) in subsection (a)(1)—*  
*(i) in the first sentence, by striking "Secretary" each place it appears and inserting "Special Counsel";*

*(ii) by striking "section 4322(e)" and inserting "section 4322(e)(2)"; and*

*(iii) by striking the second sentence; and*

*(B) in subsection (b)—*

*(i) in paragraph (1)—*

*(I) by striking "Secretary" and inserting "Special Counsel"; and*

*(II) by striking "section 4322(a)" and inserting "section 4322(a)(2) of this title"; and*

*(ii) in paragraph (2)—*

*(I) by striking "Secretary" and inserting "Special Counsel"; and*

*(II) by striking "section 4322(e)" and inserting "section 4322(e)(2) of this title";*

*(4) in section 4325(c), by striking "section 4322(d)" and inserting "section 4322(d)(1)"; and*

*(5) in section 4326—*

*(A) in subsection (a), by inserting "or the Special Counsel's" after "Secretary's"; and*

*(B) by striking "Secretary" each place it appears and inserting "Secretary or the Special Counsel".*

*(c) CONFORMING REPEAL.—The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-454) is amended by striking section 204.*

*(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to complaints filed on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.*

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