

and pass the bill (H.R. 1752) to provide that the usual day for paying salaries in or under the House of Representatives may be established by regulations of the Committee on House Administration, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1752

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

SECTION 1. AUTHORITY OF COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION TO ESTABLISH DAY FOR PAYING SALARIES IN OR UNDER THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Section 116(a) of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2002 (2 U.S.C. 60d-1) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: "Notwithstanding the previous sentence, the Committee on House Administration may by regulation provide for the payment of salaries with respect to a month on a date other than the date provided under the previous sentence as may be necessary to conform to generally accepted accounting practices."

SEC. 2. MEMBERSHIP IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EXERCISE FACILITY FOR ACTIVE DUTY ARMED FORCES MEMBERS ASSIGNED TO CONGRESSIONAL LIAISON OFFICE.

House Resolution 1068, One Hundred Tenth Congress, agreed to April 15, 2008, is enacted into law.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation.

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

There was no objection.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, the principal purpose of this legislation is to allow the Committee on House Administration to oversee and administer a payday schedule for all staff in the House of Representatives. It does not affect pay for Members.

The House passed a similar bill in the 110th Congress. This bill gives the Committee on House Administration the ability to set the day of pay for House employees. This flexibility will allow the committee to be more responsive to the needs of our employees, many of whom have expressed their frustration about the current system. Furthermore, this bill will give us the opportunity to be more consistent with employees in the Senate, the executive branch, and most of the private sector with regard to paydays.

The committee also adopted a technical amendment to provide that staff members of congressional liaison offices assigned to the House who are on active duty in the Armed Forces will

continue to be eligible to apply for membership in the House of Representatives staff exercise facility. The House passed a resolution, H. Res. 1068, in the 110th Congress which approved this policy, and the bill before us simply would enact it into permanent law.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 1752, which will vest in the Committee on House Administration the authority to evaluate and implement best practices to improve efficiency in our payroll process.

The House Inspector General has reported that it may be of benefit to the House to transition to a bimonthly pay cycle with a lag time. Preliminary financial assessments suggest that after incurring up-front transition costs, this change may reduce overpayments over time and reduce errors by more easily distributing the burden of incorporating payment changes into the system.

If the distinguished gentlewoman from California would enter into a colloquy on the subject of exactly how this authority is to be exercised, I would like to stress that the legislation before the House simply grants the Committee on House Administration the authority to change the pay cycle and does not in and of itself authorize any changes. As the gentlewoman is aware, any change to our current operating status with regard to payroll would have a large impact on the daily lives of House staff. It is thus important that the committee granting this authority will act cautiously and only after soliciting and evaluating the feedback of the House community.

I understand on the majority side that you would be willing to work with us to ensure that the opinions of House staff are gathered and considered prior to any potential change in the pay cycle.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. The gentleman is correct. We would be delighted to work with him on that.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I appreciate that very much.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would urge support for this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1752, as amended.

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. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

ABSENTEE BALLOT TRACK, RECEIVE, AND CONFIRM ACT

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2510) to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to reimburse States for the costs incurred in establishing a program to track and confirm the receipt of voted absentee ballots in elections for Federal office and make information on the receipt of such ballots available by means of on-line access, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2510

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 "Absentee Ballot Track, Receive, and Confirm Act".

SEC. 2. REIMBURSEMENT FOR COSTS INCURRED IN ESTABLISHING PROGRAM TO TRACK AND CONFIRM RECEIPT OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS.

(a) REIMBURSEMENT.—Subtitle D of title II of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (42 U.S.C. 15401 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new part:

"PART 7—PAYMENTS TO REIMBURSE STATES FOR COSTS INCURRED IN ESTABLISHING PROGRAM TO TRACK AND CONFIRM RECEIPT OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS

"SEC. 297. PAYMENTS TO STATES.

"(a) PAYMENTS FOR COSTS OF ESTABLISHING PROGRAM.—In accordance with this section, the Commission shall make a payment to a State to reimburse the State for the costs incurred in establishing, if the State so chooses to establish, an absentee ballot tracking program with respect to elections for Federal office held in the State (including costs incurred prior to the date of the enactment of this part).

"(b) ABSENTEE BALLOT TRACKING PROGRAM DESCRIBED.—

"(1) PROGRAM DESCRIBED.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—In this part, an 'absentee ballot tracking program' is a program to track and confirm the receipt of absentee ballots in an election for Federal office under which the State or local election official responsible for the receipt of voted absentee ballots in the election carries out procedures to track and confirm the receipt of such ballots, and makes information on the receipt of such ballots available to the individual who cast the ballot, by means of on-line access using the Internet site of the official's office.

"(B) INFORMATION ON WHETHER VOTE WAS COUNTED.—The information referred to under subparagraph (A) with respect to the receipt of an absentee ballot shall include information regarding whether the vote cast on the ballot was counted, and, in the case of a vote which was not counted, the reasons therefor.

"(2) USE OF TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBER BY OFFICIALS WITHOUT INTERNET SITE.—A program established by a State or local election official whose office does not have an Internet site may meet the description of a program under paragraph (1) if the official has

established a toll-free telephone number that may be used by an individual who cast an absentee ballot to obtain the information on the receipt of the voted absentee ballot as provided under such paragraph.

“(C) CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE AND COSTS.—

“(1) CERTIFICATION REQUIRED.—In order to receive a payment under this section, a State shall submit to the Commission a statement containing—

“(A) a certification that the State has established an absentee ballot tracking program with respect to elections for Federal office held in the State; and

“(B) a statement of the costs incurred by the State in establishing the program.

“(2) AMOUNT OF PAYMENT.—The amount of a payment made to a State under this section shall be equal to the costs incurred by the State in establishing the absentee ballot tracking program, as set forth in the statement submitted under paragraph (1), except that such amount may not exceed the product of—

“(A) the number of jurisdictions in the State which are responsible for operating the program; and

“(B) \$3,000.

“(3) LIMIT ON NUMBER OF PAYMENTS RECEIVED.—A State may not receive more than one payment under this part.

“SEC. 297A. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

“(a) AUTHORIZATION.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Commission for fiscal year 2010 and each succeeding fiscal year such sums as may be necessary for payments under this part.

“(b) CONTINUING AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—Any amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization under this section shall remain available until expended.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents of such Act is amended by adding at the end of the items relating to subtitle D of title II the following:

“PART 7—PAYMENTS TO REIMBURSE STATES FOR COSTS INCURRED IN ESTABLISHING PROGRAM TO TRACK AND CONFIRM RECEIPT OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS

“Sec. 297. Payments to States.

“Sec. 297A. Authorization of appropriations.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation.

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

There was no objection.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 2510, the Absentee Ballot Track, Receive, and Confirm, or TRAC Act. I would like to thank House Administration Committee Chairman BRADY, Ranking Member LUNGREN, and Election Subcommittee Chairwoman LOFGREN for allowing this bill to come forward today. I would also like to especially

thank our subcommittee's ranking member, Mr. MCCARTHY, for joining me in introducing this bill. I appreciate my California colleague's input in support of this important legislation. This is a better bill because of his efforts, and I hope that the members of our subcommittee can continue to work together across party lines because election administration need not be a partisan issue.

We introduced this bill after hearing from absentee voters that they would like to know whether their ballots were sent, whether their ballots were received, and whether their votes were actually counted. In most cases, the fears of one's mail-in ballot somehow being lost in the system are unfounded, but we all know that the worry is still there, and sometimes there is real reason for concern.

We have all heard election horror stories from people who simply did not receive a ballot they requested. Other voters have called their overwhelmed election officers and waited on hold for far too long trying to find out what happened to their ballots. And most voters never know whether their absentee ballot actually was counted. Was there a problem with their signature, they might wonder? Was the ballot damaged in the mail?

Our Nation's voters deserve electoral procedures that are transparent and that strengthen their faith in democracy. The good news is that it is possible and practical to track absentee ballots. If voters can identify a problem early, they can work with their election offices to fix it and ensure that their votes count.

The TRAC Act is modeled on a successful piece of bipartisan California State legislation that allows voters to go online or call a phone number to easily find out whether an elections office has sent out a ballot, whether a completed ballot has arrived back at the registrar's office, and whether the registrar has counted the ballot; and if not, why not?

Absentee tracking has been a proven success in California and in several other States. In my home county of San Diego, over 98,000 voters checked their ballot status online last November using such a system.

Tracking gives voters easy access to the answers they need, and it takes a burden off the phone lines at elections offices. Absentee ballot tracking is particularly useful for our men and women in uniform serving overseas who have difficulty phoning their elections offices during regular business hours. The TRAC Act would allow the Federal Government to reimburse States for establishing absentee tracking systems. And setting up these tracking systems can be done for just a few thousand dollars in many jurisdictions. San Mateo County in California, for example, did it by simply linking their database to their Web site, and many other counties have followed that model. In these tough economic times, even the small

grants we are offering States today will be especially helpful.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join Mr. MCCARTHY and me in supporting this effort to strengthen the democratic process and give American voters the electoral certainty they deserve.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of this bill, the TRAC bill, which will encourage States to adopt measures toward the modernization of election systems.

The legitimacy of our election systems is based on the public trust that properly cast ballots are counted, and in the case of absentee ballots, reach their appropriate destination. Any time an election system fails to include properly cast ballots there is cause for concern as to the legitimacy of the outcome.

Long gone should be the days when dog-eared absentee ballots are relegated to dark and dusty corners of election offices with voters never having the certainty that their vote counted. By instituting a tracking system, States can further ensure the security of their absentee ballots. Some have said this is really promoting uniform postal progress information for election shipments. Moreover, an absentee ballot tracking system will enable voters to act as guardians of their own vote, providing them the ability to call attention to ballots that fail to reach their destination.

An important aspect of this bill beyond the benefits of a ballot tracking system is that it is a voluntary, incentive-driven program. Whereas each State approaches its election process from a unique background and context, this voluntary program empowers the States to modernize their election systems in a manner appropriate to their particular challenges. The Committee on House Administration has held several hearings over the past year dealing with challenges to the administration of reliable and credible elections. Through the testimony of many qualified witnesses, we have come to realize that one particular subset of voters who are particularly vulnerable to those challenges is overseas military voters. My colleague on the committee, Mr. MCCARTHY, has introduced a piece of legislation which will help remedy that disservice to our men and women in uniform. And just as we take up this bill today, I am hopeful that we will soon see Mr. MCCARTHY's bill brought before this body for a vote.

It simply isn't acceptable for ballots to disappear, some might say, like wandering puppies. We owe our uniformed servicemembers better than that.

Madam Speaker, I urge support for this measure, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT).

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlelady from California, and I rise in support of the Absentee Ballot TRAC Act. I commend her and Mr. MCCARTHY for crafting this commonsense measure, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

For the sake of good democracy, we must do all we can to have accessible, reliable, auditable voting. And we must do all we can to remove every reason for voters to believe that the voting system is not working well, to remove any doubt that they might have that votes are not counted as they intended.

□ 1845

Every year, some number of absentee ballots are requested by voters but not received, or delivered to voters but not returned to the election officials. The Election Assistance Commission's 2004 election administration voting survey reported that on average, only 89 percent of absentee ballots requested were returned. The 2006 Election Administration and Voting Survey reported that on average, a quarter of domestic civilian absentee ballots were rejected due to untimely receipt. And according to a survey of military and overseas voting in 2008 conducted by the nonpartisan Overseas Vote Foundation, more than 1 in 5 American voters living overseas, including military personnel, did not receive their ballots on time for them to be counted in the 2008 election.

Every such instance of nonreceipt or nondelivery must be treated as a probable instance of wrongful disenfranchisement because we can assume voters would not have requested the ballots if they did not intend to vote. And that's why I support this commonsense measure. It would reimburse States for establishing programs to track and confirm the receipt of absentee ballots and make available to the individual who cast the ballot information on the receipt of the ballot, and information about whether or not the ballot was counted. This would be done by means of on-line access using an Internet site of the official's office.

I commend this bill to my colleagues, and I thank the gentleman and the gentlelady for proposing it.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I urge the Members to support H.R. 2510, a bill to amend the Help America Vote Act. This bipartisan bill, sponsored by Representatives SUSAN DAVIS and KEVIN MCCARTHY, and reported unanimously from the Committee on House Administration, will reimburse states for the cost of tracking and confirming absentee ballots.

More voters than ever cast their ballots by mail. Many remain anxious that their ballots may not reach election offices on time—they question whether their votes are actually counted.

H.R. 2510 provides incentives to states to develop systems allowing voters to track their ballots. Voters will be able to use the internet

or a voter hotline to track whether the elections office has sent out a ballot, whether the completed ballot has arrived back at the registrar's office, whether the registrar has counted the ballot, and if not, why. Highly effective systems like these are already in place in counties in California, Washington, Virginia, Kansas and my home state of Pennsylvania.

Voters and election offices both benefit from ballot tracking technology. With voters able to track their ballots, transparency and voter confidence in America's election system will be greatly improved. Voters will be able to receive accurate and updated information on the status of their ballots and confirm whether they were counted.

Once this legislation is fully implemented, it will save costs for local governments and take the strain off election offices.

I urge all my colleagues to vote for this bipartisan legislation.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I have no additional speakers. I urge passage of this legislation. And I yield back my remaining time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2510.

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. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

COMMENDING THE CONGRESS OF LEADERS OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 535) commending the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for calling upon all nations to live in peace and mutual understanding.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 535

Whereas religious leaders can be a decisive factor in maintaining peace and security in the world;

Whereas a Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was established in 2003;

Whereas the purpose of the Congress is to advance tolerance, development, and security;

Whereas the Congress provides a forum for improving understanding and mutual cooperation among religious communities from around the world;

Whereas the Congress considers interfaith dialogue one of the most important instruments for the maintenance of peace and harmony among peoples and nations;

Whereas the Congress regularly holds forums that address, among other issues, religious freedom, inter-religious dialogue, and the role of religious leaders in strengthening global security;

Whereas the world's major religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shinto, and Taoism are represented in the Congress;

Whereas religious leaders representing more than 26 nations, including Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Armenia, South Korea, China, India, Thailand, the United States, Switzerland, France, Japan, and the Holy See, participate in the Congress;

Whereas a Secretariat of the Congress was established by the leaders and representatives of the world and traditional religions in 2003 as a permanent body of the interfaith dialogue;

Whereas the Secretariat of the Congress adopted resolutions to convene the second and third Congress in 2006 and 2009; and

Whereas the third Congress was held on July 1-2, 2009: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for calling upon all nations to live in peace and mutual understanding; and

(2) supports freedom of religion and conscience throughout the world as a fundamental human right and as a source of stability for all countries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from American Samoa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 535, commending the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for calling upon all nations to live in peace and mutual understanding. The Congress was organized in 2003 in recognition of the growing importance of world religions in responding to emerging threats and global epidemics. The Congress is held every 3 years and seeks to foster greater dialogue and cooperation among world religions to address the serious challenge we are facing like terrorism, poverty, war, extremism, and the global collapse of financial markets.

This year I had the privilege of attending the third Congress. Approximately 77 delegations from 35 countries participated, including leading clerics and scholars representing Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and other religious traditions. The delegation from the Vatican was led by Cardinal Jean-Louis Turan. Israel's President, Shimon Peres delivered the keynote address, and the Church of Jesus