

RECOGNIZING THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 80) recognizing and honoring the Blinded Veterans Association on its 65th anniversary of representing blinded veterans and their families.

The Clerk read the title of the joint resolution.

The text of the joint resolution is as follows:

H.J. RES. 80

Whereas, at 8:45 a.m. on March 28, 1945, 100 blinded members of the Armed Forces who served in World War II formed the Blinded Veterans Association at Avon "Old Farms" Army Convalescent Hospital in Connecticut;

Whereas the founders of the Blinded Veterans Association were a cross-section of heroes and pioneers who not only shaped the rich history, philosophy, and knowledge of education and rehabilitation of the blind, but also provided insight into current and future challenges facing the blind and engaged in continual advocacy efforts to ensure that services for all blinded persons would be unique and specialized;

Whereas, on March 28, 2010, the Blinded Veterans Association will mark its 65th anniversary of dedication to blinded members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families;

Whereas in 1946, General Omar Bradley, of the Veterans Administration, appointed the Blinded Veterans Association as the first official representative for blinded veterans for the filing of claims and appeals to the Veterans Administration, making the Blinded Veterans Association only the eighth veterans service organization to receive such authorization;

Whereas the Blinded Veterans Association was originally incorporated in New York State as a nonprofit association, and then moved to Washington, DC, in 1947;

Whereas in 1958, the 85th Congress approved the Congressional Charter for the Blinded Veterans Association;

Whereas from its early beginnings, the Blinded Veterans Association encouraged the blinded veterans it served "to take their rightful place in the community with their fellow men and work with them toward the creation of a peaceful world", and it has continued to advocate for the war-blinded to regain independence, confidence, and self-esteem through rehabilitation and training; and

Whereas many people of the United States recognize March 28 of each year as Blinded Veterans Day; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That Congress—

(1) expresses appreciation for the efforts of the Blinded Veterans Association in improving the rehabilitation services, education, and benefits for blinded veterans of the United States;

(2) supports the goals and ideals of Blinded Veterans Day; and

(3) calls upon the people of the United States to observe Blinded Veterans Day with appropriate programs and activities.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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

I rise in support of House Joint Resolution 80, recognizing and honoring the Blinded Veterans Association on its 65th anniversary of representing blinded veterans and their families, sponsored by Mrs. HALVORSON of Illinois. Mrs. HALVORSON, as a first-term Member, has been incredibly active and committed to veterans on our committee.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois to further explain the bill.

Mrs. HALVORSON. I thank Chairman FILNER for yielding.

Madam Speaker, it was truly a privilege to introduce H.J. Res. 80, which recognizes and honors the Blinded Veterans Association on its 65th anniversary. Madam Speaker, this simple resolution helps to honor the service and sacrifice of the more than 165,000 blind or visually impaired veterans.

The resolution helps us to remember that on March 28, 1945, 100 blinded members of the Armed Forces who served in World War II formed the Blinded Veterans Association in order to help veterans and their families meet and overcome the challenges of blindness. The following year, in 1946, General Omar Bradley of the Veterans Administration, appointed the BVA as the first official representative for blinded veterans for the filing of claims and appeals to the Veterans Administration. This made the Blinded Veterans Association only the eighth Veterans Service Organization to receive such distinction and responsibility.

In 1958, Congress followed General Bradley's lead and echoed his recognition of the BVA by officially approving the BVA congressional charter. Since that time, the BVA has encouraged and assisted blinded veterans to take their rightful place in the community with their fellow men and work with them towards the creation of a peaceful world.

□ 1445

Their leadership continues to advocate for the war-blinded to regain independence, confidence and self-esteem through rehabilitation and training. Almost 13 percent of the evacuated wounded servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered a serious eye injury of one type or another. This means that the Blinded Veterans Association's services are just as crucial today as they were 65 years ago.

H.J. Res. 80 recognizes the extraordinary members and work of the BVA, and the good that they do for America's visually impaired veterans. I thank the members of the BVA for their service and strongly encourage my colleagues to do the same by voting in favor of this resolution.

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

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, not only does the BVA provide support for our Nation's blind veterans, the organi-

zation also provides inspiration and support for their family members via the Katheren F. Gruber Scholarship Awards. This worthy scholarship enables spouses and dependent children of blinded veterans to achieve their goals in higher education.

Our blinded veterans have made tremendous sacrifices on behalf of our Nation to ensure our safety and our freedom. It is altogether appropriate that we honor them this day and join the Blinded Veterans Association in celebrating its 65th anniversary.

Obviously I am a strong supporter of H.J. Res. 80, a resolution to recognize and honor the Blinded Veterans Association on its 65th anniversary of representing blinded veterans and their families. As all of us know, recovering from the tragic loss of sight is a traumatic and life-changing event. Veterans who are burdened with this loss are forced to relearn almost every task associated with normal daily activities. Such rehabilitation is a difficult but necessary challenge blinded veterans must overcome to integrate back into civilian life. The Blinded Veterans Association was established specifically to help these severely injured veterans and their families during this most difficult period.

On March 28, 1945, 100 blinded members of the Armed Forces who served in World War II formed the Blinded Veterans Association. Just a year later, in 1946, General Bradley of the Veterans Administration appointed the BVA as the first official representative for blinded veterans who were filing claims and appeals to the Veterans Administration. This made the Blinded Veterans Association the eighth veterans service organization to receive such authorization.

Chartered by Congress in 1958, the BVA has worked throughout the years assisting blind veterans in acquiring Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation and health care benefits, as well as other Federal and local benefits. Thanks in large part to the efforts of the BVA, there are now ten blindness rehabilitation centers located at various VA medical centers across this country.

Madam Speaker, along with this legislation, which obviously you can see how important it is, we wanted to honor today these blinded veterans on their 65th anniversary. But, Madam Speaker, our committee also had requested consideration of H.R. 4360, a bill to designate the blind rehabilitation center in Long Beach, California, as the Major Charles R. Soltes, Jr., O.D. Department of Veterans Affairs Blind Rehabilitation Center. This legislation has the support of the entire California delegation and the major veterans service organizations in California and would further honor blind veterans to whom Major Soltes provided so much service and so much sacrifice.

I would like to inquire, if it is appropriate to the Speaker, or perhaps

Chairman FILNER, if they could explain why this very important bill was not permitted consideration on the floor today?

Mr. FILNER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. STEARNS. I yield.

Mr. FILNER. As the gentleman knows, we included that bill on a list of seven bills that we asked to be taken up on the floor, and we were scheduled for six of them. That is as far as I know.

Mr. STEARNS. I understand he is saying that it wasn't put in the loop at the moment, it wasn't put on the schedule, but I think you are also saying that this is the type of bill that you support and you believe should be part of a vote on the floor. Can I assume you support this bill?

Mr. FILNER. If the gentleman would continue to yield, I was one of the Californians who signed the original petition, and I support the bill. We are as mystified as you are.

Mr. STEARNS. Well, Madam Speaker, I think it is unfortunate that this bill to honor an individual who did so much for our blind veterans community and paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to his country, this particular bill is not being considered this afternoon. Many of us are disappointed, and we will work with Ranking Member BUYER and Chairman FILNER, since he is a signee on the unanimous delegation letter, to have it brought to the floor at the earliest opportunity.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. Madam 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 the joint resolution.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.J. Res 80, "Recognizing and Honoring the blinded veterans association on its 65th anniversary of representing blinded veterans and their families," a bill sponsored by my colleague from Illinois, Congresswoman HALVORSON.

H.J. Res. 80 will honor those who have sacrificed greatly for this nation and have lost their eyesight in the process. These veterans have given great contributions and made incredible personal sacrifices so that all of us in this country might live in a safe and secure nation and world. When we pay tribute to the service of our brave veterans, we acknowledge the great debt that this Nation owes them.

Because I realize that our veterans deserve our very best, I introduced H.R. 1240, the Vision Impairment Specialist Training Act (VISTA), passed into law as part of larger bill. The provisions of VISTA help our nation's blind and low-vision veterans by establishing a scholarship program for students seeking training in blind rehabilitation. There are more than 160,000 legally blind veterans in the

United States, but approximately 35,000 are currently enrolled in Veterans Health Administration. Members of the armed forces are important to our nation and we show them our appreciation by taking care of them when they no longer can serve.

Caring for our veterans also means giving them our time. I have had the honor of visiting with some of our wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C. Many of these soldiers were recovering from some of the most horrific wounds imaginable. But what made the most indelible impression on me was that to a man and woman, there was no self-pity or anger at their fate. Instead of anger or sorrow there was only concern for their fellow soldiers and pride in the certain knowledge that they had fought valiantly on behalf of a country they loved. There is no reason that any of our veterans should not receive the highest care from all of us in this country. I hope all Americans take the time to visit their local VA hospital and thank the wounded for their service to our country." We must do everything possible to let our veterans know how much we value their service.

We all know that no one has paid a higher price than the brave men and women through the years who gave the last full measure of devotion to their country. Whether it is the ultimate sacrifice of life or the loss of limb or the loss of time with family and friends, we owe our veterans an enormous outstanding debt of gratitude. So, let us celebrate and recognize our blinded veterans during the 65th anniversary of the Blinded Veterans Association.

It is out of my profound respect and gratitude for all who wear and have worn the uniform of the United States that I continue to work so hard to pass legislation that will ensure that veterans receive the health care, job opportunities, housing assistance, and educational benefits they deserve. Caring for our veterans also means giving them our support when they need it.

Madam Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to support H.J. 80.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues' unanimous support, and 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 joint resolution, H.J. Res. 80.

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. 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.

HELPING HEROES KEEP THEIR HOMES ACT OF 2009

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the

bill (H.R. 3976) to extend certain expiring provisions providing enhanced protections for servicemembers relating to mortgages and mortgage foreclosure, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3976

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 "Helping Heroes Keep Their Homes Act of 2010".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF ENHANCED PROTECTIONS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS RELATING TO MORTGAGES AND MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT.

(a) EXTENSION.—Paragraph (2) of section 2203(c) of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-289) is amended—

- (1) by striking "December 31, 2010" and inserting "December 31, 2015"; and
- (2) by striking "January 1, 2011" and inserting "January 1, 2016".

(b) PROTECTION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 303 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 533) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(e) PROTECTION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSE.—With respect to a servicemember who dies while in military service and whose death is service-connected, this section shall apply to the surviving spouse of the servicemember if such spouse is the successor in interest to property covered under subsection (a).".

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (e) of section 303 of such Act, as added by paragraph (1), shall apply to a surviving spouse of a servicemember whose death is 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 Florida (Mr. STEARNS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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

Madam Speaker, I want to thank Congressman TOM PERRIELLO of Virginia for introducing H.R. 3976, the Helping Heroes Keep Their Homes Act of 2010. Mr. PERRIELLO is one of the first-term members we have on our committee. They are incredibly active and committed. Mr. PERRIELLO hit the ground running in his first year and is here today with a bill that will make an immediate difference in the lives of our Nation's military veterans.

I yield to Mr. PERRIELLO to explain the bill.

Mr. PERRIELLO. Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand in support of H.R. 3976, the Helping Heroes Keep Their Homes Act, a bill that I introduced to help ensure that our veterans have the resources they need to confront the myriad of challenges in today's economic environment.

Homeownership is the touchstone of the American dream. H.R. 3976, the Helping Heroes Keep Their Homes Act, will reauthorize home foreclosure protections to prevent lenders from foreclosing on veterans' homes within 9