

(2) a description of the services carried out by the Secretary under the pilot program;

(3) the effects that participating in the pilot program has on the following—

(A) symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and post-deployment adjustment difficulties, including depression, maintenance of sobriety, suicidal ideations, and homelessness;

(B) potentially relevant physiological markers that possibly relate to the interactions with the service dogs;

(C) family dynamics;

(D) insomnia and pain management; and

(E) overall well being; and

(4) the recommendations of the Secretary with respect to the extension or expansion of the pilot program.

(i) DEFINITION.—For the purposes of this section, the term “service dog training instructor” means an instructor who provides the direct training of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and other post-deployment issues in the art and science of assistance dog training and handling.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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 H.R. 3885.

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.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3885, the Veterans Dog Training Therapy Act.

I want to thank the ranking member of the Health Subcommittee, Congressman BROWN from South Carolina, for bringing us this legislation.

Madam Speaker, we all recognize how damaging the invisible wounds of war can be. The need for effective treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder and for other conditions, such as depression and substance abuse, is apparent, I think, to all Americans. This act recognizes and meets this need by exploring an innovative and promising new form of treatment, using the training of service dogs as a therapeutic medium.

The bill would require the VA to establish a pilot program where veterans with PTSD, or with other postdeployment mental health conditions, would help train service dogs. Through this pilot program, we can test the potential therapeutic benefits to participating veterans. Similar programs are already in existence within the Palo Alto VA Health Care System and at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

There is a lot of anecdotal evidence of participants who have reported improved emotional regulation, regular sleep patterns, feelings of personal safety, and reduced levels of anxiety and social isolation. Moreover, these participants tout a strong sense of purpose that they derive from their participation in the program.

Madam Speaker, this bill will allow us to further study this innovative new treatment modality beyond the existing anecdotal evidence, and it will help us assess its place in the VA health care system.

I urge the support of all of my colleagues, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3885, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on dog training therapy.

This bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a 5-year pilot program in at least three medical centers for assessing the effectiveness of treating postdeployment mental illness, such as PTSD, through assistance dog training.

The pilot would allow veterans battling these invisible wounds to assist certified dog trainers in training assistance animals. The veterans will work with their dogs in their care, the trainers who are guiding the curriculum and with other wounded warriors to train dogs to become valuable therapy animals, with the animals having learned some 90 different commands. At the same time, the veterans learn valuable lessons about themselves and their world, which they need to learn so they can recover and reintegrate into society.

Once trained, the therapy dogs will be provided to other disabled veterans to aid them in daily activities, like opening doors, retrieving fallen items, et cetera. As an added benefit, the veteran dog trainers are provided vocational experience should they choose to pursue service dog training as a career path.

Just as Chairman FILNER said, there are similar programs that are very successful at Palo Alto and at Walter Reed, and trying to replicate this, I think, is extremely important. These veterans who are participating are seeing great improvements, not only in their sleep but in their social interaction, in their emotional regulation, patience, trust, sense of purpose, and personal meaning. All of these things are extremely important for veterans to be able to reintegrate into society. Some of them have even been able to reduce their medications as a result of lowering their anxiety levels, which, I think, is extremely important. As we continue to hear these stories of healing and hope, I think this bill goes a long way toward giving the necessary assurances to these veterans.

Madam Speaker, I know there are few things we take as seriously as our commitment to serving those who have served us in combat, especially when they return home with physical and mental scars. So, if there is anything that we can do to be helpful to them, we would like to do that. You know, sometimes the obvious can be right in front of us. We all know that cherished feeling of having a pet—we learned it as children—and if there is anything that we can do to touch the heart of a

veteran which can help him in the healing process, it is a good thing.

So I want to thank my colleague, former Chairman and now Ranking Member BROWN, for bringing this bill. This pilot will provide much-needed scientific grounding into these dynamics and into the efficacy of a therapeutic model that will help these veterans. I think this is a wonderful bill.

I want to thank Chairman FILNER and subcommittee Chairman MIKE MICHAUD for their leadership and for their assistance in moving this bill forward.

Once again, I know HENRY BROWN is going to be retiring, and we are going to miss his leadership on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. It is only fitting that HENRY would bring a bill such as this. His own daughter was diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus, so he knows the need of having not only compassion for people but also compassion for animals. He knows how it can touch people and promote their healing. HENRY's deep commitment to helping others in need and, in particular, our veterans is unparalleled, so I want to thank HENRY BROWN for bringing this bill to the floor for consideration today.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I would urge unanimous support for the bill, 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 bill, H.R. 3885.

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, 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.

ASSURING QUALITY CARE FOR VETERANS ACT

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5145) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the continuing professional education reimbursement provided to health professionals employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5145

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 "Assuring Quality Care for Veterans Act".

SECTION 1. IMPROVEMENT OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION REIMBURSEMENT FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7411 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking "shall" and inserting "may";

(2) by striking "board-certified physician or dentist appointed under section 7401(1) of this title" and inserting "health professional appointed under paragraph (1) or (3) of section 7401 of this title";

(3) by striking "\$1,000" and inserting "\$1,600";

(4) by inserting "required to maintain licensure" after "professional education"; and

(5) by adding at the end the following new sentence: "No such health professional may receive reimbursement under this section and reimbursement for the same expenses incurred for continuing professional education provided by a Department medical center.".

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SECTION HEADING.—The heading for such section is amended to read as follows:

"§ 7411. Full-time health professionals: reimbursement of continuing professional education expenses".

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 74 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 7411 and inserting the following new item:

"7411. Full-time health professionals: reimbursement of continuing professional education expenses.".

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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 to include extraneous material on H.R. 5145, as amended.

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.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5145, the Assuring Quality Care for Veterans Act.

I thank my colleague from California (Mr. McNERNEY) for his diligent advocacy on behalf of our veterans. His talent and hard work have culminated in this important piece of legislation.

Many key health care professionals require continuing professional education in order to maintain their licensure. Such education can be costly, and the VA has long reimbursed up to \$1,000 annually to physicians and dentists. This reimbursement program has been an important part of the VA's efforts to recruit and to retain high-quality health care personnel. Moreover, it ensures that the VA employees are well-informed and knowledgeable about advances or new information in their chosen fields.

Organizational efforts to improve access to knowledge and opportunities have been shown to improve job satisfaction. However, since its inception, this program has only been open to physicians and dentists. It unfairly excludes many key health care providers who face similar licensing requirements. This act would correct this inequity by expanding the program to such key health care personnel as nurses, pharmacists, and physical therapists.

This legislation would recognize that the maximum reimbursement rate of \$1,000 is outdated, its having been unchanged for nearly two decades. H.R. 5145 would reflect inflationary increases since the last update by increasing the cap to \$1,600 annually.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to support this legislation. Not only does it recognize the hard work of health care providers in the VA system, but it also empowers the VA to hire and retain talented health care personnel and to offer them the tools they need to remain extremely skilled and knowledgeable.

I would urge the support of all of my colleagues, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 5145, as amended, the Assuring Quality Care for Veterans Act.

It would amend title 38 of the United States Code to improve continuing professional education reimbursements provided to health care professionals employed at the Department of Veterans Affairs. This legislation increases by \$600 the continuing professional education reimbursement for VA's health professionals. It would also expand those eligible to receive such reimbursements to include health professionals from a wide range of medical specialties, and it would clarify that reimbursements may only be provided for such continuing education expenses that the VA does not offer, itself.

While we can all be proud of the quality of care provided to veterans at VA facilities, we should always be looking for ways to improve the VA's provision of medical services, ensuring that the VA's health professionals are continually kept on the cutting edge of modern medical advances. It is important to ensure high-quality medical care continues to thrive at the VA. H.R. 5145, as amended, would provide VA employees with more opportunities to improve their knowledge base and skill sets, and it would provide veterans with superiority when it comes to care that they, I believe, deserve.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE).

□ 1530

Mr. SCALISE. I thank the gentleman from Indiana for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this bill dealing with professional edu-

cation, but I just arrived from New Orleans and landed in D.C. a little while ago, and I am angry.

The people back in my State are very angry right now about what is happening in the Gulf of Mexico. We have got a crisis right now that is probably the largest environmental disaster in this Nation's history, and we are not getting the adequate response we need from this Federal Government.

Now, our governor for over 2 weeks has been asking for the Federal Government to approve a barrier plan to actually protect our marsh from the oil, and we are not getting an answer from the Federal Government. All we are getting is excuses. We have got letters from the Corps of Engineers and others that are saying they need to do studies, they need to look at the environmental impact. Well, the environmental impact is right there in our marsh. Here is a dead pelican from just the other day.

We have got oil coming up into our marshes in globs, thick globs, every single day, and we don't have one ounce of action from the President. Now, the law is very clear. The Oil Pollution Act says the President shall ensure effective and immediate removal of discharge. Instead, he is just pointing fingers at everybody. We know BP is responsible for this.

Madam Speaker, I understand we are talking about veterans issues, but right now we are talking about the livelihood of the people of the gulf coast whose livelihood is threatened, and all we are asking is the President to fulfill his duties under the law, which he is not doing.

We don't need a finger-pointer-in-chief. We need somebody who is going to step up to the plate and actually follow the law, take charge of this and stop not only the oil from flowing, but let our local leaders do what they said they need to do. And they have gotten no response from the White House. They are not getting the help they need.

The President has paid a lot of lip-service, but we have had oil coming into our marsh every day now for days. It has been going on for a month now, and all we see is ceding of power to BP. We know they are going to pay the cost, but the President under the law is responsible for actually taking charge. We need a quarterback on the field, like the law says the President is supposed to be. He is not supposed to be the commentator in the booth.

So all we are doing is saying we are tired of the excuses, Mr. President. It is time to live up to your obligation under the law. Help us protect our marsh. If you don't have a plan, we do, but you are not letting us implement our plan. Get out of our way and approve our plan. Otherwise, you come up with your own. But this is inexcusable.

Mr. BUYER. I want to thank the gentleman for coming to the floor today. The issue before us deals with increasing the reimbursement on professional

education with regard to VA's health professionals.

I understand the gentleman has every reason to be upset with regard to what is occurring in the Gulf with regard to the oil spill. This oil should almost be treated as an invasion of our country. I understand why he is upset.

The legislation before us deals with veterans issues. It deals with making sure that the professionals that work in the VA are able to be reimbursed for their continuing professional education.

I want to thank Chairman FILNER right now for his patience. I want to thank you for that. I think we can feel for Mr. SCALISE as he just returned from Louisiana, how upset and how high the emotions are in New Orleans and Louisiana, not only from Katrina but also the oil spill, and I can understand where he is coming from. But I want to bring us back to the issue of the bill itself. So I want to thank Mr. FILNER for being very patient with our colleague from Louisiana.

One point that we probably haven't talked about with regard to this is the challenge, Chairman FILNER, that we have in front of us with regard to nursing and the nursing shortage. So many of the nurses are going to be retiring now over the next 12 years, and as we look at the ability for us to replenish that hole that is going to be created, there is going to be a dynamic shift within our health professions. So a lot of jobs and responsibilities that the nurse corps would be providing today, they are not going to be providing 10 years from now.

Actually, there will be a dynamic shift within health care itself and their profession. Their skill sets are actually going to get higher and even better and more improved, and jobs which they are doing today are going to have to be back-filled by nursing assistants. So for us to step forward and do this type of reimbursement to increase the quality of what they are about to provide, this is extremely important.

I want to thank the majority for bringing this type of bill, because we are going to have to help them increase the standards. It is the only way we are going to be able to actually deal with this hole that we are going to have in our health system and the increased demand that it is going to be placing upon the health system itself, because we don't have all the nursing slots in the education system to be able to do this.

I want to thank you for stepping into the breach. This is the right thing for us to do, especially when I look back at the years in which I served as a legal advisor for a hospital with regard to quality assurance and risk management. These are always extremely important issues. So I want to thank the chairman.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I do urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5145, as amended.

Like the gentleman from Indiana, I understand the outrage and anger of the gentleman from Louisiana as we are facing probably the biggest environmental disaster of this century. And yet, Madam Speaker, I find it more than ironic, I find it irresponsible, that the very same people who say "drill, baby, drill," the very same people who are always against government interference, the very same people who are always against Big Government, all of a sudden, when it is their district, they want Big Government, and they want regulation, and they want government to clean up the environmental disaster.

Well, we all have to get in there, and BP had better recognize its corporate responsibility for this. But, Madam Speaker, these people always scream against Big Government, but they are the first who want Big Government to come in and save them. So, let us understand the irony and the irresponsibility of those who keep yelling against government regulation, and government interference, but when it affects their district, they want it.

I ask for unanimous agreement on this measure.

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, H.R. 5145, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. FILNER. Madam 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.

REDUCE UNNECESSARY SPENDING ACT OF 2010—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 111-117)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Rules and the Committee on the Budget and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Today, I am pleased to submit to the Congress the enclosed legislative proposal, the "Reduce Unnecessary Spending Act of 2010," along with a section-by-section analysis of the legislation.

This proposal will be another important step in restoring fiscal discipline and making sure that Washington spends taxpayer dollars responsibly. It will provide a new tool to streamline Government programs and operations, cut wasteful Government spending, and enhance transparency and account-

ability to the American people. The legislation will create an expedited procedure to rescind unnecessary spending and to broadly scale back funding levels if warranted. The legislation would require the Congress to vote up or down on legislation proposed by the President to rescind funding. This new, enhanced rescission authority will not only empower the President and the Congress to eliminate unnecessary spending, but also discourage waste in the first place.

Now more than ever, it's critical that taxpayer dollars are not wasted on programs that are ineffective, duplicative, or out-dated. In a time when American families and small business owners are conscious of every dollar and make sure that they manage their budgets wisely, the Federal Government can do no less. The American people expect and demand that we spend their money with the same discipline. Allowing taxpayer dollars to be wasted is both an irresponsible use of taxpayer funds and an irresponsible abuse of the public trust.

Recently, the Congress has taken welcome steps to curb wasteful spending. In 2007, when I served in the Senate, a bipartisan group worked together to eliminate anonymous earmarks and brought new measures of transparency to the process so Americans can better follow how their tax dollars are being spent. Consequently, we have seen progress—with earmarks declining since these reforms were passed, including during this past fiscal year.

In addition, my Administration undertook a line-by-line review of the Budget, and put forward approximately \$20 billion of terminations, reductions, and savings both for Fiscal Year 2010 and 2011. While recent administrations have seen between 15 to 20 percent of their proposed discretionary cuts approved by the Congress, for FY 2010, we worked with the Congress to enact 60 percent of proposed cuts.

Despite the progress we have made to reduce earmarks and other unnecessary spending, there is still more work to be done. The legislation I am sending to you today provides an important tool. The legislation allows the President to target spending policies that do not have a legitimate and worthy public purpose by providing the President with an additional authority to propose the elimination of wasteful or excessive funding. These proposals then receive expedited consideration in the Congress and a guaranteed up-or-down vote. This legislation would also allow the President to delay funding for these projects until the Congress has had the chance to consider the changes. In addition, this proposal has been crafted to preserve the constitutional balance of power between the President and the Congress.

Overall, the "Reduce Unnecessary Spending Act of 2010" provides a new way for the Congress and the President to manage taxpayer dollars wisely.