

families. A failure to do so would result in job losses, a reduction in economic activity, and higher taxes for many families when they can least afford it.

So my suggestion here is to stop wasting time on less important priorities and start focusing on creating jobs and standing up for our middle class, enabling them to strengthen their purchasing power and to enable our economic recovery to be as vital and strong as possible.

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

Mr. GOHMERT. As a closing comment, I have come to know the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY), my friend across the aisle, and hold him in very high regard. I appreciate very much his comments earlier about what this compact means to Illinois and to Missouri. I know Mr. CLAY has been a leading proponent of this happening, and I really very much appreciate his comments. This will not provide jobs across the country, but it solves a problem. It will ease things for those two States so that jobs should be easier.

And I was totally serious when I offered my colleague who was saying that we were wasting our time on this—I know Mr. CLAY and many others have spent a great deal of time on this, and I didn't think the Democrats that were pushing this bill so hard were wasting our time. I think it's a very legitimate use of our time.

Some people like to confuse the term "interstate," as used in the Constitution; and they want the term "interstate" to be expanded, as it has sometimes, to apply to nothing but activity wholly within one State. The Supreme Court has even given some regard to those kinds of arguments, but this is not one of those cases. This is a matter that's been taken up and passed by the Senate, and we should pass it today. It takes up a matter clearly between two States that makes it interstate.

And then it is not the State of Illinois or Missouri coming and begging for the Federal Government to take over a State responsibility. It is two States with different opinions, different concerns, but wanting things to work together for good, coming to a solution; and then the Federal Government, since it is interstate, must recognize that compact. I think it is an appropriate thing to do. I don't think the Democrats who are pushing this bill were wasting our time. I think it's an appropriate use of Federal time.

With that, I would urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. NOEM). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution, S.J. Res. 22, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING AMERICAN LEGION GUIDANCE TO INDIVIDUAL POSTS

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1639) to amend title 36, United States Code, to authorize the American Legion under its Federal charter to provide guidance and leadership to the individual departments and posts of the American Legion, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1639

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

SECTION 1. ADDITIONAL POWER OF AMERICAN LEGION UNDER FEDERAL CHARTER.

Section 21704 of title 36, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (5) through (8) as paragraphs (6) through (9), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (4) the following new paragraph (5):

"(5) provide guidance and leadership to organizations and local chapters established under paragraph (4), but may not control or otherwise influence the specific activities and conduct of such organizations and local chapters;"

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on S. 1639, currently under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

The American Legion received its Federal charter in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization. Today, the Legion is America's largest Veterans Service Organization with 2.5 million members. Membership is available to persons who have served in the United States Armed Forces during wartime, including the current war on terrorism, and were honorably discharged or are continuing their service.

□ 1650

The Legion's goals are to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution, promote worldwide peace and goodwill, and preserve the memories of the two world wars and the other conflicts fought to uphold democracy. The Legion also aims to cement the ties and comradeship born of service and to commit the

efforts of its members to service to the United States.

The American Legion has over 14,000 local posts. The national organization is not designed to have control over all the independent posts. As the Supreme Court of Minnesota has found, local "posts and State chapters are separately incorporated . . . and the posts all have their own constitutions and bylaws." The court found that there was a very limited relationship between the posts and national headquarters.

The national organization's "Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies" states "the post is a separate and distinct unit which can and often does function independently."

The American Legion has asked Congress to amend its Federal charter to specify that the national organization may provide guidance and leadership to the individual departments and posts but that it may not control or otherwise influence the specific activities and conduct of the departments and posts.

The director of the Legion's National Legislative Commission explained the request by stating the following:

"The Legion wants to allow members to renew their memberships and pay their dues to the national organization through the use of a credit card over the Internet . . . Currently, these dues payments flow to the national organization from our posts through our departments. We are concerned that plaintiffs' lawyers would argue this would indicate that the national organization has control over those departments and posts . . . Appearance of control may . . . support a claim of liability against the national organization when a legal dispute against a post arises."

S. 1639 amends the Legion's Federal charter as requested. Our colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE), introduced the House version of the bill, H.R. 2369, which the Judiciary Committee approved by voice vote.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his work on this legislation and am pleased to see that his bill has a remarkable 432 cosponsors. It's almost unheard of.

So there are things that this Congress needs to be doing, and there are many things that are very important that this Congress does; but this is something that only the Congress can do. So if we hear from other speakers who want to talk about a jobs bill, I would encourage them to go talk to the Senate about the 15 to 20 jobs bills that they are down there sitting on.

I look forward to the day when the President says that this is a do-nothing Congress that he's no longer half right in making that statement. The House is certainly not a do-nothing House. The Senate is sitting on many bills. This is a bill for which the gentleman from Pennsylvania saw a need, so he stepped up and filled that need, and I appreciate his efforts in doing this.

The American Legion has performed a great service in bringing together veterans. I've spent a great deal of time with American Legion posts, and I'm grateful they exist. I think this is a good bill, and I would urge my colleagues to support it.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume and am glad to be the Hoyt Wilhelm of the Judiciary Committee and to relieve the gentleman from Michigan, Chairman CONYERS.

S. 1639, the Senate version of H.R. 2369, is a bipartisan bill which makes a minor change to the Federal charter of the American Legion. The American Legion, as we all know, is the Nation's largest veterans service organization, which was chartered after World War I, by Congress in 1919.

S. 1639, introduced by Senator TESTER of Montana, a distinguished Member of the Senate, is the Senate companion of the bill introduced by the distinguished Representative and former defensive back from the Florida State Seminoles, Representative ALTMIRE of Pennsylvania, who introduced H.R. 2369. He did a phenomenal job of getting 432 cosponsors—433 if including himself in the sponsorship. He can't be a cosponsor because he is "the" sponsor, which might make this the easiest suspension vote we've ever taken.

The change made by this bill simply reaffirms the organization's structure, which grants broad autonomy to the departments and posts throughout the country. While this is not a major change to the existing charter, it will help the American Legion carry out changes to the membership renewal process that were adopted by resolution at its national convention last year.

Senator TESTER and Representative ALTMIRE are responding to a call from the American Legion. I am proud to join with them, as just about everybody else is in this House; and I support the bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOHMERT. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COHEN. I now yield 3 minutes and 7 seconds to the gentleman who represents the State of Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE), an alumnus of Florida State University, who lost to the University of Tennessee in the national championship football game that I attended in Phoenix.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman, my friend from Tennessee, and I especially thank the gentleman from Texas for his kind words.

There are other things that are more important than this—our friends in the American Legion would be the first to agree—that we are working on in this Congress; but as the gentleman from Texas pointed out, this is something only the Congress can do.

This is an important issue for the American Legion. It modernizes the

charter of the American Legion, and it clarifies the local autonomy of the local posts throughout the country. This needs to be done. It is important, and it is something that we in this Chamber have come together to do. It is long overdue.

When I first introduced this bill in June, I started to talk with folks in this Chamber, and I found out that there really are things we can agree on. We've spent a lot of time over the course of the year—in fact, a lot of time today—pointing fingers at each other and casting blame and talking about all the things that we don't agree on. Yet, for our men and women in uniform, the people who are honorably and bravely serving this country, and our American veterans, we agree that they need this change and that we support them.

As the gentleman from Texas pointed out, according to the Congressional Research Service, this bill that we introduced in the House, which is the companion bill to the Senate bill on which we will vote tomorrow, has received the most cosponsors of any bill ever introduced in the history of the Congress—432 cosponsors. It's more than any bill that has ever been introduced in history. It passed unanimously in the Senate after it was introduced in October, which shows there really are things we can work together on.

Maybe this isn't the most important thing we could be doing, but it's something we need to do; and it's something we're going to do. Hopefully, it will send a message on both sides of this Capitol that we should come together and that we should put our differences aside. That doesn't mean we have to always agree, but at least let's work together, because this bill proves we can do it.

So I am proud to stand here as the author of the House companion of this bill, and I am a proud supporter of the Senate bill that we will be voting on. I'm grateful that Senator TESTER took the leadership role in the Senate to get this done.

I thank the gentleman from Texas, and I thank the gentleman from Tennessee. I support this bill and urge my colleagues to vote for it.

Mr. COHEN. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, again, Mr. ALTMIRE is owed a great debt of thanks. When my friend from Tennessee said this was a bipartisan bill, apparently it's the most bipartisan bill ever brought before the House. It's wonderful that a group like the American Legion could bring us together, and I appreciate Mr. ALTMIRE's efforts in doing that.

I would urge my colleagues to support its passage. With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1639.

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.

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS FOR BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA, INC.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1541) to revise the Federal charter for the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. to reflect a change in eligibility requirements for membership.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1541

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

SECTION 1. MODIFICATION OF MEMBERSHIP TERMS.

Section 30504 of title 36, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking the text preceding subparagraph (A) and inserting "she is a mother (meaning a woman who filled the role of birthmother, adoptive mother, step-mother, foster-mother, grandmother, or legal guardian) of a person who—"; and

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking "in World War II or the Korean hostilities"; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by inserting "or is a citizen of the United States living outside the United States" before the period at the end.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on S. 1541, currently under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

□ 1700

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

The Blue Star Mothers of America was established during World War II and federally chartered in 1960. The organization's 5,000 members and 225 chapters provide support for our men and women in uniform and assist veterans' organizations. According to their charter, the Blue Star Mothers also care for unsupported mothers.

Membership in the Blue Star Mothers is open to a mother, an adoptive mother or stepmother who lives in the U.S. of a child who serves in the Armed Forces or has served in the Armed Forces during World War II or the Korean War.