

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.

Wendy Hoffman, the national president of the Blue Star Mothers, has sent a letter to the committee and requests that their charter be amended consistent with the resolution passed at their national convention. She stated the following:

"As mothers of American servicemen and veterans, we recognize changing family dynamics and have found it extremely important to include other 'mothers' who have played a part in raising military heroes and also those mothers who are not residents of the U.S."

The Blue Star Mothers have also opened membership to mothers of children who have served in the military at any time. This bill makes the changes to the charter requested by the Blue Star Mothers. Our colleague SCOTT TIPTON introduced the House version of the bill, H.R. 2815, and the Judiciary Committee approved Mr. TIPTON's bill by voice vote.

This commonsense bill opens eligibility to "a woman who filled the role of birth mother, adoptive mother, stepmother, foster-mother, grandmother, or legal guardian" to a current member of the Armed Forces or to a child who has served at any time. To be eligible, the mother will not have to reside in the United States as long as she is a U.S. citizen.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill to help enable the Blue Star Mothers to continue their wonderful work.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

S. 1541, the Senate version of H.R. 2815, is another bipartisan bill to revise the Federal charter of the Blue Star Mothers of America. The revisions implemented by the legislation once again reflect minor changes recently made to the organization's membership eligibility requirements.

The Blue Star Mothers of America, representing the mothers of military servicemen and -women, has been a federally chartered organization since 1960. The existing charter restricts member in three ways:

A, members must be birth mothers, adoptive mothers, or certain stepmothers;

B, members must be U.S. citizens currently living in the country; and

C, the corresponding serviceman or -woman must be currently serving in the Armed Forces or must have served in World War II or the Korean War.

Last year, at the organization's national convention, the group adopted a resolution expanding these eligibility criteria. A conforming amendment to the Federal charter is needed in order make these changes operable.

S. 1541, the Senate bill, was introduced by Senator MICHAEL BENNET of Colorado. Its House companion was introduced by Representative SCOTT TIPTON, also of Colorado.

The legislation makes three minor revisions to the organization's charter:

First, to expand the membership eligibility requirements to include foster mothers, grandmothers, female legal guardians, and all stepmothers;

Second, it expands membership to U.S. citizens living abroad;

Third, it expands eligibility to servicemen and -women who served in prior conflicts other than World War II and the Korean War.

Our men and women in the military need all the support we can offer, so I applaud this effort by the Blue Star Mothers to provide the circle of support that the organization can provide. They do much to remember our servicepeople, and I appreciate their efforts. I support these changes, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, this is also another very bipartisan bill.

The Blue Star Mothers is a wonderful group. I have met with them and I have wept with them. I've prayed for them and am grateful to them for their work. I'm grateful for my mother, who passed away in 1991, as the mother of a servicemember and my stepmother as well, now.

What they're asking for makes perfect sense, and I would encourage my colleagues to support this resolution as the Blue Star Mothers have requested.

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. 1541.

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.

SAVE THE POST OFFICE

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, the other day the Postmaster General said that first class mail wasn't going to be first class anymore; it wasn't going to be overnight; it might be 2 or 3 days.

Because of the problems we have with making the post office financially sufficient, there are ways they could accomplish this, and I've got a bill that allows them to go into other services to expand their revenue base, and there's also about \$5 billion that's an issue concerning payments into a health fund that could be resolved.

The post office is almost as American as apple pie. A lot of people will switch to using the Internet to pay their bills and they'll never go back to the post office. I'm afraid that what's been recommended is penny-wise and pound-foolish, and a great American institution that serves many rural people and others without a lot of connectivity and fortune will suffer.

I wish the Postmaster General will reconsider his action. I have a "Dear

Colleague" being circulated. I hope people will sign on and that we will save the U.S. Postal Service.

AMERICA AT A CROSSROADS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, there are an awful lot of people hurting across America now.

We take up a few suspension bills here that only the Congress could deal with, so it's something we have to do, we're proud to do, important to those organizations in two States. It's important to them; it's important to us.

We have people on the other side of the aisle who come forward and try to make it into a jobs debate when it would seem that some of the best debate would be if all of us, en masse, walked down to the other end of the hall of this building and began to seek to debate the Senate—the Senate leadership, that is—and Democratic Party on why they are so intent on stopping legislation that could put people back to work.

There are many besides the President, in addition to the President, who say this is a do-nothing Congress; and because the Senate does so very little, they give credence to that argument. One need only look to all the bills we have been passing here in the House that could help the economy, would help the economy, would put people back to work, would bring down dramatically the cost of energy, which would bring down inflation and the stagnation and stagflation that's been put in place by this President and, actually, the 2 years prior to this President when our Democratic friends across the aisle controlled Congress and jumped up spending like we could not have anticipated.

Our friends across the aisle correctly pointed out that Republicans in 2006 were spending too much money. They were right in pointing out that we should never be spending \$160 billion more than we were taking in. They were right.

As a result of their being right on that and their promises that they would rein in that runaway spending, our friends across the aisle were given the majority in November of 2006.

□ 1710

What followed in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 under the Democratic majority was runaway spending at a level never even dreamed of, at least on our side of the aisle.

Who would have ever dreamed that the same party that condemned Republicans—correctly—for overspending the amount of money coming into the Federal Treasury by \$160 billion would up that ante and overspend by 10 times that much? Over a \$1.5 trillion deficit in just 1 year. It is just unfathomable.