

the resignation of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER), the whole number of the House is 432.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

#### VETERAN SKILLS TO JOBS ACT

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4155) to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for Federal licenses, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4155

*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 “Veteran Skills to Jobs Act”.

#### SEC. 2. CONSIDERATION OF RELEVANT MILITARY TRAINING FOR ISSUANCE OF A FEDERAL LICENSE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The head of each Federal licensing authority shall consider and may accept, in the case of any individual applying for a license, any relevant training received by such individual while serving as a member of the armed forces, for the purpose of satisfying the requirements for such license.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this Act—

(1) the term “license” means a license, certification, or other grant of permission to engage in a particular activity;

(2) the term “Federal licensing authority” means a department, agency, or other entity of the Government having authority to issue a license;

(3) the term “armed forces” has the meaning given such term by section 2101(2) of title 5, United States Code; and

(4) the term “Government” means the Government of the United States.

#### SEC. 3. REGULATIONS.

The head of each Federal licensing authority shall—

(1) with respect to any license a licensing authority grants or is empowered to grant as of the date of enactment of this Act, prescribe any regulations necessary to carry out this Act not later than 180 days after such date; and

(2) with respect to any license of a licensing authority not constituted or not empowered to grant the license as of the date of enactment of this Act, prescribe any regulations necessary to carry out this Act not later than 180 days after the date on which the agency is so constituted or empowered, as the case may be.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CHAFFETZ. I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

We are here today to discuss H.R. 4155, the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act, introduced by Mr. DENHAM of California. I really appreciate the approach that this is taking with jobs and the economic environment as such. This is a commonsense, good measure. I think it is widely supported on both sides of the aisle, and I would urge my colleagues to pass it.

Essentially, H.R. 4155 ensures that applicants for Federal licenses receive credit for relevant training completed while serving as a member of the Armed Forces. While most licenses are issued by the States, the Federal Government does grant a number of licenses, most notably in the aerospace, communications, and maritime sectors.

After 40 months with the unemployment rate above 8 percent, we must do more to help create jobs; and with the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans at 12.7 percent, we must better support our veterans as they transition to the civilian workforce.

In April, the Defense Business Board issued a report recommending Federal agencies review military training as a qualification for their respective program requirements. H.R. 4155 is in line with this recommendation.

The bill provides some certainty to veterans during their transition from the military by ensuring their training is taken into account when applying for Federal licenses. The bill does not infringe on the jurisdiction of the licensing agency. Instead, it leaves the agency free to determine whether military training is sufficient to meet license requirements.

H.R. 4155 will reduce the licensing burden for qualified veterans, enabling them to more quickly re-enter the workforce and ease their transition to civilian life.

Again, I appreciate the work of Mr. DENHAM, Mr. WALZ, and others in a bipartisan way to introduce this bill, and I would urge my colleagues to support it.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4155 and yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to thank the sponsors of H.R. 4155, especially Mr. DENHAM and Mr. WALZ, for their dedicated service to our Nation while in uniform and for their

commitment to supporting our veterans here in Congress.

I deeply value and appreciate the sacrifices made by the men and women in our Armed Forces, and I'm proud to represent thousands of them who reside in the 11th District of Virginia, a district that takes military service very seriously and holds it in high esteem.

I believe that we here in Congress have a sacred duty, Mr. Speaker, to provide for their well-being. For that reason, I strongly support efforts to expedite the transition of our Nation's warriors to civilian life. We need to do all we can to help these dedicated veterans find gainful employment. It's a shameful fact that the men and women who volunteer to safeguard our country are having so much trouble finding steady, good-paying jobs. A double-digit unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans—almost double the national average—is simply unacceptable.

Transitioning to civilian life is difficult under any circumstance; however, this hardship is compounded when veterans cannot easily translate their military skills into careers in the Federal or private sector workforce through no fault of their own.

In addition, there's the task of educating employers to better understand that so much of military training is readily transferrable to civilian job requirements in the private sector.

We need to do better for our veterans, and I believe H.R. 4155 is a strong step in that direction. It would require each agency with Federal licensing authority to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for Federal licenses. This will help our returning servicemembers get credit for their military training towards a license which they can use to get Federal or private sector jobs and reintegrate into civilian life.

The Federal Government, private sector employers, and our economy will benefit by being able to take full advantage of their talent, unique skills, and experience as veterans.

Mr. Speaker, the Senate has already passed an identical version of this non-controversial, but important, bill by unanimous consent. I urge all Members to support this bill that will enable our Nation's veterans to get back to work.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield as much time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from California, the sponsor of the bill, Mr. DENHAM.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support legislation I authored, H.R. 4155, the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act.

America is blessed with the strongest, most capable and professional military in the world. Unfortunately for many of our veterans, transitioning from service means a battle with joblessness. And as my friend from Utah explained, the unemployment rate is 12.7 percent; but for our young veterans, it's 29.1 percent for those that are under the age of 25.

The Federal Government has invested in our servicemen with some of the most unique, expensive, and valued training in the world. These brave young men and women have put their lives on the line and deserve to be able to use this training when they come back home.

With 200,000 servicemen and -women transitioning to the civilian workforce each year, we must ensure that they're able to find jobs when they come home. I have personally dealt with this issue when I left Active Duty as a crew chief. Though I had training on the most sophisticated aircraft in the world, to work on less-sophisticated aircraft on the civilian side it would have taken me 3 years of training after I left Active Duty.

In my conversations with Mr. WALZ from Minnesota, some of the challenges that his veterans have seen in Minnesota involve having to go through the same State licensing procedure.

It's time to say enough is enough. If you've had the best training in the world, you ought to be able to get the best jobs in the world; and this body ought to make sure that certification, that licensure is a seamless process. If you leave Active Duty today, you ought to have work tomorrow in the private sector utilizing that very same training.

This legislation not only mirrors similar efforts on the State level but follows the recommendation of the Defense Business Board and the Department of Defense that issued a report calling for exactly this same type of reform. The Veteran Skills to Jobs Act would help fix this problem, and I'm glad to see that both Chambers of Congress are working together in a bipartisan fashion to accomplish this very same goal.

Helping our returning veterans find jobs is not the concern of one party or one body of Congress. The Senate adopted this matter unanimously last week before we left for break, and it's time that this body do the same.

□ 1610

Again, I want to thank Mr. WALZ of Minnesota for his hard work on this effort, for the bipartisan effort. He and I have been in close communication this entire 112th Congress in making sure that this comes to reality, as well as Senator NELSON from Florida offering the companion bill in the Senate. It's time to make sure that we have a bipartisan and quick solution to this issue.

I also want to thank the American Legion, of which I'm a member. They have worked tirelessly in both bodies, as well as from a grass-roots perspective across the Nation working with many other service organizations, to actually make this a reality. Now it's time that this body does its job and pass this important measure.

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my good friend and colleague from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ), the cosponsor of this legislation.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. I thank the gentleman from Virginia for his support of this bill and other veterans issues.

First of all, I'd like to thank the gentleman from California. Mr. DENHAM's service in uniform to this Nation is to be commended, and his service to our veterans has been unwavering.

He's right, we've worked on this a long time. I had the opportunity on numerous occasions to travel downrange to visit our veterans, the last one with my good friend from California (Mr. DENHAM), and the care and concern that he showed listening to his veterans of what they need, listening to them talk about this. One of the things on the minds of our veterans, as they're fighting downrange defending our freedoms and doing what's asked of them is how are they going to be able to take care of their family when their service obligation ends.

So Mr. DENHAM came back, and working and reaching across the aisle, and working over in the Senate, crafted a piece of legislation that's not only morally the right thing to do, taking care of our veterans—you hear a lot about the 99 percent and the 1 percent. There's truth in that: 99 percent of us enjoy the benefits of security and national defense while 1 percent provide it. So the moral obligation of providing this is pretty much unquestioned, but the thing that I think Mr. DENHAM looked into on this is making sure the economic impact was felt also.

And on this, I think this is very important to keep in mind: We spend \$140 billion a year training our military. That's an investment into those folks. When they finish their career, whether it be a stint of 4 years or whether it's a 20- or 30-year career, they come out with incredible skill training, with incredible professionalism, and they are a very mature workforce. Why would we not want to get our best and brightest back working in the economy? These are entrepreneurs. These are the folks that can get things done. This piece of legislation was crafted in such a way to do exactly that.

Implementation of concurrent credentialing has no undue burden on the military nor on its readiness. In fact, opportunities for credentialing will be a selling point for our military. You can come out and move directly into a job as an aviation mechanic or whatever it may be.

I'd like to mention just quickly here, in my State of Minnesota, an average Active Duty servicemember with an aviation mechanic or avionics occupation will have attended over 18 months of training and had a minimum of 4 years of practical experience. A certified aviation maintenance technician school costs \$20,000 a year. So we've invested. We have a trained mechanic,

but we're going to have them come back, have them be unemployed, have them try and use their GI Bill—which is Federal dollars—to get the very same credentialing that they had when they left at a time when we need to put them into the job. So in Minnesota, Thief River Falls is the only place you can get this. We're asking folks to line up and get positions that they don't have enough spots for. It makes no sense.

So I'd like to thank the gentleman for a commonsense piece of legislation, for a piece of legislation that addresses both our moral and economic need. And I'd also like to say, Mr. Speaker, as the Members in this House see, we can work together to solve problems. We can understand—and on this issue—the sacrifice that our servicemembers made so that we could have the honor and the privilege of self-government and stand here and debate the country's business. We owe it to them to conduct ourselves in a manner that's reflective of their sacrifice and service.

And I would like to congratulate the gentleman from California for bringing that type of comradery, that type of can-do spirit, and that type of willingness to compromise to get things done for the good of the soldiers.

With that, I urge my colleagues, support this legislation. Let's get it passed.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, with that, let me just urge my colleagues, in the spirit of bipartisanship, to come together and support our veterans and to make opportunity more available. It is, as I said, a sacred duty, it seems to me, that those men and women who are willing to put on that uniform and serve their country ought to be treated with respect and dignity and a job when they come home, and this bill will go a long way to doing that.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, this is a good, commonsense, bipartisan bill. I appreciate both these gentlemen who spoke here earlier for their work on this, Mr. DENHAM and Mr. WALZ.

The Veteran Skills to Jobs Act, H.R. 4155, it makes sense, it's good government, it's what our troops deserve; and I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this and send a strong message to the military and to the private sector to let them know that we support them, that the work they do, the skills that they learn are a value, and that they are needed within the workforce as a whole, and that the skills and the training they get—the best in the world—mean something. And we can bypass this licensing issue and get them back to work sooner rather than later.

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 Utah (Mr.

CHAFFETZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4155, 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. CHAFFETZ. Mr. 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, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

## VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2012

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4114) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2012, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4114

*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 "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2012".

### SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) **RATE ADJUSTMENT.**—Effective on December 1, 2012, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2012, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) **AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.**—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) **WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.**—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) **ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.**—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) **CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.**—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) **DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.**—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) **DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.**—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) **DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.**—

(1) **PERCENTAGE.**—Except as provided in paragraph (2), each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2012, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(2) **ROUNDING.**—Each dollar amount increased under paragraph (1), if not a whole dollar amount, shall be rounded to the next lower whole dollar amount.

(d) **SPECIAL RULE.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

### SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 2(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2013.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I rise in support of H.R. 4114, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2012.

This critically important piece of legislation authorizes a cost-of-living increase for disabled veterans in receipt of disability compensation payments from VA, veterans clothing allowance payments, and other compensation for survivors of veterans who die as a result of their service to this country. The amount of the increase will be determined by the Consumer Price Index, which also controls the cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security beneficiaries.

I want to thank my colleague from New Jersey (Mr. RUNYAN), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, for introducing this important piece of legislation and for working with me and the ranking member to move it forward.

I want to urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 4114, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I wholeheartedly support the Veterans' Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2012, H.R. 4114. While this committee does not control the amount of the COLA, it is critical that we pass the bill so that it can be put in place when the Social Security COLA is enacted. It is so important that the payments that our veterans, their families, and survivors receive keep pace with inflation and better enable them to put food on the table and a roof over their heads.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that last year's veterans COLA increase was 3.6 percent for 2012 and that we can likely expect an increase for 2013. The exact figure will be tied directly to the Social Security COLA, whose beneficiaries will also see the same increase in their payments.

As it has since 1976, Congress, through the passage of the Veterans' Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, directs the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase the rates of basic compensation for disabled veterans and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation to their survivors and dependents. This bill will benefit disabled veterans, their families, and their survivors from the World War I era through the current conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Many of the over 3.5 million veterans who receive disability compensation benefits depend on these payments not only to provide for their basic needs, but for those of their spouses, children, and parents as well. Without an annual COLA increase, these veterans, their families, and survivors will likely see the value of their hard-earned benefits slowly eroding.

Mr. Speaker, I think we would be derelict in our duties if we fail to guarantee that those who sacrifice so much for this country are able to receive benefits and service that keep pace with their needs and inflation.

□ 1620

We fund the wars; let's fund the warriors. Let me repeat: we fund the wars; let's fund the warriors.

I urge my colleagues to support the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2012, H.R. 4114, without delay.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield as much time as he might consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. RUNYAN), the subcommittee chairman of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, not only the author of this particular piece of legislation, but since coming to this Congress, he has become one of the most ardent supporters of our veterans.

Mr. RUNYAN. Chairman MILLER, thank you for those kind words, and thank you for your support in helping me move this piece of legislation forward.

I rise today in support of H.R. 4114, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2012.

H.R. 4114, which I introduced in February, puts veterans on equal footing with Social Security beneficiaries by increasing the amount provided to several kinds of compensation by the amount of the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment. These include disabled veterans compensation, veterans' clothing allowance, and the DIC for veterans' survivors.

This annual and noncontroversial bill, which has been scored by CBO as having no budgetary impact, is a critical part of ensuring that benefits for disabled veterans and their families are sufficient to meet their needs.

I am proud that the first bill I introduced in Congress last year was the veterans' COLA bill, which gave the first cost-of-living adjustment to our