

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL G. GRIMM

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Mr. GRIMM. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 363 I was unable to vote due to a recent medical procedure. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FOR
H.R. _____, THE LONG TERM
CARE VETERANS CHOICE ACT

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing H.R. _____, the Long Term Care Veterans Choice Act, to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts and agreements for the transfer of veterans to non-Department medical foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently.

Medical foster homes are private homes in which a trained caregiver provides twenty-four-hour, around-the-clock, care to a few individuals.

They are designed to provide a non-institutional long-term care alternative to those who prefer a smaller, more home-like and familial care setting than many traditional nursing homes are able to provide.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, has been helping to place veterans in medical foster homes for over a decade.

VA, as part of the placement process, inspects and approves all medical foster homes, limits care to no more than three veterans at a time, and provides veterans living in such homes with home-based primary care services.

VA also provides safeguards to ensure veterans receive safe, high-quality care by requiring medical foster home caregivers to pass a federal background check and VA screening, agree to undergo annual training, and allow VA medical foster home coordinators and members of a VA home care team to make both announced and unannounced home visits.

Today, according to VA, over four hundred approved caregivers provide medical foster home care in their homes to over five hundred veterans daily in over thirty five states.

The problem, however, is that VA does not have the authority to pay for the cost of the medical foster home.

So, the veteran who chooses to live in a medical foster home must pay out of pocket with personal funds—regardless of whether or not such veteran is eligible for VA-paid nursing home care.

This creates a situation where many service-connected veterans with limited financial resources, who would prefer to live in a medical foster home, go to a nursing home institution instead because VA will cover the cost of

the nursing home, but not the medical foster home.

And, while traditional nursing homes will always be a vital component of long-term care, medical foster homes provide a worthy alternative for many veterans.

According to the Department, many more veterans would elect to receive care in a medical foster home should VA be granted the authority to pay for such care.

As the veteran population continues to age, the need for long-term care services will continue to grow.

I am sure we all agree that one thing we owe our veterans, particularly those who are service-connected and in need of long-term care, is the luxury of choice—the choice to decide where and how to receive the care they need.

The Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act which would authorize VA to enter into a contract or agreement with a certified medical foster home to pay for the residential long-term care of service-connected veterans who are eligible for VA-paid nursing home care and would expand the long-term care choices offered to veterans beyond traditional services.

In addition to being beneficial for the health and well-being of veterans, the average cost of a medical foster home is approximately half the monthly cost of a nursing home, making this legislation a very cost effective health care option.

This is a commonsense, veteran-centric bill that will free many veterans from financial turmoil, and allow them to make their own decisions about what kind of long-term care they want to receive.

I strongly encourage my colleagues to join me in co-sponsoring the Long Term Care Veterans Choice Act.

H.R. 2667 AND H.R. 2668, TO AMEND
THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND
AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

HON. DEREK KILMER

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, as Congress considers two pieces of legislation related to the Affordable Care Act, I rise today to point out the silly exercise we're going through. On days like today, the American public gets to see exactly why Congress' approval rating is at historic lows.

Today, we're voting on two bills that would amend provisions of the Affordable Care Act. The first bill before us, H.R. 2667, would delay the so-called employer mandate provision until January 1, 2015. Given that the Administration has already said that they are delaying the employer mandate provision until that time, this bill won't actually do anything.

Mr. Speaker, the other bill we're voting on, H.R. 2668, would delay the implementation of the so-called individual mandate for one year. This bill would severely undermine the integrity of the Affordable Care Act. While I wasn't in Congress when the Affordable Care Act was passed into law, it is clear that this provision is needed to help make insurance afford-

able for all Americans and finally end the ability for insurance companies to deny coverage to those who have pre-existing conditions. By delaying the individual mandate, this bill would raise premiums on working class families and cause significant harm to our efforts to make health insurance accessible to all Americans.

I am proud of the work the State of Washington has done, through its state-based exchange and Medicaid expansion efforts, to make health insurance accessible for more than half a million uninsured Washingtonians. This will not only lead to a healthier population, but save Washington State an estimated \$280 million by the end of 2015, and add 10,000 new jobs as a result of the coming health care changes.

Before today's vote, I reached out to Washington State's Office of the Insurance Commissioner to discuss the individual insurance marketplace and the proposal to delay the individual mandate. I was assured that the marketplace is moving forward, full steam ahead. Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler said in a statement, "Delaying the mandate would be unwise. It's an issue of personal responsibility. It's unfair for people who can afford coverage to not have it, and to expect the rest of us to cover the cost of their care if they become seriously sick or injured."

The decision to bring both of these bills to the floor in this manner is not guided by some public policy concern. It is not to put forward credible solutions to legitimate problems. It is nothing more than a cynical attempt to play politics and mock the notion that we should implement the Affordable Care Act in a thoughtful, pragmatic way.

Mr. Speaker, I reject this false dichotomy. I support H.R. 2667, the Authority for Mandate Delay Act, not because I believe it solves an urgent problem, but for the same reason that I supported the Administration when they made this decision in the first place: the provisions have been determined to be too complex to implement prior to the existing deadline. I've met with several dozen employers in recent months who have asked for more time and greater certainty. That's what this bill does.

On the other hand, I oppose H.R. 2668, the Fairness for American Families Act, because the individual marketplace is moving forward and is in a fundamentally different place. In fact, this bill would severely undermine our ability to provide affordable, comprehensive health insurance to Americans.

[From the Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner Updates, July 17, 2013]

"Delaying the mandate would be unwise. This is an issue of personal responsibility. It's unfair for people who can afford coverage to not have it, and to expect the rest of us to cover the cost of their care if they become seriously sick or injured."

"A critical part of the Affordable Care Act was the provision requiring that insurers take all applicants. No more screening out people because they have pre-existing medical conditions. But to make that work, you have to have as many people as possible in the insurance pool."

"Without an individual mandate to have coverage, people would likely just buy insurance when they knew they needed it. That's like letting people get homeowners insurance only when their house catches fire."

SAFE RETURN OF ARMANDO
TORRES**HON. FILEMON VELA**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to join my colleagues in urging the State Department and the government of Mexico to do everything that they possibly can to ensure the safe return of Armando Torres.

It has been over two months since Armando was taken captive by armed gunmen while visiting his father in Mexico. A native of South Texas, Armando served 7 years in the Marine Corps including combat tours in Iraq. Though he survived a war zone, a greater threat to his safety came closer to home when he drove across the Los Indios Bridge into Mexico.

What should have been an uneventful trip became a nightmare for the Torres family when Armando was kidnapped. This is a sadly all too common occurrence in Mexico with as many as 70 kidnappings occurring every day.

The cartel violence in Mexico has had a profound impact on the entire nation with over 60,000 killed.

The unprecedented level of violence has greatly affected the United States as well. Relations with our neighbor to the south have been strained as the free flow of lawful commerce and visitors has been threatened by crime and illegal trafficking. Over 600 U.S. citizens have been murdered in Mexico. We talk about the Global War on Terror, but the cartel violence in Mexico has proven to be a far more deadly threat. We cannot and we will not sit idly by and watch our ally Mexico fight this war alone. We are committed to working together to address the problems which face our two nations.

The number of victims of this deadly war is staggering, but Armando Torres is not just a statistic. He is not just one of the victims of the cartel violence which has ravaged Mexico. He is a Marine, a son, a nephew, a cousin, a husband, and a father. And our nation must do everything in our power to bring him home.

I stand with my colleagues in the United States Congress today in support of Armando. We will not rest until he is returned safely to his family and friends.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "ALEXIS
AGIN IDENTITY THEFT PROTEC-
TION ACT OF 2013"**HON. XAVIER BECERRA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with my friend and colleague, SAM JOHNSON, to introduce this bipartisan legislation to protect Americans from identity theft.

I have long been concerned about the problem of identity theft, where all too often the Social Security number, SSN, which is assigned to make sure Americans get their earned Social Security benefits, is the key to committing fraud. For a number of years, Chairman JOHNSON and I have worked together on a bipartisan basis with other members of our Social Security Subcommittee to

find ways to better protect Americans from identity theft.

One of the most troubling forms of identity theft is fraud involving a deceased individual, which victimizes grieving families. Our subcommittee learned about a family that not only lost their young daughter to a terrible cancer—but then was dealt another blow when they found that their child's identity had been stolen and used to collect a fraudulent tax refund.

Our bill aims to stop this fraud in its tracks. It is named in honor of the child whose family asked our Subcommittee to make sure what happened to them did not happen to another family: the "Alexis Agin Identity Theft Protection Act of 2013." No one should have to endure both the loss of a loved one and then the financial stress of dealing with identity theft because a fraudster has appropriated the person's identity.

The Death Master File, DMF, a prime source of SSNs used in identity theft, is a database of death information reported to the Social Security Administration, SSA. However, a lawsuit forced SSA to make this database available to anyone who wants it. SSA needs this information—it is used to make sure earned benefits from the Social Security Trust Fund are only paid to the living. But SSA does not want to make it available to fraudsters, and they should not be required to do so.

Our bill would restrict access to the DMF to legitimate users and release to the general public only death data that is older than three years, at which point it is relatively useless to ID thieves bent on using it for fraud. Over time, our bill also enables the States to take back the responsibility of handling their death data and ends SSA's public release of the DMF for good. The President's budget proposes a similar approach that the Joint Committee on Taxation projects would save \$793 million over ten years by reducing the potential for fraudulent tax refunds. The National Taxpayer Advocate and the SSA Inspector General have also called for the public release of the DMF data to end.

I applaud the bipartisan approach we took to resolving this problem for the American people. I hope we can learn from the Agin family's tragic experience and move swiftly to enact this bipartisan, commonsense measure to reduce the harm of identity theft.

CHAMPION OF HISPANIC YOUTH
JOHN LOPEZ**HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. John Lopez, a resident of my district who passed away on July 2, 2013.

John was born and raised in Santa Ana, California. He went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree from University of California, Irvine and a Masters from the University of La Verne.

One of his proudest affiliations was through the work he did with the American GI Forum, where John rose to serve as the California State Treasurer for the organization.

John was also a member of the Latino Advocates for Education, where he worked on

documenting the military service of Latino veterans. He also helped Anaheim Latino youth gain scholarships through his membership and participation in the LULAC Anaheim Council.

A 26-year veteran of Northrop Grumman, John was a true patriot who carried out his duties with passion and integrity.

John and his wife, Linda, founded the Hispanic Advisory Council to CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates of Orange County). Their efforts continue to impact the Hispanic youth that CASA serves.

John Lopez was a true public servant to his community. While he will be greatly missed, his contributions will benefit future generations.

HONORING THE NAPA COUNTY
FARM BUREAU**HON. MIKE THOMPSON**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Napa County Farm Bureau on the occasion of its centennial anniversary.

The Napa County Farm Bureau was initiated in 1913 when at a meeting of the Napa Grange, H. J. Baade stated that the University of California at Berkeley would hire a scientifically trained man with at least four years of practical farming experience and place him in any county that would agree to organize a Farm Bureau. The Napa Grangers instructed the District Attorney to assist the Secretary of the Napa Chamber of Commerce to organize a Bureau of at least one-fifth of all the farmers in the county.

Today, the mission of the Napa County Farm Bureau is to ensure the proper political, social, and economic climate for the continuation of a strong, vibrant and sustainable agricultural economy. The Farm Bureau is one of the county's major voices for land stewardship, agricultural sustainability, and open space preservation and conservation. Over the last four decades, the Napa County Farm Bureau has led the resistance to the trend toward paving over farmland across the state and nation, and worked with County government leaders to designate agriculture as its most precious resource—the highest and best use of the land.

Countless members of the community have given much of their time and talent to help improve the agricultural conditions of Napa County. The organization is guided by a Board of Directors and supported by a multitude of dedicated volunteers. The Napa County Farm Bureau will honor 52 Centennial Napa County farm families who have been farming in the county for 100 or more years on August 3rd.

Mr. Speaker, throughout its 100 year history, the Napa County Farm Bureau has worked to protect family farms and ranches, maintain and enhance Napa's rich agricultural heritage, and promote good stewardship of Napa's soils, watersheds, wildlife habitat and open space. It is therefore appropriate that we acknowledge the Napa County Farm Bureau today and wish it great success in future years.