

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014

SPEECH OF

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2013

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1960) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2014 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. CONNOLLY. Madam Chair, I am pleased to offer this simple bipartisan amendment with Reps. WOLF and SCHNEIDER to expand an existing report required by Section 1242 of the bill. The amendment clarifies that the report ought to include information on how the Egyptian military is supporting the rights of individuals involved in civil society and democratic promotion efforts through non-governmental organizations or NGOs.

This is a timely issue, given the guilty verdict rendered by an Egyptian court June 4th against 43 NGO workers—including 17 Americans—because of their involvement with pro-democracy groups. The guilty verdict renews concerns about Egypt's commitment to democratic principles. In fact, I am circulating a bipartisan letter with my Virginia colleague, Rep. WOLF, urging Egyptian President Morsi to immediately reconsider this action and permit the NGOs to continue their important work. So far, more than 50 Members of Congress have signed our bipartisan letter, including Rep. SCHNEIDER, who also cosponsored this amendment.

The United States supports the aspirations of the Egyptian people to become a free and fair society, in which all NGOs—regardless of their nation of origin—are allowed to operate freely. I hope that Egyptian officials will come to this same realization and return property confiscated from the NGOs 18 months ago, remove their staff from the no-fly list, and permit them to continue their work supporting a fair and open election process and helping to improve the lives of all Egyptians.

If the U.S. government and the American people are to have any confidence that the Egyptian government is undertaking a genuine transition to a democratic state, under civilian control, where the freedoms of assembly, association, religion, and expression are guaranteed and the rule of law is upheld, then we must see a swift and satisfactory resolution to this case.

As my colleagues will recall, this ordeal began a year and a half ago, when Egyptian forces raided both American and non-American NGO offices. During the raids, Egyptian forces seized records, computers, other electronic equipment, and hard currency. At every turn Egyptian authorities assured the NGOs and U.S. authorities that the situation would be appropriately resolved, only to renege on their word. For example, three days after the raids, U.S. NGOs were waiting for the return of their confiscated property as promised by Field Marshal Tantawi while simultaneously, another Egyptian official—Fayza Abou Naga, the government minister in charge of coordinating foreign aid—was holding a press con-

ference saying the property would not be returned. Abou Naga also accused the NGOs of illicitly funneling money to the April 6th Youth Movement.

When I traveled to Egypt in March of last year, my colleagues and I raised the issue of the NGOs with General Tantawi. During that trip, we also met with the Egyptian staffers who were facing charges. They were in a precarious position, and their situation has only worsened with the June 4th verdict.

We cannot in good conscience ignore the results of the recent trial, which comes on the heels of a draft law that further restricts NGOs, fails to meet Egypt's international commitments with respect to freedom of association, and lends credence to the opinion that there is an ongoing war against civil society in Egypt.

U.S. law with regard to this issue is clear in the restrictions placed on the \$1.3 billion in military aid for Egypt:

Prior to the obligation of funds appropriated by this Act under the heading 'Foreign Military Financing Program,' the Secretary of State shall certify to the Committees on Appropriations that the Government of Egypt is supporting the transition to civilian government including holding free and fair elections; implementing policies to protect freedom of expression, association, and religion, and due process of law.

With the current state of affairs in Egypt, any such certification that Egypt is, in fact, implementing policies to guarantee the pillars of a free society would be met with skepticism. That is why news reports of Sec. Kerry's recent action to waive the restrictions on that military aid are of particular concern. It is not too late to include these important NGO issues in a larger discussion about releasing (or withholding) other tranches of money to Egypt.

Our amendment would further support the transition to democracy by requiring the Pentagon report on how Egyptian military activities contribute to an atmosphere where pro-democracy NGOs can operate freely. I encourage my colleagues to support the Connolly/Wolf/Schneider amendment and to sign the related letter to President Morsi of Egypt.

**CANCEL THE SEQUESTER: LET
HERIBERTO LEÓN DO HIS JOB**

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 14, 2013

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to tell my colleagues about one of my constituents, Heriberto León, who wrote recently to explain the real-life consequences of the sequester, for him and for our country.

Mr. León is not asking Congress for much—he simply wants to be able to do his job as an EPA community involvement coordinator, helping to improve access to clean air and clean water for communities in the Chicagoland area.

My constituent spends his day providing information to communities that are dealing with well water contamination from benzene. He is working to address the environmental and health consequences of pollution, effects that are particularly harmful to children and older Americans. He obviously enjoys his work and he is making a real contribution.

Mr. León is not trying to enrich himself—in fact, he took a \$20,000 pay cut when he took his EPA job in 2010 and has been living with a three-year pay freeze. It is clear to me that, like so many Federal workers, he is committed to serving the public. And, like so many Federal workers, he cannot understand why he is unable to do his job and is being asked to take an additional personal, financial hit because of the sequester.

Mr. León is being asked to take 13 furlough days, because of the arbitrary and harsh impacts of the across-the-board sequester cuts. That's about a \$4,000—11% pay cut. We need people like Heriberto León at EPA, and I worry how we will be able to attract and retain dedicated Federal workers when they are faced with furloughs and budget cuts that prevent them from fulfilling their mission and impose serious financial hardships on them.

I hope that my colleagues will take the time to read Mr. León's full letter and that, after doing so, you will join me in supporting H.R. 900, the Cancel the Sequester Act. Our constituents are counting on us to act now.

LETTER FROM HERIBERTO LEÓN

Re Furlough Imposed on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Employees.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE SCHAKOWSKY: It is with much frustration and heartbreak that I write to you this letter to urge you to continue efforts to end the sequester and its impact on working class public employees such as myself.

Today is my second furlough day since the sequester began earlier this year. Because I'm not at work today, I am unable to attend to Americans struggling with the impact of soil, water and air pollution in their communities. As a community involvement coordinator in EPA's Region 5 office, I translate to Spanish EPA information for Chicago neighborhoods like Pilsen and Little Village and help explain to residents in Wedron, IL how the Superfund Law and the Clean Drinking Water Act each will help the EPA address the benzene contamination in their well water. I have similar assignments with communities facing contaminated sites throughout the Great Lakes states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. My workload is sufficient to keep me busy many hours beyond my regular work hours, which many times I am happy to offer because I love to contribute to citizens who are victims of industrial pollution. Instead I'm asked to not show up to work so that my salary can be used to save money for a made-up fiscal crisis.

According to EPA's announcement earlier this year I have a total of 13 furlough days between April and September, the end of the fiscal year. That means a pay-cut of nearly \$4000, or 11% of my salary between now and September. That amount is almost what I will need in August to pay the second installment of my Cook County real estate tax bill! Shall I sell my house and move out of Cook County or Illinois altogether?

Congresswoman Schakowsky, I gladly took a pay cut of 20K to come to work for the federal government in 2010 as I understood that I would be able to progress through the federal employment step and grade system. However, that same year a now three-year-old pay freeze was imposed on government workers.

I have had many employers in my work-life from institutions of higher learning such as Loyola University Chicago to private contractors for the Chicago Housing Authority. Never have I experienced the utter disregard and insulting treatment I feel from my employer, the Government of the United States

of America, and the politicians responsible for its policies. The most demeaning day for me was just a few days ago when my supervisor ordered me to fill out EPA's "Request for Leave" form to "request" my own furlough days. This sequestration was never supposed to happen. It is unfair and unreasonable. But it has happened anyway.

I am happy that Air Traffic workers and other co-workers throughout the federal government have by now been exempted from furloughs. It pains me terribly that no similar consideration is expressed for those of us who are charged with caring for the environmental, economic, health, housing and other equally important concerns of the American people.

Finally, I would like to thank your staff for listening to me and submit this letter for your consideration.

Sincerely,

HERIBERTO LEÓN.

HONORING COL. SCOTT W. GORDON

HON. TIM RYAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 14, 2013

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of an exemplary public servant, Col. Scott W. Gordon. After over thirty years of service, Col. Gordon is retiring at the end of August from the United States Army.

Col. Gordon was born in Utica, NY and grew up in Youngstown, OH. He earned his undergraduate degree in Zoology from Miami University in Oxford, OH in 1973 and went on to earn his masters in entomology from The Ohio State University in 1976. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Microbiology from Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO in 1993.

Col. Gordon joined the military in 1984 after being employed as a medical entomologist by the Vector-borne Disease Unit of the Ohio Department of Health. Throughout Col. Gordon's thirty years of service to his country, he worked in several distinguished capacities within the United States Army. Col. Gordon's work and dedication is exhibited through the numerous awards and decorations he has accrued throughout his three decades of service.

Since joining the military, Col. Gordon has remained active in entomological research as a member of numerous professional organizations including the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, The American Mosquito Control Association, and the Entomological Society of America. Col. Gordon has authored or co-authored over 20 publications in peer-reviewed journals.

I want to extend my warmest and sincere thanks to Col. Scott W. Gordon for his many years of service to his country. His long and illustrious military career will not be forgotten and I would like to wish him congratulations and all the best in his well-deserved retirement.

HONORING THE LIFE OF
CHARLOTTE TASHJIAN AARON

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 14, 2013

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Charlotte Tashjian

Aaron, who passed away on June 7, 2013 at the age of 97. Charlotte's thoughtfulness, generosity, and overwhelming love for others will be greatly missed.

Charlotte was born into a family with very strong Armenian roots. The Tashjians immigrated to the United States to escape the Armenian Genocide. They settled in Madera, California, and ran a small family business, "Simon Cleaners." After Charlotte graduated from Madera High School, she decided to stay close to home and work for her parents.

Charlotte's faith in God and her religion were extremely important to her. For over 50 years she was a part of the Fidelis Society, and served as a choir member at the First Armenian Presbyterian Church in Fresno, California for almost 70 years. Charlotte was singing in the choir when she saw the love of her life, Isaac, for the very first time. Isaac and Charlotte got married, and raised three beloved sons: James, Edward, and Richard.

For Armenians, family is everything, and Charlotte loved her family dearly. She leaves behind her sons and daughter-in-laws: Heather, Kris, and Nancy; her grandchildren: David, Michael, Janelle, Stephanie, Steven, John, Kirsten, and Danielle; and her brother Ed and her sister-in-law, Wilma.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect that I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to the life of Charlotte Tashjian Aaron. Charlotte will undoubtedly be missed many, and she will always be in the hearts of those who love her deeply.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GWEN MOORE

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 14, 2013

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding one missed vote on June 12, 2013.

Had I been present for rollcall 217, On Motion to Recommit with Instructions for the Swap Jurisdiction Certainty Act, I would have voted "aye."

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SPEECH OF

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2013

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Mr. PASCRELL. Madam Chair, it has been over 10 years since the start of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and I fear we are still not properly addressing traumatic brain injury, also known as "the signature injury of the war." I would like to thank Chairman MCKEON and Ranking Member SMITH for their commitment to this issue in recent authorizations. I would also like to thank Mr. THOMPSON for his co-sponsorship of my first amendment.

Over the last few years, Congress has continued to emphasize the importance of this issue and has made funds available for the identification and treatment of brain injuries in our soldiers. It is important these funds be used wisely to ensure that our men and women in uniform are getting timely and proper care. A January 2012 GAO report highlighted the need to coordinate TBI and psychological health activities within the Department.

In the National Defense Authorization for FY 2013, Congress mandated that the Secretary of Defense submit a plan to Congress that would improve coordination and integration of the programs that address traumatic brain injury and psychological health of members of the Armed Forces. Specifically, this report would require the identification of gaps in services and treatments, a plan for addressing any gaps or redundancies and identifying an official to lead the implementation of any changes. This report is due in July of this year, and my amendment underscores the importance of this mandated report, and strongly urges the Secretary to deliver it to Congress within the appropriate timeframe.

My second amendment addresses the continuing issue of identification of traumatic brain injuries. Although the Department of Defense has made a strong commitment to identifying, and treating those men and women who have suffered a traumatic brain injury while serving our Nation, there are still problems with screening our troops.

In June 2010, a memorandum issued by the Department of Defense made a 50-meter distance from an explosion the criterion to identify, refer, and treat members for potential traumatic brain injury in theater. However, the Department of Defense has yet to address those service members who may have been exposed to a blast prior to that time. Many of these soldiers remain on active duty and we must ensure they are tested and treated. My amendment mandates a report on how the Secretary of Defense will identify, refer, and treat possible traumatic brain injuries with respect to members of the Armed Forces who served in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom prior to June 2010. This is a vitally important report for ensuring the health of our troops. I ask that my colleagues support these amendments for those service members who are struggling with invisible wounds.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014

SPEECH OF

HON. DANA ROHRBACHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2013

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Mr. ROHRBACHER. Madam Chair, included in this en bloc package is an amendment I offered that relates to Pakistan. It adds,