

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4486, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015; AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4487, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the Rule for H.R. 4486, the “Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2015,” which supports our military and their families and provides the benefits and medical care that our veterans have earned for their service.

H.R. 4486 provides the facilities and infrastructure needed to house, train, and equip our military personnel to defend this Nation, both in the United States and abroad, provides the housing and military community infrastructure that supports a good quality of life for them and their families, and allows the military to maintain an efficient and effective base structure.

The bill also funds programs to ensure that all veterans receive the benefits and medical care that they have earned as a result of their sacrifices in the service to our Nation.

Just as our military pledges to leave no one behind on the battlefield, Democrats in Congress have pledged to leave no veteran behind when they come home.

The bill provides a total of \$165 billion in FY 2015 to fund military construction projects and programs of the Veterans Affairs Department, an increase of \$7 billion (4%) over current funding levels. This total includes \$93.5 billion in mandatory spending for VA benefits and \$71.5 billion in discretionary funding.

The bill provides a total of \$64.7 billion in discretionary funding for the VA in FY 2015, a 2% increase over current funding and I am pleased that it increases mandatory funding for veterans’ compensation and benefits by almost 10 percent.

Mr. Speaker, although there is much in this bill that I support, I wish to note two major concerns.

First, I disagree with the funding level for VA Medical Care in the bill, which is \$368 million below the President’s request and the amount I support. This underfunding for VA Medical Care could delay the timely delivery of health care services to veterans and impede our efforts to end veterans’ homelessness in 2015.

Second, the bill provides \$50 million less than the President’s request for Information Technology operations and maintenance programs. The result is likely to be a delay in making the necessary improvements to technology infrastructure that ensure continuity of operations for services that support all of VA’s services and benefit delivery.

Third, I do not support section 411 of the bill, which would prohibit the use of funds to construct, renovate, or expand any facility in the United States to house individuals held in the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. I do not support this rider because it unduly con-

strains the flexibility that the our Armed Forces and counterterrorism professionals need to best protect U.S. national security.

Mr. Speaker, the VA serves nearly 48.5 million people: 22 million veterans and 26.5 million family members of living veterans or survivors of deceased veterans, so in in my remaining time let me highlight some of the positive aspects of the bill:

\$1.2 billion for family and military personnel housing—equal to the administration’s request;

The bill contains an advance appropriation for FY 2016 of \$58.7 billion, continuing the trend started in the Democratic-led 111th Congress of providing advance appropriations to the VA for the medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities accounts.

This is a significant benefit to the veterans served by the VA at the 152 hospitals, 107 domiciliary residential rehabilitation treatment programs, 133 nursing homes, 300 Vet Centers, 70 mobile Vet Centers and 821 outpatient clinics, which include independent, satellite, community-based and rural outreach clinics.

\$589 million is provided for for medical, rehabilitative, health services and prosthetic research—\$3.3 million above current levels and recommends that a proportionate amount of funding for prosthetics should be focused on prosthetics for females, who outnumber male amputees by 3 percent.

In addition to veterans medical benefits, the bill provides \$93.7 billion, an increase of \$8.84 billion, in mandatory funding for other veterans benefits—primarily veterans compensation and pensions, and readjustment benefits.

\$78.7 billion for veterans service-connected compensation benefits and pensions, an increase of \$7.2 billion (10%) over current funding levels.

These funds are used for service-connected compensation payments to an estimated 4.6 million veterans, survivors and dependents and pension payments to 519,000 veterans and survivors.

\$14.8 billion for veterans readjustment benefits, an increase of \$1.6 billion (12%) over current funding levels. These funds include education and training assistance to veterans and service personnel; vocational rehabilitation; special housing and transportation grants to certain disabled veterans; and educational assistance to eligible dependents of deceased and seriously disabled veterans, as well as dependents of servicemembers who were captured or are missing in action.

This is not a perfect bill but this piece of legislation addresses the most critical needs of our service members, military families, and veterans.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE
EDELSTEIN FAMILY

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Edelstein family and their contributions to the Brownsville community.

In 1906, Lithuanian Immigrant Morris Edelstein opened Edelstein’s Best Furniture

store in Brownsville, Texas. By the 1930s, Mr. Edelstein had expanded his furniture business to include 12 stores throughout the Rio Grande Valley. In the 1940s, Morris Edelstein’s sons, Ruben and Ben, took over the family furniture business. Together, they operated the chain of stores for more than 60 years and would grow the company to employ 260 people.

Morris Edelstein taught his children the importance of giving back to the Brownsville community. Ruben started the first United Way in Brownsville, served as mayor of Brownsville, and was the first director of the Brownsville Public Utilities Board. Additionally, he worked with Washington policymakers to secure funds to build the Brownsville Community Health Center.

In 2008, the Edelstein family sold its 12 Edelstein’s stores but retained two Designer’s Showroom stores, managed by Ruben Edelstein’s daughter, Julie Edelstein-Best. This summer, Ms. Edelstein-Best will be closing the two remaining stores due to changing market conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to honor the Edelstein family and their commitment to Brownsville for more than 100 years.

CONGRATULATING THE HONOREES OF THE MAINE SPORTS HALL OF FAME’S 39TH ANNUAL INDUCTION BANQUET AND SCHOLAR-ATHLETE AWARDS CEREMONY

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the honorees of the Maine Sports Hall of Fame’s Annual Induction Banquet and Scholar-Athlete Awards Ceremony.

This Sunday, the Maine Sports Hall of Fame will honor Maine athletes and sports figures who have exemplified a tireless commitment to their sport and to their community. Recognition awards and scholarships also will be presented to five of Maine’s outstanding high school scholar-athletes. Each of the honorees have distinguished themselves on and off the field and are most deserving of this recognition.

This year’s inductees to the Maine Sports Hall of Fame are: Julia Faith Dawson Clukey, Augusta; Jack W. Cosgrove, Bangor; Joseph L. Ferris, Brewer; Edward J. Flaherty, Portland; William (Bill) Green, Cumberland; Eleanor D. Logan, Boothbay Harbor; George J. Mitchell, New York City; Steven M. Pound, Greenville; and Abigail L. (Abby) Spector, Waterville.

This year’s scholar-athlete honorees are: Carsyn Koch, Washburn District High School; Ian Lee, Madawaska High School; Alexandra Logan, Cheverus High School, Portland; Mikayla Turner, Messalonskee High School, Oakland; and Rayne Whitten, Massabesic High School, Waterboro.

The President’s Award is presented to “an individual who has bettered sports and athletics and has become a leader at state and national levels.” This year’s recipient is William E. Haggett of West Bath.

Each of these honorees is among the best that Maine has to offer. Through their leadership and their incredible commitment to their

sport, to their communities, and to our state, Maine is a better place in which to live.

Mr. Speaker, please join me again in congratulating each of the award recipients on their outstanding achievements and service.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TIM MURPHY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 183, I was predisposed at this time.

Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TOM MARINO

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. MARINO. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 184, I was unable to make votes due to a personal conflict.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

CELEBRATING THE CENTENNIAL
OF THE BOROUGH OF WOODLAND
PARK

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Borough of Woodland Park, located in Passaic County, New Jersey, as it celebrates its 100th Anniversary.

The Borough of Woodland Park was created on May 1, 1914. The area which now encompasses the Borough began as a section of the Township of Little Falls, called "West Park." In 1905, the residents of West Park, concerned that they were not being fairly represented within the township initiated a fight to create their own Borough.

On January 7, 1913, the organization proposed the establishment of the "Borough of West Paterson." The proposed name of the new town was chosen in recognition of its location next to the City of Paterson, America's first industrial center and the birthplace of the American silk industry.

Little more than a year later, on March 25, 1914, New Jersey State Senator Peter J. McGinnis' bill, "An Act to Incorporate the Borough of West Paterson," received final approval by Governor James F. Fielder. On May 1, 1914, a referendum was held, and the voters overwhelmingly approved the creation of the new Borough, by a vote of 194 to 20. Twenty four days later, the town elected its first Mayor, Councilmen, Tax Collector, Constables, and two Justices of the Peace.

In its early years, West Paterson's major economic activity was agriculture. The rich, verdant farm lands produced an abundance of dairy products, fruits, and vegetables. The

neighboring City of Paterson, which was home to numerous wealthy silk manufacturers, began to see many of its most prominent citizens move to West Paterson to take advantage of its bucolic, small town atmosphere.

The presence of the Passaic River, which is a major natural resource for the region, helped attract many hotels, ball fields, amusement parks, and a racetrack to its banks in West Paterson. At the time, one of the leading amusement parks of the town was Idlewood Park. Other amusement parks also located themselves on Garrett Mountain, on the east side of the Borough, where the Garret Mountain Reservation is today.

As the Borough grew, the population continuously rose. In 1920, the population was 1,858. By 1950, it had jumped to 3,931, and more than doubled over the following decade, to 7,602 by 1960. As of 2010, the Borough's population had grown to 11,819.

As the Borough grew, the township's necessary municipal services did as well. Many of these services were and are made possible due to residents volunteering to carry them out. Woodland Park has a long history of active volunteer commitment to the community, reflecting the value that its citizens place on their town and their desire to continue to make it a great place in which to live and work. Over the past several decades, many townhouse and condominium units were built to accommodate the influx of people wishing to make this desirable community their home.

In 2008, the Borough of West Paterson changed its name to the Borough of Woodland Park. Supporters had been attempting to change the town's name for 20 years, and were successful during the General Election of November 4, 2008. On December 17, 2008, the governing body approved Resolution R08-253, making the town's official name the Borough of Woodland Park, effective January 1, 2009.

Today, the Borough consists of a mixture of retail, office, residential, and industrial properties. A significant portion of the Borough consists of municipal parkland, county parks, and two reservoirs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Borough of Woodland Park as it celebrates its 100th Anniversary.

SANDY AND MARCIA COHEN

HON. LOU BARLETTA

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Sandy and Marcia Cohen, who are being honored at the 2014 Susquehanna Tzedakah Society Dinner for their selfless dedication to the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Jewish community.

Mr. and Mrs. Cohen, both Harrisburg natives, are well known throughout our community for their selfless devotion to Jewish philanthropies and activities. Mr. Cohen, CEO of Cohen Produce Marketing, and Mrs. Cohen, a pharmacist at Holy Spirit Hospital, each credit their parents for instilling a strong sense of devotion to helping the Jewish community in any way possible. In their many years of service, the Cohens have always accepted requests for their assistance and in doing so have set

a high standard of excellence for others to emulate. Not unmindful of providing for future generations, the Cohens made sure to encourage a strong dedication to tzedakah in their four children, no doubt ensuring their legacy will inspire and benefit many members of the community for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, tonight as the Harrisburg community honors the Cohens at the 2014 Susquehanna Tzedakah Society Dinner, I join in commending them for their outstanding commitment to bettering the Jewish community and thank them and their family for their selfless dedication.

IN RECOGNITION OF KATHRYN
STONER O'CONNOR

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kathryn Stoner O'Connor and her commitment to historical preservation.

Mrs. O'Connor was born on February 11, 1883, on her family's ranch in Victoria County, Texas. In 1905, she married Thomas O'Connor, a prominent rancher in South Texas.

In 1963, Mrs. O'Connor donated approximately \$1 million to restore the Presidio La Bahía in Goliad, Texas. The Presidio, which lies along the San Antonio River, was constructed in 1749 by the Spanish army.

During the Texas Revolution, the fort came under siege by a group of Texans lead by Colonel James Fannin. Following the Battle of the Alamo, General Sam Houston ordered Colonel Fannin to abandon the fort. However, Fannin and the more than 300 soldiers under his control were met by the Mexican army and subsequently surrendered, believing they would not be harmed. Fannin and his men were imprisoned at La Bahía. On Palm Sunday, March 27, 1836, Colonel Fannin and more than 300 soldiers were executed in what has become known as the Goliad Massacre.

By the early 1900s, the fort had fallen into disrepair. Thanks to Mrs. O'Connor's generosity, the fort was rebuilt to its 1836 appearance based on archeological evidence. In 1967, Presidio La Bahía was designated a National Historic Landmark.

Today, thanks to Mrs. O'Connor's generous donation, Presidio La Bahía is one the best examples of a Spanish ecclesiastical building in North America and hosts an annual living history event, which includes battle reenactments.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to honor Mrs. O'Connor. I appreciate you joining me in recognizing Mrs. O'Connor's generosity, which preserved the Presidio La Bahía in Goliad, Texas for future generations.

IN HONOR OF VELVET ICE CREAM
AND THE ENTIRE DAGER FAMILY

HON. PATRICK J. TIBERI

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. TIBERI. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate Velvet Ice Cream in Utica, Ohio upon its 100th anniversary.