

The Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center serves as the primary healthcare provider for almost 130,000 veterans in southeast Texas.

Veterans from around the country are referred to the DeBakey VA Medical Center for specialized diagnostic care, radiation therapy, surgery, and medical treatment including cardiovascular surgery, gastrointestinal endoscopy, nuclear medicine, ophthalmology, and treatment of spinal cord injury and diseases.

DeBakey VA Medical Center provide vital healthcare services to Veterans in the Houston area and through the nation. The Medical Center houses:

- A Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Clinic;
- Network Polytrauma Center;
- an award-winning Cardiac and General Surgery Program;
- Liver Transplant Center;
- VA Epilepsy and Cancer Centers of Excellence;

- VA Substance Abuse Disorder Quality Enhancement Research Initiative;

- Health Services Research & Development Center of Innovation;

- VA Rehabilitation Research of Excellence focusing on mild to moderate traumatic brain injury;

- Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center; and

- one of the VA's six Parkinson's Disease Research, Education, and Clinical Centers.

In late 2012, the MEDVAMC received official designation as a Kidney Transplant Center. Including the outpatient clinics in Beaumont, Conroe, Galveston, Houston, Katy, Lufkin, Richmond, Tomball and Texas City, MEDVAMC outpatient clinics log more than a million outpatient visits annually.

Earlier this week I joined other members of the Congressional Women's Caucus for the Wreath Laying Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery to remember the contributions of women who served our nation proudly in uniform.

Veterans are told that the care that they need can be found at Veteran medical facilities around the nation and we must be certain that they have access to the care that is provided.

The veterans who have served our nation deserve better than what we have been made aware of due to the disclosures related to the Arizona VA facility in Phoenix.

It has been reported that physicians at the Phoenix Veterans Hospital ignored mandates to prioritize treatment of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

The placement of veterans on secret waiting lists who later died is unconscionable and should be criminally investigated if proven to be true.

The Veterans facilities serving veterans in Houston, to my knowledge, are not under investigation regarding these terrible reports related to accusations of mistreatment of our nation's veterans.

I know that there are concerns regarding the implications of H.R. 4031 on civil service protection for federal employees at the Veterans Administration.

I am mindful of those concerns, but I am also very focused on making sure that our veterans receive the healthcare that they need.

Should this bill become law, I will make sure that veterans received the care they need, while monitoring how the authority provided under this bill is used.

The intent of this bill should not be solely for the removal of people from federal service unless there is cause for such action—like in the case of the Phoenix reports if proven to be true.

Falsifying federal records that may lead to the deaths or further degradation of health of our nation's veterans if true should disqualify a person from federal employment and the receipt of bonuses.

Our nation's veterans need help now—not later.

The work that Congress along with the Administration can do today to make sure that the promises made to our veterans and their families are kept should be done.

The bill would authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to remove any individual from the Senior Executive Service upon determining that such individual's performance warrants removal, and remove such individual from federal service or transfer the individual to a General Schedule position at any grade that the Secretary deems appropriate.

A part of the important job of our Nation's Secretary of Veterans Affairs is to administer a national hospital system for our nation's veterans.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs needs more than just the power to fire, but the authority and means to hire hospital and facility administrators at competitive rates when compared to the private sector.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs needs the ability to make decisions regarding distribution of resources and facility management.

The Secretary must have the ability to make decisions and the power to act on whether to open additional facilities or enter into agreements with private or other public hospital systems to meet the healthcare needs of returning Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans along with the needs of our aging veteran population who have increased need for healthcare.

The Veterans Administration needs Congressional intervention by making sure that the Secretary can be held fully accountable for how the Department functions because they have the authority and the means to manage the agency as it should be managed.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs would always be ultimately accountable to the oversight of Congressional Committees, and must provide greater transparency to veterans and their families on what the agency is doing to meet the needs of veterans.

But it is within our power as Members of Congress to make sure that our nation's veterans receive the best medical care that modern medicine has to offer to them and their families.

In the State of Texas we have over a million Veterans under the age of 65 and nearly a half million who are over the age of 65.

I believe that a message of unity is critical to the wellbeing of our men and women in uniform and those transitioning out of uniformed service to our nation.

Veterans share a kinship in ways that too few Americans who have not served can understand.

Our men and women in the military have fulfilled a commitment to this nation and to each other that we should imitate in our actions to work to provide for veterans now that their military service has ended.

Today, I want to renew my commitment to our nation's veterans by encouraging my col-

leagues to act to keep the nation's promises to them.

Congress must communicate its wholehearted support for the security of the nation by addressing mindless cuts created by sequestration.

I firmly believe that Congress must act to care for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen, both on and off the battlefield.

I believe that the nation's concern for their wellbeing must be more than in words, but must be reflected in deeds.

Veterans demonstrate a love of country and a measure of devotion making us proud as their Representatives, but we must offer to each veteran a level of comfort that the promises made to them will be kept.

Their quiet dignity sets aside concerns for self because their vision is broader than the moments of partisanship that we see too often in Washington, DC.

I ask that my colleagues remember the damage done to the budget of the Veterans Administration through cuts, sequestration, and the government shutdown.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that the passion that I see in the actions and words of fellow Members of the House will translate into a long-term commitment to mend what is broken at the VA and strengthen what is working well.

We should recognize the great work being done by a majority of doctors, nurses, therapists, and medical aides at the dozens of veterans medical facilities around the nation.

We must remember that the leadership at Veterans Affairs needs the funding and authority to make decisions regarding implementing solutions to overcome challenges of providing the best care possible to our nation's veterans.

We should seek reports on the ability of the VA to meet the challenge of the returning veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the needs of Veterans from previous wars with the current level of funding, personnel, offices, and medical facilities.

I am in support of our veterans and seek a bipartisan solution to resolving the problems with VA backlogs and the treatment of veterans and their families.

HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

SPEECH OF

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 21, 2014

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4435) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2015 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:

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Chair, for the past year, the House Armed Services Committee has conducted an "Oversight of the Asia Pacific Rebalance." This initiative was brought forth by the collective leadership of Chairman BUCK McKEON and Ranking Member ADAM SMITH. I would also recognize Chairman RANDY FORBES and Congresswoman COLLEEN HANABUSA for their great efforts on this critical committee engagement,

culminating in their legislative contributions to the NDAA we consider here today.

Without question, the Asia Pacific Rebalance constitutes one of America's most important military and security policies. The Chairman and I both represent districts in a state with vast ties to the Asia Pacific—whether political, security, military, economic, cultural, social and even people-to-people exchange. We also have a vibrant Asian American community in our state that is an embodiment of our relationship with this critically important region.

It is within this context that I wish to raise an important issue and one that I feel is central to the Asia Pacific Rebalance. Let me be clear that I feel this issue is both germane to the jurisdiction of this committee and our consideration of the NDAA on the Floor.

As you and our colleagues on this committee are well aware, more than 200,000 young women and girls from throughout Asia and the Pacific, but mainly from Korea, were forced to become sex slaves during World War II by the Imperial Armed Forces of Japan. For over 70 years, these women endured unspeakable and nightmarish ordeals and have yet to receive a formal apology.

There are those who believe that the Comfort Women issue is a controversial historical dispute that is not germane to our committee's jurisdiction or the NDAA. I fundamentally disagree. As a case in point, during President Obama's recent Asia trip a couple of weeks ago, he specifically brought up the Comfort Women issue. At a joint press conference with Korean President Park Geun-Hye, President Obama stated that what happened to the Comfort Women was "terrible and egregious," that these "women deserved to be heard and respected" and that "there should be an accurate and clear account of what happened." President Obama made these remarks in the context of U.S.-Korea-Japan relations and the Asia Rebalance.

The Comfort Women survivors are dying by the day. Of the over 200,000 survivors less than 100 are still alive today. As a matter of valuing women's rights and human rights, these Comfort Women survivors deserve the dignity of a formal apology by the Japanese Government. I further urge Japan to follow the recommendations set forth in H. Res. 121 that was authored by my friend and colleague, Representative MICHAEL HONDA and passed the House on June 30, 2007. Proper resolution to this issue yields the benefit of closer U.S.-Korea-Japan trilateral relations which is critical to countering the North Korean nuclear threat and enhancing security ties with our allies.

Mr. Chair, I wish to reiterate the importance of this issue to our committee, our constituents, our state, our nation and our allies. I urge my colleagues to also offer expressions of support for the Comfort Women survivors.

CELEBRATING LOU WEINTRAUB

HON. AMI BERA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Mr. BERA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lou Weintraub. The oldest veteran in the Sacramento Jewish Community, Lou turned 100 earlier this year and will be

honored at the Jewish Memorial Day Commemoration this weekend for his years of commitment to the Sacramento County community.

Born to Polish immigrant parents in New York in 1914, Lou and his two siblings were children of the Depression. He attended City College of New York, and later the University of Pennsylvania. Soon after, he served as a clinical psychologist in the military for four years during World War II.

A longtime executive with San Francisco's Jewish Community Federation before he retired, Lou has worked with and served on the board of many commissions and nonprofits in the Sacramento region, where he moved in 1989 after meeting his wife.

He continues to be very active, delivering food to the home-bound for Meals-A-La-Car and on the boards of both the Community Services Planning Council and the Friends of the Sacramento Public Library. He is currently the Vice-Chair of the Emergency Food and Shelter Board.

Lou is also an active congregant of Mosaic Law Congregation, attending its Daily Minyan and Shabbat and holiday services. He is known to regularly hold court after the services where at lunch in the social hall he is surrounded by people of all ages taking in his wisdom.

Lou's wife Roslyn summed him up best when she told the Sacramento Bee earlier this year, "What I see about Lou is that he cares more about other people than himself. He's always caring about somebody else."

Thank you, Lou, for caring, and for your continued dedication to the Sacramento area community.

SUPPORTING THE NAVY EA-18G "GROWLER"

HON. JASON T. SMITH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and its Chairman, BUCK McKEON, on passage of the National Defense Authorization Act FY15 today that includes funding for additional Navy EA-18G "Growler" aircraft as well as language to stretch the EA-18G and FA-18 E/F lines in St. Louis, Missouri.

I recently visited the F-18 line in St. Louis, Missouri near my district. Like many Members I have an F-18 supplier in my district. Without additional funding, this line will shut down and we as a nation will lose a national asset including thousands of dedicated and talented workers who make up this defense industrial base.

But the EA-18G is about more than just jobs—it is about supporting our warfighter. The U.S. Navy has clearly stated before Congress this year that it has a requirement for additional EA-18G airborne electronic attack aircraft that are vital to current and future operations—both for the Navy and other services. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming weeks, especially on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, to help address this clear Navy and joint war fighting requirement. The warfighter

needs the EA-18G and we in Congress need to continue to support our warfighters.

SUPPORTING CONTINUED PRODUCTION OF THE EA-18G "GROWLER"

HON. WILLIAM L. ENYART

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Mr. ENYART. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and its Chairman, BUCK McKEON, and Ranking Member SMITH, on passage of the FY15 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 4435) today that includes funding for additional Navy EA-18G "Growler" aircraft as well as language to continue the EA-18G and F/A-18 E/F lines in St. Louis, Missouri.

During this year's deliberations of the President's budget request, the committee received a request from the Navy for an unfunded requirement for 22 additional airborne electronic attack (AEA) aircraft—the EA-18G Growler. The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Greenert outlined the growing need to control the electromagnetic spectrum to support the warfighter. The CNO indicated to the Committee that the current level of AEA aircraft in the Navy inventory was just meeting the operational needs in today's world. However, based on increasing demands and a projected difficult operational environments in the future, the Navy requested 22 additional EA-18G Growlers. It is this Growler that can meet these expanding and stressing AEA operational requirements.

I have a number of constituents that commute to work on the production line in St. Louis, and like many members have F/A-18 suppliers in my district. Without additional funding for EA-18G aircraft, this important production line will shut down and we as a nation will lose a national asset—including thousands of dedicated and talented workers who make up this defense industrial base.

But the EA-18G is about more than jobs—it is about supporting our warfighter. The Navy has clearly made its case before Congress that it has a growing operational requirement for additional EA-18G aircraft that are vital to current and future operations—both for the Navy and other services.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming weeks, especially on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, to help address this clear Navy requirement. We need to support our warfighter needs and the EA-18G Growler is key to operating and prevailing in the important airborne electronic attack environment.

PLANT OF THE YEAR IN NORTH AMERICA

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate TRW Automotive's Fowlerville, Michigan facility on earning Quality magazine's "Plant of the Year in North America" award for quality, safety and continuous