

I rise to say thank you to all of the Members of this body on both sides of the aisle and across this country for all you did to support my incredible city during its darkest hour.

Thanks to each and every one of you most humbly from the bottom of my heart. Thank you.

#### A CALL FOR A VOTE REGARDING ENDING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, last night in the Rules Committee, we witnessed the very definition of political cowardice. For the second time in 3 years, the Republican leadership of this House refused to make a thoughtful, germane, and bipartisan amendment on Afghanistan in order to the defense authorization bill.

The rule we will debate later today makes in order 162 amendments—162. There were amendments on everything from deferred retirement for military chaplains to charging admission to air shows and to ensuring public access to Rattlesnake Mountain.

But we can't have a debate and a vote on holding the administration accountable for ending the war in Afghanistan?

Because we are at war, Mr. Speaker. I know that we don't like to talk about it around here, and I know that some of my colleagues would rather bury their heads in the sand and hope it goes away, but our troops and their families deserve a debate, and Congress has the responsibility to give it to them.

But no. But no. I don't know what the Republican leadership is afraid of, but this is outrageous, and I am not going to stand for it.

#### MOTION TO ADJOURN

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia). The question is on the motion to adjourn offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 7, nays 381, not voting 43, as follows:

[Roll No. 223]

#### YEAS—7

Honda  
Jones  
Lee (CA)

Moore  
Pingree (ME)  
Velazquez

#### NAYS—381

Aderholt  
Amash  
Amodei  
Bachmann  
Bachus  
Barber  
Barletta  
Barr  
Barrow (GA)  
Barton  
Beatty  
Becerra  
Benishek  
Bentivolio  
Bera (CA)  
Bilirakis  
Bishop (GA)  
Bishop (NY)  
Bishop (UT)  
Black  
Blackburn  
Blumenauer  
Bonamici  
Boustany  
Brady (PA)  
Brady (TX)  
Braley (IA)  
Brooks (AL)  
Brooks (IN)  
Broun (GA)  
Brown (FL)  
Brownley (CA)  
Buchanan  
Bucshon  
Burgess  
Bustos  
Butterfield  
Byrne  
Calvert  
Camp  
Campbell  
Cantor  
Capito  
Capps  
Capuano  
Cárdenas  
Carney  
Carson (IN)  
Carter  
Cartwright  
Cassidy  
Castro (TX)  
Chabot  
Chu  
Ciilline  
Clark (MA)  
Clarke (NY)  
Clay  
Cleaver  
Clyburn  
Coble  
Coffman  
Cohen  
Cole  
Collins (GA)  
Collins (NY)  
Conaway  
Connolly  
Conyers  
Cook  
Costa  
Cotton  
Courtney  
Cramer  
Crawford  
Crenshaw  
Crowley  
Cuellar  
Culberson  
Cummings  
Daines  
Davis (CA)  
Davis, Danny  
Davis, Rodney  
DeFazio  
DeGette  
DeLaney  
DeLauro  
DelBene  
Dent  
DeSantis

DesJarlais  
Deutch  
Diaz-Balart  
Doggett  
Duckworth  
Duffy  
Duncan (SC)  
Edwards  
Ellison  
Ellmers  
Engel  
Enyart  
Eshoo  
Esty  
Farenthold  
Farr  
Fattah  
Fincher  
Fitzpatrick  
Fleischmann  
Fleming  
Flores  
Forbes  
Fortenberry  
Fox  
Franks (AZ)  
Frelinghuysen  
Fudge  
Gabbard  
Gallego  
Garamendi  
Garcia  
Gardner  
Garrett  
Gerlach  
Gibbs  
Gibson  
Gingrey (GA)  
Gohmert  
Goodlatte  
Gosar  
Gowdy  
Granger  
Graves (GA)  
Graves (MO)  
Grayson  
Green, Al  
Green, Gene  
Griffin (AR)  
Griffith (VA)  
Guthrie  
Gutiérrez  
Hahn  
Hall  
Hanabusa  
Hanna  
Harper  
Harris  
Hartzler  
Hastings (FL)  
Hastings (WA)  
Heck (NV)  
Heck (WA)  
Hensarling  
Herrera Beutler  
Himes  
Hinojosa  
Holding  
Horsford  
Hoyer  
Hudson  
Huizenga (MI)  
Hultgren  
Hunter  
Israel  
Issa  
Jackson Lee  
Jeffries  
Jenkins  
Johnson (OH)  
Johnson, E. B.  
Johnson, Sam  
Jolly  
Jordan  
Joyce  
Kaptur  
Keating  
Kelly (IL)  
Kelly (PA)  
Kennedy  
Kildee

#### Waters

Poe (TX)  
Polis  
Pompeo  
Posey  
Price (GA)  
Price (NC)  
Quigley  
Rahall  
Rangel  
Reed  
Reichert  
Renacci  
Ribble  
Rice (SC)  
Richmond  
Rigell  
Roby  
Roe (TN)  
Rogers (AL)  
Rogers (KY)  
Rogers (MI)  
Rohrabacher  
Rokita  
Rooney  
Ros-Lehtinen  
Roskam  
Ross  
Rothfus  
Roybal-Allard  
Royce  
Ruiz  
Runyan  
Rush  
Ryan (OH)  
Ryan (WI)  
Salmon  
Sanchez, Linda  
T.

Sanchez, Loretta  
Sanford  
Sarbanes  
Scalise  
Schiff  
Schneider  
Schock  
Schrader  
Schweikert  
Scott (VA)  
Scott, Austin  
Scott, David  
Sensenbrenner  
Serrano  
Sessions  
Sewell (AL)  
Shea-Porter  
Sherman  
Shimkus  
Shuster  
Simpson  
Sinema  
Smith (NE)  
Smith (NJ)  
Smith (TX)  
Smith (WA)  
Southernland  
Speier  
Stewart  
Stivers  
Stockman  
Stutzman  
Swalwell (CA)  
Takano  
Terry  
Thompson (CA)  
Thompson (MS)  
Thornberry

#### NOT VOTING—43

Bass  
Bridenstine  
Castor (FL)  
Chaffetz  
Cooper  
Denham  
Dingell  
Doyle  
Duncan (TN)  
Foster  
Frankel (FL)  
Grijalva  
Grimm  
Higgins  
Holt  
Huelskamp  
Huffman  
Hurt  
Johnson (GA)  
Kingston  
Labrador  
Lankford  
Larson (CT)  
Lewis  
Luetkemeyer  
Maloney, Sean  
McIntyre  
Meng  
Miller, Gary  
Miller, George

□ 1256

Messrs. SCHNEIDER, NUNES, Ms. LOFGREN, Messrs. CROWLEY, MCNERNEY, RANGEL, Ms. TSONGAS, Mr. KEATING, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Messrs. NADLER, CONYERS, ELLISON, and Ms. CLARKE of New York changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

So the motion to adjourn was rejected to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained today and missed roll No. 223. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea.”

Stated against:

Mr. HURT. Mr. Speaker, I was not present for rollcall vote No. 223. Had I been present, I would have voted “no.”

#### 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 the motion 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.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken later.

# DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2014

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4031) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal of the Senior Executive Service employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs for performance, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4031

*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 “Department of Veterans Affairs Management Accountability Act of 2014”.

## SEC. 2. REMOVAL OF SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR PERFORMANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

### “§ 713. Senior Executive Service: removal based on performance

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary may remove any individual from the Senior Executive Service if the Secretary determines the performance of the individual warrants such removal. If the Secretary so removes such an individual, the Secretary may—

“(1) remove the individual from Federal service; or

“(2) transfer the individual to a General Schedule position at any grade of the General Schedule the Secretary determines appropriate.

“(b) NOTICE TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30 days after removing an individual from the Senior Executive Service under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives notice in writing of such removal and the reason for such removal.

“(c) MANNER OF REMOVAL.—A removal under this section shall be done in the same manner as the removal of a professional staff member employed by a Member of Congress.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“713. Senior Executive Service: removal based on performance.”

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

□ 1300

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4031.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, for the past 3 years, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs has uncovered, and continues to uncover, numerous instances of gross negligence and incompetence by senior VA officials that have led to delays in care, growing patient wait times, and lengthy backlogs of disability claims. Regrettably, some of these instances have resulted in lack of proper care for veterans and for preventable deaths.

Despite repeated promises of accountability and change, the committee has received nothing but disturbing silence from the White House and only one excuse after another from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, we have all seen the heartbreaking news or spoken personally to family after family coming forward, sharing their stories of how the VA has failed to fulfill their promise to our veterans. The time is past due for us, as the House of Representatives, to take action.

The troubling stories that have come out of Phoenix, Arizona, where whistleblowers allege that as many as 40 veterans died while waiting for care and alleged secret waiting lists are unconscionable if in fact proven true. We would not be doing our sworn duty if we sat idly by and allowed these preventable deaths of those who made sacrifices for this great country to become the status quo at the VA.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, these incidents do not seem to be isolated. They are under the watch of not just one senior VA manager. Similar stories of mismanagement and negligence have arisen in Fort Collins, Colorado; San Antonio, Texas; Augusta, Georgia; Atlanta, Georgia; Memphis, Tennessee; Columbia, South Carolina; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois, with news stories being covered almost every single day.

Mr. Speaker, these stories were crystallized for me and other Members at a recent hearing that we had on patient wait times on April 9. Mr. Barry Coates, a veteran from Columbia, South Carolina, informed the committee that he waited almost a year to receive a colonoscopy at VA. When he finally received his appointment, it was revealed that he had stage IV colon cancer.

Mr. Coates testified: “The gross negligence and crippling backlog epidemic of the VA health care system has not only handed me a death sentence, but ruined my quality of life.”

Mr. Speaker, the need for accountability to help veterans like Mr. Coates is the reason why H.R. 4031 is so critically important. The VA Management Accountability Act of 2014 would give the Secretary the authority to fire or to demote VA Senior Executive Service or equivalent employees based on performance at any time. The current system is so calcified in bureaucratic red

tape that it is easier for someone to get a bonus than it is to be given some type of discipline at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Is this what our citizens want? Is this what our veterans deserve? I don’t think so, and neither do the 150 bipartisan cosponsors of this piece of legislation or the leading VSOs that support it.

Now, the actions of these few senior executives do not tarnish the hard work of 300,000 frontline VA employees who come to work every day and by and large provide excellent care and services to our veterans. Too many of these employees have in fact been continually let down by poor-performing senior executives. It is time to restore their trust and America’s trust in the leadership at VA.

Look, General Shinseki is a good man. He wants to hold others accountable, but he is being held back by a failed civil service that makes it nearly impossible to remove SES employees. If this bill becomes law, he and his successors will have no excuse. He will have every tool to hold managers accountable and restore faith in the VA.

I am truly grateful to the 150 sponsors from both sides of the aisle of this vital piece of legislation.

I also want to thank the following VSOs, veterans service organizations, who have tirelessly advocated on behalf of this bill, including the American Legion, Concerned Veterans for America, IAVA, AMVETS, the Reserve Officers, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Military Officers Association of America.

Finally, I thank Leader CANTOR and Speaker BOEHNER for their help in bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that VA’s status quo is upended, which is why I believe this bill, the House’s earlier action this year to suspend VA bonuses for 5 years, and my call on President Obama to establish a bipartisan VA medical care access commission is crucial to getting a resolution to this problem.

I believe the question presented before each Member here today is very clear: Do you stand with our veterans or do you stand with a bureaucratic-entrenched failing system?

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 4031 and maintain our promises to our veterans and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our Nation’s veterans and in support of action that will fundamentally address the systematic failures that are clearly occurring across the Department of Veterans Affairs. I reluctantly support this legislation because I believe we owe it to the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much for our Nation to do everything in our power to ensure the VA is accountable for its performance.