

will be able to avoid costly duplicative research, which will stretch every dollar further and significantly advance this important research.

In my congressional district, the Indian River Lagoon has experienced algae blooms each year from 2011 to 2013, leading to the loss of nearly half of all the sea grass beds—the primary means of measuring health in the Indian River Lagoon. Prior to 2011, sea grass beds in the lagoon had been on a steady increase for nearly 15 years. The devastating economic and ecologic impacts of these blooms over the past 3 years can be felt across the entire length of the 156-mile lagoon.

The economic impact of the Indian River Lagoon is approximately \$3.5 billion. A healthy lagoon is vital to the economic well-being of the Treasure Coast and the Space Coast. I raised my family on the lagoon, so I can speak from personal experience about the changes we have seen and the benefits of our lagoon to our communities.

Our bill gives researchers another tool to help us better understand, anticipate, control, and mitigate harmful algal blooms like those we have seen in the Indian River Lagoon and in communities across the country.

I would like to thank Chairman SMITH and the majority and minority staff who worked together to shepherd this bill through committee. I would also like to thank the ranking member of the Environmental Subcommittee, Ms. BONAMICI. It was a pleasure to work with you and your staff to make several bipartisan perfecting changes to the Senate bill so that this bipartisan measure can make it here to the House floor.

I would encourage my colleagues to support the bill before us so that we can reauthorize this important program and continue to advance this research that is so important for communities, like the coastal community I am privileged to live in and represent in Congress.

□ 1700

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentleman from Oregon (Ms. BONAMICI).

Ms. BONAMICI. I thank the ranking member of the Science Committee for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation, and I am glad the House is considering it today. I would like to begin by thanking the gentleman from Florida (Mr. POSEY), for his willingness to work with me on an amendment to S. 1254 that was adopted in committee and made some modifications to the legislation we are considering today.

I would also like to thank the full committee chairman, Mr. SMITH, and our ranking member, Ms. JOHNSON, for supporting us as we developed the amendment and moved the bill forward. This was truly a team effort, and our constituents are well served by this

collaboration. I want to join Mr. POSEY, also, in thanking our staff on both sides of the aisle for their hard work on this bill.

Authorization for the programs under the Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Act expired in 2012, so this reauthorization is long overdue. The rapid overproduction of algae can have devastating effects on aquatic plants and animals, as well as on human health.

For coastal and Great Lakes ecosystems and communities that depend on fishing and tourism to sustain their economies, the effect of algae blooms is a threat to their livelihood. The cost of these blooms has been estimated to be close to \$82 million each year, a significant hit to the economy in areas that are still struggling to recover.

This issue was first brought to my attention by Oregon State University scientists and the crab industry in Oregon, where business was struggling when Dungeness crabs were dying because of low oxygen levels in the water, a hypoxic event caused by algal blooms.

I do want to stress, however, that the effect of these blooms is not only felt in coastal communities. Last year, in my home State of Oregon, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs experiencing hypoxic events were closed to protect public health for a combined total of more than 700 days.

Research has helped advance our understanding of and response to harmful algal blooms, but we need to continue to invest in this research. The frequency and duration of these events and subsequent hypoxic conditions are on the rise, and our constituents need us to act.

In order to equip ourselves with the tools we need to manage these events and reduce the environmental and economic damage they cause, we need to better understand how and why algal blooms occur and how they respond to a changing environment.

The bill before us today directs NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to develop and implement a national strategy that takes a regional approach to helping communities understand, predict, and mitigate harmful algal bloom and hypoxic events.

It will not only improve coordination, but also assess the program's activities to ensure that we are prepared for these events and are able to respond in an effective and efficient manner.

This will become increasingly important as coastal populations increase and changes in the environment, such as warmer water temperatures, have the potential to alter the growth, toxicity, and geographic distribution of algal blooms.

The stakeholder community has been calling for the reauthorization of this critical program, and they are eager to see NOAA continue its work on this important issue.

The amendment that Mr. POSEY and I included responds to a number of sug-

gestions offered by our colleagues on the Natural Resources Committee, which has joint jurisdiction over these programs; and the amendment clarifies that the bill does not establish any new programs or regulatory authority.

The amendment also ensures that State and local governments, along with other stakeholder groups, are involved in efforts to reduce harmful algal blooms and hypoxia.

Because freshwater ecosystems are also susceptible to HABs, the amendment makes certain that the plan also addresses harmful algal blooms and hypoxia events in the Great Lakes in a cost-effective and technically feasible manner.

NOAA researchers and the academic community have established a strong partnership to lead this effort, and I applaud their work. Now, Congress needs to reauthorize these important programs, so that work can continue; and this bill accomplishes that goal.

I urge our colleagues to support this legislation.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1254, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR VETERANS ACT OF 2014

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2072) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2072

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 "Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act of 2014".

SEC. 2. SCORING OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

SEC. 3. ACCOUNTABILITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

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

“§ 712. Accountability of Secretary to Inspector General

“(a) LIST OF MANAGERS.—(1) If the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs determines that the Secretary has not appropriately responded with significant progress to a covered report by the date specified in the action plan of the Secretary developed in response to such covered report—

“(A) the Inspector General shall notify the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives and the Secretary of such failure to appropriately respond; and

“(B) not later than 15 days after such notification, the Secretary shall submit to the Inspector General a list of the names of each responsible manager and the matter in the action plan for which the manager is responsible.

“(2) The Inspector General may not make public the names of responsible managers submitted under paragraph (1)(B).

“(b) PERFORMANCE OF RESPONSIBLE MANAGERS.—(1) The Secretary shall—

“(A) promptly notify each responsible manager of a covered issue by not later than seven days after the date on which the Secretary submits to the Inspector General the name of the manager under subsection (a)(1)(B);

“(B) direct such manager to resolve such issue; and

“(C) provide such manager with appropriate counseling and a mitigation plan with respect to resolving such issue.

“(2) The Secretary shall ensure that any performance review of a responsible manager includes an evaluation of whether the manager took appropriate actions during the period covered by the review to respond to the covered issue for which a request was made under subsection (a).

“(3) The Secretary may not pay to a responsible manager any bonus or award, including a performance award under section 5384 of title 5 if the covered issue for which a request was made under subsection (a) is unresolved.

“(c) ROLE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.—Any authority of the Inspector General provided under this section is in addition to any responsibility or authority provided to the Inspector General in the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App).

“(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered issue’ means, with respect to a responsible manager, an issue described in a covered report for which the manager is or was responsible.

“(2) The term ‘covered report’ means a report by the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs that recommends actions to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (or other official or employee of the Department) to address an issue in the Department with respect to public health or safety.

“(3) The term ‘responsible manager’ means an individual who—

“(A) is an employee of the Department;

“(B) is or was responsible for an issue included in a covered report; and

“(C) in being so responsible, is or was employed in a management position, regardless of whether the employee is in the competitive civil service, Senior Executive Service, or other type of civil service.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 711 the following new item:

“712. Accountability of Secretary to Inspector General.”.

SEC. 4. SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CONTRACT AUTHORITY FOR TRANSFER OF VETERANS NON-DEPARTMENT MEDICAL FOSTER HOMES.

(a) AUTHORITY.—Section 1720 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h)(1) During the three-year period beginning on October 1, 2014, at the request of a veteran for whom the Secretary is required to provide nursing home care under section 1710A of this title, the Secretary may transfer the veteran to a medical foster home that meets Department standards, at the expense of the United States, pursuant to a contract or agreement entered into between the Secretary and the medical foster home for such purpose. A veteran who is transferred to a medical foster home under this subsection shall agree, as a condition of such transfer, to accept home health services furnished by the Secretary under section 1717 of this title.

“(2) For purposes of this subsection, the term ‘medical foster home’ means a home designed to provide non-institutional, long-term, supportive care for veterans who are unable to live independently and prefer a family setting.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (h) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on October 1, 2014.

SEC. 5. CONDITIONS ON THE AWARD OF PER DIEM PAYMENTS BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR THE PROVISION OF HOUSING OR SERVICES TO HOMELESS VETERANS.

(a) CONDITION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) of section 2012(c) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a per diem payment may not be provided under this section to a grant recipient or eligible entity unless the entity submits to the Secretary an annual certification, approved or verified by the authority having jurisdiction or a qualified third party, as determined by the Secretary, that the facility where the entity provides housing or services for homeless veterans using grant funds is in compliance with codes relevant to the operations and level of care provided, including applicable provisions of the most recently published version of the Life Safety Code or International Building Code and International Fire Code (or such versions of such codes that have been adopted as State or local codes by the jurisdiction in which the facility is located), licensing requirements, fire and safety requirements, and any other requirements in the jurisdiction in which the facility is located regarding the condition of the facility and the operation of the entity providing such supportive housing or services. For purposes of this paragraph, if a facility where a grant recipient or eligible entity provides housing or services for homeless veterans using grant funds is located in a jurisdiction without relevant code requirements, the Secretary shall determine code and inspection requirements to be applied to the facility.”.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to an application for a per diem payment under section 2012 of title 38, United States Code, submitted on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—Section 2065(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (6) as paragraph (7); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (5) the following new paragraph (6):

“(6) The Secretary’s evaluation of the safety and accessibility of facilities used to pro-

vide programs established by grant recipients or eligible entities under section 2011 and 2012 of this title, including the number of such grant recipients or eligible entities who have submitted a certification under section 2012(c)(1).”.

(c) TREATMENT OF CURRENT RECIPIENTS.—In the case of the recipient of a per diem payment under section 2012 of title 38, United States Code, that receives such a payment during the year in which this Act is enacted, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall require the recipient to submit the certification required under section 2012(c)(1) of such title, as amended by subsection (a)(1), by not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act. If the recipient fails to submit such certification by such date, the Secretary may not make any additional per diem payments to the recipient under such section 2012 until the recipient submits such certification.

SEC. 6. EXTENSION OF LOAN GUARANTY FEE FOR CERTAIN SUBSEQUENT LOANS.

(a) EXTENSION.—Section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) in clause (iii), by striking “October 1, 2017” and inserting “October 1, 2018”; and

(B) in clause (iv), by striking “October 1, 2017” and inserting “October 1, 2018”; and

(2) in subparagraph (C)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking “October 1, 2017” and inserting “October 1, 2018”; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking “October 1, 2017” and inserting “October 1, 2018”; and

(3) in subparagraph (D)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking “October 1, 2017” and inserting “October 1, 2018”; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking “October 1, 2017” and inserting “October 1, 2018”.

SEC. 7. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO OBTAIN CERTAIN INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY OR THE COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY.

Section 5317 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “September 30, 2016” and inserting “May 31, 2017”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENISHEK) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2072, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2072, as amended, the Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act.

This bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs inspector general—the IG—to determine whether appropriate action has been taken by the VA in response to an IG report concerning public health or patient safety. It would require the IG to notify the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees and the Secretary of any failure of VA to respond appropriately.

The bill would require the Secretary, following such notification, to report

the names of managers responsible for implementing the relevant action plan to the IG within 15 days and prohibit the IG from making such names public.

It would require the Secretary to promptly notify each responsible manager of an issue in a covered report, direct that responsible manager to resolve the issue, and provide such manager with counseling and a mitigation plan to resolve the issue.

It also would require the VA to include an evaluation of whether such manager took appropriate action to a covered report in his or her performance review, and it would prohibit the VA from paying a bonus or performance award to any responsible manager if an issue in a covered report is left unresolved.

Other provisions of the bill will authorize the VA for 3 years, beginning on October 1, 2014, to enter into a contract or agreement with certified medical foster homes to pay for long-term care for certain veterans already eligible for VA-paid nursing home care and require an eligible veteran to receive VA home health services as a component of such payment.

It would require per diem payment recipients under VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program to provide VA with certification of compliance with all relevant fire, safety, and building codes; and it would allow entities already receiving grants or assistance under the program to submit such certification within 2 years of enactment, require the VA to determine the code requirement for a facility in a location without a code requirement, and also to determine how such facility would be inspected.

It would require VA to include an accounting and evaluation of the safety and accessibility of facilities used for homeless veterans in the annual report on assistance to homeless veterans.

It would also extend the current rate of certain VA housing loan guarantee funding fees from October 1, 2017, to October 1, 2018, and extend VA's authority to receive information from the Internal Revenue Service for pension income verification purposes from September 30, 2016, to May 31, 2017.

H.R. 2072, as amended, was reported out of the full committee last year with full support and is fully offset.

I would like to offer my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the Members who cosponsored the provisions in this bill, particularly Chairman MILLER and Representative DAVID MCKINLEY from West Virginia, who we will be hearing from shortly.

I also commend Chairman MILLER; Ranking Member MICHAUD; the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health, JULIA BROWNLEY; and all the members of the Subcommittee on Health, for their hard work and leadership on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago today, our Nation commemorated Memorial Day in remembrance of the brave men and women throughout history who paid

the ultimate price in defense of our freedoms.

One of the best ways we can honor these heroes is to ensure that their fellow servicemembers—those they fought side by side with—receive the best possible health care when they return home.

Unfortunately, it has become painfully clear that the VA is not only failing to reach the standard, they are not even coming close. It is a sad legacy that I have seen firsthand as a VA surgeon for 20 years.

From my first day on this committee, we have been working to identify the problems at VA and provide solutions for our veterans.

It has been more than a year since we on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee first began investigating delays in care and seeking answers, and it has been 2 months since public awareness of these problems took off, after CNN highlighted the tragedy in Phoenix, allegations which were first brought to light by the committee; yet we still cannot get clear answers from the VA and are still waiting for key VA officials to be held accountable.

I am sick and tired of these bureaucrats and undersecretaries coming before us to say: We know there's a problem, and we're working on it. We take this seriously. We're going to have a fix in a little while.

Yet there never seems to be a fix. Veterans are dying. The time for excuses and delays is long past. The time for action is now.

Two weeks ago, the VA IG released an interim report on the alleged negligence and mismanagement at the Phoenix VA health care system.

In that report, the IG states that they have issued reports to call attention to problems in analyzing critical data for almost a decade and called for a system to monitor VA's corrective action. That system is exactly what we are creating today.

No longer will VA officials be able to hide behind excuses. Instead, with this bill, we will take bold steps toward ending the culture of mismanagement and complacency at VA.

When the VA concurs with an inspector general's recommendation on an issue that needs to be fixed and, indeed, nothing happens, who was the person responsible for following through on that fix?

Why is the fact that they didn't reply to an IG report and stated via a VA concurrence that an action would be completed, not punished? Why are they still getting bonuses if they don't comply? Why are they getting promotions for not getting the job done?

Anywhere else in America, these questions would already have been answered, but not in bureaucracies like VA. The Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act will correct this injustice.

Let me be clear. I know the people that are providing direct patient care for our veterans—the nurses and the

doctors—are good people who work hard, but their leadership has failed them, and it has failed our veterans, and it must stop now.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation and, in doing so, take a needed step to ensure that responsible individuals are held accountable for correcting any lapses in care that impact the health and well-being of our veterans.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in full support of H.R. 2072, as amended, the Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act.

This legislation addresses a number of concerns that have arisen during hearings and other forums that we have conducted during this Congress.

Too often, we have seen inspector general reports that find the same problem time and time again at VA medical centers, but nothing seems to change.

Recommendations are made, solutions are identified, plans are made, but there is no followthrough. Problems aren't fixed, processes aren't changed, and problems reoccur several times over.

□ 1715

This bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs inspector general to determine whether appropriate action has been taken by the Department in response to a report concerning public health or patient safety; and if he determines it has not, it authorizes the VA IG to alert the Secretary and Congress. This authority will increase accountability and will, hopefully, get the actions needed for things to change.

H.R. 2072, as amended, also addresses medical foster homes. It authorizes the Department to enter into contracts with medical foster homes to pay for long-term care for veterans who are already eligible for VA-paid nursing home care. We know that many veterans prefer to be cared for in a home-like setting rather than in an institution. This provision gives them that option.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has many homeless programs, and I am proud to say that we have done a great job in reducing the number of homeless veterans by 50 percent. Buildings in which these homeless veterans receive services must be held to the highest standard concerning safety. This bill would require per diem payment recipients under the VA's Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program to provide the VA with a certification of compliance with all relevant fire, safety, and building codes.

It is our commitment—no, our obligation—to ensure that veterans receive the best care and treatment available. This is whether we are fighting homelessness, ensuring the safety and security of facilities, or ensuring that when

a problem and a solution are identified they get addressed.

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

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Indiana, Mrs. JACKIE WALORSKI, my colleague on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and a member of the Subcommittee on Health.

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act, a bill I am proud to cosponsor.

As the recent scandals at the VA have clearly demonstrated, better accountability and oversight are needed at the VA. This bill will actually help provide better accountability and oversight by ensuring that the VA inspector general recommendations are fully implemented by the VA.

Currently, after the VA inspector general investigates a VA facility, the inspector general releases a list of recommendations for what the VA must do to correct the problems identified during the investigation. Oftentimes, these recommendations are never fully implemented by the VA.

This bill will provide additional tools to ensure that the VA implements the IG recommendations.

Specifically, this bill requires the VA Secretary to determine exactly which employees within the VA are responsible for implementing the suggested changes. This bill prevents the employees who are charged with implementing those recommendations from receiving a bonus until the problems identified by the IG have been addressed. This bill also makes it easier to fire employees who are refusing or failing to implement those IG recommendations.

The VA's failure to fully implement IG recommendations has contributed to the mismanagement and corruption we are seeing in the VA today. Think about it. If the VA had done a better job of implementing the IG's corrective actions, maybe we wouldn't be hearing about the things we are hearing about today—falsified records, secret waiting lists, deaths due to negligence. Our veterans certainly deserve better.

I will continue to work with my colleagues on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee in order to bring accountability to the VA and to protect the men and women who have sacrificed so much for our Nation. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan has 11½ minutes remaining.

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from West Virginia, Mr. DAVID MCKINLEY, my colleague on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. MCKINLEY. I commend the chairman for bringing this bill before us today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2072.

I would specifically like to talk about section 5 of the bill, which is based on legislation I previously introduced, the Safe Housing for Homeless Veterans Act. This is a modification of a bill that passed the House in 2012.

Currently, there are over 2,100 shelters for homeless veterans across the country. Unfortunately, some of these structures have been found to be unsafe for habitation. From 2006 to 2010, more than 1,900 fires had been reported in these structures. In the last decade alone, nearly 200 residents have been lost in unsafe shelters.

How can this slip through the cracks?

The answer is that, currently, there is no law mandating that VA homeless shelters meet building codes. There is only a loosely defined policy that is not universally followed. As a licensed professional engineer, I find this to be a shocking omission in the law governing our veterans' homeless program funds. This bill would require any organization that seeks funding from the VA for services to homeless veterans to have documentation that the shelter meets or exceeds building codes.

As a nation, it should be unacceptable for us to allow homeless veterans to be housed in unsafe conditions. In defense of our country, these men and women were put in harm's way. They should not be in doubt about their own safety now that they are back in this country.

Mr. Speaker, this is commonsense legislation that will ensure that our homeless veterans are in a safe environment while they work and struggle to get back to a normal life.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Madam Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. WALORSKI). The gentlewoman has 17 minutes remaining.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BENISHEK. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my colleague from New York (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of New York. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his leadership on this important issue.

Madam Speaker, I come to the House floor tonight to speak in support of the Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act, which I am proud to cosponsor.

You would think Congress wouldn't have to act to demand accountability from the VA on behalf of our veterans, but, sadly, as everyone knows, that is not the case with the current VA. The VA is supposed to provide service and benefits that all of our veterans have earned by protecting our freedom. Instead, what we have in too many cases is a bunch of bureaucrats in both Washington and in the local facilities who seem content to collect a paycheck and not serve the public.

Enough is enough.

The least we should expect is, when the inspector general issues a corrective action report about a public health or a patient safety problem, the VA employees would be held accountable for fixing it.

At the VA hospital in Buffalo, New York, which is right outside my district, the improper use of insulin pens resulted in some 700 veterans being potentially exposed to HIV and hepatitis. In this case, the IG issued a corrective action report. The public has every right to expect the VA to be held accountable for implementing a fix to make sure something like that never happens again. Without this legislation, we can't make that promise, and that is an insult to our veterans and to all Federal taxpayers.

This legislation also makes it easier to get rid of the bad apples at the VA so that issues with problem employees don't fester and overshadow the care being delivered by hardworking VA nurses and doctors.

Again, I want to thank Congressman BENISHEK for his work on this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to pass the bill.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I am reminded of the words of the first President of the United States, and I think they are worth repeating here today: the willingness with which our young men are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justifiable, should be directly proportionate as to how they perceive the veterans of early wars are treated and appreciated by their country.

I want everyone to know that I have been on this committee for 22 years. I am the longest-serving member on this committee, and I support the veterans 100 percent; but I remember in 2005 when the first servicemen started returning home and the Bush administration was underfunding the VA to the tune of \$1.5 billion. Congress had to pass a supplemental funding bill to pay for this shortfall. Because the administration was using old data, which was taken before all of these veterans returned for care, the number was wrong, and the veterans paid the price. Following that, a Democratic-leaning Congress increased the VA's budget to its highest level ever in the history of the United States, guaranteeing that veterans' health care would not be subject to the whims of politics and to advance appropriations on Capitol Hill.

I know many people don't remember that, because sometimes it is like we don't have any institutional memory around here.

I want to commend Secretary Shinseki. He did a yeoman's job as the Secretary. When each Vietnam veteran had to prove his case, he opened up the VA so that all of the veterans could come in. Certainly, the VA wasn't prepared for millions of additional veterans, but it was the right thing to do.

I can tell you that I have done my reconnaissance and that we are not involved in any scandals in Florida. When we had a problem in the Miami hospital—and this is a service that we should give the Secretary the authority to do—two small projects had to be stopped because they combined into one project—the operating facility. We were able to get it amended and get it taken care of so that the veterans in the Miami hospital were being cared for. In Orlando, we have been working on that VA hospital for over 25 years—a long time. The VA has not built any hospitals until recently, and now we are building six new hospitals. We had not built a VA hospital in the Veterans Administration for 15 years.

Yes, we are coming together in Congress and are doing what we should do for the veterans. Let me point out that I support this bill, but this bill should go to every agency, because every single agency ignores the reports that come in. So, if we are going to do our oversight, we should do it with all of the agencies. We should not let veterans think that we are not doing what we need to do to take care of them. It should be, as I would say, one team and one fight. We should be fighting for the veterans. Ever since I have been on this committee, it has been all for the veterans. It hasn't been about the politics that go on—you did not fill out my report. The important thing is that we are taking care of the veterans.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 2072, as amended, the Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act, and, in turn, to support our veteran heroes.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of New York). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENISHEK) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2072, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1730

AUTHORIZING USE OF ROTUNDA FOR CEREMONY COMMEMORATING 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ENACTMENT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res 100) authorizing the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 100

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),

SECTION 1. USE OF THE ROTUNDA OF THE CAPITOL FOR CEREMONY TO COMMEMORATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENACTMENT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964.

The rotunda of the United States Capitol is authorized to be used on June 24, 2014, for a ceremony to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the significant impact the Act had on the Civil Rights movement. Physical preparations for the conduct of the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as may be prescribed by the Architect of the Capitol.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER) and the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support today of House Concurrent Resolution 100, authorizing the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

It is certainly fitting that we take pause and recognize the passage of this historic landmark legislation that was passed into law and the events in our Nation that called upon its leaders to act all those years ago.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act was a major step forward for America that finally allowed our great Nation to truly live up to its creed found in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal.

188 years following the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, 99 years after the conclusion of the Civil War, and after decades of struggle by great leaders like Martin Luther King and so many Americans who fought valiantly, broad bipartisan majorities of both Houses of Congress came together to ensure equality for every American.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act was a very proud moment for the House of Representatives because America faced a time of choosing in 1964, and together, our Congress rallied and voted to strengthen individual protections and rights, and voted to end discrimination and segregation 50 years ago.

The Civil Rights Act still remains one of the most important pieces of legislation that has ever been debated in our Chamber and instituted across

our great Nation, not only for people of color or different nations of origin, but for each and every American, regardless of gender or socioeconomic status or their religious background.

Our Nation has a very vibrant and rich history, and that moment, 50 years ago, when many different people of various walks of life joined together and, in one voice, called for equality stands as one of the most monumental in our history.

Our Nation stood as a witness to those who led and participated in civil rights protests such as the March on Washington, sit-ins at lunch counters, and maintaining one's seat on a bus and refusing to move solely based on one's color of one's skin.

Fifty years ago, so many risked prison or worse to overcome huge odds and stand for what they truly believed must be changed. Their contributions reverberated across every State and every town and every home. Many took up roles as spokespersons, using their talents or what was available to them to make peaceful statements. Several have joined this Chamber as Members.

I see JOHN LEWIS has joined us today, and I am just very proud to be able to serve with a man of his historic background and distinguished service to our Nation, Mr. Speaker.

These people were pillars, absolutely pillars of strength. They used their courage to meet injustice head-on, and they are memorialized in the history that we carry forward. The actions of those individuals called on every citizen of our Nation to recognize and to listen to the struggles of others and to support the call for a change to our laws.

So many individuals from all walks of life rose up and lifted their voices to add to the call for change in our Nation, and they stood for all of those who were to come after them in the next generation and for the betterment of their lives.

They brought their concerns to the forefront of our political stage and they spoke for all of us, men, women, rich or poor.

In my home State of Michigan, Mr. Speaker, we were blessed to have so many great leaders in this movement, but one of those individuals was truly a civil rights icon who became a treasured member of our community. Rosa Parks inspired countless Americans with her grace, her dignity and strength, and through the simple yet profound act of refusing to give up her seat on a bus, she continued her advocacy for equality and freedom and inspired so many others who have carried the cause for individual rights forward to this very day.

She also has a connection to this House with another Member of Congress as well, a Michigan colleague of mine, JOHN CONYERS, who was also a recognized leader in the civil rights movement.

As we mark this 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, we remember the