

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4870, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015, AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENTS TO H.R. 3230, PAY OUR GUARD AND RESERVE ACT

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 628 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 628

Resolved, That (a) at any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4870) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived.

(b) During consideration of the bill for amendment—

(1) each amendment, other than amendments provided for in paragraph (2), shall be debatable for 10 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent and shall not be subject to amendment except as provided in paragraph (2);

(2) no pro forma amendment shall be in order except that the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees may offer up to 10 pro forma amendments each at any point for the purpose of debate; and

(3) the chair of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read.

(c) When the committee rises and reports the bill back to the House with a recommendation that the bill do pass, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. Upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 3230) making continuing appropriations during a Government shutdown to provide pay and allowances to members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who perform inactive-duty training during such period, with the Senate amendments thereto, and to consider in the House, without intervention of any point of order or question of consideration, a single motion offered by the chair of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs or his designee that the House: (1) concur in the Senate amendment to the title; and (2) concur in the Senate

amendment to the text with the amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. The Senate amendments and the motion shall be considered as read. The motion shall be debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the motion to adoption without intervening motion or demand for division of the question. If the motion is adopted, then it shall be in order for the chair of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs or his designee to move that the House insist on its amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3230 and request a conference with the Senate thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 628 provides for the consideration of H.R. 4870, the Department of Defense Appropriation Act for FY 2015 under a modified open rule.

This resolution will give Members on both sides of the aisle the opportunity to offer as many amendments to the bill as they wish, provided they comply with the rules of the House. It ensures that all Members can be active participants in shaping this bill. I think my colleague on the Rules Committee from Georgia described it best when he called this process a "festival of democracy."

The underlying legislation will give the Department of Defense the resources it needs to protect our country at home and abroad. I am encouraged that both sides of the aisle can usually unite around this cause. This bill is another example of that bipartisanship, as it was reported out of the committee unanimously.

The DOD Appropriations Act will also provide support for our warfighters, the 1 percent who risk all in defense of this Nation. It is critical that we give our troops the tools they need to carry out their mission abroad and the resources they need to support their families here at home. This legislation will fully fund a 1.8 percent pay increase for the military instead of the 1 percent raise requested by the President.

Secondly, this rule allows us to begin ironing out the differences between the House and the Senate attempts to address the VA scandal. While we have yet to uncover the full scope of this

scandal, it is apparent the problems are systemic to that institution.

There have been secret wait lists, unacceptable patient wait times, inadequate care, backlogs, a culture of retaliating against whistleblowers, and a serious lack of leadership, to name only a few of the issues plaguing the VA.

Tragically—tragically—veterans have died because of these problems. Mr. Speaker, it is disgraceful. The fact that a veteran died waiting for care from this country that they fought for, it is just tough to come to grips with that reality, but it is a reality.

As a father of three sons serving in the military, I am appalled, I am horrified, and I believe the American people are, too, as to the treatment of our veterans. Our veterans deserve a whole lot more, a whole heck of a lot more from their government than to have the government turn their back on them. They deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, and the House will make every effort to ensure that these problems never happen again.

One of the ways we can begin this effort is by giving the VA the authority to terminate employees for performing poorly, much like the private sector, much like I had as sheriff. It is what most employers have the ability to do. This will give the Secretary of the VA the ability to quickly remove bureaucrats who falsified, in this instance, wait times.

As we have come to find out with all other scandals this administration is engulfed in, it is difficult to hold people accountable in the executive branch, try as we might. Therefore, the provisions are sorely needed.

We can also require the VA to reimburse private health care for veterans who live more than 40 miles from a VA facility or those who have not received timely medical treatment at the VA.

□ 1230

This will allow our veterans to get the care that they need when they need it.

Finally, it is a bit discouraging that we even have to codify this into law, but we need to end the bonuses and awards at the VA for at least the next two fiscal years. Incredibly, the Phoenix VA—where veterans actually died waiting for care—felt it was appropriate to pay out \$10 million in bonuses over the last 3 years.

By prohibiting this practice, we can ensure that the funds we provide to the VA are going where they are needed: toward the care of our veterans and not to fatten bureaucrats' pockets.

I stand in strong support of this rule and the underlying legislation, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Florida, my friend Mr. NUGENT, for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. McGOVERN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, today, we debate the rule to consider two measures: H.R. 4870, the fiscal year 2015 Defense Appropriations bill; and the motion to go to conference on legislation addressing the problems at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I regret that this is not an open rule. Strict time limits have been placed on debate, which make it impossible to adequately discuss important issues. On issues regarding our national security, we should have ample time for discussion. This is hardly a festival of democracy, as my friend from Florida described this process—this is muzzling democracy. But less debate in a more closed process has become the signature of the Republican majority, I am sad to say.

I am pleased that legislation addressing the problems at the VA is moving forward in a timely way. However, I want to echo the statement of my friend from Maine, the ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. MICHAUD. The distinguished ranking member correctly pointed out in testimony presented to the Rules Committee that while this bill is important, it is shortsighted and should include many of the bipartisan measures that have been worked on at the Veterans' Affairs Committee. Like Mr. MICHAUD, I would prefer that this process be more open, and it is just another example of how this closed process denies many good bipartisan ideas from being considered and adopted.

Although I have serious concerns with the final Defense Appropriations product, I do want to thank Chairman FRELINGHUYSEN and Ranking Member VISCLOSKEY for working together in a bipartisan way on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, we take up this bill at a very serious moment in time. Every day we turn on our TVs and see conflict, war, and turmoil around the world. It is often hard to remember that most of the world is not at war.

I am very concerned that this bill continues funding the longest war in United States history: the war in Afghanistan. Even though the President has announced that he will draw down most of our combat forces by the end of this year, he has also said that he will keep 10,000 of our servicemen and -women in Afghanistan through 2016.

I believe strongly that Congress should debate and vote on approving the President's proposal to keep our uniformed men and women in harm's way for another 2 years. What are these 10,000 troops supposed to accomplish that 100,000 troops have not yet done? Our own generals were quoted in Monday's Washington Post saying that security is not the problem in Afghanistan, corruption is the problem. Ten thousand U.S. troops are now going to magically eliminate corruption in Afghanistan.

Just last month, at the end of May, during consideration of the NDAA,

Armed Services Ranking Member ADAM SMITH, Congressman WALTER JONES, and I attempted to offer a germane amendment that would have required the House to vote early next year on whether to maintain U.S. military forces in Afghanistan as the President has proposed.

Outrageously, the Republican leadership of this House refused to let us offer that amendment. We were denied the chance to debate one of the most important questions facing this Congress, the American people, our troops, and their families. So, as we get ready to deliver in this Defense Appropriations bill a \$79.4 billion blank check to the President to continue the war in Afghanistan, I call upon the Speaker and the leadership of this House to promise—to promise—that before the 113th Congress adjourns they will bring before this House a joint resolution whether to approve the President's proposal to maintain U.S. Armed Forces in Afghanistan through 2016.

Let the House debate it, and let the House vote on it, up or down. Let's do our jobs. I have no idea what the result of such a vote might be, but I do know that we owe that vote to our troops, their families, and to the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I am tired of endless wars. I am increasingly anxious as I listen to talk shows where politicians and pundits rattle their sabers and advocate for more full-scale war in Iraq, and many other places around the world.

It is especially galling to listen to the people who got us into this mess in Iraq in the first place. In *The Wall Street Journal* today, Dick Cheney actually had the audacity to write:

Rarely has a U.S. President been so wrong about so much at the expense of so many.

Are you kidding me? How pathetic. If it is possible to have less than zero credibility, then Dick Cheney has it on Iraq.

I believe in our military, Mr. Speaker. I believe in our men and women in uniform. I believe we should have a military second to none. I believe we shouldn't hesitate to use that military when our Nation is directly threatened and when the cause is serious enough to warrant the sacrifice of American lives.

But there are many problems—indeed most problems—in the world where sending the U.S. military is not the solution. The crisis facing Iraq has been years in the making. It is not happening because Iraq does not have a well-trained and well-equipped military. The United States took great pains to make sure that it is.

No, Mr. Speaker, Iraq is facing this current crisis because a corrupt, exclusive, power-hungry, sectarian government, headed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, deliberately chose to exclude ethnic and religious minorities and other factions of Iraqi society from government decisionmaking. Indeed, the Maliki government often went out

of its way to deliberately fan the flames of sectarianism and extend the power of the Shiite majority. Now it is reaping the whirlwind that it created, but in ways it likely never imagined.

If Iraq is to be saved from this crisis, then Iraqi leaders need to learn real fast how to lead—not just their own faction, but how to lead a Nation, to stand up for all their people, and to order their troops and their militias to protect all the Iraqi people: Sunni, Christian, Jewish, Bahai, north, south, and center. They know how to do it. They just have to choose to do it and pray it is not too late. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is time for the governments and powers in the region to stand up against the vicious militias and violent jihadists wreaking havoc in their own countries and among their neighbors. They are the ones who need to lead the way to a political solution to the challenges facing the entire region, or watch it go up in flames around them.

Several of our generals and commanders have commented in recent news articles that it is difficult for the U.S. to respond with air power or drones or special operations because the Iraqis rebelling against the central government are not just made up of extremist ISIS members, but they include local Sunnis and other disenfranchised Iraqis. So who do you target? How do you target them? Should you target groups at all?

If one thing has become clear after watching the crisis unfold and listening to all the pundits, the solution to the crisis in Iraq will depend on Iraqis, not on American bombs or firepower, let alone manpower.

Mr. Speaker, as we take up the Defense Appropriations bill, these matters weigh heavily on the minds of all of us who serve in this House. While we work to ensure that our uniformed men and women have what they need to carry out their duties and missions, let us also be clear that there are many problems confronting the world today that, unfortunately, our military simply cannot fix.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENISHEK).

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman.

Today, I rise in support of going to a conference committee with the Senate on VA reform. I am pleased that the Senate has followed our lead in swiftly passing legislation that will help the thousands of veterans waiting for care in a dysfunctional VA system.

While I don't agree with everything in the Senate bill, we all agree that our veterans deserve better than the VA has been giving them. Today, Congress will renew its commitment, on a bipartisan basis, to overhauling the VA and working to give our veterans the care they have earned.

I was a surgeon at the VA for 20 years treating our veterans, and today I am

grateful for the opportunity to continue that care by working to get a VA reform bill to the President's desk.

The bottom line is this: we cannot allow the VA to continue operating as a failed, bloated bureaucracy.

I believe we can give the VA the tools to be smarter, leaner, and much more responsive to the needs of our veterans. As a father of a veteran, I am dedicated to making this a reality. The time for excuses is over, the time for action is now.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I certainly appreciate the gentleman's very expansive assessment on the two underlying bills that we are about to address today.

Let me, first of all, say that I live in a community of a very major veterans hospital. In fact, I carried the legislation to name it after Dr. Michael E. DeBakey, who created the MASH units in World War II. We care about veterans, as do my colleagues across the aisle in both the House and the Senate.

I believe that it is important to move the Veterans' Access to Care Through Choice, Accountability, continue through the process, and to make sure that our veterans, after the many audits that we have received on the individual hospitals, know that there is a long period of time for those veterans newly accessing veterans health care.

Who does that include? That includes the recent returnees of Afghanistan veterans or Iraq veterans or even those veterans who have maintained good health and now find themselves in senior years, such as Vietnam veterans, and are coming to the system for the first time. It is intolerable for them to have to wait. I believe this is a very important initiative. If we are to send soldiers overseas or in the line of battle, as many are promoting now in light of the violence in Iraq, can we not without shame stand and provide them the kind of health care for them and their families?

I rise as well to comment on the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, and I am glad that there has been attention to PTSD. I intend to offer an amendment addressing resources for PTSD and resources for the epidemic of breast cancer among military women in the Appropriations Act.

But I do think it is important that again we have a prohibition against the transfer of Guantanamo detainees to the United States. That means that this facility continues to be open.

Then, of course, we have appropriations for the overseas contingency operations, for which the President has not yet made a request. But I think in the context of providing an increase in wages for our military personnel, I congratulate the chairman and ranking member for working so cooperatively.

But I raise a point in the backdrop of the crisis in Iraq, the ISIS, and all of

the disjunctured chords of calling for troops on the ground and to do airstrikes when in actuality we live in a world family, we live in a family with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan, we live in a family with NATO alliances, and we need to be able to work together to demand why an unworkable leader in Iraq, who was given an opportunity for a consensus government, never made any effort. Yes, these individuals are horrific, they are radicalized, they are vicious, they are vile. But there are Sunnis and Shiites who have worked together, there are Sunnis who are moderate, who want to be in the government, who want their children to have an opportunity for education, they want their young people to have jobs, they want an Iraq where they can pledge allegiance to their flag, a united Iraq. Where was the leadership, the selfish leadership of Maliki, to be able to do that—and now we must clean up his dirty kitchen? I think not.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. MCGOVERN. I yield an additional minute to the gentlewoman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the gentleman.

This must be a unified effort. Frankly, the President is right to be deliberative. We yet do not know, as I speak—there may be some news announcement—what his decision may be. But I do believe he has done the right thing by providing security and safety for the thousands of Americans that are in Baghdad and protecting our Embassy. That is the right thing to do. He has done the right thing by finding one of the perpetrators of Benghazi.

I would ask we do the right thing by not ignoring again another terrorist threat, Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria, that is fueling the flames, taking over municipalities, ready to pounce on places other than the northeast. These are threats that need the collective body of the United Nations—in this instance, the African Union, the ECOWAS, and all the states surrounding Nigeria, and, of course, the Nigerian government, of which we are friends with.

But I will say that America cannot continuously go it alone. We have given our treasure. Our young men and women never say “no.” When they are called to duty, they go, reservists and all.

I believe it is time to be responsible, respectful, and cautious in the way we move forward using our troops around the world. I ask my colleague to consider this as we deliberate on this appropriations bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the rule for H.R. 4860, the “Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2015” and the underlying bill.

I thank Chairman FRELINGHUYSEN and Ranking Member VISLOSKEY for their work on this legislation to the floor and for their devotion to the men and women of the Armed Forces who risk their lives to keep our nation safe.

I also want to extend thanks and appreciation to the men and women in and out of uniform who defend our nation and serve honor and distinction.

My work in the 18th Congressional District of Texas has allowed me the privilege of working with men and women in the military, the workers in aeronautics and space industries that contribute to our nation's defense as well as those in the Department of Defense who work in and around our nation's capital.

Through my work as a Member of Congress I know those who have served and returned home to a tough economy, struggles with physical disabilities and life changing injuries associated with their service to our nation.

The men and women who serve in the military are collection of statistics and data points, but individuals with names and faces—real people who depend on us to ensure they are the best trained, best equipped, and best led defense force in the world.

I appreciate the Committee's continued support for providing funding that assists military men and women's ability in operating in unconventional and irregular warfare and countering unconventional threats, supports capacity-building efforts with foreign military forces, and supports ongoing operations, as well as programs that will improve the health and well-being of the force, including sexual assault prevention.

This bill before us does much but not enough to recognize the sacrifices of the men and women serving in the military.

The fiscal year 2015 Department of Defense military personnel budget request was for \$128.95 billion. The Committee appropriated \$128.127 billion, nearly \$800 million less the request and less than the need.

While we watch Al Qaeda-inspired terrorists in Nigeria in the form of Boko Haram and ISIS in Iraq carry out terrible acts of violence, it is important to ensure that military has the resources needed to respond to any threat to our nation or its allies.

The bill recognizes that the military is changing due to the expanded roles for women who pursue careers in the armed services and it is essential that this change not lead to a diminution of rights or opportunities from what women would enjoy had they pursued a different career path.

That is why I will be offering an amendment (Jackson Lee No. 1) to provide \$5 million in increased funding and support for medical research related to breast cancer research. The identical amendment was offered and adopted by the House last year.

This additional funding will be made available for Triple Negative Breast Cancer research. TNBC is one of the most deadly forms of the disease that is extremely difficult to detect, and has an extremely high mortality rate.

I will also be offering an amendment (Jackson Lee Amendment No. 2) to reprogramming \$500,000 toward outreach programs targeting hard to reach veterans, especially those who are homeless or reside in underserved urban and rural areas, who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). An identical amendment was offered by me and adopted by the House last year.

PTSD, along with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), are the signature wounds of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The need for treatment and support of those afflicted will be with us long after the conflict ceases and our heroes have returned home.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. May I inquire of the gentleman as to how many more speakers he has.

Mr. NUGENT. I have none.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remaining time.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will insert in the RECORD a Statement of Administration Policy on this bill, but first I would just highlight a couple of points.

□ 1245

The administration strongly opposes House passage of H.R. 4870, as it now stands—and so do I—for a number of reasons. I want to highlight one. There are provisions in this bill that make it difficult, if not impossible, for the President to close down Guantanamo.

Let me read from the administration's statement in reference to some of these restrictive provisions that prevent them from shutting down something that I think does nothing to enhance our security:

Operating the detention facility at Guantanamo weakens our national security by draining resources, damaging our relationships with key allies and partners, and emboldening violent extremists. These provisions are unwarranted and threaten to interfere with the executive branch's ability to determine the appropriate disposition of detainees and its flexibility to determine when and where to prosecute Guantanamo detainees based on the facts and circumstances of each case and our national security interests.

There are other issues as well, but that is something that Members ought to know. This bill does contain these extraneous provisions.

Let me close by saying to my colleagues that it is no secret to people in this House that I believe that the war in Afghanistan—the longest war in U.S. history—should be brought to a close.

It is also no secret that I have expressed my frustration loudly on this House floor over the fact that we have not been given the opportunity to discuss that war in an open debate.

When the defense authorization bill came up before us, a germane bipartisan amendment was offered that would give Members of Congress the ability to vote on whether we should continue to maintain troops there or not. That is an important question. That is an important issue, certainly, as we discuss the defense authorization and the Defense Appropriations bills.

We were denied that opportunity in this House of Representatives, which my friend is saying is a festival of democracy, on the most important issue that is confronting this country right now, the fact that we are at war. We were denied the opportunity to be able to deliberate on that issue.

As I said in my opening statement, we have Members of Congress and pun-

ditions that are rattling sabers and trying to get us recommitted to a war in Iraq. I think that would be a horrible mistake.

I want to close by making a plea to the leadership of this House to let us discuss these issues openly on the House floor. Let us deliberate on those issues. Let us live up to our responsibilities, as Members of Congress, to have a role in some of these discussions. Let's not abdicate that responsibility.

In fact, it has become a habit with this leadership to just kind of brush aside those issues, to allow no debate, to allow no deliberation. I find that appalling.

When you go to Walter Reed and talk to those veterans who have been wounded and who suffered enormously as a result of their service, when you talk to their parents and their loved ones, we owe those men and women a hell of a lot better than they have received on this House floor. The least we can do is deliberate on those issues.

I make a plea to this leadership to let us talk about these things. This is important. If this isn't important, I don't know what is.

I oppose the final passage of the bill for a number of reasons, but I do want to commend the chairman and the ranking member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee for their hard work, as well as their staff, and I yield back the balance of my time.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 4870—DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015

(Rep. Rogers, R-KY, June 17, 2014)

The Administration strongly opposes House passage of H.R. 4870, making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes. The Administration appreciates the bill's continued support for providing funding that assists the warfighter in operating in unconventional and irregular warfare and countering unconventional threats, supports capacity-building efforts with foreign military forces, and supports on-going operations, as well as the support for programs that would improve the health and well-being of the force, including sexual assault prevention. While there are a number of areas of agreement with the bill, the Administration has serious concerns with provisions that would constrain the ability of the Department of Defense (DOD) to align military capabilities and force structure with the President's defense strategy and to reduce unneeded costs.

The Administration will soon submit a budget amendment to request funding for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). This request will reflect the President's decision on troop levels in Afghanistan and include funding for the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan, DOD's supporting presence in the broader region, as well as the recently proposed Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund and European Reassurance Initiative. The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress on this request.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress on an orderly appropriations process that supports economic growth, opportunity, and our national security while avoiding unnecessary fiscal crises that hold the Nation's economy back. This

process should include reconciling funding levels for individual appropriations bills to promote economic growth and national security, and passing bills without ideological provisions that could undermine an orderly appropriations process.

The President's fiscal year (FY) 2015 Budget provides a roadmap for making investments to accelerate economic growth, expand opportunity for all hard-working Americans, and ensure our national security, while continuing to improve the Nation's long-term fiscal outlook. At the same time, the Budget takes key steps to both continue and enhance the Administration's efforts to deliver a Government that is more effective, efficient, and supportive of economic growth.

The President's Budget adheres to the FY 2015 spending levels agreed to in the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) and shows the choices the President would make at those levels. However, the levels agreed to in the BBA are already below FY 2007 funding levels adjusted for inflation and are not sufficient—either in FY 2015 or beyond—to ensure the Nation is achieving its full potential. For that reason, the Budget also includes a fully paid for Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative—evenly split between defense and non-defense priorities—that presents additional investments to grow the economy, expand opportunity, and enhance security. The Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative would provide \$26.4 billion for DOD to make progress on restoring readiness lost under sequestration, accelerate modernization of key weapons systems, and improve DOD facilities across the United States.

In the Administration's view, the risk to the Nation will grow significantly should the Congress not accept reforms proposed in the FY 2015 Budget. Without congressional support for meaningful compensation reforms and other cost saving measures, force structure changes, and flexibility to manage weapon systems and infrastructure, there is an increased risk to the Department's ability to implement the President's defense strategy, which will contribute to a military that will be less capable of responding effectively to future challenges.

The Administration would like to take this opportunity to share additional views regarding the Committee's version of the bill and urges the Congress to resolve these issues during the FY 2015 appropriations process.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Prohibition on Retirement, Divestiture, Realignment, or Transfer of Aircraft. The Administration appreciates the Committee's support of the Air Force's A-10 fleet divestiture plans. Divesting the A-10 fleet will help the Air Force meet near-term readiness and achieve long-term modernization objectives. However, the Administration strongly objects to provisions that restrict the Department's ability to retire other weapon systems and aircraft platforms in accordance with current strategic and operational plans. These divestitures are critical and would provide funding for higher priority programs.

Specifically, the Administration strongly objects to sections 8122, 8133, and 8136 of the bill, consistent with previously stated objections to provisions in the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act. Section 8122 of the bill would prohibit the cancellation or modification of the C-130 Avionics Modernization Program (AMP). DOD plans to replace the C-130 AMP with a less expensive, fully capable alternative that has been validated by independent study to ensure that the fleet continues to meet future requirements. Section 8133 would prevent the Air Force from using funds to divest or to disestablish any units of the active or reserve

component associated with E-3 airborne warning and control system aircraft. This provision would force the Air Force to take funding from higher priority defense needs in order to operate, sustain, and maintain aircraft that are not needed and are unaffordable in today's constrained fiscal environment. Section 8136, which limits the transfer of Apaches from the Army National Guard to the active Army, would result in gaps in the Army's armed reconnaissance units that would require approximately \$4 billion to fill. As DOD transitions out of a decade of war, aircraft force structure changes are necessary to shape a force that is more agile and ready to respond to the requirements of the defense strategy.

Compensation Reform. To achieve a proper balance between DOD's obligation to provide competitive pay and benefits to servicemembers and its responsibility to provide troops with the training and equipment they need to do their jobs, it is imperative to slow the growth of basic pay and housing allowances, modernize military healthcare, and reform how commissaries operate. The Administration strongly urges the Congress to support these reforms, which would save \$2 billion in FY 2015 and \$31 billion through FY 2019. While the Committee restored funding to offset the FY 2015 savings associated with proposals that were not supported, the rejection of these proposals will likely require DOD to find over \$27 billion in additional reductions to readiness, modernization, and force structure for FY 2016 through FY 2019. The Administration looks forward to the recommendations of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission on long-term compensation and retirement issues, but delaying DOD's holistic package of proposed initial changes will only result in increased costs, degradation in training and modernization efforts, and risks to the force.

Guantánamo Detainee Restrictions. The Administration strongly objects to sections 8107, 8108, 8139, and 9015 of the bill, each of which would restrict the Executive Branch's ability to manage the Guantánamo detainee population. The President has repeatedly objected to the inclusion of these or similar provisions in prior legislation and this year has reiterated his call to the Congress to lift such restrictions. As the President said in his State of the Union Address, "this needs to be the year Congress lifts the remaining restrictions on detainee transfers and we close the prison at Guantánamo Bay." Operating the detention facility at Guantánamo weakens our national security by draining resources, damaging our relationships with key allies and partners, and emboldening violent extremists. These provisions are unwarranted and threaten to interfere with the Executive Branch's ability to determine the appropriate disposition of detainees and its flexibility to determine when and where to prosecute Guantánamo detainees based on the facts and circumstances of each case and our national security interests. Sections 8107, 8139, and 9015 would, moreover, violate constitutional separation-of-powers principles under certain circumstances.

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC). The Administration strongly objects to the proposed \$4.8 million reduction in funds that would support a BRAC 2017 round. This impairs the ability of the Executive Branch to plan for contingencies or make other needed adjustments that would improve military effectiveness and efficiency. The Administration strongly urges the Congress to provide the BRAC authorization and funding as requested, which would allow DOD to rightsize its infrastructure while providing important assistance to affected communities. Without authorization for a new round of BRAC, DOD

will not be able to properly align the military's infrastructure with the needs of our evolving force structure, which is critical to ensuring that limited resources are available for the highest priorities of the warfighter and national security.

Limitation on Funds Available to Procure Equipment. The Administration objects to section 8116 of the bill which would continue and expand prohibitions on using funds to procure certain equipment, including maintenance for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). This section would severely limit DOD's ability to sustain military-use helicopters and other equipment that is already in ANSF's inventory and is critical to their ability to continue the fight against extremists who threaten the security of Afghanistan, the United States, and our allies. If enacted, this section could force DOD to seek more costly alternatives than contracting with the Russian helicopter industry to sustain ANSF aircraft, increasing costs to the U.S. taxpayer.

Liquid Rocket Engine Development. The Administration objects to the unrequested \$220 million for a new rocket engine. An independent study recently concluded that such a program would take eight years to field and could cost \$1.5 billion with another \$3 billion needed to develop a suitable launch vehicle. This approach prematurely commits significant resources and would not reduce our reliance on Russian engines for at least a decade. With a goal of promptly reducing our reliance on Russian technology, the Administration is evaluating several cost-effective options including public-private partnerships with multiple awards that will drive innovation, stimulate the industrial base, and reduce costs through competition. The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress on this issue once the analysis is complete.

Limitations on Phased Modernization of Weapon Systems. While appreciative of the bill's overall support for cruiser modernization, the Administration objects to the unnecessary limitations on the current plan, which would preclude modernization in the most cost effective and timely manner and may hinder the Navy's ability to retain 11 modernized cruisers into the 2040s.

Reducing the Force Structure at Lajes Air Force Base. The Administration objects to section 8123 of the bill, which would prohibit the Secretary of the Air Force from reducing the force structure at Lajes Air Force Base and is duplicative of section 341 of the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act. Because DOD is nearing completion of the section 341 requirements for Lajes, duplicating and amplifying these requirements is unnecessarily onerous.

Littoral Combat Ship (LCS). The Administration objects to finding reductions for the LCS program. The reductions leave the program with insufficient funds to procure three LCS in FY 2015, delaying the delivery of much needed capability to the Fleet. Deferring additional ships into FY 2016 would compound the already significant challenges the Navy faces in funding the shipbuilding account in a fiscally constrained environment while increasing overall costs to the Navy and increasing risk to the industrial base, including sub-tier suppliers.

Reallocation of Missile Defense Agency Funding. The Administration objects to the reallocation of \$370 million from the FY 2015 Budget request. These changes would reduce capability and capacity, and may possibly hinder the Department's ability to effectively manage the Agency. Specifically, this reallocation of funds would delay critical engineering, testing, command and control, and weapons system development, and would affect homeland and regional commitments,

including a likely delay of one year for the European Phased Adaptive Approach Phase 3—a national commitment to our allies. Also, the reduction in advanced procurement funding for the Standard Missile-3 IB could increase its planned procurement cost by about \$140 million.

Opposition to Unrequested Funding. The Administration objects to the billions of dollars provided for items DOD did not request and does not need, such as additional EA-18G aircraft, High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles, M-1 Abrams upgrades, and a significantly larger amount of funding for the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account than provided in recent years. The Administration is also concerned that section 8006 of the bill makes spending on these and other unnecessary items statutorily required, diverting scarce resources from more important defense programs and limiting the Secretary's flexibility to manage the Department efficiently.

Classified Programs. The Administration looks forward to providing its views on the adjustments contained in the Classified Annex to the bill once it becomes available.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress as the FY 2015 appropriations process moves forward.

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

Mr. Speaker, the rule before us allows for an open and transparent consideration of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2015. Chairman FRELINGHUYSEN has done an excellent job in the appropriations area, working with his minority member, to craft this appropriations bill to fit the needs of our military. They have done an excellent job.

Providing for the common defense is a constitutional responsibility that we share with the President. This Congress shares that with the President. Without a strong defense, we have no way of ensuring that our liberties we enjoy and the safety of our citizens from threats, both foreign and domestic, keep us safe here at home.

The underlying legislation helps fulfill Congress' responsibility to provide for our national defense by funding the Armed Forces and addressing critical readiness gaps.

The DOD Appropriations bill provides \$1 million to be used exclusively for improving military readiness. That commitment is vital because we need to give our warfighters the best possible chance to complete their mission and make it home safe and sound.

As a father of three soldiers, I can only tell you that the ability to train and equip our men and women that have volunteered to serve this country is the utmost responsibility that this country has to them to make sure that they have the ability to come back. We need to give them the best possible fighting chance to come home to their families.

As a father who has sons serving in both Iraq and Afghanistan, we have got to make sure this country provides the best possible military, second to none in the world.

We want to make sure that our men and women have the ability to have the medical treatment that they so rightly

deserve when they come back after serving their country. I think that we have taken the steps in the Rules Committee to do just that.

This rule and this appropriations bill actually rejects, again, the President's proposed cuts to TRICARE. Once again, in the last 4 years, TRICARE has come under fire.

We don't believe that we should balance the budget on the backs of our men and women who fight for this country. We need to make sure of our priorities that we owe our troops, which is a debt we can never repay, but you don't repay it by cutting their benefits, and you don't repay it by cutting their pay, you don't repay it by ignoring them as it relates to when they come back with a service-connected disability, go in front of the VA, and be denied the service they rightfully earned.

Finally, the rule provides for the motions necessary to go to conference with the Senate because, if you remember right, the Senate passed a bill, the House passed a bill as it relates to the VA, in regards to trying to fix the VA. It is a good first step.

Those bills have already been passed. Now, it is the opportunity to provide an opportunity to conference with the Senate to come up with a compromise that puts our veterans first—not last, not behind bureaucrats, but in front of the line, not the back of the line.

We can quickly resolve those issues between the House and the Senate by going to conference, and that is what this bill helps us do.

I think we all agree the treatment of our veterans has been shameful. It is a complete disservice to those who risked their lives for us. The severity of this issue, the sheer gravity of it, demands input from both Chambers.

We have heard about how keeping GTMO open makes us less safe. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that releasing five members of Taliban's senior leadership positions makes America less safe—which we just did, without input from this House or without input from the Senate, as required by law. It was just done.

Are we safer because we released these five Taliban leaders? They are not the trigger pullers. They are not the guys on the ground. These are the guys that actually helped design and implement the Taliban and the attacks on us. Some of those leaders are purported to be members of that group that helped design and implement those.

I agree with my good friend from Massachusetts. We agree on a lot of issues, particularly as it relates to our military and open-ended conflicts. We do agree on that.

Having sons that have served both in Iraq and Afghanistan, I want to make sure that this body has a say in what happens. I want to make sure this body hears from the President in a cohesive way in regards to what he expects to accomplish and what our mission is.

I have two sons in Iraq in the conflict. I happened to travel there and got to see my two kids. The night that I was there, a U.S. base was struck by an IRAM, which is an Iranian rocket warhead.

The only place you get that is from Iran. You don't find it on the shelf at a store. Iran provided a warhead that killed five troops the night I was in Iraq. They were part of the division where my youngest son served.

Here we are, talking about working with Iran, who has been the most destabilizing country in the world, as it relates to Afghanistan and Iraq. This is a sectarian issue going on between the Sunnis and the Shiites.

I don't know what the best way forward is, but I want to hear from the President what his plan is. We sent more troops to Iraq. I want to hear specifically what we expect to get out of that. What do we expect?

I will tell you that the ISIL in the media, they want to hurt America. They are the ones that are advancing towards Baghdad. They have the ability, from what I am reading in the press, to reach out and touch America.

Do we have a vested interest in seeing what happens in Iraq? I believe we do, but I want to hear from this President about how you move forward and how you fix something that my good friend from Massachusetts talked about, the corrupt government within Iraq.

We have some of the same issues in Afghanistan. How do we do that?

I think he hit it on the head. The people of those countries have got to stand up and take control. The problem is we don't want terrorists to take control. The ISIL is a terrorist organization; there is no doubt about it.

Lastly, I just want to touch on the conference allowing us to give instructions to conferees as relates to the Senate. We want to make sure that that gets done—and it gets done right and done in a timely fashion. It is amazing that the Senate, when motivated, can do the right thing and move a piece of legislation through.

I support this straightforward rule and the much-needed underlying legislation. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 244, nays 163, not voting 24, as follows:

[Roll No. 315]

YEAS—244

Aderholt	Graves (GA)	Petri
Amash	Graves (MO)	Pittenger
Amodei	Griffin (AR)	Pitts
Bachmann	Griffith (VA)	Poe (TX)
Barber	Grimm	Pompeo
Barletta	Guthrie	Posey
Barr	Harper	Price (GA)
Barton	Harris	Reed
Benishkek	Hartzler	Reichert
Bentivolio	Hastings (WA)	Renacci
Bilirakis	Heck (NV)	Ribble
Bishop (GA)	Hensarling	Rice (SC)
Bishop (UT)	Herrera Beutler	Rigell
Black	Holding	Roby
Blackburn	Hudson	Roe (TN)
Boustany	Huelskamp	Rogers (AL)
Brady (TX)	Huizenga (MI)	Rogers (KY)
Braley (IA)	Hultgren	Rogers (MI)
Brooks (AL)	Hunter	Rohrabacher
Brooks (IN)	Hurt	Rokita
Broun (GA)	Issa	Rooney
Brownley (CA)	Jenkins	Ros-Lehtinen
Buchanan	Johnson (OH)	Roskam
Bucshon	Johnson, Sam	Ross
Burgess	Jolly	Rothfus
Bustos	Jones	Royce
Byrne	Jordan	Ruiz
Calvert	Joyce	Runyan
Camp	Kelly (PA)	Ryan (WI)
Campbell	King (IA)	Salmon
Capito	King (NY)	Sanford
Carney	Kingston	Scalise
Carter	Kinzinger (IL)	Schneider
Cassidy	Kline	Schock
Chabot	Kuster	Schweikert
Chaffetz	Labrador	Scott, Austin
Coble	LaMalfa	Scott, David
Coffman	Lamborn	Sensenbrenner
Cole	Lance	Sessions
Collins (GA)	Latham	Shea-Porter
Collins (NY)	Latta	Shimkus
Conaway	Lipinski	Shuster
Cook	LoBiondo	Simpson
Cotton	Loeb sack	Sinema
Crenshaw	Long	Smith (MO)
Culberson	Lucas	Smith (NE)
Daines	Luetkemeyer	Smith (NJ)
Davis, Rodney	Lummis	Smith (TX)
Denham	Maffei	Southerland
Dent	Marchant	Stewart
DeSantis	Marino	Stivers
DesJarlais	Massie	Stockman
Diaz-Balart	McAllister	Stutzman
Duckworth	McCarthy (CA)	Terry
Duffy	McCaul	Thompson (PA)
Duncan (SC)	McClintock	Thornberry
Duncan (TN)	McHenry	Tiberi
Ellmers	McIntyre	Tipton
Enyart	McKinley	Turner
Farenthold	McMorris	Upton
Fincher	Rodgers	Valadao
Fitzpatrick	Meadows	Walberg
Fleischmann	Meehan	Wagner
Fleming	Messer	Walberg
Flores	Mica	Walden
Forbes	Miller (FL)	Walorski
Fortenberry	Miller (MI)	Walz
Fox	Mullin	Weber (TX)
Franks (AZ)	Murphy (FL)	Webster (FL)
Frelinghuysen	Murphy (PA)	Wenstrup
Garcia	Neugebauer	Westmoreland
Gardner	Noem	Whitfield
Garrett	Nolan	Williams
Gerlach	Nugent	Wilson (SC)
Gibbs	Nunes	Wittman
Gibson	Olson	Wolf
Gingrey (GA)	Owens	Womack
Gohmert	Palazzo	Woodall
Goodlatte	Paulsen	Yoder
Gosar	Pearce	Yoho
Gowdy	Perry	Young (AK)
Granger	Peters (CA)	Young (IN)

NAYS—163

Barrow (GA)	Carson (IN)	Connolly
Bass	Cartwright	Conyers
Becerra	Castor (FL)	Cooper
Bishop (NY)	Castro (TX)	Courtney
Blumenauer	Chu	Crowley
Bonamici	Cicilline	Cuellar
Brady (PA)	Clark (MA)	Cummings
Brown (FL)	Clarke (NY)	Davis (CA)
Butterfield	Clay	Davis, Danny
Capps	Cleaver	DeFazio
Capuano	Clyburn	DeGette
Cárdenas	Cohen	Delaney

DeLauro	Kilmer	Pocan
DelBene	Kind	Polis
Deutch	Kirkpatrick	Price (NC)
Dingell	Langevin	Quigley
Doggett	Rahall	Rahall
Doyle	Larson (CT)	Richmond
Edwards	Lee (CA)	Royal-Allard
Ellison	Levin	Ruppersberger
Engel	Lewis	Rush
Eshoo	Lofgren	Sánchez, Linda
Esty	Lowenthal	T.
Farr	Lowey	Sanchez, Loretta
Fattah	Lujan Grisham	Sarbanes
Foster	(NM)	Schakowsky
Frankel (FL)	Luján, Ben Ray	Schiff
Fudge	(NM)	Schrader
Gabbard	Lynch	Schwartz
Gallego	Maloney,	Scott (VA)
Grayson	Carolyn	Serrano
Green, Al	Maloney, Sean	Sewell (AL)
Green, Gene	Matheson	Sherman
Grijalva	Matsui	Sires
Gutiérrez	McCarthy (NY)	Slaughter
Hahn	McCollum	Smith (WA)
Hanabusa	McDermott	Speier
Hastings (FL)	McGovern	Swalwell (CA)
Heck (WA)	McNerney	Takano
Higgins	Michaud	Thompson (CA)
Himes	Moore	Thompson (MS)
Hinojosa	Moran	Tierney
Holt	Nadler	Titus
Honda	Napolitano	Tonko
Hoyer	Neal	Tsongas
Huffman	Negrete McLeod	Van Hollen
Israel	O'Rourke	Vargas
Jackson Lee	Pallone	Veasey
Jeffries	Pascrell	Vela
Johnson (GA)	Pastor (AZ)	Velázquez
Johnson, E. B.	Payne	Visclosky
Kaptur	Pelosi	Wasserman
Keating	Perlmutter	Schultz
Kelly (IL)	Peters (MI)	Waters
Kennedy	Peterson	Wilson (FL)
Kildee	Pingree (ME)	Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—24

Bachus	Garamendi	Miller, Gary
Beatty	Hall	Miller, George
Bera (CA)	Hanna	Mulvaney
Bridenstine	Horsford	Nunnelee
Cantor	Lankford	Rangel
Costa	McKeon	Ryan (OH)
Cramer	Meeks	Waxman
Crawford	Meng	Welch

□ 1322

Ms. KUSTER, Mr. LIPINSKI and Ms. SHEA-PORTER changed their vote from “nay” to “yea.”

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated against:

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained today and missed roll No. 315. Had I been present, I would have voted “nay.”

PAY OUR GUARD AND RESERVE ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 628, I call up the bill (H.R. 3230) making continuing appropriations during a government shutdown to provide pay and allowances to members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who perform inactive-duty training during such period, with the Senate amendments thereto, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will designate the Senate amendments.

The text of the Senate amendments is as follows:

Senate amendments:

H.R. 3230

Resolved, That the bill from the House of Representatives (H.R. 3230) entitled “An Act making continuing appropriations during a Government shutdown to provide pay and allowances to members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who perform inactive-duty training during such period.”, do pass with the following amendments:

Strike all after the enacting clause, and insert in lieu thereof:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) *SHORT TITLE*.—This Act may be cited as the “Veterans’ Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014”.

(b) *TABLE OF CONTENTS*.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. *Short title; table of contents.*

TITLE I—IMPROVEMENT OF SCHEDULING SYSTEM FOR HEALTH CARE APPOINTMENTS

Sec. 101. *Independent assessment of the scheduling of appointments and other health care management processes of the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Sec. 102. *Technology task force on review of scheduling system and software of the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

TITLE II—TRAINING AND HIRING OF HEALTH CARE STAFF

Sec. 201. *Treatment of staffing shortage and bi-annual report on staffing of medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Sec. 202. *Clinic management training for managers and health care providers of the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Sec. 203. *Use of unobligated amounts to hire additional health care providers for the Veterans Health Administration.*

TITLE III—IMPROVEMENT OF ACCESS TO CARE FROM NON-DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PROVIDERS

Sec. 301. *Expanded availability of hospital care and medical services for veterans through the use of contracts.*

Sec. 302. *Transfer of authority for payments for hospital care, medical services, and other health care from non-Department providers to the Chief Business Office of the Veterans Health Administration of the Department.*

Sec. 303. *Enhancement of collaboration between Department of Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Service.*

Sec. 304. *Enhancement of collaboration between Department of Veterans Affairs and Native Hawaiian health care systems.*

Sec. 305. *Sense of Congress on prompt payment by Department of Veterans Affairs.*

TITLE IV—HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Sec. 401. *Improvement of access of veterans to mobile vet centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Sec. 402. *Commission on construction projects of the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Sec. 403. *Commission on Access to Care.*

Sec. 404. *Improved performance metrics for health care provided by Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Sec. 405. *Improved transparency concerning health care provided by Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Sec. 406. *Information for veterans on the credentials of Department of Veterans Affairs physicians.*

Sec. 407. *Information in annual budget of the President on hospital care and medical services furnished through expanded use of contracts for such care.*

Sec. 408. *Prohibition on falsification of data concerning wait times and quality measures at Department of Veterans Affairs.*

Sec. 409. *Removal of Senior Executive Service employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs for performance.*

TITLE V—HEALTH CARE RELATED TO SEXUAL TRAUMA

Sec. 501. *Expansion of eligibility for sexual trauma counseling and treatment to veterans on inactive duty training.*

Sec. 502. *Provision of counseling and treatment for sexual trauma by the Department of Veterans Affairs to members of the Armed Forces.*

Sec. 503. *Reports on military sexual trauma.*

TITLE VI—MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES

Sec. 601. *Authorization of major medical facility leases.*

Sec. 602. *Budgetary treatment of Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facilities leases.*

TITLE VII—VETERANS BENEFITS MATTERS

Sec. 701. *Expansion of Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship.*

Sec. 702. *Approval of courses of education provided by public institutions of higher learning for purposes of All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program and Post-9/11 Educational Assistance conditional on in-State tuition rate for veterans.*

TITLE VIII—APPROPRIATION AND EMERGENCY DESIGNATIONS

Sec. 801. *Appropriation of emergency amounts.*

Sec. 802. *Emergency designations.*

TITLE I—IMPROVEMENT OF SCHEDULING SYSTEM FOR HEALTH CARE APPOINTMENTS

SEC. 101. INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHEDULING OF APPOINTMENTS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) *INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT*.—

(1) *ASSESSMENT*.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into a contract with an independent third party to assess the following:

(A) The process at each medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs for scheduling appointments for veterans to receive hospital care, medical services, or other health care from the Department.

(B) The staffing level and productivity of each medical facility of the Department, including the following:

(i) The case load of each health care provider of the Department.

(ii) The time spent by each health care provider of the Department on matters other than the case load of such health care provider, including time spent by such health care provider as follows:

(I) At a medical facility that is affiliated with the Department.

(II) Conducting research.

(III) Training or overseeing other health care professionals of the Department.

(C) The organization, processes, and tools used by the Department to support clinical documentation and the subsequent coding of inpatient services.

(D) The purchasing, distribution, and use of pharmaceuticals, medical and surgical supplies,