

the Cherokee Freedmen. But Republicans have consistently refused to acknowledge this tragic history and do something to bring justice to this situation. And this bill is no exception. During the Committee markup, they rejected my amendment, which would have made NAHASDA funding to the Cherokee contingent on full recognition of the Freedmen as citizens of the Cherokee Nation.

My position on this issue remains steadfast, and I cannot support continued silence in the face of such injustice. That is why I will not support this bill unless it grants the Freedmen the justice they deserve.

I am also withholding my support from this bill because it contains a provision that would seriously undercut the central goal of providing affordable housing for low-income Native Americans. This bill would waive a long-standing tenet of affordable housing known as the "Brooke Rule," which states that the maximum rent paid by assisted households must be no more than 30 percent of their income.

The Brooke Rule is a basic safeguard that exists in the public housing and Section 8 programs. It ensures that federally subsidized housing is affordable for the lowest-income households. By stripping away this basic safeguard, this bill would make low-income Native Americans vulnerable to unlimited increases in rent without any kind of hardship exemptions in place.

This is simply unacceptable. It is a basic purpose of NAHASDA to provide housing for low-income Native Americans, and this provision would seriously undermine that purpose. Republicans may not be concerned about the plight of the lowest-income Native Americans who rely on NAHASDA programs, but they are at the top of my concerns when it comes to this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank Ms. MOORE, Mr. HECK and Mr. KILDEE for their efforts to reach a bipartisan agreement on this bill. However, I cannot support this reauthorization bill in its current form for all of the reasons I have stated.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 360, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET PLANNING REFORM ACT OF 2015

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 216) to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a Future-Years Veterans Program and a quadrennial veterans review, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Chief Strategy Offi-

cer, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 216

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Planning Reform Act of 2015".

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANS TO IMPROVE PROGRAMS AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS.

(a) FUTURE-YEARS VETERANS PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 119. Future-Years Veterans Program

"(a) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary shall submit to Congress each year, at or about the time that the President's budget is submitted to Congress pursuant to section 1105(a) of title 31, a Future-Years Veterans Program reflecting the estimated expenditures and proposed appropriations included in that budget. Any such Future-Years Veterans Program shall cover the fiscal year with respect to which the budget is submitted and at least the four succeeding fiscal years.

"(b) CONSISTENCY.—(1) The Secretary shall ensure that amounts described in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2) for any fiscal year are consistent with amounts described in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph for that fiscal year.

"(2) Amounts referred to in paragraph (1) are the following:

"(A) The amounts specified in program and budget information submitted to Congress by the Secretary in support of expenditure estimates and proposed appropriations in the budget submitted to Congress by the President under section 1105(a) of title 31 for any fiscal year, as shown in the Future-Years Veterans Program submitted pursuant to subsection (a).

"(B) The total amounts of estimated expenditures and proposed appropriations necessary to support the programs, projects, and activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs included pursuant to paragraph (5) of section 1105(a) of title 31 in the budget submitted to Congress under that section for any fiscal year.

"(c) CONTENTS.—The Future-Years Veterans Program under subsection (a) shall set forth the five-year plan of the Department to address the commitment of the United States to veterans and the resources necessary to meet that commitment and shall be developed and updated, as appropriate, annually by the Secretary. Each Future-Years Veterans Program shall include an explanation of—

"(1) the information that was used to develop program planning guidance for the Future-Years Veterans Program; and

"(2) how the resource allocations included in the Future-Years Veterans Program correlate to such five-year strategy.

"(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on a publically accessible Internet website of the Department each Future-Years Veterans Program submitted pursuant to subsection (a)."

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 118 the following new item:

"119. Future-Years Veterans Program."

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 119 of title 38, United States Code, as added by paragraph

(1), shall apply with respect to the preparation and submission of the budget request for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal years thereafter.

(b) QUADRENNIAL VETERANS REVIEW.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Such chapter is further amended by adding after section 119, as added by subsection (a)(1), the following new section:

"§ 120. Quadrennial veterans review

"(a) REQUIREMENT.—(1) Not later than fiscal year 2019, and every fourth year thereafter, the Secretary shall conduct a review of the strategy for meeting the commitment of the United States to veterans and the resources necessary to meet that commitment (in this section referred to as a 'quadrennial veterans review').

"(2) Each quadrennial veterans review shall include a comprehensive examination of the policies and strategies of the United States with respect to veterans, including recommendations regarding the long-term strategy and priorities for programs, services, benefits, and outcomes regarding veterans and guidance on the programs, assets, capabilities, budget, policies, and authorities of the Department.

"(3) The Secretary shall conduct each quadrennial veterans review in consultation with key officials of the Department, the heads of other Federal agencies, and other relevant governmental and nongovernmental entities, including State, local, and tribal government officials, members of Congress, veterans service organizations, private sector representatives, academics, and other policy experts.

"(4) The Secretary shall ensure that each quadrennial veterans review is coordinated with the Future-Years Veterans Program required under section 119 of this title.

"(b) CONTENTS OF REVIEW.—In each quadrennial veterans review, the Secretary shall—

"(1) delineate a veterans strategy consistent with the commitment of the United States to veterans and refine a strategy for the types of, and provision of, programs, services, benefits, and outcomes consistent with current authorities and requirements;

"(2) outline and prioritize the full range of programs and capabilities regarding veterans provided by the Federal Government;

"(3) identify the budget plan required to provide sufficient resources to successfully execute the full range of such programs and capabilities;

"(4) include an assessment of the organizational alignment of the Department with respect to the strategy referred to in paragraph (1) and the programs and capabilities referred to in paragraph (2);

"(5) review and assess the effectiveness of the mechanisms of the Department for executing the process of turning the requirements identified in the quadrennial veterans review into a plan to meet such requirements, including an expenditure plan for the Department; and

"(6) identify emerging trends, problems, opportunities, and issues that could affect veterans or the Department during the ten-year period following the period covered by the review.

"(c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—(1) The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report regarding each quadrennial veterans review. The Secretary shall submit the report in the year following the year in which the review is conducted, but not later than the date on which the President submits to Congress the budget for the next fiscal year under section 1105 of title 31.

"(2) Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include—

“(A) the results of the quadrennial veterans review;

“(B) a description of the challenges to, and opportunities for, the assumed or defined veterans-related interests of the Nation that were examined for the purposes of that review;

“(C) the strategy for meeting the Nation's commitment to veterans, including a prioritized list of the missions of the Department;

“(D) a description of the interagency cooperation, preparedness of Federal assets, infrastructure, budget plan, and other elements of the programs and policies of the Nation associated with the strategy referred to in subsection (b)(1) that are required to execute successfully the full range of programs and capabilities identified in such strategy and the programs and capabilities outlined under subsection (b)(2);

“(E) an assessment of the organizational alignment of the Department with the strategy referred to in subsection (b)(1) and the programs and capabilities outlined under subsection (b)(2), including the Department's organizational structure, management systems, budget and accounting systems, human resources systems, procurement systems, and physical and technical infrastructure;

“(F) a discussion of the status of cooperation among Federal agencies in the effort to promote national support for veterans;

“(G) a discussion of the status of cooperation between the Federal Government and State, local, and tribal governments in supporting veterans and providing programs, services, benefits, and outcomes to assist veterans;

“(H) an explanation of any underlying assumptions used in conducting the review; and

“(I) any other matter the Secretary considers appropriate.

“(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on a publically accessible Internet website of the Department each quadrennial veterans review submitted pursuant to subsection (c).

“(e) INDEPENDENT VETERANS REVIEW PANEL.—(1) Not later than February 1 of a year in which a quadrennial veterans review is conducted under this section, the Secretary shall establish an independent panel to be known as the Independent Veterans Review Panel (in this subsection referred to as the ‘Panel’). The Panel shall have the duties set forth in this subsection.

“(2) The Panel shall be composed of 10 members who are recognized experts in matters relating to veterans. The members shall be appointed as follows:

“(A) Two by the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

“(B) Two by the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate.

“(C) Two by the ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

“(D) Two by the ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate.

“(E) Two by the Secretary, who shall serve as co-chairs of the panel.

“(3) Members shall be appointed for the life of the Panel. Any vacancy in the Panel shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

“(4) The Panel shall have the following duties with respect to a quadrennial veterans review:

“(A) While the review is being conducted, the Panel shall review the updates from the Secretary required under paragraph (7) on the progress of the conduct of the review.

“(B) The Panel shall—

“(i) review the Secretary's terms of reference and any other materials providing the basis for, or substantial inputs to, the work of the Department of Veterans Affairs on the quadrennial veterans review;

“(ii) conduct an assessment of the assumptions, strategy, findings, and risks included in the report on the quadrennial veterans review required in subsection (c);

“(iii) conduct an independent assessment of a variety of strategies for delivering services and support to veterans;

“(iv) review the resource requirements identified pursuant to subsection (b)(3) and, to the extent practicable, make a general comparison to the resource requirements to support the strategies assessed under this subparagraph; and

“(v) provide to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives and the Secretary, through the report under paragraph (7), any recommendations the Panel determines appropriate.

“(5) If the Secretary has not appointed members to the Panel under paragraph (2)(E) by February 1 of a year in which a quadrennial veterans review is conducted under this section, the Panel shall convene for its first meeting with the remaining members.

“(6) Not later than three months after the date on which the report on a quadrennial veterans review is submitted under subsection (c) to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Panel shall submit to such committees a report containing an assessment of the quadrennial veterans review, including a description of the items addressed under paragraph (4) with respect to that quadrennial veterans review.

“(7) Periodically, but not less often than every 60 days during the life of the panel, or at the request of the co-chairs, the Secretary shall brief the Panel on the progress of the conduct of the quadrennial veterans review.

“(8)(A) The Panel may request directly from the Department such information as the Panel considers necessary to carry out its duties under this subsection. The Secretary shall cooperate with the Panel to ensure that information requested by the Panel under this subparagraph is promptly provided to the maximum extent practical.

“(B) Upon the request of the co-chairs, the Secretary shall make available to the Panel the services of any federally funded research and development center that is covered by a sponsoring agreement of the Department.

“(C) The Panel shall have the authorities provided in section 3161 of title 5 and shall be subject to the conditions set forth in such section.

“(D) Funds for activities of the Panel shall be provided from amounts available to the Department.

“(9) The Panel shall terminate 45 days after the date on which the Panel submits the report on the quadrennial veterans review under paragraph (6).”

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 119, as added by subsection (a)(2), the following new item:

“120. Quadrennial veterans review.”

(c) POLICY GUIDANCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Such chapter is further amended by adding after section 120, as added by subsection (b)(1), the following new section:

“§ 121. Policy guidance

“The Secretary shall provide annually to the appropriate officials of the Department written policy guidance for the preparation and review of the planning and program recommendations and budget proposals of the

elements of the Department of such officials. Such guidance shall include guidance on the objectives of the Department in accordance with Future-Years Veterans Program under section 119 of this title and the quadrennial veterans review under section 120 and the resource levels projected to be available for the period of time for which such recommendations and proposals are to be effective.”

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 120, as added by subsection (b)(2), the following new item:

“121. Policy guidance.”

SEC. 3. CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 323. Chief Strategy Officer

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall designate the Assistant Secretary whose functions include planning, studies, and evaluations as the Chief Strategy Officer of the Department. The Chief Strategy Officer shall advise the Secretary on long-range strategy and implications.

“(b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Chief Strategy Officer is the principal advisor to the Secretary and other senior officials of the Department, and shall provide independent analysis and advice to the Secretary and such officials. The Chief Strategy Officer shall carry out the following responsibilities:

“(1) Conducting cost estimation and cost analysis for the programs of the Department.

“(2) Establishing policies for, and overseeing the integration of, the planning, programming, budgeting and execution process for the Department.

“(3) Providing analysis and advice on matters relating to the planning and programming phase of the planning, programming, budgeting and execution process, and the preparation of materials and guidance for such process, as directed by the Secretary, working in coordination with the Assistant Secretary for Management.

“(4) Developing and executing the Future-Years Veterans Program of the Department, as specified under section 119 of this title.

“(5) Developing resource discussions relating to requirements under consideration in the quadrennial veterans review under section 120 of this title.

“(6) Formulating study guidance for analysis of alternatives for programs and initiatives, including any necessary acquisitions, development, or procurement commensurate with such alternatives, and performance of such analysis as directed by the Secretary.

“(7) Reviewing, analyzing, and evaluating programs for executing approved strategies and policies, ensuring that information on programs and expected outcomes is presented accurately and completely.

“(8) Ensuring that the costs of programs and alternatives are presented accurately and completely by assisting in establishing standards, policies, and procedures for the conduct of cost estimation and cost analysis throughout the Department, including guidance relating to the proper selection of confidence levels in cost estimates generally and for specific programs of the Department.

“(9) Conducting studies at the request of the Secretary regarding costs, policy assumptions, and strategic implications of current policies and possible alternatives.

“(10) Communicating directly to the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs about matters for which the Chief Strategy Officer is responsible without obtaining the approval or concurrence of any other official within the Department.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 322 the following new item:

“323. Chief Strategy Officer.”.

SEC. 4. PROHIBITION ON NEW APPROPRIATIONS.

No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act or the amendments made by this Act. This Act and such amendments shall be carried out using amounts otherwise available for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material on H.R. 216, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 216, as amended, would revise the process by which the Department of Veterans Affairs prepares its annual budget as a means to provide Congress with greater transparency regarding VA's alignment of resource requirements with its strategic goals.

The bill directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit annually to Congress a Future-Years Veterans Program reflecting estimated expenditures and proposed appropriations included in the budget for that fiscal year and the subsequent 4 fiscal years.

The bill would also require the Secretary, in 2019 and every 4 years thereafter, to conduct a review of the strategy for meeting the Nation's commitment to veterans and the resources needed to implement the strategy. To assist the Secretary in carrying out the 5-year plan and the quadrennial review, the bill would require the Secretary to designate a chief strategy officer to advise the Secretary on long-range VA strategy and implications.

Finally, the bill puts in place a 10-member panel to study the quadrennial review and report back to the Congress on the panel's opinions of the review's findings. The combination of the 5-year budget look-ahead, the quadrennial review, and the panel is intended to increase our ability to determine VA's future needs in a manner that provides checks and balances that currently do not exist.

Mr. Speaker, this really is a commonsense bill. No longer would VA be able to announce ambitious goals such as ending homelessness or eliminating the claims backlog without Members of Congress and the public having insight into the estimated long-range re-

sources that are going to be needed to meet those goals.

With a \$168 billion budget, veterans and taxpayers deserve full transparency when it comes to how scarce resources are planned to be allocated.

I must also add that this bill makes no additional fund available and would require VA to accomplish this bill's requirements within its existing resources.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 216, as amended, the Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Planning Reform Act of 2015.

This bill represents a bipartisan effort of the Veterans Affairs' Committee, building on the work of former Ranking Member Michael Michaud and current Ranking Member CORRINE BROWN of Florida.

I also want to thank Chairman JEFF MILLER, Mr. DOUG LAMBORN of Colorado, and all of the members of the committee for their efforts on behalf of this bill.

H.R. 216 would codify and strengthen efforts by the VA to improve the manner in which it matches resources with requirements. H.R. 216 will improve transparency and give us in Congress, veterans, and the American people a better sense of where the VA is going and how it intends to get there.

It is often said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Far too often, it seems that, in terms of budget planning, the VA is focused on the single step and not the thousand-mile journey.

Currently, the majority of the VA's programs are provided funding under what is called “advance appropriations.” This means that the VA budget is put in place well before the start of the fiscal year in which it will be needed.

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This also means that the VA is attempting to estimate the demands it will face many, many months down the road. H.R. 216 will assist the VA in ensuring that these estimates are as reliable as possible.

H.R. 216 will provide the necessary framework for the VA to strategically determine how best to meet the needs of veterans, while ensuring that this framework and these decisions are transparent and justified. This will assist our work here in Congress and give veterans the peace of mind that the VA is looking to the future and not caught in the past.

H.R. 216 would require the VA to lay out a 5-year budget plan beginning in fiscal year 2020. This budget plan would be informed by a quadrennial review, initially required in fiscal year 2019, and then upgraded every 4 years. This would give the VA plenty of time to ensure that its internal processes can support these requirements.

H.R. 216 would also require the Secretary to provide annual policy guidance to ensure that near-term budgets are aligned with the VA's longer-term strategic outlook.

Many of the challenges the VA is facing today are remarkably similar to the problems it was facing when I served on the committee two decades ago. There is always a challenge to fit the available resources to the immediate needs and to focus on what will be required in the months ahead. It is easy to lose focus on where we are going while meeting the emergencies and crises of today.

I believe that H.R. 216 will assist all of us in keeping the entire journey in mind and not the single step. It will provide the information we need to look ahead, enable veterans and the American people to have the information they need to be assured that we are on the right track, and better enable the VA to get the resources it truly needs to meet the challenges it faces.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no speakers, so if the gentleman is prepared to close, I am also prepared to close.

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 216.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my good friend, Mr. CLYBURN, for helping manage this bill for Ms. BROWN and also to say thank you to our former colleague, Mr. Michaud, who did, in fact, work long and hard to get this piece of legislation brought to the floor.

Once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 216, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 216, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

PROVIDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 162) calling on the President to provide Ukraine with military assistance to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows: