

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.

HOMES FOR HEROES ACT OF 2015

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 251) to transfer the position of Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Office of the Secretary, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 251

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 “Homes for Heroes Act of 2015”.

SEC. 2. SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

(a) TRANSFER OF POSITION TO OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY.—Section 4 of the Department of Housing and Urban Development Act (42 U.S.C. 3533) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS.—

“(1) POSITION.—There shall be in the Office of the Secretary a Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs, who shall report directly to the Secretary.

“(2) APPOINTMENT.—The Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs shall be appointed based solely on merit and shall be covered under the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service.

“(3) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs shall be responsible for—

“(A) ensuring veterans have fair access to housing and homeless assistance under each program of the Department providing either such assistance;

“(B) coordinating all programs and activities of the Department relating to veterans;

“(C) serving as a liaison for the Department with the Department of Veterans Affairs, including establishing and maintaining relationships with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs;

“(D) serving as a liaison for the Department, and establishing and maintaining relationships with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and officials of State, local, regional, and nongovernmental organizations concerned with veterans;

“(E) providing information and advice regarding—

“(i) sponsoring housing projects for veterans assisted under programs administered by the Department; or

“(ii) assisting veterans in obtaining housing or homeless assistance under programs administered by the Department;

“(F) coordinating with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in carrying out section 3 of the Homes for Heroes Act of 2015; and

“(G) carrying out such other duties as may be assigned to the Special Assistant by the Secretary or by law.”.

(b) TRANSFER OF POSITION IN OFFICE OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR SPECIAL NEEDS.—On the date that the initial Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs is appointed

pursuant to section 4(h)(2) of the Department of Housing and Urban Development Act, as added by subsection (a) of this section, the position of Special Assistant for Veterans Programs in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development shall be terminated.

SEC. 3. ANNUAL SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON VETERANS HOMELESSNESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in coordination with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, shall submit annually to the Committees of the Congress specified in subsection (b), together with the annual reports required by such Secretaries under section 203(c)(1) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11313(c)(1)), a supplemental report that includes the following information with respect to the preceding year:

(1) The same information, for such preceding year, that was included with respect to 2010 in the report by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs entitled “Veterans Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress”.

(2) Information regarding the activities of the Department of Housing and Urban Development relating to veterans during such preceding year, as follows:

(A) The number of veterans provided assistance under the housing choice voucher program for Veterans Affairs supported housing (VASH) under section 8(o)(19) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(19)), the socioeconomic characteristics of such homeless veterans, and the number, types, and locations of entities contracted under such section to administer the vouchers.

(B) A summary description of the special considerations made for veterans under public housing agency plans submitted pursuant to section 5A of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437c–1) and under comprehensive housing affordability strategies submitted pursuant to section 105 of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 12705).

(C) A description of the activities of the Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

(D) A description of the efforts of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the other members of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness to coordinate the delivery of housing and services to veterans.

(E) The cost to the Department of Housing and Urban Development of administering the programs and activities relating to veterans.

(F) Any other information that the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs consider relevant in assessing the programs and activities of the Department of Housing and Urban Development relating to veterans.

(b) COMMITTEES.—The Committees of the Congress specified in this subsection are as follows:

(1) The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate.

(2) The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate.

(3) The Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

(4) The Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives.

(5) The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives.

(6) The Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. LUETKEMEYER) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 251, the Homes for Heroes Act of 2015.

This bill, introduced by my colleague from Texas, Congressman AL GREEN, would establish the position of special assistant for Veterans Affairs within HUD to coordinate services provided to homeless veterans and to serve as HUD’s liaison to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, State and local officials, and nonprofit service organizations. The position is currently in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs. This transfer highlights the importance of this issue.

H.R. 251 would also require HUD to submit a comprehensive annual report to Congress on the housing needs of homeless veterans and the steps undertaken by HUD to meet these needs.

Previous iterations of H.R. 251 have garnered broad support in the past. In 2013, the bill passed by a vote of 420–3; in 2012, by a vote of 414–5; in 2009, by a vote of 417–2; and in 2008, by a vote of 412–9.

Our servicemen and -women continue to bravely serve our country both here and abroad. The least we can do is ensure they have proper access to the services offered to them. This bill represents a step in that direction.

I urge my colleagues to again support this worthy endeavor.

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

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to thank my colleague and friend, Mr. GREEN, for introducing this important bill, the Homes for Heroes Act of 2015.

This bill aims to help prevent low-income veteran families from falling into homelessness, while also providing relief for those who are currently homeless. This bill achieves these aims by elevating a position at HUD aimed specifically at coordinating efforts to ensure that all Federal agencies working to house our homeless veterans are working together at maximum capacity. This position will work closely

with the HUD Secretary to achieve these outcomes.

The Homes for Heroes Act will also ensure the long-term coordination of services for homeless veterans by requiring HUD to submit a comprehensive annual report to Congress on the housing needs of homeless veterans.

This bill will help ensure that we continue to make progress on the goal of ending veteran homelessness so that we can ensure that every veteran has a roof over their head. Recent efforts to house our homeless veterans have seen bipartisan support in both the House and Senate in the form of supporting robust funding for the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program, also known as HUD-VASH. This bill should be no different.

Our veterans have been at the forefront of protecting this country, and we have an obligation here in Congress to protect and provide for those who are most vulnerable. No person in the country should be deprived of a safe, decent, and affordable place to call home. No person should be deprived of a roof over their head. This bill would help to ensure that we are taking care of those who have taken care of this country.

In addition, this bill is supported by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, a national advocacy organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States.

An identical bill passed the House last Congress. I urge my colleagues to again pass this important piece of legislation.

I want to thank Mr. GREEN for his persistence in bringing forth this legislation. It is another wonderful moment for him.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. GUINTA).

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Mr. GUINTA. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that almost 50,000 veterans are homeless on any given night. That means that right now there are roughly 50,000 of our Nation's heroes on the streets, without shelter, struggling to find a place to live.

This is not how our country should treat the men and women who have risked their lives to protect our Nation. The issue of homeless veterans needs to be addressed and resolved, and it needs to be done now.

It has always been a priority of mine to eliminate veterans homelessness not just in my home State of New Hampshire, but all across this great Nation. I think my colleagues will all agree with me that we must ensure our veterans and their families have access to affordable housing in order to help promote their independence and well-being.

When I was mayor of New Hampshire's largest city, Manchester, I

launched a homeless veterans initiative by working with leaders at Liberty House, a safe, supportive, and substance-free housing community for those transitioning out of homelessness.

Our veterans deserve equal treatment and access to HUD housing and homeless assistance programs. We can start now by cutting down the bureaucracy, bureaucratic hurdles, and by ensuring that the highest care is given to our veterans. This bipartisan bill is a step in the right direction.

I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for fighting on behalf of homeless veterans. I am proud to rise in support of our Nation's heroes, and I am proud to support H.R. 251.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN), the ranking member of the Subcommittee for Oversight and Investigations of the Financial Services Committee.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank the ranking member very much.

Mr. Speaker, I am so honored to stand on the floor with the gentleman. Her reputation for supporting the needs of the homeless across the length and breadth of our country is widely known and greatly appreciated and, quite frankly, celebrated.

She has been there for the homeless, she has spoken up in committee, and she has passed legislation to assist. So it does not surprise me that she would be supportive of this legislation.

While it does not surprise me, I still must say that I am greatly appreciative for her support because her support makes a difference in legislation moving forward from our committee.

I am also honored to thank the chair of the committee, Mr. HENSARLING, who, without question, reservation, or hesitation, immediately concluded that this legislation should have an opportunity to be voted upon. He has been a supporter of the legislation in the past, and I thank him for his current support.

Mr. LUETKEMEYER has been supportive of the legislation, and I thank him for his willingness to allow it to come to the floor as quickly as it has. Sometimes it can take a little longer than we would like in getting legislation to the floor, but the gentleman immediately responded, and this legislation has made its way to the floor.

I also would like to thank the gentleman from New Hampshire, who spoke very eloquently about the needs of veterans. It means a lot to me to know that we have the breadth of support in the House of Representatives that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is almost sinful for us in the richest country in the world to pass veterans who are living in the streets of life, holding signs indicating that they are homeless and that they need help. I believe that the richest country in the world can afford to provide for those who return home and are homeless.

I think that, when a person signs up to serve in the military, you do not know where that assignment will take you. It could very well mean that you will go to some distant place or it could mean that you will stay right here within the continental United States.

But when you sign up, you sign up to go wherever you are told and to do whatever is required, and a good many of those who sign up and go and do what is required don't always return home the same way they left.

As a result, we see not only veterans on the streets asking for help, but you see veterans who are sometimes without all of their body parts. It is especially painful when you see a person who has served the country and who may be in a wheelchair now who is asking for assistance on a street corner.

I am proud to thank the Obama administration for the work that has been done to eradicate homelessness among our veterans. In Houston, Texas, we had a meeting with the HUD Secretary and others.

At that meeting, our mayor announced that we were ending homelessness in Houston, Texas, in the sense that a person who needs help could find help if one is a veteran in Houston, Texas. That means a lot to me to know that my hometown city is now moving forward and is helping those who are living in the streets of life.

This piece of legislation, H.R. 251, makes permanent what is already taking place. There is a person who is there to look out for veterans in HUD, but we want to make sure that that person is there permanently. That is what this legislation does.

You have heard about the reports that will have to be submitted. It is exceedingly important that we know how many people are homeless in the veterans population, and it is exceedingly important to know what it costs to house and to take care of them. These are the kinds of things that the report will reveal to all who wish to know.

It is also important for us to understand that this is not an effort that we can end, because we are making progress. Progress is important, but to continue the progress and to completely eradicate this homelessness, we have to have people who are there, acting as sentinels, as watchmen, for those who have served us well. That is what this person will do who will be stationed in HUD.

For further edification about the situation in terms of homelessness among the veterans population, let me share the statistical information with you:

In January of 2014, the demographics indicated that, on any given night, as was indicated, about 50,000 veterans—49,933—were homeless.

Let's talk about the people themselves and not allow them to become numbers. Here is what the statistical information further reveals: 12 percent of the homeless adult population are veterans.

It reveals that 20 percent of the male homeless population are veterans. It reveals that 51 percent of individual homeless veterans had disabilities, 51 percent who need our help, 51 percent who will benefit from having a person whose job it is to monitor and to make sure that they are taken care of.

Further, it would reveal that 70 percent have substance abuse problems, which is something that we really don't like to talk about. We know that it exists, and we know that something can be done about it, but you need someone who is there as a sentinel, as a watchman, to make sure that these needs are taken care of.

Many of them developed their substance abuse problems while in the military, while serving the country. That is unfortunate, but it is a fact. What we want to do is to make sure that we take care of all of them.

I am so honored to say to you that this bill has received great bipartisan support in the past, overwhelmingly so, I might add.

I also want to just thank my colleagues by reminding us of Ruth Smeltzer's words:

Some measure their lives by days and years, others by heartthrobs, passions, and tears; but the surest measure under the God's Sun is what for others in your lifetime have you done.

I want to thank all who are going to do what they can to help eliminate homelessness among the veterans population and those who will support this piece of legislation. Hopefully, we will get it passed in the Senate such that we won't next term find ourselves supporting this same legislation.

I thank the ranking member again so much for her many years of service and for her support for this legislation as well as for the many years of support that she has accorded those who have lived in the streets of life.

God bless her, and God bless our country.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, in closing, just to reiterate and, again, congratulate and associate our remarks with the fine gentleman's from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN), one can see that his hard work and advocacy and his passion for this issue is unparalleled. We certainly want to continue to support him, and we urge the support of this body for his fine bill here, H.R. 251.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support to H.R. 251, the "Homes for Heroes Act of 2015," which would amend the Department of Housing and Urban Development Act to establish in the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) a Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs.

Our military veterans deserve our deepest gratitude for the courage and valor they demonstrated in service while defending the United States of America.

I support this bill strongly because it ensure veterans fair access to HUD housing and homeless assistance programs, coordinates all HUD programs and activities relating to veterans, and better serves as a HUD liaison with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Also, terminating the position of Special Assistant for Veterans Programs in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs would create more coordinated relations that will better serve the needs of our nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, today, in our country, there are approximately 107,000 veterans (male and female) who are homeless on any given night.

And perhaps twice as many (200,000) experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year.

Many other veterans are considered near homeless or at risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions in cheap hotels or in overcrowded or substandard housing.

In my hometown of Houston for example, between the years 2010 and 2012, the number of homeless veterans increased from 771 to 1,162.

President Obama and the Congress made a commitment to end homelessness by 2015.

However, even with all the progress this administration has made, until we have every veteran permanently sheltered in the United States, we have not succeeded.

I have always devoted myself in these efforts, as I know of the kind of impact assisting our heroes to get back on their feet can have on the well-being of our communities.

H.R. 251, the "Homes for Heroes Act of 2015," is a positive step towards the right direction in our effort to support our nation's heroes, who have put their lives on the line for our protection.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot let this issue of homelessness continue.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting in support of H.R. 251.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARTER of Georgia). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. LUETKEMEYER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 251.

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. LUETKEMEYER. 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.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE EFFICIENCY ACT

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1047) to authorize private nonprofit organizations to administer permanent housing rental assistance provided through the Continuum of Care Program under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1047

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 "Housing Assistance Efficiency Act".

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO ADMINISTER RENTAL ASSISTANCE.

Subsection (g) of section 423 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11383(g)) is amended by inserting "private nonprofit organization," after "unit of general local government,".

SEC. 3. REALLOCATION OF FUNDS.

Paragraph (1) of section 414(d) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11373(d)(1)) is amended by striking "twice" and inserting "once".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. LUETKEMEYER) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1047, the Housing Assistance Efficiency Act, introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. PETERS). This bill makes a technical correction to the 2009 HEARTH Act amendments to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

H.R. 1047 will accomplish two goals:

First, it would restore the ability of nonprofit organizations to administer permanent housing rental assistance provided through the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care program.

Second, it would authorize the HUD Secretary to reallocate any housing assistance provided from the Emergency Solutions Grants Program that is unused or returned or that becomes available after the minimum allocation requirements under McKinney-Vento have been met on an annual rather than on a semiannual basis.

In 2009, the HEARTH Act amended McKinney-Vento to combine the Shelter Plus Care program and the supportive housing programs into a single, competitive program.

When combining the activities of the previous programs into one, the HEARTH Act also created a new requirement that only States, units of local governments, or Public Housing Agencies—PHAs—could administer rental assistance. Previously, these public entities had used private nonprofit organizations to administer the assistance.