

NOT VOTING—53

Amodei	Hinojosa	Rangel
Bass	Huelskamp	Renacci
Beatty	Jackson Lee	Richmond
Becerra	Jenkins (WV)	Roskam
Blum	Johnson, E. B.	Roybal-Allard
Brady (PA)	Kelly (IL)	Rush
Butterfield	Kirkpatrick	Sanchez, Loretta
Carter (TX)	Labrador	Sewell (AL)
Clawson (FL)	Lee	Sires
Cleaver	Lieu, Ted	Slaughter
Cohen	Love	Stewart
Conyers	Lujan Grisham	Stivers
Fudge	(NM)	Thompson (MS)
Gabbard	McNerney	Tiberi
Gibbs	Meeks	Tipton
Gosar	Moore	Turner
Green, Al	Nugent	Wagner
Gutiérrez	Pittenger	Walden

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DOLD) (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining.

□ 1915

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

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I missed the following votes: S. 1482—Need-Based Educational Aid Act of 2015. Had I been present, I would have voted “yes” on this bill; H.R. 1656—Secret Service Improvements Act of 2015, as amended. Had I been present, I would have voted “yes” on this bill; and H.R. 2770—Keeping our Travelers Safe and Secure Act, as amended. Had I been present, I would have voted “yes” on this bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, during the votes on S. 1482, H.R. 1656 and H.R. 2770, I was inescapably detained and away handling important matters related to my District and the State of Alabama. If I had been present, I would have voted “yes” on all of the aforementioned bills.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. TIBERI. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall Nos. 467 (On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass S. 1482), 468 (On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, H.R. 1656), 469 (On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, H.R. 2270), I was unavoidably detained and did not cast my vote. Had I been present, I would have voted, “yea” on all three votes.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Mr. Speaker, today, July 27, 2015, I was not present for rollcall votes Nos. 467, 468, or 469 due to weather-related travel delays. If I had been in attendance, I would have voted “yes” on rollcall vote 467, “no” on rollcall vote 468, and “yes” on rollcall vote 469.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House chamber for votes on July 27, 2015. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall votes 467, 468, and 469.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 427, REGULATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE IN NEED OF SCRUTINY ACT OF 2015; PROVIDING FOR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM JULY 30, 2015, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 7, 2015; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 114-230) on the resolution (H. Res. 380) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 427) to amend Chapter 8 of Title 5, United States Code, to provide that major rules of the executive branch shall have no force or effect unless a joint resolution of approval is enacted into law; providing for proceedings during the period from July 30, 2015, through September 7, 2015; and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

AUTHORIZING THE USE OF EMANCIPATION HALL IN THE CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER FOR A CEREMONY TO PRESENT THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO THE MONUMENTS MEN

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on House Administration be discharged from further consideration of House Concurrent Resolution 64, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

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

There was no objection.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 64

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

SECTION 1. USE OF EMANCIPATION HALL FOR CEREMONY TO PRESENT CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO THE MONUMENTS MEN.

Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center is authorized to be used on October 22, 2015, for a ceremony to present the Congressional Gold Medal to the Monuments Men collectively, in recognition of their heroic role in the preservation, protection, and restitution of monuments, works of art, and artifacts of cultural importance during and following World War II. Physical preparations for the conduct of the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as the Architect of the Capitol may prescribe.

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 836

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Representative CLARK of Massachusetts be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 836.

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

There was no objection.

VETERANS’ COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2015

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 675) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2015, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 675

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2015”.

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

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT

Sec. 101. Increase in rates of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation.

Sec. 102. Publication of adjusted rates.

TITLE II—UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

Sec. 201. Extending temporary expansion of United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Sec. 202. Recall of retired judges of United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Sec. 203. Life insurance program relating to judges of United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Sec. 204. Voluntary contributions to enlarge survivors’ annuity.

Sec. 205. Salaries of judges of United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Sec. 206. Selection of chief judge of United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

TITLE III—IMPROVEMENT OF CLAIMS PROCESSING

Sec. 301. Interim payments of compensation benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 302. Claims processors training.

Sec. 303. Notice of average times for processing claims and percentage of claims approved.

TITLE IV—OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 401. Clarification of eligible recipients of certain accrued benefits upon death of beneficiary.

Sec. 402. Observance of Veterans Day.

TITLE I—COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT

SEC. 101. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2015, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30,

2015, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—

(1) PERCENTAGE.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2015, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(2) ROUNDING.—Each dollar amount increased under paragraph (1), if not a whole dollar amount, shall be rounded to the next lower whole dollar amount.

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85–857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 102. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 101(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2016.

TITLE II—UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

SEC. 201. EXTENDING TEMPORARY EXPANSION OF UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.

Section 7253(i)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “January 1, 2013” and inserting “January 1, 2020”.

SEC. 202. RECALL OF RETIRED JUDGES OF UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.

Paragraph (1) of section 7257(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(1)(A) The chief judge may recall for further service on the Court a recall-eligible retired judge in accordance with this section. Such a recall shall be made upon written certification by the chief judge that substantial service is expected to be performed by the retired judge for such period, not to exceed 90 days (or the equivalent), as determined by the chief judge to be necessary to meet the needs of the Court.

“(B)(i) A recall-eligible judge may request that the chief judge recall the recall-eligible judge for a period of service of not less than 90 days (or the equivalent).

“(ii) The chief judge shall approve a request made by a recall-eligible judge pursuant to clause (i) unless the chief judge certifies, in writing, that the Court does not have—

“(1) sufficient work to assign such recall-eligible judge during the period of recalled service; or

“(2) sufficient resources to provide to such recall-eligible judge appropriate administrative and office support.

“(iii) At any time during the period of recalled service of a judge who is recalled pursuant to clause (i), the chief judge may terminate such recalled service if the chief judge makes a written certification described in clause (ii).”.

SEC. 203. LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM RELATING TO JUDGES OF UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7281 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(j) For purposes of chapter 87 of title 5, a judge who is in regular active service and a judge who is retired under section 7296 of this title or under chapter 83 or 84 of title 5 shall be treated as an employee described in section 8701(a)(5) of title 5.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any payment made on or after the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 204. VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENLARGE SURVIVORS' ANNUITY.

Section 7297 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(p)(1) A covered judge who makes an election under subsection (b) may purchase, in three-month increments, up to an additional year of service credit for each year of Federal judicial service completed, under the terms set forth in this section.

“(2) In this subsection, the term ‘covered judge’ means any of the following:

“(A) A judge in regular active service.

“(B) A retired judge who is a recall-eligible retired judge pursuant to subsection (a) of section 7257 of this title.

“(C) A retired judge who would be a recall-eligible retired judge pursuant to subsection (a) of section 7257 but for—

“(i) meeting the aggregate recall service requirements under subsection (b)(3) of such section; or

“(ii) being permanently disabled as described by subsection (b)(4) of such section.”.

SEC. 205. SALARIES OF JUDGES OF UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.

Section 7253(e) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “district courts” and inserting “courts of appeals”.

SEC. 206. SELECTION OF CHIEF JUDGE OF UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.

Section 7253(d) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking “and”;

(B) by redesignating subparagraph (B) as subparagraph (C); and

(C) by inserting after subparagraph (A) the following new subparagraph (B):

“(B) are 64 years of age or under and have at least three years remaining in term of office; and”;

(2) by amending paragraph (2) to read as follows:

“(2)(A) In any case in which there is no judge of the Court in regular active service who meets the requirements under paragraph (1), the judge of the Court in regular active service who is senior in commission and meets subparagraph (A) or (B) and subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) shall act as the chief judge.

“(B) In any case under subparagraph (A) of this paragraph in which there is no judge of the Court in regular active service who meets subparagraph (A) or (B) and subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1), the judge of the Court in regular active service who is senior in commission and meets subparagraph (C) shall act as the chief judge.”.

TITLE III—IMPROVEMENT OF CLAIMS PROCESSING

SEC. 301. INTERIM PAYMENTS OF COMPENSATION BENEFITS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 51 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§5127. Interim payments of compensation benefits

“(a) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a claim described in subsection (b), prior to adjudicating the claim, the Secretary shall make interim payments of monetary benefits to the claimant based on any disability for which the Secretary has made a decision or, with respect to such a disability that is not compensable, notify the claimant of the rating relating to such disability. Upon the adjudication of the claim, the Secretary shall pay to the claimant any monetary benefits awarded to the claimant for the period of payment under section 5111 of this title less the amount of such benefits paid to the claimant under this section.

“(b) CLAIM DESCRIBED.—A claim described in this subsection is a claim for disability compensation under chapter 11 of this title (including a claim regarding an increased rating)—

“(1) the adjudication of which requires the Secretary to make decisions with respect to two or more disabilities; and

“(2) for which, before completing the adjudication of the claim, the Secretary makes a decision with respect to a disability that would result in the payment of monetary benefits to the claimant upon the adjudication of the claim.”.

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

“5127. Interim payments of compensation benefits.”.

SEC. 302. CLAIMS PROCESSORS TRAINING.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a training program to provide newly hired claims processors of the Department of Veterans Affairs with training for a period of not less than two years. In carrying out such program, the Secretary shall identify successful claims processors of the Department who can assist in the training of newly hired claims processors.

(b) ABILITY TO PROCESS CLAIMS.—The Secretary shall carry out the training program established under subsection (a) without increasing the amount of time in which claims are processed by the Department.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 303. NOTICE OF AVERAGE TIMES FOR PROCESSING CLAIMS AND PERCENTAGE OF CLAIMS APPROVED.

(a) PUBLIC NOTICE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall post the information described in subsection (c)—

(1) in a conspicuous place in each regional office and claims intake facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(2) on the Internet Web site of the Department.

(b) NOTICE TO APPLICANTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide to each person who submits a claim for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary before the person submits such claim—

(A) notice of the information described in subsection (c); and

(B) notice that the person is eligible to receive up to an extra year of benefits payments if the person files a claim that is fully developed.

(2) ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT OF NOTICE.—Each person who submits a claim for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary shall include in such application a signed form acknowledging that the person received the information described in subsection (c).

(c) INFORMATION DESCRIBED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The information described in this subsection is the following:

(A) The average processing time of the claims described in paragraph (2) and the percentage of such submitted claims for which benefits are awarded.

(B) The percentage of each of the following types of submitted claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for which benefits are awarded:

(i) Claims filed by veterans who authorized a veterans service organization to act on the veterans' behalf under a durable power of attorney.

(ii) Claims filed by veterans who authorized a person other than a veterans service organization to act on the veterans' behalf under a durable power of attorney.

(iii) Claims filed by veterans who did not authorize a person to act on the veterans' behalf under a durable power of attorney.

(2) CLAIMS DESCRIBED.—The claims described in this paragraph are each of the following types of claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs:

(A) A fully developed claim that is submitted in standard electronic form.

(B) A fully developed claim that is submitted in standard paper form.

(C) A claim that is not fully developed that is submitted in standard electronic form.

(D) A claim that is not fully developed that is submitted in standard paper form.

(E) A claim that is not fully developed that is submitted in non-standard paper form.

(3) UPDATE OF INFORMATION.—The information described in this subsection shall be updated not less frequently than once each fiscal quarter.

TITLE IV—OTHER MATTERS

SEC. 401. CLARIFICATION OF ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS OF CERTAIN ACCRUED BENEFITS UPON DEATH OF BENEFICIARY.

(a) ELIGIBILITY OF ESTATE.—Section 5121(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “, or estate,” after “person”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(D) The estate of the veteran (unless the estate will escheat).”

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to the death of an individual on or after the date that is two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 402. OBSERVANCE OF VETERANS DAY.

(a) TWO MINUTES OF SILENCE.—Chapter 1 of title 36, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 145. Veterans Day

“The President shall issue each year a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe two minutes of silence on Veterans Day in honor of the service and sacrifice of veterans throughout the history of the Nation, beginning at—

“(1) 3:11 p.m. Atlantic standard time;

“(2) 2:11 p.m. eastern standard time;

“(3) 1:11 p.m. central standard time;

“(4) 12:11 p.m. mountain standard time;

“(5) 11:11 a.m. Pacific standard time;

“(6) 10:11 a.m. Alaska standard time; and

“(7) 9:11 a.m. Hawaii-Aleutian standard time.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 1 of title 36, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“145. Veterans Day.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. TITUS) 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 may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous material on H.R. 675, 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, I urge all Members to support H.R. 675, as amended. The bill includes several important provisions that would help our Nation's veterans, including the annual COLA increase, changes to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, requirements for VA to pay accrued benefits to the estate of a deceased veteran, improvements to claims processing, and would encourage Americans to observe 2 minutes of silence to honor our Nation's heroes on Veterans Day.

Mr. Speaker, many disabled veterans and their families depend on VA benefits to pay for their housing, their food, and other necessities. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that VA benefits keep pace with the rate of inflation so that our Nation's heroes are able to make ends meet.

The original text of H.R. 675, introduced by the chairman of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, Dr. Abraham, would authorize the annual COLA increase to veterans disability compensation rates and other benefits.

The amount of the increase will be determined by the Consumer Price Index, which also establishes the COLA for Social Security beneficiaries.

H.R. 675, as amended, would also incorporate legislation that was originally introduced by Representative COSTELLO that would modernize our Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, or CAVC, to ensure that the CAVC is able to meet the anticipated increase in the number of appeals that are coming over the next few years.

To address this problem, the bill would extend the temporary expansion of the CAVC from seven to nine judges through 2020. The bill would also authorize the chief judge to recall retired judges to serve more than 90 days, if necessary. These two changes would help ensure that the CAVC is able to continue deciding cases in a timely fashion.

Additionally, H.R. 675, as amended, would revise the qualifications for the chief judge and make CAVC judges eligible for the same salaries, life insurance programs, and retirement service credit benefits that are offered to other Federal appellate court judges.

H.R. 675, as amended, also includes provisions introduced by Representative TITUS that would help veterans who seek disability benefits for more

than one medical condition. VA would be required to make interim payments for disabilities found to be service connected while the Department makes determinations with respect to claims for individual conditions that have yet to be adjudicated.

Additionally, this bill would require VA to establish a 2-year training program that would help ensure claims processors have the skills necessary to accurately decide claims for beneficiaries.

The bill would also address another serious problem for veterans and their families, which is that many veterans die before the VA is able to decide their claim for benefits.

Processing a claim for benefits can often take years, and if a veteran dies before VA completes adjudication of the claim, VA currently pays any accrued benefits to qualifying family members, such as spouses, dependent children, and dependent parents. However, if the veteran dies without any surviving qualifying family member, VA simply keeps the benefits.

This legislation, however, includes language authorized by Representative ZELDIN to fix this problem by requiring that VA pay any accrued benefits to the estate of the veteran, unless the estate would escheat. This would ensure that adult children and other beneficiaries of the veteran's estate will receive the benefits to which the veteran was legally entitled.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this bill incorporates a bill by my friend Representative LYNCH that would help remind the American public of the true meaning of Veterans Day.

H.R. 675, as amended, would direct the President to issue an annual proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe a 2-minute moment of silence in honor of our Nation's veterans' service and their sacrifice.

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

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

I, too, rise in support of H.R. 675, as amended, which serves to provide an increase in the benefit payments for our veterans, as well as for their families and survivors.

I thank the chairman and Ranking Member BROWN for their help and their work on this important legislation.

Since 1976, Congress has consistently increased the rates of basic compensation for disabled veterans and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation, DIC, for their survivors and dependents. This is in order to keep pace with inflation.

However, unlike Social Security cost-of-living adjustments, known commonly as COLAs, Congress must act each year to provide veterans with the benefit adjustments they deserve. This legislation will bring COLA increases for veterans to the same level as Social Security recipients for this year.

This action is very important in the short term, but I look forward to the House also considering H.R. 677, the American Heroes COLA Act of 2015, which I introduced, along with Chairman ABRAHAM. This would eliminate the possibility of congressional gridlock ensnaring the yearly COLA adjustments by making the increases automatic, just like they are for Social Security.

I would like to highlight an additional provision included in H.R. 675 that will also help ensure our veterans receive the benefits they have earned in a more timely fashion. Title 3 of this legislation is the text of H.R. 1414, the Pay As You Rate Act, which I introduced earlier this year.

The VA pays veterans when their complete claim has been reviewed and processed. The Pay as You Rate Act would expedite the benefit claims process for veterans by requiring the VA to pay benefits to veterans as individual components of their claims are reviewed, rather than at the completion of the entire claim.

The average benefits claim for our Iraq and Afghanistan veterans contained over eight separate components. Each medical condition is individually adjudicated, but the veteran only begins receiving benefits when the entire claim has been processed.

The Pay as You Rate Act is a commonsense change that will help reduce the backlog and provide veteran families much-needed financial support. I am pleased it has been included as part of H.R. 675.

This legislation also includes H.R. 2139, introduced by Representative O'ROURKE, which requires the VA to inform veterans of the expected turnaround for VA's various methods of filing a benefits claim. The intent of this legislation is to aid veterans as they determine the most appropriate manner for filing their benefits claim.

Lastly, included in this bill is H.R. 995, introduced by Representative LYNCH. This legislation would honor our veterans by formalizing a Veterans Day moment of silence across the Nation.

Again, I thank the chairman and subcommittee Chairman ABRAHAM for their work on behalf of our Nation's heroes, and I look forward to continuing to work with them in a bipartisan fashion to ensure that all our Nation's veterans are receiving the benefits they have earned and they deserve.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am happy at this time to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO), from the Sixth District of Pennsylvania, who is a member of our committee.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 675, the Veterans' Compensation Cost of Living Adjustment Act of 2015. I applaud Chairman MILLER, subcommittee Chairman ABRAHAM, and our committee staff for bringing this commonsense legislation to the floor today.

First, Mr. Speaker, this bill would take a commonsense step to ensure that veterans disability benefits are eligible for cost-of-living adjustments, much like our seniors are eligible for Social Security benefit adjustments.

Next, Mr. Speaker, this bill would take steps towards ensuring that our veterans are able to receive more timely and prompt review of their benefit appeals.

This legislation contains my legislation that I introduced earlier this year, H.R. 1067, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Reform Act.

□ 1930

This measure is a proactive step to ensure that the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, known as the CAVC, is able to meet the growing demand for review of veterans' claims benefits.

Not only would H.R. 675 ensure that we have an adequate number of appellate judges to handle current and future demand, but it would also ensure that we continue to attract qualified and capable individuals to serve our veterans on this critical panel.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, particularly from my vantage point, the Philadelphia VA regional office has been plagued with claims backlogs, data manipulation, and excessive wait times. It is not only happening at this VA facility. As we continue to fix this mess, we need to make sure that we do all we can to promote and support efficiency within the VA and to ensure that there is no additional interruption in the benefits review process and service provided to our veterans.

To provide a little background, in November 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Veterans' Judicial Review Act into law, which established the CAVC as a court of record within the Federal judiciary. The court has exclusive appellate jurisdiction over decisions of the Board of Veterans' Appeals, and it plays a critical role in ensuring the timely and accurate review of veterans' claims.

Currently, the court is authorized to have seven permanent judges and two temporary additional judges; but absent legislative action, the court is expected to revert back to its permanent seven judges without the two additional temporary judges. In order to handle the increase in claims, this legislation would enable the court to maintain nine judges through 2020.

As we continue to see reports of mismanagement, data manipulation, excessive wait times, and lost claims, it is imperative that this measure, as included in H.R. 675, is passed to proactively address potential complications that could hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of the CAVC to review and process veterans' claims. I encourage my colleagues to pass H.R. 675.

I thank the gentleman from Louisiana for introducing the legislation and for working with members of the committee to get this well-rounded, commonsense legislation to the floor.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from the Fifth District of Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM), the chairman of a very critical subcommittee on our Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. ABRAHAM. I thank the chairman.

Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee, I would like to thank the Veterans' Affairs Committee as a whole and leadership on their role in getting this important bill to the floor.

I am proud to have introduced the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2015, which is also known as COLA.

The bill provides a cost-of-living adjustment increase to the veterans' disability compensation and other veterans' benefits for 2016. The amount of the increase is the same given to Social Security beneficiaries.

We all understand how important it is for the VA benefits to keep pace with the rate of inflation, and our Nation's veterans depend on these benefits to pay for housing, food, and other necessities. Congress has previously passed similar increases with wide bipartisan support because both parties see the need in making sure that our American heroes are cared for, which they most markedly deserve.

I would also like to thank the ranking member, Representative TITUS, for her support as an original cosponsor of H.R. 675.

These benefits are instrumental in supporting those who have honorably served our Nation. Passing the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2015 provides our veterans with much-needed peace of mind so that they know their benefits will be secure each year.

We must demand the highest protection of our veterans and their financial security. Our veterans are our Nation's heroes; and this bill, which enjoys bipartisan support, gives Congress a chance to give back to those who have already given so much. I urge the full passage of this bill, H.R. 675.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from the First District of the State of New York (Mr. ZELDIN), another valued member of our committee.

Mr. ZELDIN. I thank the chairman for his leadership on the Veterans' Affairs Committee and for his unyielding passion toward always putting veterans first.

I thank the great staff as well on both sides of the aisle with the Veterans' Affairs Committee. It is a pleasure to serve with all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening in support of H.R. 675, which has been amended to include my bill, H.R. 1569, the Veterans Estate Transfer to Survivors Act, or the VETS Act.

I am honored to represent the First Congressional District of New York, which is located on the east end of Long Island. My district is in the County of Suffolk, which has the largest veterans population of any county in New York and the second highest in the entire country. With so many veterans in my home county, I am extremely proud to serve on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

With the passage of H.R. 675, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2015, which has been amended to include my bill, H.R. 1569, veterans are securing a big victory here in the Halls of Congress.

The VETS Act is a commonsense reform to the VA benefit payouts that will help veterans and their families on Long Island and across the country as my legislation would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to pay certain benefits that were earned by a veteran to the veteran's estate.

Under current law, if a veteran passes away while the VA is still reviewing a claim, the VA no longer has to award the earned benefits. Currently, only a veteran's spouse, minor child, or dependent parent is eligible to collect the accrued benefits. By adding the estate to the current list of beneficiaries, adult children can now also receive the benefits earned should there be no other qualifying family members.

My bill ensures our veteran families, who rightfully earned and deserve their benefits, actually receive their benefits even after the veteran passes away. I encourage all of my colleagues to support H.R. 675.

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I simply urge my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 675, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I also urge the passage of H.R. 675, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 675, the Veterans' Compensation Cost of Living Adjustment Act and urge my colleagues to vote in favor of it.

This is an important bill that provides a critical cost-of-living increase for the service-connected disability compensation that our disabled veterans need and deserve. In addition, it makes other needed changes to a number of programs administered by the VA to ensure that they better meet the needs of our veterans and their families.

I am pleased that H.R. 675, as amended by the Veterans Affairs Committee, includes the text of my bill, H.R. 995, the "Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act." This bipartisan legislation calls for two minutes of silence every Veterans Day. Its set time of 2:11 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, allows all Americans from coast to coast and Puerto Rico to come together to reflect on the service of our veterans, past and present. Generations of brave men and women have served our nation with honor: risking their lives to keep us safe and free. They deserve our support and, most of all our gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, there are few words that can do justice to the magnitude of what our servicemembers have done throughout our history, and continue to do for us every day. They leave their families and loved ones behind, and go to some of the world's most dangerous places. They risk their health and their lives to serve and defend the nation we all love. I have had the honor and pleasure of meeting with some of them in my travels abroad and I am always moved by their dedication, their professionalism, and their courage.

I would like to thank Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member BROWN for including the language of "The Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act" to this bill. I also wish to recognize and thank the Bendetson family who first approached me with the concept of this tribute. Daniel and Michael Bendetson, along with their father, Dr. Peter Bendetson, have worked tirelessly for years to bring this proposal to fruition. Finally, I would most like to thank all the veterans in my district and across America, in whose honor I am proud to have introduced this legislation.

Once again, I urge my colleagues to support and pass H.R. 675.

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. 675, as amended. The question was taken.

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

RUTH MOORE ACT OF 2015

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1607) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the disability compensation evaluation procedure of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for veterans with mental health conditions related to military sexual trauma, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1607

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 "Ruth Moore Act of 2015".

SEC. 2. REPORTS ON CLAIMS FOR DISABILITIES INCURRED OR AGGRAVATED BY MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.

(a) ANNUAL REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter VI of chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§1164. Reports on claims for disabilities incurred or aggravated by military sexual trauma

"(a) REPORTS.—Not later than December 1, 2015, and each year thereafter through 2019, the

Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on covered claims submitted during the previous fiscal year.

"(b) ELEMENTS.—Each report under subsection (a) shall include the following:

"(1) The number of covered claims submitted to or considered by the Secretary during the fiscal year covered by the report.

"(2) Of the covered claims listed under paragraph (1), the number and percentage of such claims—

"(A) submitted by each sex;

"(B) that were approved, including the number and percentage of such approved claims submitted by each sex; and

"(C) that were denied, including the number and percentage of such denied claims submitted by each sex.

"(3) Of the covered claims listed under paragraph (1) that were approved, the number and percentage, listed by each sex, of claims assigned to each rating percentage.

"(4) Of the covered claims listed under paragraph (1) that were denied—

"(A) the three most common reasons given by the Secretary under section 5104(b)(1) of this title for such denials; and

"(B) the number of denials that were based on the failure of a veteran to report for a medical examination.

"(5) The number of covered claims that, as of the end of the fiscal year covered by the report, are pending and, separately, the number of such claims on appeal.

"(6) For the fiscal year covered by the report, the average number of days that covered claims take to complete beginning on the date on which the claim is submitted.

"(7) A description of the training that the Secretary provides to employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration specifically with respect to covered claims, including the frequency, length, and content of such training.

"(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) The term 'covered claims' means claims for disability compensation submitted to the Secretary based on a covered mental health condition alleged to have been incurred or aggravated by military sexual trauma.

"(2) The term 'covered mental health condition' means post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, or other mental health diagnosis described in the current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association that the Secretary determines to be related to military sexual trauma.

"(3) The term 'military sexual trauma' means, with respect to a veteran, psychological trauma, which in the judgment of a mental health professional, resulted from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred during active military, naval, or air service."

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

"1164. Reports on claims for disabilities incurred or aggravated by military sexual trauma."

(3) INITIAL REPORT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress an initial report described in section 1164 of title 38, United States Code, as added by paragraph (1), by not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act. Such initial report shall be in addition to the annual reports required under such section beginning in December 2015.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs should update and improve the regulations of the Department of Veterans Affairs with respect to military sexual trauma by—

(1) ensuring that military sexual trauma is specified as an in-service stressor in determining the service-connection of post-traumatic stress disorder by including military sexual trauma as