

veterans homes to pay for adult day health care for a veteran eligible for, but not receiving, nursing home care.

It would also stipulate that payment under each agreement or contract between the VA and a State home cover the cost of adult day care for eligible veterans at a rate equal to 65 percent of the payment that the VA would otherwise pay to the State home if the veteran were receiving nursing home care.

Adult day health care programs provide veterans in need of skilled services, case management, or assistance with activities of daily living with valuable social activities, peer support, medical monitoring, companionship, and recreation during the day and provide caregivers with needed respite.

However, according to the National Association of State Veterans Homes, veterans face barriers accessing adult health care programs each day due to costs. This bill would help address those cost concerns and increase the degree of access for veterans who are eligible for VA-paid nursing home care due to their 70 percent or higher service-connected rating.

As the veteran population ages, Mr. Speaker, it is increasingly important that the VA provide a wide variety of geriatric and long-term care services and supports, and adult day health care programs can serve as an important component of that.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this piece of legislation.

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

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

According to the VA, adult day health care is a program which veterans can go to during the day for social activities, peer support, companionship, and recreation.

The program is for veterans who need skilled services, case management, and help with activities of daily living. Examples include helping with bathing, dressing, fixing meals, or taking medication.

This program is also for veterans who are isolated or their caregiver is experiencing burdens. Adult day health care can be used in combination with other home and community-based services.

Health services such as care from nurses, therapists, social workers, and others may also be available. Adult day health care can provide respite care for a family caregiver and also help veterans and their caregivers gain skills to manage the veteran's care at home.

This legislation would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to enter into agreement with State veterans homes to provide adult health care for a veteran who is eligible for but does not receive nursing home care.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation and urge its passage.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from the First District of New York (Mr. ZELDIN), the sponsor of this piece of legislation.

□ 1630

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 2460, which would expand disabled veterans' access to adult day health care, a daily program for disabled veterans who need extra assistance and special attention in their day-to-day lives. Those veterans who are 70 percent or more disabled from a service-connected injury often require significant assistance from others in order to carry out basic everyday tasks.

Despite various care options for veterans, their choices are often limited and can come at a great expense. One such program that is currently available is adult day health care. This program provides disabled veterans and their families with a high-quality alternative to nursing home care, providing quality outpatient services for those suffering from debilitating illnesses or disabilities.

These programs provide a range of services from daily activities such as bathing to full medical services like physical therapy. The focus of the program is on improving disabled veterans' quality of life through an individualized plan specific to their needs while still allowing them to maintain their independence.

Adult day health care programs don't only benefit the veteran, they also benefit the family members and caregivers as well. This model allows caregivers to tend to their day-to-day activities without worrying about the well-being of their spouse, child, or friend, allowing the veteran to lead a much more fulfilling life, while keeping families together and strong.

Adult day health care, however, is only currently offered at three facilities in the entire country. My district is fortunate to have one of these facilities, the Long Island State Veterans Home in Stony Brook, New York, but this program could easily be offered at any of the 153 State veterans homes across the country.

Since the Department of Veterans Affairs does not currently cover the cost of participation in this program, the expense must be paid out of pocket by the veteran and their family, which significantly limits the number of veterans who can enroll.

My bill, H.R. 2460, would ensure that 70 percent or more service-connected disabled veterans are able to receive adult day health care at no cost to the veteran and their family by defining the program as a reimbursable treatment option through the VA. This would expand this great option of care for our veterans.

Currently, 52 Republicans and Democrats in this Chamber have signed on as cosponsors of this bill. I would like to thank the chairman of the House

Committee on Veterans' Affairs, JEFF MILLER, for his leadership as chairman of the committee and for recognizing the urgency in passing this bill. Myself, the committee, many Members of this Congress, his constituents, and this country will miss him following his service this year.

I would also like to thank House Majority Leader KEVIN MCCARTHY for having this bill placed on the calendar for today.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2460.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I, too, ask all my colleagues to support this piece of legislation.

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. 2460.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FINAL FAREWELL ACT OF 2016

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3715) to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit interments, funerals, memorial services, and ceremonies of deceased veterans at national cemeteries and State cemeteries receiving grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs during certain weekends if requested for religious reasons, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3715

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 "Final Farewell Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF INTERMENTS, FUNERALS, MEMORIAL SERVICES, AND CEREMONIES AT NATIONAL CEMETERIES AND STATE CEMETERIES RECEIVING GRANTS DURING WEEKENDS.

(a) NATIONAL CEMETERIES.—Section 2404 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(i) The Secretary shall permit the interment or funeral, memorial service, or ceremony of a deceased veteran at a national cemetery during weekends, other than Federal holiday weekends, upon a request of the next-of-kin of the veteran."

(b) STATE CEMETERIES.—Section 2408(c) of such title is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

"(2) In addition to the conditions specified in subsection (b) and paragraph (1), any grant to a State under this section to assist such State in establishing a veterans' cemetery shall be made on the condition that

such cemetery shall permit the interment or funeral, memorial service, or ceremony of a deceased veteran at the cemetery during weekends, other than Federal holiday weekends, upon a request of the next-of-kin of the veteran.”.

(c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to deaths occurring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) **NOTICE REQUIREMENT.**—Upon receipt of a request for an application for burial or interment in a national cemetery, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide notice to the individual submitting the request of the opportunity to request the interment or funeral, memorial service, or ceremony of a deceased veteran at a national cemetery during weekends, other than Federal holiday weekends, as authorized by subsection (i) of section 2404 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) 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 within which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3715, as amended, the Final Farewell Act of 2016.

We know that it can sometimes be a challenge to take time away from work to attend a funeral or a memorial service for a loved one. This bill, which is sponsored by the ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Congresswoman CORRINE BROWN of Florida, would lessen that challenge for those arranging to attend the funeral service of a veteran buried in a national cemetery.

This bill would require VA, upon the request of the family of the deceased, to permit weekend funerals and memorial services. In doing so, this bill would allow more family members and friends to pay final respects to their loved ones as they are laid to rest.

Our veterans—the men and women who sacrificed so much for us—have earned the right to be treated with honor and respect after they pass on. Although I support this bill, I understand that some of the State Directors of Veterans Affairs have raised concerns with the restriction it contains on grants to State and tribal cemeteries who receive Federal grants. I look forward to working with the ranking member to address these concerns during the upcoming negotiations with the Senate.

I want to thank Ms. BROWN once again for sponsoring this legislation and bringing this very important issue

to our attention. I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3715, as amended, the Final Farewell Act. This bill is of great importance to many families who traditionally hold funerals on weekends.

While the VA has the authority to provide weekend services to veterans and their families, they rarely do. This has been a particular challenge for various religions and cultures who bury their loved ones on Saturday. Furthermore, these families are forced to bear the cost of storing their loved one's remains over the weekend. However, this bill, as amended, makes weekend burials available to all veterans, regardless of their reasoning and need for a weekend burial.

This benefit for our veterans is to honor their service to our country. Their loved ones should have the opportunity to mourn their loss at a time that works for them. I thank all Members for their consideration and support for this commonsense change.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman MILLER for his support of this important legislation, and I urge passage of this very important bill.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

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. 3715, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: “A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit interments, funerals, memorial services, and ceremonies of deceased veterans at national cemeteries and State cemeteries receiving grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs during certain weekends.”.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SUPPORT OUR MILITARY CAREGIVERS ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3989) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the process for determining the eligibility of caregivers of veterans to certain benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3989

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 “Support Our Military Caregivers Act”.

SEC. 2. EXTERNAL CLINICAL REVIEW OF DENIED APPLICATIONS BY CAREGIVERS OF VETERANS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (c) the following new subsection (d):

“(d) **EXTERNAL CLINICAL REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS.**—(1) Using amounts otherwise appropriated to carry out this section, an individual may elect to have an independent contractor described in paragraph (2) perform an external clinical review of any of the following:

“(A) The denial by the Secretary of an application by an individual to be a caregiver or family caregiver eligible for the program of comprehensive assistance administered by the Secretary pursuant to this section.

“(B) With respect to such an application that the Secretary has granted, a determination by the Secretary of the level or amount of personal care services that a veteran requires.

“(C) A request by a caregiver or family caregiver for a reconsideration of the level or amount of personal care services that a veteran requires based on changes to the health or abilities of the veteran occurring since the Secretary granted such an application.

“(D) The revocation by the Secretary of assistance administered by the Secretary pursuant to this section.

“(2) An independent contractor described in this paragraph is an independent contractor that—

“(A) is awarded a contract by the Secretary to carry out this section pursuant to full and open competition under the Federal Acquisition Regulation;

“(B) has no direct or indirect financial relationship with any non-Department provider of services to caregivers and family caregivers pursuant to this title;

“(C) has not otherwise conducted an external clinical review of benefits administered by the Secretary pursuant to this title other than this section;

“(D) has sufficient training and expertise in medical science and other appropriate health, educational, and vocational training and legal matters to perform the reviews described in paragraph (1); and

“(E) employs a panel of physicians or other appropriate health care professionals who do not provide health care to the individual who makes an election under paragraph (1).

“(3) Each external clinical review conducted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall—

“(A) be based on applicable information included in the application for assistance described in such paragraph, including clinical expertise, medical, technical, and scientific evidence;

“(B) include an opportunity for both the individual who elects for such review and, to the extent possible, the veteran for whom care is being provided to offer opinions and supporting data as to the level of care required; and

“(C) include a review of the initial clinical review of such veteran and any other review made by the Secretary.

“(4) In carrying out the external clinical reviews pursuant to paragraph (1), the independent contractor shall, as determined appropriate by the Secretary—