

My amendment simply extends whistleblower protections that are created under the bill to Federal employees who disclose information about travel, including improper use of aircraft.

Not only would this make clear to agencies that any violation of laws, rules, or regulations concerning travel or government aircraft is unacceptable, it will also ensure those who come forward to expose any wrongdoing will have appropriate protection from retaliation.

Regardless of party, those who serve the American public must be held to the highest ethical standards. Our ability to hold government officials accountable to taxpayers is a hallmark of our democracy, and we must work to uphold that principle. The resources invested to agencies to fulfill their missions of serving Americans should not be abused or frivolously flaunted for personal gain or convenience.

This is not about Republicans or Democrats. We must come together to stand up for accountability and transparency. The moment we begin treating disregard for the rules by our elected and appointed officials as partisan politics, we risk ceding the very values that make our democracy great and unique in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting my commonsense amendment on behalf of American taxpayers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BLUM. Mr. Speaker, I claim the time in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Iowa is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I oppose the motion to recommit.

This bill addresses critical flaws in how the Federal Government addresses whistleblower retaliation.

The consequences for whistleblower retaliation are very real. There is a chilling effect of whistleblower reports or unjust termination. In some cases, like that of Dr. Kirkpatrick in the Department of Veterans Affairs, the consequences are literally life and death.

We have the opportunity to send this bill to the President for a signature today and fix this now. Why wait? And at what cost to Federal employees, veterans, and taxpayers?

I support the gentleman from Maryland's effort to pass this provision which I previously cosponsored myself, but let's not let one good bill get in the way of another.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose the motion to recommit and support the underlying bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

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

Mr. O'HALLERAN. 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 question will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess for a period of less than 15 minutes.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 48 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1355

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky) at 1 o'clock and 55 minutes p.m.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES ON H.R. 2810, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 2810) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, with the Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and request a conference with the Senate thereon.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

There was no objection.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to instruct conferees at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Langevin moves that the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the Senate amendment to the bill H.R. 2810 be instructed as follows:

(1) To disagree with subsection (c) of section 336 of the Senate amendment.

(2) To recede from section 1064 of the House bill.

(3) To disagree with section 1087 of the Senate amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XXII, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Army has a surplus of pistols. The M-1911 A-1, a .45-caliber pistol—the Armed Forces standard issue sidearm for more than 50 years—was replaced in the 1980s by a newer model.

Since then the Army has accumulated stores of surplus M-1911 pistols which are housed at taxpayer expense in Alabama.

There is no national security reason to keep these pistols. The Army stopped issuing them 30 years ago, yet the Army has been prevented from disposing of them due to parochial interests tied to the Civilian Marksmanship Program, or CMP.

The CMP's proponents basically want to transfer the pistols to a private corporation so that it can sell them. Do we want this to happen? We have the opportunity in this year's NDAA to stop this transfer of tens of thousands of M-1911 A-1 pistols which constitutes a multimillion-dollar government giveaway.

It is also important to note that this would make our streets more dangerous at a time when gun violence is all too common.

The CMP was established in 1903—just to put this in historical context—following the Spanish-American War when American militiamen demonstrated distressingly poor marksmanship. At that time, our Nation needed a better trained and organized militia, and the CMP helped the government build a broader base of able citizen-soldiers.

Now, the program was an important component of our national defense back then. But today, Mr. Speaker, over a century later, we have a professional military and many rifle clubs, and the CMP is, quite frankly, no longer needed. Congress clearly understood this when it privatized the CMP in 1996.

Now, as an initial capital investment at a time when earmarks were still common, Congress provided the newly chartered corporation with a stock of rifles, ammunition, and other spare parts. The CMP could sell the surplus equipment—mostly M1 Garand rifles—in order to fund its activities until it became self-sufficient.

□ 1400

However, it was never Congress' intent to equip the CMP with handguns, or it would have provided the corporation with surplus M-1911-A1 .45-caliber pistols at that time.

Now, more than two decades later, the CMP is running out of rifles to sell. The reality is that it is in dire financial straits as, more than 20 years later, the program is still reliant on rifle sales to support its activities.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is clearly not the taxpayers' responsibility to bail out the CMP. To do so would be an unprecedented government handout at a time when earmarks have been banned for years.

So what makes this program so special?

There is nothing.

Beyond this, it would flood our streets with handguns—the guns that are most often used by criminals. I believe this would be extremely dangerous when, more than 2 years ago, the first attempt was made to effectuate this earmark, I heard the argument that storing surplus pistols, as the Army is now doing, is a waste of government funds. Well, I agree. However, a handout is not the answer.

There is no national security reason to put these guns on our streets. In fact, an increase in the number of handguns will only result potentially in more violence.

So, Mr. Speaker, we should allow the Army to dispose of these pistols by melting them down, as it plans to do with other surplus arms.

Senate language in the NDAA exempts M-1911-A1 pistols from Army disposal, but I urge my colleagues to support the motion to instruct the conferees to reject this exemption. There is no reason to store these pistols. There is no reason to flood our streets with them. There is no reason to give an earmark, again, to a private corporation. They should be melted down and repurchased for other military uses, which is exactly what this motion supports.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise against the motion to instruct. I believe this is the first motion to instruct that the House has voted on so far this year and this Congress, so not all Members may not realize that, as the House and the Senate are about to go to conference committee to work out differences in the House and Senate versions of whatever bill they are focused on, procedurally it is possible to have a motion to instruct conferees, such as the gentleman from Rhode Island has offered.

That motion is not binding on the conferees, but it is an attempt to have a vote on an issue that a Member or group of Members think is important or that they can make a point upon.

The subject of this motion to instruct is the disposal of excess weapons, as the gentleman from Rhode Island mentioned.

I would just say, Mr. Speaker, I know of no evidence that—as the government has over the years disposed of these weapons, there is no evidence that any of them have been improperly used. They must be disposed of fully consistent with the law, and that includes background checks and the rest, and the proceeds support safety programs, which I would suspect that all of us think is a worthwhile endeavor.

I would also say, Mr. Speaker, the House has regularly expressed its opinion and its will with amendment votes both on the floor and in committee

over the years. We have voted on this program a number of times and it has consistently been the will of the House that this program should continue. As a matter of fact, in this year's bill, we had a vote in committee and the amendment to provide for this program was adopted.

So, to me, Mr. Speaker, the most important point to make is this: the bill before us is one that helps this Congress fulfill the first responsibilities of the Federal Government, and that is to defend our citizens.

It also provides the support that the men and women who serve our Nation in the military must have if they are to carry out the missions to which they are assigned.

That is the purpose of this bill, that is the focus of this bill: to defend the country and to support our troops. That will continue to be the focus as the House and Senate move into conference.

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I certainly have great respect for the chairman and his leadership of the Armed Services Committee. No one questions his commitment to defending the Nation in support of our military, but we don't need to support earmarks to a private corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CARBAJAL).

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against provisions in the House and the Senate National Defense Authorization Act that would allow the transfer of all surplus pistols to the Civilian Marksmanship Program—or CMP—for sale to the public.

Allowing the transfer of this large volume of guns for sale to the public moves the CMP into the retail gun market and away from its statutorily mandated functions. This is a program meant to instruct citizens in marksmanship and promote safety in the use of firearms, not to deal firearms.

The Army has opposed such provisions in the past, and I am here to oppose any NDAA provisions that would allow the transfer of any surplus Army firearms to the CMP.

I join my colleague, Mr. LANGEVIN, in calling for all surplus firearms to be melted down and not distributed to the public.

There are over 300 million guns in America, nearly one for every citizen. We have lost way too many lives to gun violence.

The Department of Defense should not participate in freely distributing their guns onto our streets.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS).

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, the Civilian Marksmanship Program is an organization that was established initially by this Congress because we needed institutions to help

people better understand gun safety and how to handle weapons. It has fulfilled a vital mission.

Fortunately, in recent years, we have been able to not have to fund it anymore by being able to self-fund through the refurbishment and sale of surplus weapons.

It has been their mission for a century. These 1911s are surplus pistols that were used up until the early nineties by our military. Since that time, statutorily, they were made available to law enforcement and allied countries.

As you might imagine, most law enforcement and allied countries would rather have new, modern weapons, rather than surplus. So we have approximately 100,000 of these weapons in storage at the Anniston Army Depot in my district. It costs us in the neighborhood of \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year in direct cost to store these weapons.

What the Armed Services Committee and this Congress in preceding NDAs has repeatedly done has been to instruct the Department of the Army to start turning those over to the Civilian Marksmanship Program at 10,000 a year until the full 100,000 has been eliminated from our storage.

The CMP—the Civilian Marksmanship Program—takes those weapons as they get them, completely refurbishes them, and then sells them to collectors. These are not weapons that wind up on the streets. They generally cost between \$800 and \$1,000, and they are sold to collectors.

To be able to buy one, you have to go through the same background check as any other buyer. But not just anybody can buy these. You have to either be in law enforcement, the military, or an active member of a gun club.

These are not a danger to the public. In fact, this whole process of taking this money, the CMP then sells the weapons and it goes into their trust fund to allow them to continue to train Americans in gun safety, is a vital mission that we should be supporting. This Congress has repeatedly supported it over the years.

It is my hope that the full body will reject this motion by my friend and colleague, Mr. LANGEVIN. It has been defeated repeatedly in the Armed Services Committee, and I hope it will be defeated again today.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I would just mention many wonderful organizations around the country that would love to have earmarks, but we don't do earmarks anymore.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN).

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to a provision in the NDAA authorizing the transfer of nearly 100,000 surplus military-grade firearms to the Civilian Marksmanship Program for sale to the public.

This multimillion-dollar government handout to a private corporation is bad policy. It places more military-grade

weapons on our streets and in our communities.

The horrific violence on October 1 in Las Vegas, the deadliest mass shooting in modern American history, has forever altered the lives of hundreds of thousands of families related to those 22,000 victims that were there the day of the shooting.

It is now more urgent than ever that we take meaningful action on passing gun safety measures. That should be our priority, yet here we are taking a step backwards.

Instead of bringing legislation on the floor to ban the manufacture of bump stocks that allow semiautomatic rifles to fire hundreds of rounds per minute, instead of being on the floor to ban the sale of high-capacity magazines used to inflict widespread carnage, or instead of being on the floor to expand background checks to all commercial gun sales so that felons and the seriously mentally ill and terrorists cannot obtain access to dangerous weapons, we are here debating a provision that increases a number of military weapons on our streets.

I know we can uphold the Second Amendment while taking reasonable steps to reduce the toll of gun violence inflicted on our communities. Putting nearly 100,000 more military-grade firearms designed for Army use into our neighborhoods is not a reasonable step in the right direction.

According to its text, the provision included in this bill mandates the immediate transfer of an unlimited number of guns to the Civilian Marksman Program for sale to the public.

This program was originally created to instruct Americans in marksmanship, promote firearms safety, and conduct friendly shooting competitions in controlled environments.

The NDAA provision we are speaking of today would turn this program into a mass firearms retailer, with the new mission to sell as many military-grade weapons to the public as possible. It defies logic and common sense. Gun violence has become a public crisis.

So I urge my colleagues to join together and work across the aisle to decrease the scope and devastation caused by tragic mass shootings. No community across America should be forced to experience the grief and trauma that my community and others like mine have gone through in these past few years.

I ask all Members of Congress to support the Democratic motion to instruct conferees to remove this dangerous provision from the NDAA.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Congress intended for the CMP to become self-sufficient after it was privatized in 1996. It was never meant to be the recipient of another multimillion-dollar government hand-out years later, especially not a hand-out of tens of thousands of pistols

which then would be used immediately for sale to the public to fund its operations.

Again, perhaps one could argue that, when earmarks were around, they needed this to fund their operations. Again, there was a time when earmarks were in existence. Earmarks are no longer regular order. They don't exist anymore. They were done away with several years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear that I don't hold with the need for the CMP to receive Federal support.

On another note, I don't often see eye to eye with the NRA, but I must agree with the statement on the NRA's website that the Association is "the premier firearms education organization in the world."

□ 1415

Well, the NRA does not receive Federal support from its education programs, which are widely accessible, and in our professional military, the need for marksmanship training for national security purposes has evaporated. Even if we truly think the CMP is deserving of a government subsidy, Congress should do so through the appropriations process, not through a provision that is, quite frankly, again, an earmark.

As my colleagues so well know, earmarks were banned in the 112th Congress, yet the provisions at issue in the House-passed NDAA would transfer millions of dollars, ostensibly, in government property to a corporation that is in the congressional district of the measure's chief advocate. And while I have deep respect for my colleague, the government shouldn't be engaged in this type of practice.

The government has occasionally transferred surplus property to non-profit corporations for education or other purposes; however, it has never done so with the intent that the property be immediately sold, with the proceeds going to the corporation's bottom line. So if that isn't an earmark, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what is. It is blatant subversion of congressional order, and it would set, I believe, a very dangerous precedent.

I hope that my colleagues would join me in upholding the rules of the House and support the motion to instruct.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to highlight the danger of this transfer, potentially, to public safety. Injecting tens of thousands of new pistols onto our streets by providing them to the CMP, I believe, could be disastrous, as handguns are regularly used in crime.

Now, in 2013, of the 6,498 homicides committed by a firearm for which the type of weapon was known, 89 percent were handgun related—89 percent. Only 4 percent were carried out using a rifle, the type of firearm the CMP has traditionally sold.

The qualities that made the M1911A1 .45-caliber pistol a fun sidearm is the fact that it is easily concealed, extremely reliable, and packs quite a

punch, all qualities that make it prized also among criminals. In fact, the Department of Justice has tracked 1,768 M1911A1s over the last decade due to their involvement in criminal activity.

In a time when mass shootings have become all too common and 93 Americans are killed with guns every day, the last thing we need is more guns on our streets.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, again, the bill before us, overall, is a fine mark. I was proud to support it in committee, overall, because it provides for our national defense. It supports key programs of the Department of Defense to make sure our warfighters have every advantage possible. We never want to send our warfighters into a fair fight, and this bill, overall, goes a long way toward ensuring for our national defense and provides great support for our men and women in uniform.

Unfortunately, this CMP issue has been an unnecessary distraction. It is something I don't believe belongs in the bill. I believe that and, again, I made the point that we have done away with earmarks, and so we shouldn't be using an earmark and subverting congressional authority and will through the regular order process, through the appropriations process, to help to fund a private organization.

Again, there are many, I am sure, meritorious organizations around the country that would love to have an earmark, but we don't do them anymore, and we shouldn't be doing a side-step here to give a private organization such an earmark.

As I said, I have highlighted again the potential for guns to fall into the wrong hands. And although the owners of the weapons may be of good character and those who purchased the guns, to fund, again, the operations of the CMP, a private organization, even if they have them in their home, if there is criminal activity that takes place, whether it is an act of violence or if the home is broken into and the weapon is stolen, which happens every day in America that a law-abiding citizen has a weapon that gets in the wrong hands, that weapon is then used in the crime. The more weapons out there, the more likely something like that could potentially happen.

This is what we are trying to prevent. We want to do this in a responsible way. Again, we want to make sure that the guns don't just wind up out in our streets, and we want to make sure that they are melted down like other surplus equipment.

The Army surely does not need to store them any longer. We want to get rid of them. We want the Army to be able to do that, but they should be able to do what they do with other surplus equipment, and that is melt it down,

perhaps use that melted down material for making other weapons that the Army does need that are relevant at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to oppose the language in the current NDAA. We should work together and support my motion to instruct so that, as we go to conference, we have clear direction from the House as to what the House believes we should do and not allow these weapons out in our communities. We shouldn't be supporting earmarks.

As I said, I know that the Senate provision does in fact have a provision there that would allow these weapons to be melted down, and that is the way that we should go. I believe that we have an opportunity to make that statement right here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH), the ranking member of the full House Armed Services Committee.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I just really want to support Mr. LANGEVIN for his leadership on this issue, something that we brought up in committee, and a program that really should be just discontinued, and I think the motion to instruct is perfectly appropriate.

It was a program that was originally created, and the reason that we were selling back firearms to the public from the U.S. military, the program was literally created because we were worried that there wouldn't be enough people in our country that knew how to fire a weapon if we should need to draft them into a war. That is why the program was created.

Obviously, for a whole bunch of reasons, that is no longer applicable. We have an all volunteer military. They are trained to shoot. They know how to shoot. We don't need to train random folks with weapons from the military.

Also, originally, the program was simply aimed at rifles; and now they have thrown in, I think it is, around 100,000 pistols that they want to sell back to the public, in general. And this company makes money, the taxpayers don't, and we put 100,000 more weapons out on the streets.

I think if there is one thing we should be able to agree on is that there is more than enough firepower out there amongst the public. We should not be taking military weapons and selling them back out into the public, and this motion, this amendment that Mr. LANGEVIN first brought up has a very simple solution. We will hold onto those weapons; we will melt them down. I think that is the appropriate response. We do not need to sell more firearms out there into the public.

I think the gentleman from Rhode Island has done an outstanding job showing leadership on this issue. I urge us to adopt this motion to instruct, and I urge the conference committee to adopt this as part of the final National Defense Authorization Act that we ultimately will pass.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, may I ask how much time I have left.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEBER of Texas). The gentleman from Rhode Island has 11½ minutes remaining.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers other than myself, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Ranking Member SMITH for speaking on behalf of this motion to instruct. I deeply appreciate his leadership on the Armed Services Committee and his years of service, as I do, again, have deep respect for Chairman THORNBERRY and his leadership as chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Case in point, the NDAA this year, and as has been the case in past years, has been truly a bipartisan effort, and it's one of the reasons I truly enjoy serving in the Armed Services Committee is because of the bipartisan cooperation that is demonstrated when it comes to protecting our country, when it comes to providing for our national defense, especially supporting our men and women in uniform. It is a bipartisan effort. It is unfortunate that in this one particular case we have this difference of opinion.

We are, again, a program that was initially intended to train marksmen years ago when we didn't have a professional military. Maybe it had merit and the organization was supported, but we have a professional military now, great marksmanship programs and training programs, as well as private organizations that do this. But it doesn't require or need a government subsidy, and so it wouldn't be appropriate in this case any further to continue to support this private organization, the CMP program with, ostensibly, a earmark.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS).

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, today, we are considering a National Defense Authorization Act measure that would transfer thousands of military weapons to a civilian nonprofit, the Civilian Marksmanship Program. These guns will then make their way into the public for purchase.

The Army has recommended against this proposal. One of their concerns, not a surprise, is public safety. For us to go against the recommendations of our own military on this matter is, frankly, absurd. Every single day, our country—our country—experiences horrific gun violence, and the last thing we should be doing is going against the advice of our military and putting more guns onto American streets.

Those who are in support of the measure claim that transferring these weapons to the Civilian Marksmanship Program will save the government the cost of storing these guns, but the

amount of money to be saved to store some weapons is really negligible, and that small cost is nothing compared to the potential cost to human life by unleashing these handguns for the public to purchase.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to employ common sense here. Listen to the advice of our Army and support the motion to instruct.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from California for her comments and support of the motion to instruct. I also want to commend her and thank her for her leadership on the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, just to once again reiterate, a priority of the overall NDAA that we worked on in a bipartisan, collaborative way, this one sticking point is this provision in the NDAA that, again, amounts to an earmark, and it could potentially put tens of thousands of additional weapons on our streets that could wind up in the wrong hands. It is an unnecessary step.

□ 1430

Again, when the CMP was first created, it had a legitimate purpose. That purpose is no longer needed, per se, for the military in terms of marksmanship training. There are other organizations out there that do that, but we also have the professional military.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the provisions in the House-passed NDAA would give a multimillion-dollar handout in the form of .45-caliber pistols to the Civilian Marksmanship Program. It is an unnecessary and unwise use of taxpayer property that would potentially make our streets less safe.

My motion will instruct our House conferees to reject this earmark and allow the Army to melt down and repurpose its surplus firearms, as it does with other firearms or surplus equipment.

Congress needs to find solutions to the endemic gun violence that is plaguing our Nation right now. We saw, it seems, time after time, multiple incidents where firearms get into the wrong hands and are misused, causing loss of life and sometimes, unfortunately, sadly, in significant numbers, just as we saw, as Ms. ROSEN mentioned, with the terrible shooting in Las Vegas: 58 people lost their lives and hundreds more were injured. It was a terrible tragedy for Nevada, for those who lost their lives, and for those who were injured; and, really, it was a tragedy once again that has plagued and affected our country.

It has to stop. We should not be adding to the problem by injecting tens of thousands of handguns onto our streets.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will support the motion to instruct, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, first, I want to express my appreciation to the gentleman from Rhode Island. As he said, we make every effort to ensure that the support for the men and women who serve in the military is on a bipartisan basis. The gentleman from Rhode Island is a key leader on a number of those issues, whether it is cyber, directed energy, and a host of others.

I appreciate all of the Members on both sides of the aisle who have spoken. That bipartisan support is what helped lead us to pass the House version of this bill by the biggest majority in 8 years. That does not mean we agree on everything, obviously, but when it comes to supporting the military, their interests are first, and I think we need to keep it that way.

The subject of this motion to instruct is a long-running program designed to support safety programs. While we have had votes on this on the floor and in committee over the years, it has never been a particularly controversial program, even though the gentleman from Rhode Island has consistently been against it from the start. But the point is that in both the House and the Senate bills this year, there are provisions dealing with these programs. We come to some resolution every year, and for 55 straight years the conference report has gotten signed into law.

I would like to correct one point, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe that the Army is opposed to this program. As a matter of fact, both Mr. ROGERS and I have talked to the Army about this, and they have not expressed in any sense that they are opposed to it. They were waiting to see what direction they are given, and they are happy to go implement that.

Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, our country has been buffeted by a number of tragedies: hurricanes; of course, wildfires going on now in the West. And the horrible, horrific murders in Las Vegas are much on our minds, as are the victims and the whole communities.

It is important to take time and to learn what that investigation yields so that we can, hopefully, prevent it from happening in the future.

I just want to point out that there is nothing, whether these provisions stay or go, that is going to have any effect on an event like we just saw in Las Vegas. As a matter of fact, in the history of this program, I know of no single instance where one of these weapons that has been disposed of for gun safety programs has been used improperly. As a matter of fact, most of these weapons go up on a mantle somewhere. They are collectors items. So it would be inappropriate, in my opinion, to try to tie that horrible tragedy in Las Vegas, or others, to these particular programs.

That leads me to the last point I would like to make, Mr. Speaker, and

it is similar to the first. On a bipartisan basis, this House and, indeed, this Congress, come together to support the men and women who risk their lives to defend us. The world is getting more dangerous, and, unfortunately—the fault of both parties in both the executive and legislative branches of government—we cut our military too much. We are seeing the effects of that through declining readiness, through increasing accidents, and a whole variety of things where the fruits of that neglect is becoming more apparent.

But I think it is crucial, as we begin to rebuild and repair our military, that we not let other agendas, other issues, impair our ability to do so. I am concerned, for example, that some Republicans say: Oh, yeah, I will increase funding for defense, as long as you can cut that money in other parts of the budget.

I am concerned when Democrats say: Oh, I am for increasing defense, as long as you increase other parts of the budget.

I am concerned when anybody brings any other agenda, any other issue, that impedes our ability to support the men and women who serve our Nation. We ought to do our best to support them on the basis of those issues alone and let other debates, whatever they may be, stand on their own as well.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, motions to instruct are, of course, non-binding. I think, in this case, the better vote is to vote “no.” There are provisions dealing with this in both the House and the Senate bill. I hope that we can come to a reasonable conclusion on these provisions and the whole bill. But the goal is to defend the country and to support the men and women who serve. We can never be distracted from that goal.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct.

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. 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 question will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess for a period of less than 15 minutes.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 37 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1440

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBER of Texas) at 2 o'clock and 40 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

The motion to instruct on H.R. 2810;

The motion to permit closed conference meetings on H.R. 2810, if offered;

The motion to suspend the rules on H. Res. 569;

The motion to recommit on S. 585; and

Passage of S. 585, if ordered.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES ON H.R. 2810, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to instruct on the bill (H.R. 2810) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, offered by the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN), on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk will redesignate the motion.

The Clerk redesignated the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 184, nays 237, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 564]

YEAS—184

Adams	Clark (MA)	Ellison
Aguilar	Clarke (NY)	Engel
Barragán	Clay	Española
Bass	Cleaver	Esty (CT)
Beatty	Cohen	Evans
Bera	Connolly	Foster
Beyer	Conyers	Frankel (FL)
Bishop (GA)	Correa	Fudge
Blumenauer	Costa	Gabbard
Blunt Rochester	Courtney	Gallego
Bonamici	Crist	Garamendi
Boyle, Brendan	Crowley	Gomez
F.	Cummings	Gonzalez (TX)
Brady (PA)	Davis (CA)	Gottheimer
Brown (MD)	Davis, Danny	Green, Al
Brownley (CA)	DeFazio	Green, Gene
Bustos	DeGette	Grijalva
Butterfield	Delaney	Gutiérrez
Capuano	DeLauro	Hanabusa
Carbajal	DelBene	Hastings
Cárdenas	Demings	Heck
Carson (IN)	DeSaulnier	Higgins (NY)
Cartwright	Deutch	Himes
Castor (FL)	Dingell	Hoyer
Castro (TX)	Doggett	Jackson Lee
Chu, Judy	Doyle, Michael	Jayapal
Cicilline	F.	Jeffries