

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 224, nays 183, answered “present” 1, not voting 25, as follows:

[Roll No. 657]

YEAS—224

Abraham	Franks (AZ)	Napolitano
Adams	Frelinghuysen	Newhouse
Aderholt	Gabbard	Noem
Allen	Gianforte	Norman
Arrington	Gibbs	Nunes
Bacon	Gonzalez (TX)	O'Rourke
Banks (IN)	Goodlatte	Olson
Barletta	Gottheimer	Pascarell
Barton	Gowdy	Perlmutter
Beatty	Granger	Pingree
Bilirakis	Grothman	Polis
Bishop (MI)	Guthrie	Posey
Bishop (UT)	Hanabusa	Ratcliffe
Black	Handel	Rice (SC)
Blackburn	Harper	Roby
Blumenauer	Harris	Roe (TN)
Blunt Rochester	Hartzler	Rogers (KY)
Bonamici	Heck	Rohrabacher
Brady (TX)	Hensarling	Rooney, Thomas J.
Brat	Higgins (LA)	Rosen
Brooks (AL)	Higgins (NY)	Ross
Brooks (IN)	Himes	Rothfus
Brown (MD)	Hollingsworth	Royce (CA)
Buchanan	Huffman	Ruppersberger
Bucshon	Hultgren	Rush
Bustos	Jeffries	Russell
Butterfield	Johnson (GA)	Scalise
Byrne	Johnson (LA)	Schiff
Calvert	Johnson, E. B.	Schneider
Carson (IN)	Johnson, Sam	Schweikert
Carter (TX)	Kaptur	Scott (VA)
Cartwright	Kelly (MS)	Scott, David
Chabot	Kelly (PA)	Sensenbrenner
Cheney	Kildee	Sessions
Chu, Judy	King (IA)	Shea-Porter
Cicilline	King (NY)	Sherman
Clay	Krishnamoorthi	Shimkus
Cole	Kuster (NH)	Shuster
Collins (NY)	Kustoff (TN)	Smith (NE)
Comer	Labrador	Smith (NJ)
Comstock	LaMalfa	Smith (TX)
Cook	Lamborn	Smith (WA)
Cooper	Larsen (WA)	Speier
Courtney	Latta	Stefanik
Cramer	Lewis (MN)	Stivers
Crawford	Lipinski	Suozi
Culberson	Long	Takano
Cummings	Loudermilk	Taylor
Curtis	Love	Thornberry
Davidson	Lowey	Tiberi
Davis (CA)	Lucas	Titus
Davis, Danny	Luetkemeyer	Torres
DeGette	Lujan Grisham,	Trott
DeLauro	M.	Tsongas
DelBene	Luján, Ben Ray	Turner
Demings	Maloney,	Upton
DeSaulnier	Carolyn B.	Vela
DesJarlais	Marino	Wagner
Deutch	Massie	Walden
Diaz-Balart	McCarthy	Walker
Dingell	McCaul	Walorski
Doggett	McClintock	Walters, Mimi
Donovan	McCollum	Wasserman
Doyle, Michael	McEachin	Schultz
F.	McHenry	Waters, Maxine
Duncan (SC)	McMorris	Webster (FL)
Duncan (TN)	Rodgers	Welch
Dunn	McNerney	Wenstrup
Ellison	Meadows	Williams
Engel	Meng	Wilson (FL)
Eshoo	Mitchell	Wilson (SC)
Estes (KS)	Moolenaar	Wittman
Ferguson	Mooney (WV)	Womack
Fleischmann	Moulton	Yarmuth
Fortenberry	Mullin	Young (IA)
Foster	Murphy (FL)	
Frankel (FL)	Nadler	

NAYS—183

Aguilar	Graves (MO)	Pallone
Amash	Green, Al	Palmer
Babin	Green, Gene	Panetta
Barr	Hastings	Paulsen
Barragán	Herrera Beutler	Pearce
Bass	Hice, Jody B.	Perry
Bera	Hill	Peters
Bergman	Holding	Peterson
Beyer	Hoyer	Pittenger
Biggs	Hudson	Poe (TX)
Bishop (GA)	Huizenga	Poliquin
Blum	Hunter	Price (NC)
Bost	Hurd	Raskin
Boyle, Brendan	Issa	Reed
F.	Jackson Lee	Reichert
Brady (PA)	Jayapal	Renacci
Buck	Jenkins (KS)	Rice (NY)
Budd	Jenkins (WV)	Richmond
Burgess	Johnson (OH)	Rogers (AL)
Capuano	Jones	Rokita
Carbajal	Jordan	Ros-Lehtinen
Cárdenas	Joyce (OH)	Roskam
Carter (GA)	Katko	Rouzer
Castor (FL)	Keating	Roybal-Allard
Castro (TX)	Kelly (IL)	Ruiz
Clarke (NY)	Khanna	Rutherford
Cleaver	Kihuen	Ryan (OH)
Clyburn	Kilmer	Sánchez
Coffman	Kind	Sanford
Cohen	Kinzingler	Sarbanes
Collins (GA)	Knight	Schakowsky
Conaway	LaHood	Schrader
Connolly	Lance	Serrano
Correa	Langevin	Sewell (AL)
Costa	Larson (CT)	Sinema
Costello (PA)	Lawrence	Sires
Crist	Lawson (FL)	Slaughter
Crowley	Lee	Smith (MO)
Cuellar	Levin	Smucker
Davis, Rodney	Lewis (GA)	Soto
DeFazio	Lieu, Ted	Swalwell (CA)
Delaney	LoBiondo	Tenney
Denham	Loeb sack	Thompson (CA)
DeSantis	Lofgren	Thompson (MS)
Duffy	Lowenthal	Thompson (PA)
Emmer	Lynch	Tipton
Espallat	MacArthur	Valadao
Esty (CT)	Maloney, Sean	Vargas
Evans	Marchant	Veasey
Farenthold	Marshall	Velázquez
Faso	Mast	Visclosky
Fitzpatrick	Matsui	Walberg
Flores	McGovern	Watson Coleman
Foxx	McKinley	Weber (TX)
Fudge	McSally	Westerman
Gallagher	Meehan	Woodall
Gallego	Messer	Yoder
Garamendi	Moore	Yoho
Garrett	Nolan	Young (AK)
Gomez	Norcross	Zeldin
Gosar	O'Halleran	
Graves (GA)	Palazzo	

ANSWERED “PRESENT”—1

Tonko

NOT VOTING—25

Amodei	Graves (LA)	Pocan
Bridenstine	Griffith	Quigley
Brownley (CA)	Grijalva	Rooney, Francis
Clark (MA)	Gutiérrez	Scott, Austin
Conyers	Kennedy	Simpson
Curbelo (FL)	Meeks	Stewart
Dent	Neal	Walz
Gaetz	Payne	
Gohmert	Pelosi	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

□ 1351

Mr. KIND changed his vote from “yea” to “nay.”

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House Chamber for rollcall votes 655, 656, and 657 on Tuesday, December 5, 2017. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall votes 655

and 656, and I would have voted “nay” on rollcall vote 657.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, December 5, for personal reasons, I was absent and missed votes. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall No. 655—“Yea.”

Rollcall No. 656—“Yea.”

Rollcall No. 657—“Yea.”

MODIFICATION IN APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 1, TAX CUTS AND JOBS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection and pursuant to clause 11 of rule I, the Chair removes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) as a conferee on H.R. 1 and appoints the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPTON) to fill the vacancy.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will notify the Senate of the change in conferees.

ENHANCING VETERAN CARE ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1266) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts with nonprofit organizations to investigate medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1266

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 “Enhancing Veteran Care Act”.

SEC. 2. INVESTIGATION OF MEDICAL CENTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may contract with a nonprofit organization that accredits health care organizations and programs in the United States to investigate a medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs to assess and report deficiencies of the facilities at such medical center.

(b) AUTHORITY OF DIRECTORS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to coordination under paragraph (2), the Secretary shall delegate the authority under subsection (a) to contract for an investigation at a medical center of the Department to the Director of the Veterans Integrated Service Network in which the medical center is located or the director of such medical center.

(2) COORDINATION.—Before entering into a contract under paragraph (1), the Director of a Veterans Integrated Service Network or the director of a medical center, as the case may be, shall notify the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Comptroller General of the United States for purposes of coordinating any investigation conducted pursuant to such contract with any other investigations that may be ongoing.

(c) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section may be construed—

(1) to prevent the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs from conducting any review, audit,

evaluation, or inspection regarding a topic for which an investigation is conducted under this section; or

(2) to modify the requirement that employees of the Department assist with any review, audit, evaluation, or inspection conducted by the Office of the Inspector General of the Department.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1266, the Enhancing Veteran Care Act. S. 1266 would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to contract with a nonprofit entity specializing in civilian accreditation or healthcare evaluation to investigate and assess deficiencies at VA medical centers and to coordinate any such investigations with the VA inspector general and the Government Accountability Office.

This bill is sponsored by Senator JAMES INHOFE from Oklahoma and is companion legislation to H.R. 42, which is sponsored by my good friend, Representative MARKWAYNE MULLIN from Oklahoma's Second District. I am grateful to both Senator INHOFE and Congressman MULLIN for their work on this legislation.

We are all familiar with the various challenges and scandals that have plagued VA medical centers across the country since the 2014 systemwide VA access and accountability crisis.

I, along with Ranking Member WALZ and other committee members, our Senate colleagues, Secretary Shulkin, veterans service organizations, and others, have been working tirelessly to transform the VA healthcare system into the modern, high-performing healthcare organization that our veterans deserve.

S. 1266 is in line with those efforts in that it would provide VA an additional avenue to identify and resolve problems impacting the care our veterans receive in VA medical facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, since 2014, the Veterans' Affairs Committee has held countless hearings focused on VA medical centers that were found to have covered up

wait times or failed to consistently provide high-quality healthcare to veterans.

Many of these failures were first brought to light by whistleblower allegations and were later substantiated by Government Accountability Office studies and VA inspector general investigations. Solutions to these failures were only uncovered through multiple inspections of medical centers' facilities, their policies, and their employees.

Congress relies on the hard work of medical inspectors and investigators at the VA, the OIG, and the GAO to review allegations and issue recommendations regarding how VA and Congress should work to correct deficiencies at medical centers and hold VA officials accountable. With limited resources, the inspector general and the GAO have completed a staggering number of investigations and reviews that have led to significant reforms of the VA system. They should be commended for their excellent work.

□ 1400

The Enhancing Veteran Care Act gives the Secretary another tool for developing solutions to problems at VA medical facilities. The VA Secretary should be able to contract with nonprofit-nongovernmental medical inspectors or auditors when deemed appropriate.

However, I strongly believe that granting the VA Secretary the authority to contract with nongovernmental inspectors and auditors should not result in cuts to the IG's or VA's budgets. We need to ensure VA inspectors and the VA OIG have the resources to continue their thorough and timely investigations.

I am also concerned about these nongovernmental organizations not being required to follow Federal laws that require transparency. I believe these nongovernmental bodies should be held to the very same level of transparency as the IG, GAO, and VA investigators, including requirements to publish their methods for conducting audits and reviews alongside their findings and recommendations. Without transparency, Congress and the public will not have the same level of confidence in their findings.

If we had the opportunity to consider this legislation in committee, we could have received testimony from VA, the IG, and GAO on this legislation and done more to address concerns around transparency, while also ensuring that investigative efforts are not duplicated. I encourage the chairman to continue his inclusive approach by seeking to bring all veterans related bills through committee for due consideration.

However, these concerns will not prevent me from supporting the Enhancing Veteran Care Act. I trust the Secretary will execute this authority in a manner that supports and supplements government-led investigations.

Veterans should have full confidence that they will receive high-quality healthcare at VA facilities. Rigorous and transparent investigations and audits will help guarantee these high standards are met.

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

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN), my good friend and sponsor of the House companion bill, H.R. 42.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ROE for allowing this to come to the floor and Leader MCCARTHY for his leadership in bringing this bill to the floor. I also want to thank my fellow Senators from Oklahoma, Mr. INHOFE and Mr. LANKFORD, for their great work in getting this passed in the Senate.

As the sponsor of H.R. 42, the House companion bill to S. 1266, I urge my colleagues to support and vote in favor of today's bill.

Nearly a year ago, we debated this bill on the floor and saw it passed by voice vote. I look forward to another strong response from the House in sending this bill to the President's desk and it becoming law.

This bill simply authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to contract with nonprofit organizations that accredit healthcare organizations in order to investigate VA medical centers.

This bill would allow the VA to get a second opinion from outside of the agency in order to get the best information and provide the best care for our veterans. Just like how patients sometimes need to get a second opinion on their diagnosis, the VA should not be above bringing in a second opinion.

Our veterans deserve care equal to the finest civilian hospitals, so let's bring more transparency to the VA by allowing them to invite the people who evaluate those private hospitals to take a look at the VA and make recommendations when problems arise.

This is a commonsense bill that will help improve the care for our veterans, and I hope all will support it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this bill.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. KUSTER), my good friend and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1266, Enhancing Veteran Care Act.

Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs can contract with qualified and accredited third-party nonprofits to investigate a VA medical center for deficiencies in its facility. Only the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, however, is directly capable of authorizing these third-party investigations.

Unfortunately, this process is needlessly cumbersome and delays the improvement of medical centers. This bill

is an important reform because it empowers Veteran Integrated Service Network directors and VA medical center directors to initiate these third-party reviews.

The Manchester VA Medical Center in my home State of New Hampshire currently faces a number of questions regarding the services it provides and the facilities it manages. While Secretary Shulkin has initiated reviews of the facility, it took a number of whistleblowers to put their reputation and jobs on the line to force action.

Legislation like the Enhancing Veteran Care Act could have streamlined this process and made both the facility and the VISN more accountable to the needs of veterans in New Hampshire. VA must be better at assessing its own shortcomings.

Ultimately, veterans in the Granite State and across the country deserve the highest standard of care.

I thank Senators INHOFE and LANKFORD for introducing this important legislation. I thank Senator SHAHEEN, one of the lead Democratic cosponsors of the bill, for helping advance this bill through the U.S. Senate and being attentive to the needs of our Granite State veterans.

I proudly support this legislation and urge all of my colleagues to support this bill and immediately send it to the President's desk.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in support of S. 1266, the Enhancing Veteran Care Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. This has been a team effort on the Veterans' Affairs Committee to work to try to improve the care that our veterans and Nation's heroes get throughout this country. The involvement on both sides of the aisle on our committee is unprecedented, I think, for a committee working toward a single goal and purpose.

Many times, we have differences of opinion, but this bill is just another tool that the VA will be able to use to improve the care that veterans get.

I received a letter today from a gentleman in New Mexico who had a very different experience 6 or 7 years ago with the VA. He was even hesitant to go back. He went back to this VA hospital and had a very pleasant experience. So I think things are changing for the better, I think due to the hard work of the leadership at the VA, the people who work there every day, and this committee.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCLINTOCK). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1266.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. 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.

CONDEMNING ETHNIC CLEANSING OF ROHINGYA AND CALLING FOR AN END TO ATTACKS IN AND AN IMMEDIATE RESTORATION OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS TO RAKHINE, BURMA

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 90) condemning ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya and calling for an end to the attacks in and an immediate restoration of humanitarian access to the state of Rakhine in Burma, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 90

Whereas on August 25, 2017, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army carried out attacks on Government positions in the state of Rakhine in Burma ("Rakhine State");

Whereas in recent decades the Rohingya people have lost, through systematic discrimination by Burmese national, state and local authorities, a range of civil and political rights, including citizenship, and face barriers today such that they are mostly stateless peoples;

Whereas since the August 25 attacks, Burma's military and security forces, as well as private mobs, have carried out attacks resulting in over 600,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh;

Whereas Amnesty International described the attacks by stating that "Myanmar security forces are setting northern Rakhine State ablaze in a targeted campaign to push the Rohingya people out of Myanmar";

Whereas the United Nations Security Council has called for an end to the violence and attacks;

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights has said that the response by the military is "grossly disproportionate" and a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing";

Whereas Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has said, "This violence must stop, this persecution must stop";

Whereas under Burma's military-drafted constitution, the country's military and security services are not subject to civilian rule and only Burma's Commander-in-Chief, Min Aung Hlaing, can command troops to cease attacks impacting civilians in Rakhine State;

Whereas Burma's civilian Government, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, has not yet taken necessary steps to address the violence and should take further measures, including to address the pervasive problem of hate speech;

Whereas the United States acknowledges the democratic transition underway in Burma, maintains hope for further genuine democratic reforms, and expects Burma's elected officials to take action to prevent violence and secure rights;

Whereas the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State ("Rakhine Commission") examined, beginning in 2016, the underlying tensions in Rakhine State and made a series of recommendations including a wide range of suggestions and policy changes dealing with humanitarian aid, citizenship, reconciliation, and peace;

Whereas the Rakhine Commission stated, "While Myanmar has every right to defend its own territory, a highly militarized response is unlikely to bring peace to the area. What is needed is a calibrated approach—one that combines political, developmental, security and human rights responses to ensure that violence does not escalate and intercommunal tensions are kept under control.";

Whereas the United Nations estimates that \$434,000,000 in humanitarian assistance will be needed to provide life-sustaining support to 1,200,000 people, both refugees and host communities, in the first few months of this crisis; and

Whereas the United States is providing an initial \$32,000,000 in humanitarian assistance to address the urgent needs of Rohingya fleeing violence from Rakhine State into Bangladesh, as well as the needs of internally displaced persons in Rakhine State and host communities in Bangladesh: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) condemns the attacks against civilians by Burma's military and security forces and calls on Burma's Commander-in-Chief, Min Aung Hlaing, to immediately end all attacks against civilians in the state of Rakhine in Burma;

(2) expresses deepest appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for providing refuge to those fleeing violence and attacks;

(3) condemns the attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and the violence in Rakhine and Rohingya communities, but warns that these attacks do not justify the unrestrained response by Burmese military and security forces that has resulted in severe human rights violations, murderous ethnic cleansing, and atrocities against civilians;

(4) calls on Burma's Government, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, and the Burmese military and security forces to work constructively to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, including those relating to justice, reconciliation, humanitarian aid, and citizenship;

(5) calls on Burma's Government and its military and security services to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to refugees and internally displaced persons;

(6) urges support and access for the United Nations Fact Finding Mission to Burma;

(7) calls on Burma's military and Government to allow refugees to voluntarily return to Burma in a manner consistent with internationally recognized principles of human rights and refugee protection and to change laws and policies that have contributed to insecurity in the state of Rakhine; and

(8) calls on the President of the United States to impose sanctions on members of the Burmese military and security forces who are responsible for human rights abuses.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days