

requirements in many communities to ensure that their grandchild does not fall behind during a move. They may need to spend down their savings or refinance a home in order to provide for their grandchildren, putting their own financial future in jeopardy.

This bill, the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act, will help us bring to the forefront the resources that grandparents need to raise their grandchildren. It will create an important new Federal advisory council focused on developing and disseminating information designed to help grandparents.

The advisory council would examine information about how to address mental health issues, how to navigate school systems, and how to build social and support networks that create the best possible environment for children.

Madam Speaker, we are so grateful that these grandparents have stepped in to care for grandchildren, and we need to do everything we can to support and sustain them.

Madam Speaker, I thank especially Senator SUSAN COLLINS of Maine for her leadership on this issue, along with Senator CASEY from Pennsylvania, and I am grateful to my colleague, Congressman PETER KING of New York, for his work and help getting this legislation passed.

As we deal with the opiate crisis, we have to deal with many different issues. There is not just one issue. There are multiple issues, and this is one of them.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the bipartisan support for my bill, and I appreciate the gentlewoman for yielding me the time.

Mr. LEWIS of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I am prepared to close if the gentlewoman is, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BONAMICI. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, again, I support this legislation, the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act, and other efforts of my colleagues to address the opioid crisis, but these policies will only be a drop in the bucket if the administration continues undermining access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare that includes robust Affordable Care Act protections for preexisting conditions like substance use disorder.

If we are to stem the tide of this epidemic, Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers must fully cover addiction treatment and safer alternatives to opioids for pain.

One thing is clear: Changing policy alone won't stop this crisis. We also need more resources for prevention, treatment, and innovative solutions.

The urgent need for more funding is wide and varied. Prevention programs need to be able to reach more people. Researchers need additional funding to gather data that will drive effective solutions. Overstretched public health departments need to be able to coordi-

nate a comprehensive response. Treatment facilities need more beds and more staff. Healthcare providers need further education and training.

We must increase the resources to match the scale of this problem, this crisis, and focus on making smart investments to adequately address the opioid crisis.

Madam Speaker, once again, I thank Senators COLLINS and CASEY, as well as Congressmen MCGOVERN and KING, for their work on this legislation, and I urge its passage.

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

Mr. LEWIS of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues across the aisle for their efforts in this regard.

I too agree that, absolutely, we need healthcare reform to ensure that people have the kind of coverage that covers things like opioid and substance abuse. Part of that effort means that people can afford a good insurance policy and choose the kind of coverage they want so that they are not priced out of the market and go without any insurance at all, which is really a problem with some of these people suffering through this epidemic.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of S. 1091, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act. I am proud to be a lead cosponsor of this legislation.

Grandparents play a crucial and increasingly significant role in the lives of their grandchildren. There are approximately 2.6 million grandparents who are raising their grandchildren in the United States.

Unlike parents or foster parents who plan for months or years to care for a child, grandparents often step in to raise the children unexpectedly with little to no support. This has become more prevalent in the wake of the opioid crisis. As a result, many grandparents are left without adequate information on available resources to help them with their caregiving duties.

This legislation will enable the federal government to provide much needed support to grandparents. Specifically, this bill will establish a federal advisory council to identify, promote, coordinate, and disseminate information and resources in order to help grandparents meet the health, educational, nutritional, and other needs of the children in their care. The task force will also help identify resources to help grandparents meet their own physical and mental health needs.

I thank Senator COLLINS, Senator CASEY, and Congressman MCGOVERN for working with me on this important legislation. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. LEWIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1091, 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 establish a Federal Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren".

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2018

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2147) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to provide treatment court services to justice-involved 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. 2147

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 "Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018".

SEC. 2. HIRING BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH SPECIALISTS.

(a) *HIRING OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH SPECIALISTS.—*

(1) *IN GENERAL.—*Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall hire not fewer than 50 Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists and place each such Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist at an eligible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in accordance with this section.

(2) *REQUIREMENTS.—*The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist employed under paragraph (1)—

(A) *serves, either exclusively or in addition to other duties, as part of a justice team in a veterans treatment court or other veteran-focused court; and*

(B) *otherwise meets Department hiring guidelines for Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists.*

(b) *ELIGIBLE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTERS.—*For purposes of this section, an eligible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center is any Department of Veterans Affairs medical center that—

(1) *complies with all Department guidelines and regulations for placement of a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist;*

(2) *works within a local criminal justice system with justice-involved veterans;*

(3) *maintains an affiliation with one or more veterans treatment courts or other veteran-focused courts; and*

(4) *either—*

(A) *regularly provides Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to serve as part of a justice team in a veterans treatment court or other veteran-focused court; or*

(B) *establishes a plan that is approved by the Secretary to provide Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists employed under subsection (a)(1) to serve as part of a justice team in a veterans treatment court or other veteran-focused court.*

(c) *PLACEMENT PRIORITY.—*The Secretary shall prioritize the placement of Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists employed under subsection (a)(1) at eligible Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers that have or intend to establish an affiliation, for the purpose of carrying out the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, with a veterans treatment court, or other veteran-focused court, that—

(1) was established on or after the date of the enactment of this Act; or

(2)(A) was established before the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(B) is not fully staffed with Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists.

(d) REPORTS.—

(1) REPORT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the implementation of this section and its effect on the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(i) The status of the efforts of the Secretary to hire Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists pursuant to subsection (a)(1), including the total number of Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists hired by the Secretary pursuant to such subsection and the number that the Secretary expects to hire pursuant to such subsection.

(ii) The total number of Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists assigned to each Department of Veterans Affairs medical center that participates in the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, including the number of Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists hired under subsection (a)(1) disaggregated by Department of Veterans Affairs medical center.

(iii) The total number of eligible Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers that sought placement of a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist under subsection (a)(1), how many Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists each such center sought, and how many of such medical centers received no placement of a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist under subsection (a)(1).

(iv) For each eligible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center—

(I) the number of justice-involved veterans who were served or are expected to be served by a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist hired under subsection (a)(1); and

(II) the number of justice-involved veterans who do not have access to a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist.

(2) REPORT BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than three years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the implementation of this section and the effectiveness of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) An assessment of whether the Secretary has fulfilled the Secretary's obligations under this section.

(ii) The number of veterans who are served by Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists hired under subsection (a)(1), disaggregated by demographics (including discharge status).

(iii) An identification of any subgroups of veterans who underutilize services provided under laws administered by the Secretary, including an assessment of whether these veterans have access to Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists under the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

(iv) Such recommendations as the Comptroller General may have for the Secretary to improve the effectiveness of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) JUSTICE TEAM.—The term “justice team” means the group of individuals, which may include a judge, court coordinator, prosecutor, public defender, treatment provider, probation or other law enforcement officer, program mentor, and Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist, who assist justice-involved veterans in a veterans treatment court or other veteran-focused court.

(2) JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERAN.—The term “justice-involved veteran” means a veteran with

active, ongoing, or recent contact with some component of a local criminal justice system.

(3) LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.—The term “local criminal justice system” means law enforcement, jails, prisons, and Federal, State, and local courts.

(4) VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROGRAM.—The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Program” means the program through which the Department of Veterans Affairs identifies justice-involved veterans and provides such veterans with access to Department services.

(5) VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH SPECIALIST.—The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist” means an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs who serves as a liaison between the Department and the local criminal justice system on behalf of a justice-involved veteran.

(6) VETERANS TREATMENT COURT.—The term “veterans treatment court” means a State or local court that is participating in the veterans treatment court program (as defined in section 2991(i)(1) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1))).

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. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material into the RECORD on H.R. 2147, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2147, as amended, the Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018.

This bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, to hire at least 50 Veterans Justice Outreach specialists, also referred to as VJO specialists, to serve in a veterans treatment or other veteran-focused court.

VJO specialists provide direct outreach to and case management services for veterans who are involved in the local criminal justice system. They serve to protect some of our most vulnerable veterans from unnecessary criminalization and incarceration by working with law enforcement and the courts to identify service-related mental health or substance abuse issues that may be underlying criminal behavior among veterans, and to link veterans with treatment they need from the VA to recover and become fully functional and contributing members of society.

This bill is sponsored by Congressman MIKE COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. COFFMAN is a senior member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and a tireless advocate for service members, veterans, and their families.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his leadership on this bill,

and I urge all of our colleagues to join me in supporting this.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2147, as amended, the Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018.

This bill would require VA to expand access to Veterans Justice Outreach specialists in an effort to aid veterans as they interact with the justice system.

Dealing with veterans who break the law can be complicated. While they should be held accountable for their crimes, there are frequently underlying factors, like substance abuse or PTSD, that come into play. Transitioning from the battlefield to civilian life can be tough for many.

These specialists are integral to VHA's efforts to ensure veterans avoid unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among veterans.

Veterans treatment courts are proven ways to ensure veterans receive the treatment and support necessary to avoid recidivism. I have visited the Riverside County Veterans Treatment Court and witnessed firsthand the stellar services it offers veterans in my community.

That is why I believe this bill is so important, as it would ensure veterans have the assistance and support they need to navigate successfully through the justice system.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN), both an Army and Marine veteran, my good friend and the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. COFFMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2147, the Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act.

For many veterans, the transition from military service has been successful, with few challenges. However, that is not the case for all veterans.

Unfortunately, for some veterans, the integration into civilian life has been met with difficulties, complications, and being caught up in the criminal justice system, often due to undiagnosed and untreated mental health issues attributed to multiple combat tours.

□ 1600

The Veteran Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018, H.R. 2147, assists criminal justice-involved veterans in getting the help they need to navigate the justice system and receive much-needed services through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 2147 authorizes the Secretary of VA to hire an additional 50 Veteran Justice Outreach specialists to support the existing VA Veteran Justice Outreach program.

The veteran treatment court model helps prevent the unnecessary incarceration of veterans who have suffered mental health issues, substance abuse, and homelessness related to the military service.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2147 to better meet the needs of the program and provide much-needed services to more veterans in need.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) who, though she is not a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has had a distinguished record of serving our veterans through very, very significant legislation.

Ms. SINEMA. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2147, the Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018.

Madam Speaker, it is our responsibility as Americans to help our bravest men and women heal from both the physical and mental wounds of war.

Veteran treatment courts are important, effective tools to help heal the invisible injuries many of our veterans sustained defending our country.

Retired Brigadier General Gregg Maxon, an Arizona veterans court advocate, told me these courts and their employees "make all the difference in how these veterans engage in their treatment programs."

We worked across the aisle on this bill to ensure that lifesaving courts have the resources to serve any Arizona veteran who needs support.

Madam Speaker, too many Arizona families continue to struggle with addiction. In the past year alone, more than 8,000 Arizonans overdosed on opioids. Over 1,200 of those lives couldn't be saved.

Leaders in Congress have attempted to cut programs like Medicaid, known as AHCCCS in Arizona, which ensures treatment and recovery services for many hardworking Arizonans struggling with addiction. But instead of attacking this program that works for everyday people across our State, we should reach across the aisle and work together to find solutions that help families get ahead and build better lives.

This week, we are working across the aisle and I am proud to see our progress. We are passing bills to help reduce foreign shipments of illegal synthetic opioids from places like China that enter our country through the mail system; passing bills to provide additional targeted services for individuals and families struggling with addiction; and passing bills to give law enforcement additional tools to keep synthetic drugs off the streets and out of our communities.

More work remains, and I look forward to working across the aisle to deliver results for everyday Arizonans.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY).

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from California for his leadership.

I rise in support of the Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018 requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs to hire 50 Veterans Justice Outreach specialists to support veteran treatment courts.

We have a sacred obligation to serve the needs of our Nation's veterans, including those struggling with addiction and the invisible wounds of war. Twenty percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression. One in six battle with substance abuse.

Left undiagnosed or untreated, these illnesses can lead to an encounter with the justice system. Worse yet, they can also lead to suicide, which veterans commit at more than twice the rate of the civilian population.

Fortunately, specialized veteran treatment courts are being developed across the country to help veterans who suffer from substance addiction or mental health disorders, and they receive the assistance they deserve.

The first such court was established in Buffalo, New York, in 2008. Since then, more than 300 have opened across the country, including one in Fairfax County and another in Prince William County, both counties I represent. I was glad to help establish the first docket in Fairfax County, and have been a proud supporter ever since.

By bringing these service organizations, State Veterans Services Departments and volunteer mentors into the courtroom, veteran treatment courts promote community collaboration and can connect veterans with the programs and benefits they have earned and they need.

Having a veteran-only court docket ensures that everyone, from the judge to the volunteers, specialize in veteran care; and the involvement of fellow veterans allows the defendant to experience the camaraderie to which he or she has become accustomed in the military.

We know this model works. It is our hope that the additional Veterans Justice Outreach specialists provided for in this bill will help promote veteran treatment courts as an alternative to detention for our Nation's returning heroes, and help them with the transition to civilian life.

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

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

Let me just say that I have personally witnessed the effectiveness of these courts in my own community. They have saved lives; they have fixed lives; they have repaired lives; and they have afforded our veterans a measure of dignity as they heal from their experiences in battle.

So I ask all my colleagues to please join me in passing H.R. 2147, as amended.

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

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 2147, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARCHANT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2147, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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:

H.R. 5890, by the yeas and nays; and H.R. 5891, by the yeas and nays.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. The second electronic vote will be conducted as a 5-minute vote.

ASSISTING STATES' IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANS OF SAFE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5890) to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to provide assistance to States in complying with, and implementing, certain provisions of section 106 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in order to promote better protections for young children and family-centered responses, and for other purposes, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GARRETT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 406, nays 3, not voting 18, as follows:

[Roll No. 263]

YEAS—406

Abraham	Bishop (GA)	Brown (MD)
Adams	Bishop (MI)	Brownley (CA)
Aderholt	Bishop (UT)	Buchanan
Aguilar	Black	Buck
Allen	Blackburn	Bucshon
Amodei	Blum	Budd
Arrington	Blumenauer	Burgess
Babin	Blunt Rochester	Bustos
Bacon	Bonamici	Butterfield
Banks (IN)	Bost	Byrne
Barr	Boyle, Brendan	Calvert
Barragán	F.	Capuano
Barton	Brady (PA)	Carbajal
Bass	Brady (TX)	Cardenas
Bera	Brat	Carson (IN)
Bergman	Brooks (AL)	Carter (GA)
Beyer	Brooks (IN)	Carter (TX)