

I would appreciate your response confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 6742 and ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the Congressional Record during consideration of the bill on the House floor.

Sincerely,

KEVIN BRADY,
Chairman.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC, September 25, 2018.
Hon. KEVIN BRADY,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BRADY: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 6742, the "Secure Border Communications Act." I appreciate your support in bringing this legislation before the House of Representatives, and accordingly, understand that the Committee on Ways and Means will not take further action on this bill.

The Committee on Homeland Security concurs with the mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration on this bill at this time, the Committee on Ways and Means does not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this bill or similar legislation in the future. In addition, should a conference on this bill be necessary, I would support a request by the Committee on Ways and Means for conferees on those provisions within your jurisdiction.

I will insert copies of this exchange in the Congressional Record during consideration of this bill on the House floor. I thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL T. MCCUAUL,
Chairman.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6742, the Secure Border Communications Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential that the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security have reliable and effective communications equipment in the field.

Unfortunately, in recent years, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has been unable to achieve and maintain baseline communications capabilities, with devices exhibiting a range of issues from system incompatibility to outright interoperability. For Border Patrol agents in remote areas of the border, particularly along the U.S.-Canadian border, such issues give rise to troubling operational and officer safety challenges.

In response, H.R. 6742 directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure that CBP agents and officers are equipped with secure radio technologies that are interoperable regardless of where used along the border.

Additionally, it authorizes the Secretary to evaluate new and emerging communications technologies to determine their suitability for use along the border.

On a related note, a recent positive development came this summer when CBP awarded \$26 million in contracts to upgrade their mission critical equipment.

While CBP is slowly upgrading their communication networks and equip-

ment, H.R. 6742 underscores Congress' interest in seeing meaningful progress. As such, I support H.R. 6742 and ask my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, it is our duty as Members of Congress to ensure that the men and women who patrol and protect our border are trained and equipped to do their jobs.

Unreliable communication in areas between ports of entry or remote areas due to system interoperability is an issue H.R. 6742 aims to fix. It seeks to do so by placing on the shoulders of the Secretary of Homeland Security the responsibility for ensuring that each agent or officer is equipped with secure, reliable radios.

Mr. Speaker, I support this approach. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 6742, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, this ensures that not only are communication devices operable but that they are interoperable between agents down on the border risking their lives day in and day out.

I can't thank them enough. I have been down to the border so many times, and I see the harsh conditions that they operate under. I just want to send a message of gratitude from the United States Congress and our Committee on Homeland Security, and thank them for the work that they do tirelessly. Honestly, I think we don't thank them enough for what they do.

The encryption issue is vitally important because the drug cartels are getting so sophisticated that they can pick up communications of our law enforcement. This bill will go a long way to help protect those communications and make sure that they can do their job in a more safe and efficient manner in protecting the American public.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6742, the Secure Border Communications Act. Every single day the brave law enforcement officers of the United States Customs and Border Protection put themselves in harm's way in order to secure our borders and ports of entry. This bill will strengthen interagency border security communication and communication within U.S. Customs and Border Protection by improving communication technologies for all CBP officers and agents.

When agents or officers are in the field, secure communications with other CBP personnel and law enforcement agencies is imperative to mission success and officer safety. Currently, communication devices and radios used by officers and agents are outdated and hinder interagency communication. I never want there to be a circumstance where a CBP officer or agent is operating in a remote area along our border and is not able to call for backup or whose location is intercepted by the cartels due to defective devices. We must not accept that as a possibility; we must ensure that our agents and officers are fully equipped with the proper technology.

H.R. 6742 will require the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that CBP per-

sonnel are equipped with secure radios or other two-way communication devices. These devices will allow officers and agents to communicate between ports of entry and inspection stations, and with other law enforcement entities operating in the same area of responsibility.

I want to thank my friend and colleague, Chairman McCaul, for his cosponsorship and leadership on this important bill. Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a war on terror and continue to be the target of radicals who want to do our country harm. Ensuring our law enforcement officers operating along the borders and at our ports of entry are fully equipped is essential to national security. Beyond the threat of terrorism, securing our border is vitally important to preventing drug and human trafficking. Improving communication is a critical component of this mission. Mr. Speaker, let's take some decisive action to secure our border. Let's pass this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCaul) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6742.

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.

SERGEANT JOHN TOOMBS RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION TREATMENT FACILITY

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged from further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2634) to designate the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Facility Expansion of the Department of Veterans Affairs Alvin C. York Medical Center in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, as the "Sergeant John Toombs Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Facility", and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

There was no objection.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2634

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

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Sergeant John Toombs of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, served in the Tennessee Army National Guard as a part of the highly distinguished 230th Signal Corps.

(2) His six years in the National Guard included a deployment to Afghanistan, where Sergeant Toombs proudly served as a guard and escort for visiting dignitaries and reporters traveling into highly dangerous, war-ravaged areas in Afghanistan.

(3) As a result of his service in Afghanistan, Sergeant Toombs developed symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a disability he continued to suffer from after leaving the National Guard in 2014.

(4) After two years of battling PTSD and failing to receive the necessary treatment, Sgt. Toombs tragically took his own life in November of 2016.

(5) However, the life of Sergeant Toombs has impacted other veterans in Tennessee suffering from PTSD. Since this devastating tragedy, positive measures have been made to raise awareness and improve the overall treatment of veterans suffering from PTSD within the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System.

SEC. 2. SERGEANT JOHN TOOMBS RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION TREATMENT FACILITY.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Facility Expansion of the Department of Veterans Affairs Alvin C. York Medical Center in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, shall be known and designated as the “Sergeant John Toombs Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Facility”, after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in any law, regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the Alvin C. York Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the “Sergeant John Toombs Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Facility”.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EXPIRING AUTHORITIES ACT OF 2018

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 3479) to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend certain expiring provisions of law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill. The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3479

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2018”.

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

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. References to title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—EXTENSIONS OF AUTHORITY

Subtitle A—Health Care Matters

Sec. 101. Extension of authority for collection of copayments for hospital care and nursing home care.
Sec. 102. Extension of requirement to provide nursing home care to certain veterans with service-connected disabilities.
Sec. 103. Removal of authorization of appropriations to provide assistance and support services for caregivers.
Sec. 104. Making permanent authority for recovery from third parties of cost of care and services furnished to veterans with health-plan contracts for non-service-connected disability.
Sec. 105. Extension of authority for transfer of real property.

Sec. 106. Extension of authority for pilot program on assistance for child care for certain veterans receiving health care.
Sec. 107. Extension of authority to make grants to veterans service organizations for transportation of highly rural veterans.
Sec. 108. Extension of authority for pilot program on counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service.
Sec. 109. Extension of temporary expansion of payments and allowances for beneficiary travel in connection with veterans receiving care from vet centers.
Subtitle B—Benefits Matters
Sec. 121. Making permanent authority for temporary expansion of eligibility for specially adapted housing assistance for certain veterans with disabilities causing difficulty ambulating.
Sec. 122. Extension of authority for specially adapted housing assistive technology grant program.
Sec. 123. Making permanent authority to guarantee payment of principal and interest on certificates or other securities.
Sec. 124. Making permanent authority for calculating net value of real property at time of foreclosure.
Sec. 125. Extension of authority relating to vendee loans.
Sec. 126. Making permanent authority to provide rehabilitation and vocational benefits to members of the Armed Forces with severe injuries or illnesses.
Sec. 127. Extension of authority to enter into agreement with the National Academy of Sciences regarding associations between diseases and exposure to dioxin and other chemical compounds in herbicides.
Subtitle C—Homeless Veterans Matters
Sec. 141. Extension of authority for homeless veterans reintegration programs.
Sec. 142. Extension of authority for homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children reintegration program.
Sec. 143. Extension of authority for referral and counseling services for veterans at risk of homelessness transitioning from certain institutions.
Sec. 144. Extension of authority for treatment and rehabilitation services for seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans.
Sec. 145. Extension of authority for financial assistance for supportive services for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing.
Sec. 146. Extension of authority for grant program for homeless veterans with special needs.
Sec. 147. Extension of authority for the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans.
Subtitle D—Other Matters
Sec. 161. Extension of authority for transportation of individuals to and from Department of Veterans Affairs facilities.
Sec. 162. Extension of authority for operation of the Department of Veterans Affairs regional office in Manila, the Republic of the Philippines.

Sec. 163. Extension of authority for monthly assistance allowances under the Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events.
Sec. 164. Extension of requirement to provide reports to Congress regarding equitable relief in the case of administrative error.
Sec. 165. Extension of authorization of appropriations for adaptive sports programs for disabled veterans and members of the armed forces.
Sec. 166. Extension of authority for Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

TITLE II—IMPROVEMENT OF HEALTH CARE FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Sec. 201. Treatment of modifications of contracts under Veterans Community Care program.
Sec. 202. Modification of provision requiring recognition and acceptance, on an interim basis, of credentials and qualifications of health care providers under community care program.
Sec. 203. Expansion of coverage of Veterans Care Agreements.
Sec. 204. Modification of authority for deduction of overpayments for health care.
Sec. 205. Modification of eligibility of former members of the Armed Forces for mental and behavioral health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 206. Access of health care providers of the Department of Veterans Affairs to drug monitoring programs that do not participate in the national network.
Sec. 207. Elimination of report on activities and proposals involving contracting for performance by contractor personnel of work previously performed by Department employees.
Sec. 208. Additional report on increased availability of opioid receptor antagonists.
Sec. 209. Expansion of health care assessment to include all territories of the United States and the assessment of extended care services.
Sec. 210. Authorization of major medical facility project at Department of Veterans Affairs West Los Angeles Medical Center.
Sec. 211. Technical amendments to VA MISSION Act of 2018 and amendments made by that Act.

TITLE III—OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 301. Approval of courses of education provided by public institutions of higher education for purposes of training and rehabilitation for veterans with service-connected disabilities conditional on in-State tuition rate for veterans.
Sec. 302. Corrective action for certain Department of Veterans Affairs employees for conflicts of interest with educational institutions operated for profit.
Sec. 303. Modification of compliance requirements for particular leases relating to Department of Veterans Affairs West Los Angeles Campus.