

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2511, the Commercial Engagement Through Ocean Technology Act, as amended, also known as CENOTE.

This bicameral, bipartisan, and bicoastal legislation advances the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's use of unmanned maritime systems by coordinating the private and academic sectors with the Navy on evaluating unmanned maritime systems technology and their utility in science and management.

The legislation highlights the unique role that nondefense interests such as NOAA, academia, and the private sector play in the advancement of unmanned systems, which can gather a wide range of ocean data with fishery management, navigation, and economic benefits. Additionally, sensors can be utilized for dozens of meteorological and oceanographic readings, including acoustics, water temperature, salinity, and much more.

The evolution of unmanned systems continues to present opportunities to replace, enhance, and reinforce traditional tools and infrastructure, such as moorings and manned research vessels, while minimizing operational costs.

Demand greatly outpaces supply in the fielding of these assets. Specifically, NOAA is charged with the difficult tasks of mapping, observing, and exploring our oceans, which cover over 70 percent of our Earth's surface. It is no surprise, then, that 80 percent of our ocean is unmanned, unobserved, and unexplored. Because of the limitations of funding and fielding, NOAA continues the slow process of mapping.

However, legislation like this can assist in the process. This legislation would require NOAA to leverage the technical and procurement expertise of the Navy and other partners to assess existing capabilities and initiate acquisition strategies.

Ultimately, CENOTE is a win for defense, commerce, fisheries, environmental monitoring, and research and disaster planning and recovery.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Finally, I want to thank Chairman ROB BISHOP and his professional staff, Bill Ball, for assisting my office in bringing this legislation to the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, S. 2511 directs NOAA to coordinate the use and data collection of unmanned maritime systems, including with the Navy. In addition, this bill directs NOAA to regularly assess how these technologies can be used to support NOAA's missions.

Unmanned maritime systems are exciting new technologies that are remotely operated or autonomous vehicles used to collect data for seafloor mapping, atmospheric conditions, wave heights, water temperature, salinity, and carbon dioxide content. They can even be used to study marine mammals and help with fishery management.

This is an important bill that embraces 21st century technology to address the increasing challenges and needs facing our oceans today.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill. I commend Senators WICKER and SCHATZ and Congressmen PALAZZO and PARNETTA for their work on this bipartisan bill.

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

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to thank Chairman SMITH of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee; Chairman THORNBERRY of the Armed Services Committee; and Congressman STEVEN PALAZZO, who sponsored the House counterpart of this legislation, for their cooperation in getting S. 2511 to the floor today.

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, December 10, 2018.

Hon. MAC THORNBERRY,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services,
Washington, DC

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Majority Leader wishes to schedule S. 2511, the Commercial Engagement Through Ocean Technology Act of 2018, for consideration under suspension of the rules this week. This bill was primarily referred to the Committee on Natural Resources and additionally referred to the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Science, Space and Technology.

I ask that the Committee on Armed Services not insist on its referral of the bill so that it may be considered on the Floor with an amendment requested by the Committee on Science, Space and Technology. This concession in no way affects your jurisdiction over the subject matter of the bill, and it will not serve as precedent for future referrals. In addition, should a conference on the bill be necessary, I would support your request to have your committee represented on the conference committee. Finally, I would be pleased to include this letter and your response in the Congressional Record during debate on the bill.

Thank you for your consideration of my request and for the extraordinary cooperation shown by you and your staff over matters of shared jurisdiction.

Sincerely,

ROB BISHOP,
Chairman,
Committee on Natural Resources.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, December 10, 2018.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am writing to you concerning S. 2511, the "Commercial Engagement Through Ocean Technology Act of 2018." There are certain provisions in the bill which fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on Armed Services.

In the interest of permitting your committee to proceed expeditiously to floor consideration of this important legislation, I am willing to waive this committee's further consideration of S. 2511. I do so with the understanding that by waiving consideration of the bill, the Committee on Armed Services does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the subject matters contained in

the legislation which fall within its Rule X jurisdiction. The committee also reserves the right to seek appointment to any House-Senate conference on this legislation and requests your support if such a request is made.

Please place this letter into the Congressional Record during consideration of the measure on the House floor. Thank you for the cooperative spirit in which you have worked regarding this matter and others between our respective committees.

Sincerely,
WILLIAM M. "MAC" THORNBERRY,
Chairman.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 2511, 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.

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SECRET SERVICE OVERTIME PAY EXTENSION ACT

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6893) to amend the Overtime Pay for Protective Services Act of 2016 to extend the Secret Service overtime pay exception through 2019, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6893

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 "Secret Service Overtime Pay Extension Act".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF OVERTIME PAY EXCEPTION THROUGH 2020 FOR PROTECTIVE SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2 of the Overtime Pay for Protective Services Act of 2016 (5 U.S.C. 5547 note), as amended by Public Law 115–160, is further amended—

(1) in the section heading, by striking "2018" and inserting "2020";

(2) in subsection (a), by striking "or 2018" and inserting "2018, 2019, or 2020"; and

(3) in subsection (b)(1), by striking "and 2018" and inserting "2018, 2019, and 2020".

(b) REPORT ON EXTENSIONS.—Not later than January 30 of each of calendar years 2020 and 2021, the Director of the Secret Service shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Committee on Homeland Security and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on the effects of the amendments made by subsection (a). The report shall include, with respect to the previous calendar year, the information described under paragraphs (1) through (7) of section 2(c) of Public Law 115–160.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JODY B. HICE) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Secret Service is the premier protective agency in the world. Secret Service agents and officers play a vital role in defending the President, high-ranking government officials, and events of national significance.

Protection is a round-the-clock job, and Secret Service personnel often work extensive overtime to fulfill their zero-fail mission.

Under current law, Federal employees across the government may not be paid above an annual premium pay cap. The cap consists of base pay, including locality pay, and premium pay, such as overtime. The cap is in place to ensure a hierarchy of pay so that frontline employees do not earn more than their supervisors who are ineligible for overtime pay. It also helps to control agency spending on compensation.

The cap, however, has led to issues at the Secret Service. Due to a staffing shortage and increased protective responsibilities, Secret Service personnel are expected to work increasing amounts of overtime, causing them to hit the premium pay cap well in advance of the end of the year.

Secret Service personnel are expected to continue working once they hit the cap, but they receive no extra compensation for this work. This phenomenon is known as maxing out at the agency, and it can cause morale and attrition problems.

Committee staff recently traveled to observe Secret Service operations in Europe. During that trip, the topic of maxing out came up as an issue consistently on the minds of personnel in the field. The maxing out issue is expected to get worse in 2020, when the burdens of the Presidential campaign cycle cause a large increase in hours worked by the Secret Service.

In the previous Presidential election cycle, Congress raised the premium pay cap for Secret Service personnel to the Executive Schedule Level II, ensuring Secret Service personnel receive additional compensation commensurate with the amount of time they must work.

This waiver of the governmentwide premium pay cap was extended to the

end of 2018 by the Secret Service Recruitment and Retention Act. Without a further extension, Secret Service personnel will once again be subject to the lower pay cap.

H.R. 6893 extends the premium pay cap waiver to the end of 2020. Between 700 and 900 personnel will be eligible for extra pay in 2019, while approximately 1,150 will be eligible in 2020.

The bill also continues a series of reports due to Congress on the premium pay cap, to ensure its appropriate use.

Extending the premium pay cap waiver also gives time for the Government Accountability Office to complete ongoing review of the Secret Service's staffing issues.

Finally, it ensures the agency doesn't backtrack on staffing progress made to date. The Oversight and Government Reform Committee continues to maintain that the premium pay cap waiver cannot be a permanent change and that the Secret Service must fix its own staffing issues and problems.

For now, however, I do urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank and acknowledge the remarks of the gentleman from Georgia on this bill. As ranking member of the Subcommittee on National Security, I also express my strong support for H.R. 6893, the Secret Service Overtime Pay Extension Act, introduced by my friend STEVE RUSSELL from Oklahoma, who is the chairman of our subcommittee.

In light of previous legislation reported out of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on a bipartisan basis, this bill would ensure that the United States Secret Service retains the ability to provide overtime pay to its dedicated workforce for the additional work that agents will be required to perform in 2019 and through the 2020 Presidential election process.

The bipartisan investigation conducted by our committee during the 114th Congress examined how best to strengthen the core protective mission of the Secret Service. The Secret Service is our Nation's primary security force for the protection of the President, the First Family, Presidential candidates, and, when necessary, other elected officials and world leaders.

The Secret Service currently faces serious administrative challenges. According to the bipartisan report unanimously adopted by our committee in 2016, chief among those challenges is a staffing crisis that poses perhaps the greatest threat to the agency and that allowed a series of brazen security breaches during both the Obama and Trump administrations.

The safety and security of the Secret Service mission demands that the Congress provide sufficient funding to restore the agency to adequate staffing levels. At a minimum, we must first ensure that the agency retains the basic ability to compensate its agents

with the overtime pay that they have earned and that they deserve.

In 2017, we passed legislation on a bipartisan basis to retroactively authorize overtime pay for the thousands of additional hours worked by Secret Service employees in the midst of an extraordinarily taxing and extended 2016 Presidential campaign season.

Recognizing that the agency now provides security details for a President with a larger First Family and multiple and extensive travel schedules, we subsequently passed legislation extending that authorization through 2018.

As underscored by the Federal union representing rank-and-file Secret Service agents, the 2020 Presidential campaign season is expected to involve the participation of multiple candidates who may require earlier Secret Service protection than customary and include an extended Presidential primary cycle, thereby imposing further demands on the already understaffed Secret Service workforce.

That is why our committee approved Representative STEVE RUSSELL's legislation to fund overtime pay for the Secret Service for calendar year 2019, as well as an amendment introduced by our full committee ranking member, the gentleman from Maryland, ELIJAH CUMMINGS, to extend this authorization through the 2020 campaign year. I note that the 2-year authorization request was specifically supported by the Secret Service.

The hardworking men and women of the Secret Service put their lives on the line every day and make tremendous personal sacrifices for our country. Congress has a fundamental responsibility to provide the resources that they need to do their jobs safely and successfully.

While I believe Congress should also spend some time working together on a permanent fix to this problem, I, nevertheless, stand proud to join my colleagues in this bipartisan effort to support the Secret Service in this effort.

Mr. Speaker, I also urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I will take just a moment to give a huge thank you to the sponsor of this bill, Mr. STEVE RUSSELL from Oklahoma. Unfortunately, his flight was delayed. I know he would have loved to have been here to speak on this bill. I give a shout-out to him, thanking him for his leadership here. And also, as the gentleman from Massachusetts mentioned, other cosponsors, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO), and others, thanks to each of them.

Mr. Speaker, may the gentleman from Massachusetts be aware that I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

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

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers.

Mr. Speaker, again, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I also urge adoption of this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JODY B. HICE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6893, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend the Overtime Pay for Protective Services Act of 2016 to extend the Secret Service overtime pay exception through 2020, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING CERTAIN BURIAL BENEFITS FOR SPOUSES AND CHILDREN OF VETERANS WHO ARE BURIED IN TRIBAL CEMETERIES

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 2248) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide certain burial benefits for spouses and children of veterans who are buried in tribal cemeteries, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2248

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 "Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018".

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

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—EDUCATION

Sec. 101. Inclusion of certain additional periods of active duty service for purposes of suspension of charges to entitlement during periods of suspended participation in Department of Veterans Affairs vocational rehabilitation programs.

Sec. 102. Provision of monthly housing stipend information under Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program.

Sec. 103. Disapproval for purposes of educational assistance programs of Department of Veterans Affairs of certain courses of education that do not permit individuals to attend or participate in courses pending payment.

Sec. 104. Provision of information on required additional actions to allow individuals to stay enrolled in courses of education pending receipt of educational assistance from department of veterans affairs.

Sec. 105. Calculation of monthly housing stipend under high technology pilot program based on location of campus where veteran attends classes.

Sec. 106. Clarification regarding applicability of authority to use educational assistance to pursue independent study programs at certain educational institutions that are not institutions of higher learning.

TITLE II—MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

Sec. 201. Eligibility of spouses and children of veterans buried in tribal cemeteries for certain Department of Veterans Affairs burial benefits.

Sec. 202. Department of Veterans Affairs provision of headstones and markers for, and interment in national cemeteries of, spouses and dependent children of members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty.

TITLE III—CIVIL RELIEF

Sec. 301. Termination of leases of premises of deceased servicemembers who die while in military service.

Sec. 302. Residence of spouses of servicemembers for tax purposes.

Sec. 303. Residence of spouses of servicemembers for voting.

Sec. 304. Termination of multichannel video programming and internet access service contracts.

TITLE IV—TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

Sec. 401. Study of community-based transition assistance programs for members of the Armed Forces after separation, retirement, or discharge.

TITLE V—DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

Sec. 501. Misuse of Department of Veterans Affairs purchase cards by Department employees.

Sec. 502. Updating dependent information.

Sec. 503. Oversight of Electronic Health Record Modernization Program.

Sec. 504. Department of Veterans Affairs notice relating to debt collection activities.

TITLE VI—MEDICAL FACILITIES

Sec. 601. Authorization of major medical facility projects for fiscal year 2019.

Sec. 602. Plans to improve medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

TITLE VII—OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 701. Homeless veterans reintegration programs.

Sec. 702. Technical corrections.

Sec. 703. Medical Surgical Prime Vendor program.

Sec. 704. Report on expanding access to dental care for veterans eligible for health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

TITLE I—EDUCATION

SEC. 101. INCLUSION OF CERTAIN ADDITIONAL PERIODS OF ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE FOR PURPOSES OF SUSPENSION OF CHARGES TO ENTITLEMENT DURING PERIODS OF SUSPENDED PARTICIPATION IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS.

Section 3105(e)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "or 12304" and inserting "12304, 12304a, or 12304b".

SEC. 102. PROVISION OF MONTHLY HOUSING STIPEND INFORMATION UNDER POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Section 3313 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(k) PROVISION OF HOUSING STIPEND PAYMENT INFORMATION.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall furnish to individuals receiving educational assistance under this chapter documentation that verifies the amount of the monthly housing stipend the individual receives under this section.

"(2) MANNER.—The Secretary shall make such documentation available to the individual using an internet website in the same manner the Secretary provides documentation verifying compensation and other benefits furnished by the Secretary to individuals."

SEC. 103. DISAPPROVAL FOR PURPOSES OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF CERTAIN COURSES OF EDUCATION THAT DO NOT PERMIT INDIVIDUALS TO ATTEND OR PARTICIPATE IN COURSES PENDING PAYMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3679 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(e)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, beginning on August 1, 2019, a State approving agency, or the Secretary when acting in the role of the State approving agency, shall disapprove a course of education provided by an educational institution that has in effect a policy that is inconsistent with any of the following:

"(A) A policy that permits any covered individual to attend or participate in the course of education during the period beginning on the date on which the individual provides to the educational institution a certificate of eligibility for entitlement to educational assistance under chapter 31 or 33 of this title and ending on the earlier of the following dates:

"(i) The date on which the Secretary provides payment for such course of education to such institution.

"(ii) The date that is 90 days after the date on which the educational institution certifies for tuition and fees following receipt from the student such certificate of eligibility.

"(B) A policy that ensures that the educational institution will not impose any penalty, including the assessment of late fees, the denial of access to classes, libraries, or other institutional facilities, or the requirement that a covered individual borrow additional funds, on any covered individual because of the individual's inability to meet his or her financial obligations to the institution due to the delayed disbursement of a payment to be provided by the Secretary under chapter 31 or 33 of this title.

"(2) For purposes of this subsection, a covered individual is any individual who is entitled to educational assistance under chapter 31 or 33 of this title.

"(3) The Secretary may waive such requirements of paragraph (1) as the Secretary considers appropriate.