

which has been occurring. I thank Congressman KIM for this very important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to extend my gratitude to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL), whose district I have visited and whose medical center I have also visited. And I have to say that he runs a crack operation. That came out wrong.

He runs, not a crack operation, but amazing constituent services for his veterans.

You know, this unfortunate situation where the VA overpays veterans and then claws back those payments will be corrected by this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say I have no further speakers and I am prepared to close.

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

□ 1700

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

Mr. Speaker, I don't know about New Jersey and California, but a crack operation where we are is a good one, so I think I would take that as a compliment.

I thank Mr. KIM and my good friend Mr. HILL for their work on this.

It does create, as the chairman said, tremendous anxiety and problems for our veterans. It is needless. Many times, it is just a bureaucratic mistake. I think all of us have suffered those with the IRS or whomever, so this is a way to correct that. I thank these Members for bringing it up.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this bill, and I urge Members to.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 4360, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BEYER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4360.

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.

PROTECTING FAMILIES OF FALLEN SERVICEMEMBERS ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4356) to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to allow certain individuals to terminate contracts for telephone, multichannel video programming, or internet access service, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4356

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 "Protecting Families of Fallen Servicemembers Act".

SEC. 2. TERMINATION OF CONTRACTS FOR TELEPHONE, MULTICHANNEL VIDEO PROGRAMMING, OR INTERNET ACCESS SERVICE BY CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT.

Section 305A(a) of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. 3956(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(4) ADDITIONAL INDIVIDUALS COVERED.—For purposes of this section, the following individuals shall be treated as a servicemember covered by paragraph (1):

"(A) A spouse or dependent of a servicemember who dies while in military service or a spouse or dependent of a member of the reserve components who dies while performing duty described in subparagraph (C).

"(B) A spouse or dependent of a servicemember who incurs a catastrophic injury or illness (as that term is defined in section 439(g) of title 37, United States Code), if the servicemember incurs the catastrophic injury or illness while in military service or performing duty described in subparagraph (C).

"(C) A member of the reserve components performing military service or performing full-time National Guard duty, active Guard and Reserve duty, or inactive-duty training (as such terms are defined in section 101(d) of title 10, United States Code)."

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 4356, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4356, as amended, the Protecting Families of Fallen Servicemembers Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill was introduced by Representative JOSH HARDER from California, and I thank him for his work with the committee on the bill. It expands on the work the committee did last Congress in partnership with Representative BUSTOS to improve the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

This bill ensures that spouses and dependents of both Active and Reserve component servicemembers who are catastrophically injured or pass away while in service to this Nation have protections under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, otherwise known as SCRA. Specifically, the bill allows impacted servicemembers or their families to terminate cable, internet, and phone service.

Servicemembers and families undergo difficult life transitions because of a catastrophic injury or death of loved ones. Families should have the flexi-

bility to be at the servicemember's side during recovery. Surviving spouses and family members of fallen servicemembers should easily be able to move closer to family and friends or other support networks. Families dealing with the difficult loss or injury of their loved ones should not have to worry about contracts or cancellation fees.

I would like to note that this legislation unanimously passed the House last Congress and has been updated to reflect improvements recommended by veterans service organizations.

I also thank Dr. WENSTRUP, who served with us on the committee for several Congresses, for his focus on the issue and for working with Mr. HARDER on this bill.

Finally, I thank the Paralyzed Veterans of America for highlighting the need to include catastrophically disabled veterans and families in our work to improve the SCRA.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the bipartisan work of Congressman LEVIN and Congressman BILIRAKIS on moving this bill through committee.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in voting to pass H.R. 4356, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4356, as amended, the Protecting Families of Fallen Servicemembers Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to give a spouse or dependent of a servicemember who experiences a catastrophic injury or who dies while in military service the ability to terminate telephone, multichannel video programming, or internet service contracts.

This bill would also extend SCRA protections to members of the National Guard and Reserve who are executing Active Duty orders or performing inactive duty training. These are worthwhile protections for our servicemembers and are worthy of our support.

This bill is sponsored by Congressman JOSH HARDER from California, and I appreciate his work.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

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

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP), my good friend. Dr. Colonel BRAD WENSTRUP is a combat veteran of Iraq who is still on Reserve duty and has served at both Fort Belvoir Hospital and Walter Reed Hospital.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I thank Dr. ROE for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4356, the Protecting Families of Fallen Servicemembers Act.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the armed services, I know how important it is to protect the families of those who serve when tragedy strikes. That is why I was proud to join Representative HARDER to introduce this legislation, which will allow the spouses and dependents of servicemembers who are killed or catastrophically injured in the line of duty to terminate their phone, internet, and TV contracts without penalty.

Last year, the Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018 passed the House with overwhelming support. That legislation included a number of changes to existing law to protect our servicemembers and our Gold Star families.

However, due to a drafting error, the bill only allowed servicemembers, not their spouses and dependents, to end their phone, internet, and TV contracts without penalty. This bill corrects that error and ensures that grieving families are able to terminate contracts, giving them the freedom to relocate based on the needs of their families.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the House Veterans' Affairs Committee for advancing this legislation to the floor, and I urge all Members to support this bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, in closing, this is commonsense legislation—I talk about this a lot when I go home—about a grieving spouse, a husband or wife, who has lost a family member in combat in service to our country. I saw many of those this past weekend, as many of us did, as we attended veterans events.

I can't think of anything worse than being a spouse who is in a city that is unfamiliar to them, away from family, and to have these contractual obligations through our catastrophically injured veteran or a deceased veteran.

It is the right thing to do. Everywhere I go and talk about this throughout the country, our fellow Americans want this done.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support this much-needed legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I agree with my friend and colleague from Tennessee, Ranking Member ROE. This is commonsense legislation. We should not compound the suffering of a family, whether they are caretakers or grieving, with the complications that they may not be aware of, which are these continuing contractual agreements for cable, internet, or other types of contractual agreements of the sort. This bill addresses a way for families to easily terminate these contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 4356, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4356, 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.

GI BILL PLANNING ACT OF 2019

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4162) to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the period under which an election must be made for entitlement to educational assistance under the All-Volunteer Educational Assistance Program of Department of Veterans Affairs, to phase out the use of such program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4162

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 “GI Bill Planning Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. PERIOD FOR ELECTION TO RECEIVE BENEFITS UNDER ALL-VOLUNTEER EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3011 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)(1), by striking “Any such election shall be made at the time the individual initially enters on active duty as a member of the Armed Forces” and inserting “Any such election shall be made during the 90-day period beginning on the day that is 180 days after the date on which the individual initially enters initial training”; and

(2) in subsection (b)(1), by striking “that such individual is entitled to such pay” and inserting “that begin after the date that is 270 days after the date on which the individual initially enters initial training”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. PHASE OUT OF ALL-VOLUNTEER EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Subsection (a)(1)(A) of section 3011 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 1, is further amended by striking “after June 30, 1985” and inserting “during the period beginning July 1, 1985, and ending September 30, 2029”.

SEC. 4. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 4162, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4162, as amended, the GI Bill Planning Act of 2019.

Mr. Speaker, this bill was introduced by Representative JACK BERGMAN and Representative KATHLEEN RICE. Both of them are great members of our committee and tireless fighters for veterans. I thank Representative BERGMAN for his work on this legislation and his commitment to working with me on several issues related to veterans education and healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, with the enactment of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill has become a less attractive option for many servicemembers. In most cases, the benefits are worse for servicemembers when choosing the Montgomery GI Bill instead of the Forever GI Bill. The issue is that many servicemembers sign up without knowing what they are signing up for.

For a servicemember to receive benefits through the Montgomery GI Bill, they must elect to pay into it when they first enter the military. Often, this is a chaotic period in a servicemember's life, to say the least. They are unable to give the decision much thought or do not fully understand the full impact of the decision at the time.

Also, there have been ongoing reports that some servicemembers are pressured to sign up by instructors at initial entry training or lose the benefit. This bill addresses this concern by moving the date when a servicemember elects to join the program so they can better understand and make a better informed decision.

Many end up signing up for the Montgomery GI Bill benefits only to never use them and never see them refunded. This is wrong and a waste of our servicemembers' money.

The committee will work to ensure that the Post-9/11 GI Bill is updated to ensure that future generations who may have benefited more from the Montgomery GI Bill than the Post-9/11 GI Bill do not see one bit of a drop-off in potential benefits. With the work we are doing to empower State approving agencies to improve the quality of education, now is the time for us also to improve the quality of benefits for our servicemembers.

I thank Representative BERGMAN and Representative RICE for their leadership, and I urge all of my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 4162.

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

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