

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this meaningful, necessary legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Combating human trafficking is a global challenge, and we are proud of the State Department's critical role in that effort. This legislation will ensure that the Department has the tools and resources necessary to counter these heinous human rights abuses.

I would like to thank the ranking member, Mr. McCAUL, for his work on this important issue. This is a strong bill that I am pleased to support, and I urge my colleagues, Democrat and Republican, to do the same.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5664, as amended.

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. McCAUL. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3 of House Resolution 965, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

HONORING ALL VETERANS ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3010) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a mission statement of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3010

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 "Honoring All Veterans Act".

SEC. 2. MISSION STATEMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) REQUIRED MISSION STATEMENT.—Section 301 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d) The mission statement of the Department shall be as follows: 'To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those 'who shall have borne the battle' and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.'"

(b) NOTIFICATION.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) publish in the Federal Register and on the internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs a notification explaining the mission statement of the Department as specified in subsection (d) of section 301 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) of this section; and

(2) update each internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs and other electronic references that use a previous mission statement.

(c) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall develop and issue guidance to all elements of the Department regarding the mission statement of the Department as specified in subsection (d) of section 301 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) of this section. The guidance shall include the following:

(1) A notification explaining the mission statement.

(2) Instructions and a timeline for updating all previous mission statement references at each such element.

(3) A method to monitor and evaluate the compliance by facilities of the Department with the guidance, including a reporting mechanism for such facilities to report back to the Secretary on the progress made in updating all non-electronic mission statement references.

(4) Any other information that the Secretary determines necessary to ensure timely compliance with the guidance.

(d) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report containing a review and assessment of the progress of each element of the Department in complying with the guidance under subsection (c), including—

(1) any reasons explaining why an element of the Department has failed to implement the guidance; and

(2) a plan to address any such failure to implement the guidance and ensure that each element of the Department fully implements and complies with the guidance.

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. Madam 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. 3010.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, H.R. 3010 establishes an inclusive VA mission statement or motto as follows: "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those 'who shall have borne the battle' and for their families, caregivers, and survivors." Congresswoman RICE introduced this bill to establish a model at VA that includes all who VA is mandated to serve.

Since its creation in 1861, only one woman, Dr. Mary Walker, has received the Medal of Honor. Her citation recognized her for devoting "herself with much patriotic zeal to the sick and wounded soldiers, both in the field and in hospitals, to the detriment of her own health," and enduring "hardships as a prisoner of war."

She received the Medal of Honor in 1866 for her service to the U.S. Army throughout the American Civil War.

The current VA mission statement, a line from President Lincoln's second inaugural address delivered in 1865, uses only male pronouns and excludes women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer veterans, as well as the diversity of their families, caregivers and survivors.

For years, this committee has heard from veterans and their supporters that both the gender-exclusive motto and the VA's refusal to changes it are reflective of a culture that does not prioritize or value them.

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The current model was unilaterally selected by the Administrator of what was then the Veterans Administration in 1959.

By passing this bill to create a new mission statement, we are demonstrating the will of the American people for VA's motto to be inclusive. In the original context, President Lincoln expressed an intent of inclusion and an obligation to care for all who had endured conflict.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 3010 both honors the original spirit of President Lincoln's words while reflecting the full scope of VA's mission and whom they must serve. As Dr. Mary Walker said: "Let the generations know that women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom."

I, again, thank Miss RICE from the State of New York for sponsoring this bill and for her tireless work on behalf of America's veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

I thank Dr. ROE and the minority Members who made bringing this bill to the floor a fully bipartisan effort, and I hope the Senate will take this on swiftly so that it will pass into law before the end of the 116th Congress.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3010, the Honoring All Veterans Act, which is sponsored by my friend, Congresswoman KATHLEEN RICE from New York.

This bill would establish a mission statement in the statute for the Department of Veterans Affairs. That mission statement would read: "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those 'who shall have borne the battle' and for their families, caregivers, and survivors."

This is in homage to President Lincoln's immortal words in his second inaugural address, which state, in full: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the Nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan,

to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

Those words, which were delivered in 1865, remain some of the most important in our country’s history, and they continue to reverberate even now.

For one, they inspired the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs as we know it. That is why VA has been using them as a motto since 1959. However, in the last several years, veterans service organizations and others have rightly noted that the use of the male pronoun in President Lincoln’s statement can inadvertently ostracize the increasing number of women in the military and veteran communities.

Women are the fastest growing cohort of servicemembers and veterans. They play critical roles in the battlefield and in the VA healthcare system where their numbers have tripled in the last two decades alone. VA has made great strides in the last few years with respect to improving care for women and, as a result, women veterans now express greater trust in VA than ever before.

Enacting the Honoring All Veterans Act would go one step further in making VA a more inclusive and welcoming place of care for them and future generations of veterans, whoever they may be, while preserving in statute the spirit of President Lincoln’s charge to forever honor and care for those who have served.

The bill would also be more inclusive of many caregivers, survivors, and family members of veterans who are vitally important sources of ongoing love and support of veterans in need across the country.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate Congresswoman RICE’s leadership on this bill. I am proud to sponsor it and support it today, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Miss RICE), who is my good friend and who is the sponsor of H.R. 3010.

Miss RICE of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my bipartisan bill, the Honoring All Veterans Act.

This bill would finally require the Department of Veterans Affairs to replace its outdated motto with a more inclusive statement. The words of the original motto would be updated to read: “To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those ‘who shall have borne the battle’ and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”

For far too long, the VA’s gender-exclusive motto hasn’t properly acknowledged the service of women and LGBT veterans. This is simply wrong, and it is long overdue that we change it. Women and LGBT servicemembers have sacrificed so much for our country. They have always answered the call of duty, and they should know that we are just as grateful for their service and sacrifice as we are for anyone who serves this country.

That is why we must make this change. We need a VA motto that properly recognizes and honors the service of all veterans, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

Changing the motto won’t solve every issue facing women and LGBT veterans, of course, but it is a start, and it is the right thing to do. It would say in no uncertain terms that all veterans are seen equally in the eyes of the agency that exists solely to serve them.

I want to thank Chairman TAKANO for his support for me getting this bill to where it is today. And it is simply that, as Chairman TAKANO said, we would not be here if it were not for the ranking member, Dr. ROE. I want to thank him personally so much for supporting this bill and for helping to bring it to the floor today.

I also want to thank my Republican coload, Representative BRIAN MAST, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and all the veterans whom I have heard from in support of this bill.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for the Honoring All Veterans Act today. It is time every veteran who served our country receives the respect and recognition they deserve.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, in closing, I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and I appreciate Congresswoman RICE’s and the chairman’s leadership on this.

It seems to me it is past time to do this. It is the right thing to do. I encourage my colleagues to support that, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I thank H.R. 3010’s sponsor, Representative KATHLEEN RICE from New York. It is long past due for us to recognize the contributions of all veterans, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 3010, 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. 3010.

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.

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN PARITY IN ACCESS TO CARE TODAY ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4908) to amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the collection of a health care copayment by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from a veteran who is a member of an Indian tribe, as amended.

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

H.R. 4908

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 “Native American Veteran Parity in Access to Care Today Act” or “Native American PACT Act”.

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON COLLECTION OF A HEALTH CARE COPAYMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FROM A VETERAN WHO IS A MEMBER OF AN INDIAN TRIBE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1730A of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the heading, by striking “catastrophically disabled” and inserting “certain”;

(2) by inserting “(a) PROHIBITION.—” before “Notwithstanding”;

(3) by striking “a veteran who is catastrophically disabled, as defined by the Secretary,” and inserting “a covered veteran”; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(b) COVERED VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘covered veteran’ means a veteran who—

“(1) is catastrophically disabled, as defined by the Secretary; or

“(2) is an Indian or urban Indian, as those terms are defined in section 4 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (Public Law 94-437; 25 U.S.C. 1603).”.

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 1730A and inserting the following:

“1730A. Prohibition on collection of copayments from certain veterans.”.

(c) DELAYED EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the day that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

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. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 3908, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4908, as amended, the Native American PACT Act.

The Federal Government has a legal and moral obligation to uphold its treaty obligations to Tribal nations, which include the provision of healthcare. Our responsibility to ensure care is compounded when American Indians and Alaska Natives serve this country in uniform.

While largely provided by the Indian Health Service and Tribal Health Programs, the healthcare obligations of the United States do not start and stop