

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This bill would finally require the Department of Veterans Affairs to replace its outdated motto with a more inclusive statement.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

with one agency. For decades, VA has not recognized the unique status of Native veterans and has charged them copays for care provided at VA.

For far too many Native Americans, particularly those in rural areas, the copay burden is a barrier to care. These veterans, who may be unable to access specialty care from their Tribal health systems, are then unable to access VA due to cost.

Eliminating the copay burden is a step toward upholding the treaties between the United States and Tribal nations while also bringing immediate relief to veterans unable to access care during these distressing times.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank Congressman GALLEGO for his steadfast leadership on this issue. I encourage all of my colleagues to support H.R. 4908, as amended, and 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. 4908, the Native American Veteran Parity in Access to Care Today Act, or PACT Act.

The care that the Department of Veterans Affairs provides to veterans for conditions that are related to military service are always provided at no cost to the veteran. Veterans being cared for by VA for conditions that are unrelated to their military service may be charged a copayment to offset the cost of care and encourage appropriate use of the VA healthcare system.

According to the Government Accountability Office and the National Council of American Indians, approximately one-third of American Indian and Alaska Native veterans were charged copayments from VA in fiscal year 2017. Those copayments averaged just under \$300 per veteran.

However, almost a century ago, Congress passed the Snyder Act, which guaranteed healthcare to Native Americans free of charge. In recognition of that, the Native American PACT Act would prohibit VA from charging copayments to Native American veterans regardless of whether the care they receive from the VA is for a service-connected condition or not.

There is no ethnic group that volunteers to defend the United States in uniform at a higher rate than Native Americans whose history of service to this country dates back to the Revolutionary War. This bill would increase access to care for those brave veterans and create parity between the care provided to them through the VA, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Indian Health Service. It would also uphold the United States Government's longstanding trust and treaty responsibilities to the Native American community.

The Native American PACT Act is sponsored by my colleague and fellow veteran, Congressman RUBEN GALLEGO from Arizona. I am glad to stand with him in support of its passage today.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I too ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 4908, 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. 4908, 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.

□ 1400

CFO AUTHORITY AND COLLABORATION ACT OF 2020

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6589) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and submit to Congress a plan to address the material weakness of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman call for the bill, as amended?

Mr. TAKANO. I am checking. I do not have "as amended." Madam Speaker, I stand by the motion that I made that we suspend the rules and pass H.R. 6589.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the title of the bill.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6589

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 "CFO Authority and Collaboration Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. PLAN TO ADDRESS MATERIAL WEAKNESS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) develop a plan, including steps and related timelines, for fully addressing—

(A) the repeated material weakness of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) the recommendations of the auditor related to entity level controls, including the organizational structure of the office of the Chief Financial Officer of the Department; and

(2) submit to the Committees on Veterans Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report containing a description of—

(A) the plan developed under paragraph (1); and

(B) the steps the Secretary plans to take to provide sufficient authority to the Chief Financial Officer of the Department to carry out the requirements of section 902 of title 31, United States Code.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gen-

tleman 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. 6589.

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. 6589, the CFO Authority and Collaboration Act of 2020, which addresses the sometimes arcane but also very important need for strong financial management and accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Madam Speaker, each year, VA spends billions of dollars in support of our Nation's veterans. Taxpayers deserve to know that each dollar is spent wisely and that each dollar is properly accounted for in order to avoid waste, fraud, and abuse.

Madam Speaker, the VA inspector general has determined what is called a "material weakness" in how the Office of the Chief Financial Officer is structured. This was a topic examined during hearings and through oversight by our Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mrs. LEE's legislation requires a small but important fix to ensure strong financial accountability. I thank Mrs. LEE for sponsoring this bipartisan legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6589.

Madam Speaker, I wish to, at this point, withdraw the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The motion is withdrawn.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AUTHORITY AND COLLABORATION ACT OF 2020

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6589) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and submit to Congress a plan to address the material weakness of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6589

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 "Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Financial Officer Authority and Collaboration Act of 2020".