

We recently celebrated those contributions in a ceremony held by the committee.

Congressman SENSENBRENNER has never hesitated to work across party lines in service of hardworking Americans. As the incoming chairman of the subcommittee, I looked to him for leadership in the beginning of the Congress. Since then, he has been a tremendous source of advice and wisdom over the past 2 years.

It has been a real pleasure working with him this Congress, and I thank him for his incredible service and wish him well in his retirement.

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

□ 1645

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 683, The Puerto Rico Recovery Accuracy in Disclosures Act of 2019. I am thankful for my friends, Chairman JERROLD NADLER, the Members serving on the Judiciary committee, and the staff who helped bring this bipartisan bill to the floor.

Congress passed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act—or PROMESA—in 2016 to set up an orderly bankruptcy process to restructure its debt, stimulate economic development, and put the Island on a path to financial recovery.

The bill before the House's consideration today, will close a loophole in the Island's debt restructuring process, improve transparency, and restore confidence in the island's future.

While we can have differing opinions on how effectively the Oversight Board is carrying out its mission, one thing should be clear—the island's residents should be entitled to the same rights and protections as any debtor on the mainland.

The trust the American people have placed in our bankruptcy resolution system is based on a fair, efficient, and transparent process. Transparency, as required by section 327 of Title 11 of the United States Code and Rule 2014 of Federal Bankruptcy procedure, applies to every corporate bankruptcy and ensures any conflicts of interest—or even the perception of such conflict—between those working on the bankruptcy and the debtor are disclosed. However, PROMESA does not have a similar requirement.

The bill we are bringing to the floor today addresses this oversight and applies a robust disclosure requirement to all PROMESA Title III proceedings, eliminating the double standard that the People of Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans should be confident that the Board's bankruptcy advisors do not have their “thumb on the scale” to favor certain debts where they have a selfinterest. This bipartisan bill ensures integrity of the PROMESA process.

The need for PRRADA was articulated in February 2019, when a board-appointed law firm investigated potential conflicts in Puerto Rico's bank-

ruptcy in response to reports by the press about conflicts of interests by one of the Board's consultants. One of the main recommendations in the “Luskin Report” was that vendors should disclose affiliate relationships. The report found that trading in Puerto Rico public debt is particularly problematic, as it gives rise to the appearance of conflict. This is exactly what PRRADA would require vendors to do—and why we need to pass this comprehensive piece of legislation.

In closing, PRRADA will guarantee to the people of Puerto Rico the same transparency and disclosure practices required by law in U.S. mainland bankruptcies. In the interest of fairness for Puerto Rico's people and for impartiality in restructuring—and thereby securing—Puerto Rico's future, we must pass H.R. 683 and close this loophole.

Once more, I would like to thank Chairman NADLER, the staff and the bipartisan cosponsors of this bill. I strongly encourage all members to vote “Yes” on this critical piece of legislation.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Judiciary, Committee, I rise in strong support of H.R. 683, the “Puerto Rico Recovery Accuracy in Disclosures Act of 2019” or “PRRADA Act,” which conditions compensation of professional persons retained under the congressionally passed “Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act” (“PROMESA”) upon the applicant providing certain disclosures similar to those required under Bankruptcy Code section 327.

In response to dire fiscal issues facing Puerto Rico at the time, Congress passed Pub. L. 114–187, the “Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act” or “PROMESA” in 2016, legislation I strongly supported and cosponsored.

The Act established the Financial Oversight and Management Board (Board), a fiscal control board comprised of seven members that would have control over Puerto Rico's budget, laws, financial plans, and regulations.

It empowered the board to propose a budget for Puerto Rico and restructure its obligations owed to bondholders, estimated to be \$6.5 billion, and other creditors.

Although largely patterned on chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code, PROMESA did not incorporate all facets of chapter 11 and other relevant provisions of the Code. For example, although the Board is authorized to retain and compensate professional persons in connection with its efforts to reorganize Puerto Rico, PROMESA does not include certain restrictions that the Bankruptcy Code requires for such purposes.

For example, Section 327 of the Bankruptcy Code, unlike PROMESA, authorizes professional persons, such as attorneys, financial advisors, appraisers, and others, to be retained in connection with the administration of a bankruptcy case provided they meet the following conditions: first, such a person must not hold or represent an interest adverse to the bankruptcy estate; and second, the professional must be a “disinterested person.”

As I indicated at the outset, H.R. 683, the “Puerto Rico Recovery Accuracy in Disclo-

tures Act of 2019” or “PRRADA,” conditions compensation of professional persons retained under PROMESA upon the applicant providing certain disclosures similar to those required under Bankruptcy Code section 327.

In addition, it would require the United States Trustee to review such disclosures and submit comments in response to the court as well as authorize the United States trustee to object to compensation requested by professionals. Further, the measure would apply retroactively to professionals who have previously been awarded compensation.

Finally, H.R. 683 would authorize the court to deny allowance of compensation for services and reimbursement of expenses accruing after the bill's enactment date if the professional person did not comply with the disclosure requirement, was not a disinterested person, or represented or held an interest adverse to the bankruptcy estate.

I urge all Members to join me in voting for H.R. 683, the “Puerto Rico Recovery Accuracy in Disclosures Act of 2019.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 683, 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.

COMBAT ONLINE PREDATORS ACT

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 134) to amend title 18, United States Code, with regard to stalking.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 134

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 “Combat Online Predators Act”.

SEC. 2. ENHANCED PENALTY FOR STALKERS OF CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 110A of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 2261A the following:

“§ 2261B. Enhanced penalty for stalkers of children

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b), if the victim of an offense under section 2261A is under the age of 18 years, the maximum imprisonment for the offense is 5 years greater than the maximum term of imprisonment otherwise provided for that offense in section 2261.

“(b) LIMITATION.—Subsection (a) shall not apply to a person who violates section 2261A if—

“(1) the person is subject to a sentence under section 2261(b)(5); and

“(2)(A) the person is under the age of 18 at the time the offense occurred; or

“(B) the victim of the offense is not less than 15 nor more than 17 years of age and not more than 3 years younger than the person who committed the offense at the time the offense occurred.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 110A of

title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 2261A the following new item:

“2261B. Enhanced penalty for stalkers of children.”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 2261A of title 18, United States Code, is amended by striking “section 2261(b) of this title” and inserting “section 2261(b) or section 2261B, as the case may be”.

SEC. 3. REPORT ON BEST PRACTICES REGARDING ENFORCEMENT OF ANTI-STALKING LAWS.

Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall submit a report to Congress, which shall—

(1) include an evaluation of Federal, Tribal, State, and local efforts to enforce laws relating to stalking; and

(2) identify and describe those elements of such efforts that constitute the best practices for the enforcement of such laws.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) and the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. ARMSTRONG) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CICILLINE. 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 Rhode Island?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, the safety of our children is paramount, and the preservation of their future is critical.

Across this country and around the world, we have awakened to a new normal where our lives are tethered to the internet like never before. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all of us to execute our daily routines online.

Children and adolescents across this country are engaged in virtual learning every day. Therefore, they are spending countless hours on the internet.

While this approach to learning is vital in keeping our children safe from the spread of the virus, the widespread use of the internet and social media can make stalking easier to carry out, allowing predators to exploit the easy access to our children.

The borderless nature of the internet has allowed these types of internet crimes to transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Current Federal law prohibits narrowly defined instances of stalking where they are accomplished via interstate travel or through electronic means.

This is why we must make sensible modifications to the stalking statute, especially given that children and adolescents are, in many respects, among the most vulnerable of our population.

Stalking affects millions of men and women in the United States. Stalking is common. About 1 in 6 women and 1

in 17 men have experienced stalking in their lifetimes.

Stalking starts early. Nearly 54 percent of female victims and 41 percent of male victims experience stalking before the age of 25 and 16.3 percent of female victims and 20.5 percent of male victims before the age of 18.

Stalking impacts the physical and mental health of victims. Research shows that stalking can lead to depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. About 68 percent of female victims and 78 percent of male victims experience threats of physical harm during their lifetimes.

I support S. 134, the Combat Online Predators Act, because this bill amends 18 U.S.C. 2261A, which criminalizes stalking when a person travels in interstate or foreign commerce with the intent to kill, injure, harass, intimidate, or place under surveillance with the intent to otherwise kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person.

This can be even more critical when young people are victimized in this way, which may occur in person or online, via cellphones, computers, email, text messages, and on social media platforms, which is sometimes referred to as cyberstalking.

Consequently, this bill is timely because it increases the maximum prison term for a stalking offense by adding 5 years if the victim is under the age of 18. The increased maximum penalty for this crime when committed against our children is reasonable.

This bill also understands that some behavior among young people should not be subject to enhancement that would apply to individuals who are older and more mature. Therefore, this bill makes an exception where the enhanced penalty shall not apply for the person who violates the stalking statute if the person is under the age of 18 at the time of the offense, or the victim of the offense is not less than 15 nor more than 17 years of age and not more than 3 years younger than the person who committed the offense at the time the offense occurred.

The bill further requires that the Attorney General submit to Congress a report which shall include an evaluation of Federal, State, Tribal, and other local efforts to enforce laws related to stalking and to identify and describe those elements of such efforts that constitute the best practices for the enforcement of such laws.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sensible bipartisan bill, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 134, the Combat Online Predators Act.

This bill will give law enforcement officers additional tools to keep children safe from adults who stalk or target them both in person and online. This bill raises the maximum criminal

penalty for stalking by an additional 5 years if the victim is a minor.

In addition, the bill directs the Attorney General and the Department of Justice to produce a report evaluating Federal, State, and local laws that relate to stalking and to describe best practices for enforcing those laws.

We must do everything in our power to protect the most vulnerable among us from digital predators. We must ensure that courts have the ability to sentence convicted stalkers to an appropriate prison term.

This bipartisan bill will help to protect our Nation's children from online predators, give their families peace of mind, and make our communities safer.

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

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

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK), my friend.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. ARMSTRONG) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as my friend, DAVID CICILLINE, just alluded to, we have no higher responsibility than to protect our children.

Cyberstalking is a serious crime that needs to be met with stricter penalties and more cooperation amongst law enforcement agencies, including my friends and colleagues in my former agency, the FBI.

The Office of Women's Health defines stalking as repeated contact that makes one feel afraid or harassed. Each year, this crime affects an estimated 7.5 million people, including many children.

Stalking disproportionately impacts women. Stalking victims are 50 percent more likely to be female, and according to the CDC, one in six women has experienced some form of stalking in their lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, my Combat Online Predators Act ensures that not only are we increasing penalties for these crimes, but we are also requiring Federal law enforcement officials to evaluate and update practices to combat this online harassment.

This bill provides enhanced criminal penalties for stalkers under title 18, section 2261, by up to 5 years if the victim is a minor.

Moreover, the legislation calls for the Attorney General and the Department of Justice to produce an evaluation of Federal, State, and local efforts to enforce laws relating to stalking and to identify and describe elements of these enforcement efforts that constitute best practices across the United States.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, this legislation was inspired by the story of a family in my district in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, the Zizzo family, whose teenage daughter, at the age of just 13 years old, was cyberstalked by a friend's father through social media.

Despite the stalking being sexual in nature, the then 51-year-old stalker pleaded guilty only to a misdemeanor stalking charge and was sentenced to probation and counseling.

Three years later, in 2016, this very same stalker began making contact again. Hiding behind social media, the predator created a perverted library of over 15,000 posts detailing his warped vision to marry her and his insistence that no one could ever stop him from being with her.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, following a sting operation by our hero law enforcement officers, local police arrested him and sentenced him to between 18 months and 7 years in State prison.

Sitting with the Zezzo family, I saw the pain in their eyes. After hearing the disturbing story of cyberstalking endured by this young girl and her family for years, the pain that they have endured for years and still endure to this day, I knew that something had to be done.

My Combat Online Predators Act is the first step in making the internet a safer environment for all users, especially young Americans, and this step cannot come soon enough.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. CICILLINE and members of the committee. I thank the Zezzo family, particularly Madison and Erin Zezzo, for their advocacy in this incredibly important issue. They have turned their unspeakable pain into action and provided a voice for all cyberstalking victims across this country, especially our young victims and our children.

We will continue to fight for justice for all victims.

Mr. Speaker, I also thank Representative STEPHANIE MURPHY, my partner in this legislation, and Senator PAT TOOMEY and Senator Bob Casey from my home State of Pennsylvania, all of whom had a part to play in this.

Mr. Speaker, we must do everything we can to forcefully respond to egregious instances of stalking and cyberstalking, especially when committed against the most vulnerable among us.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to vote “yes” on the Combat Online Predators Act.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), a distinguished and respected member of the Judiciary Committee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the manager of the bill for his leadership continuously on issues of technology as well as his very fine work on the issues of antitrust.

Mr. Speaker, let me thank the manager of this legislation. As well, I thank the Senate and the Senate sponsor for some very important legislation.

It is interesting that we would be able to bring this legislation up in a time when our children, in particular, are wedded to virtual technology or

virtual learning all over America, leaving them vulnerable in terms of what has the opportunity to become a predator.

So, I couldn't think of a more important moment to bring up S. 134, the Combat Online Predators Act, making it very clear the lack of tolerance for practices that would create harassment of children.

Clearly, now, with virtual learning being at the cornerstone of the survival of education for our children with COVID-19 raging, it seems an appropriate initiative.

The legislation calls for the Attorney General and the Department of Justice to produce an evaluation of Federal, State, and local efforts to enforce laws relating to stalking and to identify and describe elements of these efforts that constitute best practices.

Our intent here is to save lives and, as well, to protect our children, protect their minds, protect their thoughts, protect the information that might draw them to leave home. We know that that certainly has been a basis for many of our children running away, because someone caught them on the internet.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation to the United States Senate because this was a difficult amendment to be able to craft and to understand, and that is that we recognize that children can be children.

In essence, this legislation also has, for parents to understand, a provision that if children are within a certain age and the stalker is not much older than a child over 15 and under 17 and they engage in the kind of play that teenagers might engage in—we call it Romeo and Juliet—that those individuals would be exempt from the criminal aspects of this legislation.

I think it is a very important exception inasmuch as we want parents to be engaged as much as we can in teaching teenagers and young people and overseeing their activity, making sure they don't do things that would create a criminal liability or criminal acts.

So, I support this legislation because of its fairness; because of the recognition by the Senate of the importance of that exemption; and, most of all, to be able to make a national statement while we are in the midst of COVID-19, and our children are facing virtually everything, that we want to combat online predators.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support this act, S. 134, to protect our children.

□ 1700

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN).

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, I think everything has been said. Everything now is online, and that is the reason this bill is so important as well. That is the rea-

son why I rise in support of S. 134, the Combat Online Predators Act.

I am a proud cosponsor of the House companion bill, H.R. 4203, which was introduced by my good friends, Representatives BRIAN FITZPATRICK and STEPHANIE MURPHY.

I think this legislation is straightforward. It increased the maximum prison term for a stalking offense by 5 additional years if the victim is under age 18. Additionally, the Attorney General must issue a report on the best practices for the enforcement of Federal, State, local, and Tribal stalking laws as well.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, during a 12-month period, an estimated 14 in every 1,000 persons age 18 or older are victims of stalking. Overall, 7.5 million people across the Nation reported being affected by these, according to the National Center for Victims of Crime and sponsored by the Office of Violence Against Women.

The same study shows 46 percent of the stalking victims experienced at least one unwanted contact per week, and 11 percent of the victims say they have been stalked for 5 years or more.

Approximately one in four stalking victims reported some form of cyberstalking. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 83 percent of victims reported that they received emails from their stalkers, while 35 percent reported receiving instant messaging.

In addition to stalking, every jurisdiction in the U.S. has laws addressing electronic harassment, and Federal law also criminalizes the use of technology in stalking.

Puerto Rico has recently taken steps to enact a special leave policy for those who are victims of crimes, such as gender-based crimes, abuse, harassment, and felony stalking. The special leave law provides up to 15 days annually where an employee is able to address crimes through legal means to ensure that victims are able to seek the proper resources necessary to achieve justice.

While Puerto Rico may lead in terms of supporting those afflicted by these crimes, justice must be severe for those who prey on the most vulnerable among us.

Again, I thank Representatives Fitzpatrick and Murphy for leading the House version of this legislation, and, of course, the Senate for passing this bill. That is the reason I urge my colleagues to support S. 134.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, technology has improved our lives in a myriad of ways, but it has also given bad actors more tools and, in many instances, stalkers can victimize their targets without ever leaving their home and a victim can often feel like they have nowhere to escape.

I applaud the work of Senator TOOMEY and Congressman FITZPATRICK,

who sponsored the House companion to this bill on this important legislation.

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

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan measure because stalking is a crime in which victims are made to live in constant fear. The effects of stalking can manifest both physically and mentally and have short-term and long-term consequences.

In this digital and technological world that we have now all immersed ourselves in, it is imperative that we remain more vigilant of the nefarious activities of those lurking in the shadows to exploit our children's vulnerabilities.

Hence, I support the Combat Online Predators Act and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

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 Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 134.

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.

SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS INITIATIVE ACT OF 2020

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8354) to establish the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative within the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8354

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 "Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act of 2020."

SEC. 2. SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS INITIATIVE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative within the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

(b) DUTIES.—The Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative shall—

(1) serve as legal and policy advisor to the Attorney General on the Department of Justice's efforts to enforce criminal and civil laws that impact servicemembers, veterans, and their families;

(2) develop policy recommendations for the Attorney General on how the Department of Justice may improve enforcement of Federal law to support servicemembers, veterans, and their families;

(3) serve as the liaison and point of contact between the Department of Justice and the military departments;

(4) provide counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs to ensure funding decisions take into account servicemembers, veterans, and their families;

(5) consult with components of the Department of Justice to promote the provision of civil legal aid to servicemembers, veterans, and their families;

(6) serve as a liaison and point of contact with the Consumer Protection Branch of the Civil Division of the Department of Justice, with respect to the prosecution of Federal crimes involving fraud that target servicemembers; and

(7) serve as a liaison and point of contact with other components of the Department of Justice as needed to support the enforcement of other Federal laws that protect servicemembers and veterans, as the Attorney General determines appropriate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. ESCOBAR) and the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. ARMSTRONG) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Texas?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, H.R. 8354, the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act of 2020.

I thank Chairman NADLER for his leadership and support of this important legislation, along with my colleague from Texas, Congressman TAYLOR, for leading this bill with me.

This measure is the result of a truly bipartisan effort. My staff also worked closely with the committee and incorporated feedback from the Department of Justice in drafting the text. I am so grateful to everyone who made this bill better.

The Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act establishes in statute the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative within the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. The bill details the initiative's responsibilities to promote the legal interests of servicemembers, veterans, and their families, such as advising the Attorney General on efforts to support this population; developing policy recommendations; and serving as the liaison and point of contact with other components of DOJ to support the enforcement of Federal laws that protect servicemembers and veterans, like coordinating the prosecution of fraud.

As the proud Representative of Texas' 16th Congressional District, home to Fort Bliss and nearly 50,000 veterans, I know firsthand the importance of protecting this population with unique needs that necessitate specialized knowledge of the armed services and veterans' affairs.

I have learned more about the military community through my seat on the House Armed Services Committee,

where I have heard various examples of the challenges they face, from financial scams that unfairly target this population to unsafe housing conditions.

Currently, the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative draws on personnel from the Civil Rights Division and the Office of Justice Programs to enforce civil laws, such as the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986, and the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, among others, to protect our servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

Creating an independent and permanent home for these employees will allow them to better protect servicemembers and preserve institutional knowledge. The bill would also ensure that DOJ is coordinating closely with the military departments so that servicemembers, veterans, and their families are aware of their legal rights and available benefits.

Several veterans service organizations have endorsed this measure—Paralyzed Veterans of America, Student Veterans of America, and Veterans Education Success—recognizing the significance of having a dedicated focus on those who have served our Nation.

Finally, I am grateful to Senator HIRONO for introducing this measure in the Senate, and I look forward to working with her to advance the bill further.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 8354, codifies the DOJ's Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative, the important work that our Department does to honor and support our Nation's veterans.

The initiative coordinates with the Civil Rights Division and other Justice Department components to enforce Federal laws protecting servicemembers, veterans, and their families. These laws include the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, and the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

The DOJ's enforcement of these laws has helped our men and women in uniform. For example, the Department reports that enforcement of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act has provided more than \$474 million in relief for over 120,000 servicemembers whose rights were violated.

Just last year, Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband announced the largest-ever settlement against a landlord or property management company for violations of the SCRA. This is important work that needs to continue.

During the Trump administration, the Justice Department has expanded the Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative by launching the Veterans' Access Initiative. The Veterans' Access