

bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 147, 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. 147, 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. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

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

□ 1330

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UNITED STATES OUTLYING AREAS AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3730) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs an Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3730

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UNITED STATES OUTLYING AREAS AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 548. Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States

“(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish an advisory committee, to be known as the ‘Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States’, to provide advice and guidance to the Secretary on matters relating to covered veterans.

“(b) DUTIES.—The duties of the Committee shall be the following:

“(1) To advise the Secretary on matters relating to covered veterans, including how the Secretary can improve the programs and services of the Department to better serve such veterans.

“(2) To identify for the Secretary evolving issues of relevance to covered veterans.

“(3) To propose clarifications, recommendations, and solutions to address issues raised by covered veterans.

“(4) To provide a forum for covered veterans, veterans service organizations serving covered veterans, and the Department to dis-

cuss issues and proposals for changes to regulations, policies, and procedures of the Department.

“(5) To identify priorities for and provide advice to the Secretary on appropriate strategies for consultation with veterans service organizations serving covered veterans.

“(6) To encourage the Secretary to work with other departments and agencies of the Federal Government and Congress to ensure covered veterans are provided the full benefits of their status as covered veterans.

“(7) To highlight contributions of covered veterans in the Armed Forces.

“(8) To conduct other duties as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

“(c) MEMBERSHIP.—(1) The Committee shall be comprised of 15 voting members appointed by the Secretary.

“(2) In appointing members pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary shall ensure the following:

“(A) At least one member is appointed to represent covered veterans in each of the following areas:

“(i) American Samoa.

“(ii) Guam.

“(iii) Puerto Rico.

“(iv) The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

“(v) The Virgin Islands of the United States.

“(vi) The Federated States of Micronesia.

“(vii) The Republic of the Marshall Islands.

“(viii) The Republic of Palau.

“(B) Not fewer than half of the members appointed are covered veterans, unless the Secretary determines that an insufficient number of qualified covered veterans are available.

“(C) Each member appointed resides in an area specified in subparagraph (A).

“(3) In appointing members pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary may consult with any Member of Congress who represents an area specified in paragraph (2)(A).

“(d) TERMS; VACANCIES.—(1) A member of the Committee shall be appointed for a term of two years.

“(2) Not later than 180 days after receiving notice of a vacancy in the Committee, the Secretary shall fill the vacancy in the same manner as the original appointment.

“(e) MEETING FORMAT AND FREQUENCY.—(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the Committee shall meet in-person with the Secretary not less frequently than twice each year and hold monthly conference calls as necessary.

“(2) Meetings held under paragraph (1) may be conducted virtually during a public health emergency declared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services pursuant to section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d) or any renewal of such declaration.

“(f) ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATION.—(1) Representatives of relevant departments and agencies of the Federal Government may attend meetings of the Committee and provide information to the Committee.

“(2) One representative of the Department shall attend each meeting of the Committee.

“(3) Representatives attending meetings under this subsection—

“(A) shall not be considered voting members of the Committee; and

“(B) may not receive additional compensation for services performed with respect to the Committee.

“(g) SUBCOMMITTEES.—(1) The Committee may establish subcommittees.

“(2) The Secretary may, in consultation with the Committee, appoint a member to a subcommittee established under paragraph (1) who is not a member of the Committee.

“(3) A subcommittee established under paragraph (1) may enhance the function of

the Committee, but may not supersede the authority of the Committee or provide direct advice or work products to the Secretary.

“(h) REPORTS.—(1) Not less frequently than once each year, the Committee shall submit to the Secretary and the appropriate committees of Congress a report containing such recommendations as the Committee may have for legislative or administrative action.

“(2) Not later than 90 days after the date on which the Secretary receives a report under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a written response to the report after—

“(A) giving the Committee an opportunity to review such written response; and

“(B) including in such written response any comments the Committee considers appropriate.

“(3) Not less frequently than once every two years, the Committee shall submit to the Secretary and the appropriate committees of Congress a report describing the activities of the Committee during the previous two years.

“(4) The Secretary shall make publicly available on an internet website of the Department—

“(A) each report the Secretary receives under paragraph (1);

“(B) each written response the Secretary submits under paragraph (2); and

“(C) each report the Secretary receives under paragraph (3).

“(i) COMMITTEE PERSONNEL MATTERS.—A member of the Committee shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for an employee of an agency under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5 while away from the home or regular place of business of the member in the performance of the duties of the Committee.

“(j) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall consult with veterans service organizations serving covered veterans.

“(k) FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT EXEMPTION.—Section 14 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply to the Committee.

“(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘appropriate committees of Congress’ means—

“(A) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

“(B) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate.

“(2) The term ‘Committee’ means the Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States established under subsection (a).

“(3) The term ‘covered veteran’ means a veteran residing in an area specified in subsection (c)(2)(A).

“(4) The term ‘veterans service organization serving covered veterans’ means any organization that—

“(A) serves the interests of covered veterans;

“(B) has covered veterans in substantive and policymaking positions within the organization; and

“(C) has demonstrated experience working with covered veterans.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 5 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 547 the following new item:

“548. Advisory Committee on United States Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States.”.

(b) DEADLINE FOR ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish the advisory

committee required by section 548 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1) of this section.

(C) **DEADLINE FOR INITIAL APPOINTMENTS.**—Not later than 90 days after the date on which the Secretary establishes the advisory committee required by such section 548, the Secretary shall appoint the members of such advisory committee.

(d) **INITIAL MEETING.**—Not later than 120 days after the date on which the Secretary establishes the advisory committee required by such section 548, such advisory committee shall hold its first meeting.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. **TAKANO**) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. **BOST**) each will control 20 minutes.

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. 3730, 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 support this legislation, H.R. 3730, sponsored by Mr. **SABLAN** and Mrs. **RADEWAGEN**, which would create an advisory committee on veterans living in outlying areas and freely associated States, including island territories.

The advisory committee would have a variety of members, including experts from the covered geographic areas. The Secretary will be able to consult regularly with, and receive the input of, this advisory committee regarding the administration of benefits and VA programs. Once established, the advisory committee will report annually on the needs of the covered veterans and provide much-needed recommendations.

This bipartisan legislation is supported by the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Minority Veterans of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3730, to create a VA advisory committee on better serving veterans' needs in the territories. For a number of Congresses, Congresswoman **RADEWAGEN**, Congresswoman **GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN**, Congressman **SABLAN**, and other delegates from the territories have honorably served their veterans and constituents.

Committee staff has traveled with many of our delegates and colleagues to the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico. We have seen firsthand the disparities and the difficulties that their veterans face when trying to access healthcare and benefits from the VA.

The combination of limited transportation options, the lack of local re-

sources, the overlapping Federal agency jurisdictions, and the complexities around VA care in neighboring foreign nations make the territories different from the rest of the Nation and difficult to work in.

Unfortunately, the challenges that the veterans in the territories face always seem to slide down to the bottom of VA's priority list.

While I am generally skeptical of new advisory committees, I believe the voices of the veterans in the territories are not being heard, and I share Congresswoman **RADEWAGEN**'s and Congressman **SABLAN**'s goal of elevating their needs.

For those reasons, I support the bill, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mr. **TAKANO**. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. **SABLAN**), my good friend and valued member of the Committee on Veteran Affairs, who serves on the Health Subcommittee.

Mr. **SABLAN**. Mr. Speaker, my bipartisan legislation, H.R. 3730, creates a VA advisory committee for marginalized veterans living in the Marianas, the other United States insular areas, and in the freely associated States. Veterans in my district, especially, and in the other insular areas, too, face barriers to VA services no vet should be forced to endure.

In Northern Marianas, there are no VA clinics and no Vet Centers.

Veterans in my district sometimes fly 3,700 miles to Hawaii or over 6,000 miles to California to access VA services. And that is why my bill, establishing a committee to educate the Secretary on the obstacles insular area veterans face, is so important.

Each U.S. insular area and each of the freely associated States would have a seat on the advisory committee. Each would be able to describe the barriers their veterans face in receiving VA services.

Establishing an advisory committee will not solve every logistical problem for veterans who live in geographically remote areas of America, but at least those veterans on the margins will have a way to communicate directly with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. And when the Secretary hears about the barriers to service these insular veterans face, maybe, just maybe, change will occur.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minority Veterans of America, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America for their support of this bipartisan bill, H.R. 3730.

I also thank Chairman **TAKANO**, Ranking Member **BOST**, Congresswoman **RADEWAGEN**, and my fellow members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs for their unanimous support to report my bill favorably to the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 3730 to give marginalized veterans in the insular areas a voice in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. **BOST**. Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. **TAKANO**. Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 3730, 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. 3730, 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. **TAKANO**. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

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

HOMELAND PROCUREMENT REFORM ACT

Mr. **CORREA**. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2915) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 regarding the procurement of certain items related to national security interests for Department of Homeland Security frontline operational components, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2915

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 "Homeland Procurement Reform Act" or the "HOPR Act".

SEC. 2. REQUIREMENTS TO BUY CERTAIN ITEMS RELATED TO NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS ACCORDING TO CERTAIN CRITERIA.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Subtitle D of title VIII of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 391 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SEC. 836. REQUIREMENTS TO BUY CERTAIN ITEMS RELATED TO NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS.

"(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) COVERED ITEM.—The term 'covered item' means any of the following:

"(A) Footwear provided as part of a uniform.

"(B) Uniforms.

"(C) Holsters and tactical pouches.

"(D) Patches, insignia, and embellishments.

"(E) Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear protective gear.

"(F) Body armor components intended to provide ballistic protection for an individual, consisting of 1 or more of the following:

"(i) Soft ballistic panels.

"(ii) Hard ballistic plates.

"(iii) Concealed armor carriers worn under a uniform.

"(iv) External armor carriers worn over a uniform.

"(G) Any other item of clothing or protective equipment as determined appropriate by the Secretary.