

enough in terms of addressing the gun violence issue that we have in our country.

We have seen since the Uvalde shooting and the Buffalo shooting many more mass shootings occur in our country, and I believe the American people want to see more done.

Instead of just thoughts and prayers, we did pass the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which came with many provisions that address gun violence in our schools. The most significant element of the bill, in my estimation, is the broad and deep support for expanding access to mental health care for our young people. This is truly a great achievement.

I am very pleased that we are addressing the technical error that Congress made in drafting this language that it sent to the President. I am glad that we are correcting that today. I will point out that the President and his administration support this technical fix.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to vote for H.R. 5110, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, overturning the funding ban on hunting and archery programs is a no-brainer. I was glad, as a member of the Committee on Education, to see that when this bill passed, it came out of committee unanimously 42-0. That is because the value of these programs is universally recognized. They are certainly not unsafe. In fact, the best thing we could do would be to expand them, offer more of them, and teach more children how to handle recreational tools appropriately.

Furthermore, just like when the effort was made by the Governor of New Mexico, there is a bipartisan consensus that the people who were trying to restrict ownership or restrict acquainting themselves with firearms were shot down on a bipartisan basis.

Because of this administration's actions, however, many schools were proactively nixing hunting and archery programs to comply with the Department's wrongheaded and heavy-handed reading of the law. That is already going too far.

Congress should respond quickly with swift action and pass the Protecting Hunting Heritage and Education Act.

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 Wisconsin (Mr. GROTHMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5110, 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. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further pro-

ceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXTENDING AND MODIFYING CERTAIN AUTHORITIES AND REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 2795) to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend and modify certain authorities and requirements relating to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2795

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

SECTION 1. TWO-YEAR EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY CLARIFICATION OF LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTRACTOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS TO PERFORM MEDICAL DISABILITY EXAMINATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS UNDER PILOT PROGRAM FOR USE OF CONTRACT PHYSICIANS FOR DISABILITY EXAMINATIONS.

Section 2002(a)(4) of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note) is amended by striking “three years” and inserting “five years”.

SEC. 2. TWO-YEAR EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF APPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN RELIEF FOR RECIPIENTS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE WHO ARE AFFECTED BY CLOSURE OR DISAPPROVAL OF AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.

Section 3699(c)(2)(C) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “September 30, 2023” and inserting “September 30, 2025”.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Section 8117(g) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “2023” and inserting “2028”.

SEC. 4. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HOUSING LOAN FEES.

The loan fee table in section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “November 14, 2031” each place it appears and inserting “November 15, 2031”.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 2795.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2795, a bill that extends VA's expiring authorities.

The Veterans' Affairs Committee works on an extender bill every year. This year, it was introduced by my friends, Senators TESTER and MORAN.

The 2023 extender bill does three things.

It would extend VA's participation in the National Disaster Medical System for 5 years. VA has a mission to protect veterans and staff and support public health during disasters or emergencies.

Second, the bill would also allow medical professionals who are contracted to perform veterans' disability exams to continue practicing across State lines. Now, VA depends on the contractors to perform most of the disability exams, and the contractors depend on this authority. This bill would continue the authority for 2 more years.

Finally, the bill would continue to protect student veterans if their school closed or gets disapproved under the GI Bill. It would also allow the Secretary to restore the entitlement to education benefits for 2 more years.

I support this legislation because it gives VA important tools to take care of all of our veterans. Without extending these authorities, serious impacts to operations might mean VA's ability to protect Americans during disasters would be limited, veterans' claims for disability compensation would grind to a halt, and student veterans would be left out in the cold if they attended a college that closed due to fraud or mismanagement. We can't let that happen.

I once again thank Senators TESTER and MORAN for working on this legislation in the Senate, and I also thank Dr. MURPHY for his work to lead and champion the legislation here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support S. 2795, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for S. 2795.

Before I speak on the bill, I would like to note that September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. I remind everyone that help is available any time of day or night. If you are a veteran in crisis, or if you are concerned about a veteran, confidential help is available by calling 988 and selecting 1, or you can text 838255. You are not alone.

The House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs have worked together in a bipartisan manner on S. 2795, which extends expiring authorities for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Senate passed this bill by unanimous consent, and I hope my colleagues will support it. This bill must be signed into law before Sunday so that important programs at VA do not lapse.

It is a bit ironic that we all recognize the need to pass this bill before Sunday because of how important VA programs are and that we work to extend them the same week that we are facing a

government shutdown that will shutter some important services at VA.

Nevertheless, this is a must-pass piece of legislation. Section 1 of the bill extends VA's authority to enlist medical professionals across State lines for the purposes of conducting disability medical exams on behalf of veterans.

When a veteran files a claim with VA for a service-connected disability, they are often required to receive an exam to document and substantiate their injury or illness and its severity. This exam requires a medical professional who is well-versed in the injuries and illnesses that are unique to the veterans population and in the forms VA requires to be submitted. It may be the case that a provider with this expertise is not reasonably near the veteran.

To alleviate this problem, Congress enabled VA to authorize certain medical professionals to practice across State lines. This vital authority has been used by VA and its contract examiners to tremendous effect, greatly reducing the potential wait time a veteran may face in scheduling their exam and also reducing the distance many veterans must travel to attend that exam.

Extending this authority means removing roadblocks to veterans accessing the care and benefits they have earned.

Section 2 of S. 2795 provides relief to veterans who are affected by the closure or disapproval of an educational institution.

Student veterans should not be the ones penalized when their school closes. While we can't give student veterans back their time when their higher education institution closes, at the very least we should give them back their GI eligibility. Section 2 of this legislation extends the relief established in the Isakson and Roe law for more than 2 years.

Our committee remains committed to making it straightforward for student veterans to get their benefits back when a school fails to uphold its promise. While it is important to make sure that the authority being extended in the legislation before us today does not lapse on Sunday, I note that a permanent solution authored by Representative RAMIREZ, H.R. 1767, the Bipartisan Student Veterans Benefit Restoration Act, has been favorably reported out of the committee and is widely supported by the veterans service organizations but is still awaiting a vote before the full House.

Representative RAMIREZ' bill would address the inequity in protections and relief for current and former student veterans who have lost their GI Bill benefits due to fraud when their benefits were not restored while their non-veteran classmates have had their student loans discharged.

It is inexplicable that, in our current system, these student veterans are still waiting for their relief and that Congress allows this inequity to persist.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to take up and pass H.R. 1767 as soon as possible. It would grant relief to thousands of student veterans who have lost their GI Bill benefits due to fraud and would finally ensure that GI Bill beneficiaries have the same protections as student loan borrowers.

Section 3 of the bill before us today will extend VA's authority to prepare for and respond to disasters and emergencies for the next 5 years.

This authority is commonly referred to as "VA's Fourth Mission." The bill authorizes appropriations to carry out this authority.

Under its Fourth Mission, VA carries out several major responsibilities. First and foremost, it ensures VA medical facilities are prepared to protect veterans and staff during a public health emergency.

Second, under this authority, VA serves as a contingency backup to the Department of Defense medical system during a national emergency. VA can also provide support under this authority, such as staff or medical supplies, to assist civilian patients.

Finally, VA may furnish hospital care or medical services at its own facilities to nonveteran patients on a humanitarian basis during emergencies.

The COVID-19 emergency proved what a vital role VA's Fourth Mission authority plays in protecting public health, not just for veterans but for all Americans. I could not be prouder of how heroically the Department of Veterans Affairs carried out this mission during the height of the pandemic. VA not only sustained its own capacity to provide care to veterans and prevent the spread of the virus among its workforce, but it also provided critical care to civilians, serving as the backstop to the American healthcare system through Fourth Mission assignments in nearly every State and territory.

More than 6,000 VA employees volunteered to deploy to assist civilian or Tribal health systems. VA provided nearly 1.2 million pieces of PPE, such as masks, gloves, and gowns to non-VA facilities. VA admitted nearly 700 non-veterans for care at its medical facilities.

The difference VA made through its Fourth Mission authority cannot be overstated. Countless lives have been saved, and it is imperative that we extend this authority.

Finally, this bill includes a non-controversial section regarding housing loan fees that provides an offset to the small cost of this bill.

Congress has extended these authorities countless times with the support of the VSO community, which ensures that this legislation does not increase the debt or deficit.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MURPHY), the author on our side of this Chamber for this piece of legislation.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2795, a critical piece of legislation that extends the authority of the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue providing several essential services.

I am proud to have introduced the House version of this bill and grateful for Senator TESTER's leadership in the other Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, my district is home to over 76,000 veterans, and it is my honor and privilege to represent them in Congress.

I thoroughly believe that when a man or a woman signs on the dotted line to serve our country, that is their contract, but when they come home, it is our contract to take care of them.

It is an absolute priority of mine to make sure that their VA benefits, which were promised and earned, are given to them.

This legislation enables the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue carrying out its duty to care for our veterans efficiently and effectively. It allows physicians and nurses that do veterans' compensation and pension plans to practice across State lines. It allows the VA to restore veterans' GI benefits if they use them at an educational institution that closes or gets decertified from the program. It extends the Veterans Health Administration's emergency preparedness measures to protect access to care during times of crisis.

Our veterans have made great sacrifices to protect our way of life and our freedom. It is only right that we, in turn, serve them and give them the benefits that they have adamantly earned.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation and urge my colleagues to do the same.

□ 1715

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), my good friend who holds a seat on the House Budget Committee, Homeland Security Committee, and the House Judiciary Committee. She is indeed a staunch advocate for all of our military servicemembers and veterans.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California, particularly for his extended leadership and work on behalf of the Nation's veterans. I thank our manager, who is leading on the majority.

This is an important and bipartisan effort to ensure the promise that we make to the men and women of the United States military that ultimately serve—and I always use this term—particularly, for those who have come from the city of Houston, and Texas, and then for the Nation. These men and women put on the uniform unselfishly. They are ready to serve. They own up to their responsibilities. They are going away from their families, and they come back and are in need of important services.

This bill is important because it extends from 3 to 5 years the authority for additional licensed healthcare professionals to perform medical disability examinations as part of an existing VA pilot program related to the use of contract physicians for disability examinations.

If you do casework in your district, you are well aware of the challenges of our veterans in getting assessed for disability. Some feel unfairly treated and analyzed for the percentages that they get.

This is certainly extremely important with 18.5 million veterans in the United States, and with 1.5 million of them from my own State of Texas.

Several initiatives that I have designed in the past have aided Active-Duty servicemen and servicewomen, along with veterans, such as enforcing accurate reporting of maternity mortality rates among the Armed Forces, addressing physical and mental health concerns, and securing triple negative breast cancer funding.

This legislation is extremely important because it adds, if you will, additional services, expands additional services, and it also reflects our commitment to every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine that is welcomed back with all the care and compassion that this grateful Nation can show.

Our Nation has a proud legacy of appreciation and commitment to the men and women who have worn the uniform in defense of this country. Veterans continue to have unanswered needs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentlewoman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, veterans continue to have many unanswered needs, and I will continue to fight for their rights.

The reason why it is important to move quickly on the extension in this bill is because in addition to the ability to assess one's benefits, it is, of course, recognizing the myriad of issues they face, such as homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by saying, should we not focus on their service, their commitment, and realize that shutting down the government is not in any way an expression of gratitude to those men and women who serve us unselfishly?

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support S. 2795, and for us to proceed in a way that honors this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2795, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend and modify certain authorities and requirements relating to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2795, a bill passed by the Senate on September 13, 2023, is an important and necessary measure that I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of today because it will serve as a critical and necessary source of support for our veterans by extending the eligibility or applicability of various Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs and benefits.

First, the bill extends from three to five years the authority for additional licensed health care professionals (i.e., physician assistants, nurse practitioners, audiologists, and psychologists) to perform medical disability examinations as part of the existing VA pilot program related to the use of contract physicians for disability examinations.

Currently, when an individual transfers fewer than 12 credits from a program of education that is closed or disapproved, the individual is deemed to have not received those credits, and no charge from the individual's entitlement to education assistance may be made for that period of enrollment.

Under the bill, this period of relief for those affected by a closure or disapproval is extended by two years to apply to programs that close or discontinue before September 30, 2025.

This bill also extends authorization for VA emergency preparedness for public health emergencies through FY2028.

Additionally, the bill also extends the applicability of certain loan fee rates under the VA's home loan program through November 15, 2031.

These proposed changes align with my longstanding support for veterans.

Of the 18.5 million veterans in the United States, 1.5 million of them are from my own State of Texas.

Several initiatives I have designed in the past have aided active-duty servicemen and women along with veterans, such as enforcing accurate reporting of maternity mortality rates among the Armed Forces, addressing physical and mental health concerns, and securing authorization for Triple Negative Breast Cancer as well as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In 2015, I was also proud to introduce the H.E.R.O.E.S. Act which offers assistance and materials to help veteran's transition from the battlefield to the workforce.

I am very proud of the work Congress has done to address the health concerns of active duty and veteran servicemen and women, but there are still improvements to be made.

According to Texas State University researchers, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found "a lack of effective interventions persist for the veteran population from public agencies such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and private organizations."

In other words, although programs and resources have been implemented to assist veterans, there is still work to be done, as the veteran community is still suffering.

According to CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data, "the overall health of the average U.S. veteran is far worse than that of the average American, with veterans suffering more from such conditions as obesity, skin cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), arthritis, kidney disease and mental health disorders."

Members of the armed forces are vital to our nation, and I am committed to ensuring that veterans receive the quality healthcare and other services that they deserve.

We must be united in seeing that every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine is welcomed back with all the care and compassion this grateful nation can bestow.

Our nation has a proud legacy of appreciation and commitment to the men and women who have worn the uniform in defense of this country.

Veterans continue to have many unanswered needs, and I will continue to fight for the rights of our most patriotic Americans.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, how much time is remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 10 minutes remaining.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we pass this legislation, but it is cold comfort when the operation of the entire government is hanging in the balance this week.

We aren't any closer to extending funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, or any other Federal agencies that servicemembers and veterans depend on.

I think we all need to consider what a shutdown means for servicemembers and veterans. It will undermine the PACT Act by delaying the onboarding of much-needed veteran service representatives, and negatively impact customer service for veterans. The claims backlog will grow, delaying benefits and services.

Important research will come to a halt, including life-improving prosthetics research.

There will be no setting of headstones at veteran cemeteries.

Student veterans will have counseling appointments canceled.

Hiring and training of new employees will stop, creating delays that will last for months.

The Veterans Benefits Administration, the office that oversees student veteran benefits, veteran housing, pensions, and servicemember transition will have 40 percent of its staff furloughed.

At the Department of Defense, over 1 million soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, space guardians, and their families will go without pay.

Training will stop, impacting our long-term readiness and security.

Commissaries will be closed on many bases, making it harder to get basic essentials that military families need.

At the Department of Agriculture, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, commonly known as WIC food assistance, will be cut off. Nearly a quarter, 24 percent of the Active-Duty servicemembers and families are food insecure, and 9 percent of those families depend on WIC. You heard that right—9 percent of our military families depend on WIC.

How are our servicemembers supposed to focus on their job, which is inherently dangerous, or a deployment when they are worried if their family has enough to eat?

My colleagues may not think about these issues as they relate to veterans. They are too busy giving lip service to half-hearted attempts to cut the deficit

that they helped create rather than thinking about the actual consequences of their rhetoric.

There is growing evidence that both older and disabled veterans are suffering from food insecurity, as well as student veterans and Native veterans. The Rand Corporation released a study examining the issue of food insecurity among veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Rand report be included in the RECORD.

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

There was no objection. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA1300/RRA1363-2/RAND_RRA1363-2.pdf

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, food insecurity is linked to many poor outcomes for physical and mental health, including increased risk of suicide. Food insecure veterans have a 400 percent higher rate of suicidal ideation. Food insecure veterans with a diagnosed mental health issue have a 900 percent higher rate of suicidal ideation.

We, as Members of Congress, like to stand here on the floor of the House or in front of the press or at a Memorial Day parade in our districts saying that we are working every angle, trying with all our might to eliminate or at least bring down the rate of veteran suicide. But how we spend or don't spend taxpayer money reveals our true values.

When we are trying to do everything possible to address veteran suicide, these pernicious cuts around the edges are simply increasing risk for vulnerable Americans, and this includes veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

Maybe my colleagues don't want to think about the ugly truth of members of the military not getting paid. The ugly truth is that those who serve are being asked to go without. Is that fair?

As noted in a recent article in Task and Purpose, cost of living and food insecurity are ongoing concerns for military families and veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to include in the RECORD the Task and Purpose article titled "More than a million veterans experience food insecurity."

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

There was no objection.

More than a million American military veterans are food insecure, according to a new study. And of those, several hundred thousand veterans are not enrolled or signing up for available food assistance from the federal government.

That's according to a report from the Rand Corporation, released Thursday. The report, "Food Insecurity Among Veterans: Examining the Discrepancy Between Veteran Food Insecurity and Use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)," looked at the gap between the overall number of veterans experiencing food insecurity or hunger and the smaller amount that take advantage of the federal Supplemental Nutri-

tion Assistance Program or SNAP. Although 7.5% of all veterans—approximately 1.4 million people—experience food insecurity, only 4.9% are enrolled in or part of a household signed up for SNAP.

Compared to non-veterans, that is a much higher rate. Although food insecurity is higher among non-veterans (10.4%), 8.6% of people experiencing that report living in a household signed up for SNAP benefits.

"Low enrollment by food-insecure veterans could be the result of not meeting nutrition assistance eligibility requirements, perceived lack of eligibility, social stigma associated with SNAP participation, or negative messaging around nutrition assistance," the report said.

The largest discrepancy is among the oldest veterans. The vast majority of those 70 years or older experiencing food insecurity are not enrolled in SNAP, with only 30% signed up. Meanwhile, for non-veterans, 40% of those 70 and up are enrolled.

As a result, the authors of the RAND paper are proposing several ways to close that gap. The strongest recommendation calls for better and increased screenings for food insecurity in veterans at places such as Department of Veterans Affairs sites. Additional screenings at other clinical sites would be helpful, in order to reach veterans who don't get care through the VA. Additionally, the authors note that there could be better communication and coordination among the VA, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Agriculture, which administers the SNAP program.

The new Rand report highlights the main forces behind the food insecurity veterans face. Among other factors, veterans are disproportionately represented among the number of unhoused Americans in the country.

It also points to issues tied to food insecurity. Not having enough to eat can lead to poor physical and mental health and well-being. That in turn can lead veterans to committing suicide.

Cost of living concerns and food insecurity have been ongoing issues for military families and veterans, particularly exacerbated by the economic upheavals of the COVID-19 pandemic. Efforts to alleviate those challenges, including cost of living adjustments and increased benefits for veterans have not fully eliminated the problems.

However, the study found that more research is needed to better learn why so many veterans are not signed up for assistance and experiencing food insecurity.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, the plain truth is that military families depend on programs like SNAP and WIC to make ends meet. I have been working with my Democratic colleagues over the last several months on ways to address the barriers faced by veterans to access important services like SNAP and housing vouchers. We should be focused on increasing access rather than looking to undermine or cut services for veterans.

The plain truth is just that the threat of a government shutdown, the uncertainty created by the House Republicans' inability to govern creates unknowns and stress for our servicemembers and families. We should be providing predictability and stability to those who serve. Instead, the Speaker can't even tell us what funding measures we will be voting on this week.

This looming shutdown is a self-inflicted wound by the House majority,

who are choosing politics over the responsibilities of governance.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of this shutdown will be felt worldwide by military and veteran families.

Mr. Speaker, S. 2795 is a good bill and I urge its support by all my colleagues. It is impossible to pass this legislation, which we should do, without recognizing what House Republicans aren't doing.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, many people know that I was in the State legislature prior to coming to Congress, I was a foreleader there and I knew and could identify when, for some reason, whether it is leadership on one side of the aisle or the other side of the aisle, who wants to drag the debate out. So I am going to do whatever I can to help them out here.

Some things that were claimed here—I think it is amazing that the claims that actually cause fear through our Nation and through people who are providing services—we are going to try to work every way we can not to have a shutdown, but we have a responsibility, and that responsibility is to pass a budget.

That is not what we were supposed to be debating here at this time, but I am glad to do that. If you remember when we were working on the cap, where we would increase the cap, I think the other side of the aisle said we were going to cut benefits for veterans. Veterans were scared all over the United States because they claimed we were going to cut benefits for veterans.

Oh, and what happened?

I told that—not only I as chair, but the Speaker and others—we are not cutting benefits for veterans. Okay.

Let's see what actually—if the shutdown occurs, what actually is still covered at the VA? I think it is very important that the American people know.

Healthcare will not be cut. It won't even slow down. Compensation and pension benefits and processing of claims on appeals, they will still be done. The Veterans Crisis Line, it is most important, and I know both myself and the ranking member know it is vitally important to make sure that those veterans—the veteran numbers right now are 17 per day that are committing suicide—we want to make sure that is open.

Housing benefits for the homeless, open. National cemeteries and burial services and benefits, still going to be done. Essential IT functions, network data centers, cybersecurity operations, are still all going to be done with VA. The Office of General Counsel is still going to operate.

The financial accounting and debt management center, maintenance and management of VA facilities, VA customer service operations, workforce management for electronic health records, the modernization office, VA appeal court operations, small and disadvantaged veterans business support operations—all not cut. Why?

Because we have been working already with the Secretary of the VA to make sure those services remain in place.

Are there certain things that will slow down, paperwork and things like that? I hope we don't go into the shutdown, but those essential services we are going to make sure are provided for our veterans. Why?

Because our veterans deserve it.

We want to make sure that we don't have fearmongering and concern in that way.

I think there are people that should be concerned about a shutdown. I am concerned about a shutdown. That is why we are going to be—and this is very important for the American people to know—I know for a fact that I am possibly going to be offering an amendment tonight somewhere around 1 o'clock in the morning.

We are going to work through the day and through the night. We are going to do it all this week to try to take care of the business of this Nation. People should feel secure that we are.

That is not why we were here today. We wanted to talk about this bill and the importance of it. Why?

Because these are essential services we must also pass by the end of the month. As you can see, we are going to continue to do the work. We are going to continue to work in this way, and I hope in a bipartisan manner that we are.

We can go out and do press conferences and stand on this floor and claim, oh, this isn't getting done or that isn't getting done. I understand that. I have been around this process a long time. But understand, we are here to do our job and we are going to do our job.

There are 435 Members in this Chamber, and all of them have opinions and all of them have ideas.

You know what? We are doing a thing called regular order because many people called for that.

You know what? There are two things in this life you should not watch being made because it ruins the taste of both—sausage and law. Now we are making law. We are coming together and running our heads together and arguing and debating.

We are debating on our side of the aisle with our own colleagues, we are debating on that side of the aisle with their colleagues, and we are debating together to come up with the answers that we need to for this Nation to do it right.

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

□ 1730

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I remind my esteemed colleague and friend—and I do believe the gentleman from Illinois is my friend—that we are about to tonight bring up, again, the rule for the Defense appropriations bill. This body failed to even pass a rule and to

bring to the floor the Defense appropriations bill.

Barring an ability to fund a continuing resolution before October 1, which is this Sunday, we are facing our military servicemembers going without a paycheck. This is a very serious moment. As far as I know, none of the 12 appropriations bills have been agreed to and been sent to the President's desk.

The bill before us today, this moment, is a bipartisan, noncontroversial bill that needs to be signed by the President before Sunday. Time is of the essence, but we can't forget all the things that we are not accomplishing for veterans today, that we are not accomplishing for our servicemembers who are in harm's way.

Servicemembers, veterans, and their families deserve to have access to food, deserve to have access to housing, and deserve to have access to healthcare and mental health care. If we look at the reauthorization of the agriculture bill, it is atrocious what is done to all the nutrition programs that our veterans and our military families depend on.

Do not be fooled by the fact that we have passed a military construction bill that fully funds VA but has not yet been agreed to because of all of the poison pills that have been put into that bill. We stand here waiting to see if the House Republicans can fulfill the most basic role of Congress, which is to fund the government.

The brinkmanship of extremists in control of this Chamber is putting servicemember pay and the WIC program at risk. This situation is both unconscionable and was totally avoidable, yet we are here at the precipice.

Madam Speaker, again, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing S. 2795. Fund the government. Feed veterans, feed servicemembers, and feed their families.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, may I request the time remaining for each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia). The gentleman from Illinois has 12 minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 1 minute remaining.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I am so proud to be on this floor and for what we do for the people, but it is interesting to watch the debates that occur on this floor sometimes to try to stretch, as I said, and draw things out.

I actually had the opportunity earlier this afternoon during 5-minute speeches to talk about a friend of mine from the Illinois State legislature who did this very, very well. He was a floor leader in the State of Illinois. His name was William "Bill" Black. Bill was a great orator, and he could talk on every issue.

I explained during that time that because he was an educator and then the president of a community college, when he became a legislator, he knew

how to explain the issues exactly the way they needed to be explained so that whether you were a scholar or just an average person on the street, you could understand what was going on.

Basically, he used a good southern Illinois term that said he would put the cabbage down where the hogs could eat it. Let me tell you, that is what I would like to do.

As we have listened here, going off and leaving the bill we were actually debating on, we have talked about everything that is going on around here. I said earlier that it will continue to go on. Why? Because we have been elected by the people to work through this process. We are going to work through this process.

I hope that there is not a shutdown. If there is a shutdown, is this the first time we have shut down? No, it is not. What we have to know is that we want to make sure we are getting it right. The American people want us to get it right.

What legislators discover once we are here, with the 435 districts, what is happening in the ranking member's district, quite often his people feel different than the people of the Illinois 12th District, which I represent. They feel different because they come from different cultures. It is our job to try to come up with something that is balanced and that can actually operate this Nation the way we need to have it operated.

Let me also say this: We also know that we can do a whole lot of things at the same time. Right now we are working on appropriation bills, and my colleague from the other side of the aisle said that we have not passed an appropriation bill. Well, we actually had one appropriation bill out, and there wasn't a single Democrat vote on it. It is kind of interesting to watch on this floor when somebody claims you haven't done anything. However, not a single vote came in from that side of the aisle. As we are moving forward, though, we do have the 12 budget bills to move.

Now, will there be a CR? I don't know. Let me tell you the first thing we are going to do is we are going to move rules because that is what we do. We are going to move the rule, and we are going to have debates. I thank the members of the Rules Committee who worked all weekend long to try to make sure that through this process they are crossing the T's and dotting the I's.

As I said in a speech on this floor earlier today, every comma, every dot, and every word matters. Every comma, every dot, and every word matters. Why? It matters because it is going to affect generations to come. It will affect people next week, next year, and 10 years down the road.

What we do here is serious business. I am getting concerned sometimes that the only thing people want to see is the rhetoric back and forth when they don't understand how much time we do

spend working across the aisle together to having successful pieces of legislation that actually get things done.

We both knew, the Senate knew, with Senator MORAN and Senator TESTER, that this piece of legislation that we are working on today needed to be moved by the last of this month or these services would fail. Rightfully so, in a bipartisan manner, we have and we will move this tonight, and it will move on to the President so those vital services are not removed or even say a flaw in them where a problem could happen. Remember, all I said about the words and the dots and the commas: They aren't just words; they affect people's lives. That is why we have got to get it right, and we are going to work to get it right.

Madam Speaker, I am ready to close, but I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I am pleased that the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST), my friend and colleague, would like to feed cabbage to his hogs, but I want to feed America's veterans, America's military families, and America's servicemembers.

I ask all of my colleagues to join me in not only passing S. 2795, but we also need to fund the government, and we need to make sure that our military families, our veterans, and our servicemembers have enough to eat.

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

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank him for the spirited debate. Once again, that is the rhetoric I was talking about, to think that people on this side of the aisle don't want to take care of our veterans and feed our veterans, don't want to make sure that SNAP programs are passed and that those people in need are taken care of, that is the rhetoric we have got to stop.

In this particular bill, this bill actually does provide and make sure that we can carry on these three areas of service in the VA that are vitally important. We want to make sure that our colleagues on both sides of the aisle support this legislation. I will encourage mine. I just heard the ranking member support and encourage his Members to support this legislation as well.

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 Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 2795.

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.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4365, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024; PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4367, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024; PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4665, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024; AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4368, AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024

Mr. ROY. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 723 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 723

Resolved, That at any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4365) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The bill shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived.

SEC. 2. (a) No amendment to H.R. 4365 shall be in order except those printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution, and pro forma amendments described in section 13 of this resolution.

(b) Each amendment printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules shall be considered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment except as provided by section 13 of this resolution, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

(c) All points of order against amendments printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules or against amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution are waived.

SEC. 3. It shall be in order at any time for the chair of the Committee on Appropriations or her designee to offer amendments en bloc consisting of amendments printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution not earlier disposed of. Amendments en bloc offered pursuant to this section shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees, shall not be subject to amendment

except as provided by section 13 of this resolution, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

SEC. 4. At any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4367) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The bill shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived.

SEC. 5. (a) No amendment to H.R. 4367 shall be in order except those printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, amendments en bloc described in section 6 of this resolution, and pro forma amendments described in section 13 of this resolution.

(b) Each amendment printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules shall be considered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment except as provided by section 13 of this resolution, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

(c) All points of order against amendments printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules or against amendments en bloc described in section 6 of this resolution are waived.

SEC. 6. It shall be in order at any time for the chair of the Committee on Appropriations or her designee to offer amendments en bloc consisting of amendments printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution not earlier disposed of. Amendments en bloc offered pursuant to this section shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees, shall not be subject to amendment except as provided by section 13 of this resolution, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

SEC. 7. At any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4665) making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The amendment printed in part C of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered