

rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR RESERVISTS AND VETERANS ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4480) to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to report on the veterans interagency task force, to require the Comptroller General of the United States to report on access to credit for small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4480

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 "Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans Act" or the "SERV Act".

SEC. 2. REPORTING REQUIREMENT FOR VETERANS INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE.

Section 32(c) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b(c)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(4) REPORT.—Along with the budget justification documents for the Small Business Administration submitted to Congress in connection with the budget for a fiscal year submitted under section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, the Administrator shall submit a report—

"(A) discussing the appointments made to and activities of the task force; and

"(B) identifying and outlining a plan for outreach and promotion of the programs and services for veterans, including Veteran Business Outreach Centers, Boots to Business, Boots to Business Reboot, Service-Disabled Entrepreneurship Development Training Program, Veteran Institute for Procurement, Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program, and Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship."

SEC. 3. GAO REPORT ON ACCESS TO CREDIT.

(a) REPORT ON ACCESS TO CREDIT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit a report on the ability of small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals to access credit to—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include, to the extent practicable, an analysis of—

(A) the sources of credit used by small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals and the average percentage of the credit obtained from each source by such concerns;

(B) the default rate for small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals, disaggregated by each source of credit described in subparagraph (A), as compared to the default rate for the source of credit for small business concerns generally;

(C) the Federal lending programs available to provide credit to small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals;

(D) gaps, if any, in the availability of credit for small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals that are not being filled by the Federal Government or private sources;

(E) obstacles faced by covered individuals in trying to access credit;

(F) the extent to which deployment and other military responsibilities affect the credit history of veterans and Reservists; and

(G) the extent to which covered individuals are aware of Federal programs targeted towards helping covered individuals access credit.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) COVERED INDIVIDUAL.—The term "covered individual" means—

(A) a veteran;

(B) a service-disabled veteran;

(C) a Reservist;

(D) the spouse of an individual described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C); or

(E) the spouse of a member of the Armed Forces.

(2) RESERVIST.—The term "Reservist" means a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, as described in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code.

(3) SMALL BUSINESS ACT DEFINITIONS.—The terms "service-disabled veteran", "small business concern", and "veteran" have the meanings given those terms, respectively, under section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632).

SEC. 4. COMPLIANCE WITH CUTGO.

No additional amounts are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act or the amendments made by this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in full support of H.R. 4480, also known as the SERV Act, introduced by Representatives DAVIDS of Kansas and ALFORD of Missouri.

Our Nation's veterans have an incredible impact on our small business community. The skills veterans gained in the military make them leaders uniquely positioned to start and grow successful businesses. Unfortunately, veterans often face barriers when starting or growing their businesses which can feel insurmountable. In May, the Committee on Small Business heard directly from veterans on how access to capital as well as awareness of available resources are major barriers to them.

The SERV Act seeks to identify these barriers and directs the Inter-

agency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development to create an action plan to improve outreach to veterans informing them of available resources to address their unique needs. If we are spending taxpayer dollars to help these individuals, then we must ensure they are making the greatest impact possible.

Mr. Speaker, I, once again, thank the sponsors of this legislation, I urge my colleagues to support it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support H.R. 4480, the Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans Act, also known as the SERV Act, as amended.

Veteran entrepreneurs are powerful economic engines and job creators. More than 2.4 million veteran businessowners employ more than 5.7 million Americans and contribute approximately \$1.2 trillion annually to our GDP.

With that said, one of the biggest challenges facing veteran-owned small businesses is access to capital. Servicemembers report that it can be difficult to build credit while serving in the military, and studies have shown that a higher percentage of veterans are turned down for loans.

The SERV Act requires GAO to conduct a study on the availability of credit to veteran-owned, service-disabled-, and reservist-owned small businesses. The study would provide a report on the obstacles facing veterans, including the extent to which deployment and other military responsibilities affect their credit histories.

Most importantly, it requires the SBA Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development to create an outreach plan to promote the many valuable programs available to help veteran small business owners.

Representative DAVIDS has been a staunch supporter of efforts to aid veteran entrepreneurs. She first introduced this legislation in the 116th Congress, and it passed the House with broad bipartisan support.

As the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Tax, and Capital Access in the 117th Congress, she led efforts to make capital more affordable for all small firms.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this bill to ensure Congress is working to address the challenges veteran small employers face, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1715

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. ALFORD).

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in favor of H.R. 4480 because, as Members of Congress, it is our duty to protect and support our Nation's veterans.

Earlier this year, it was my distinct pleasure to have Lieutenant Commander Taylor Burks of Missouri's Fourth Congressional District and a former opponent of mine in the primary for this very congressional seat, testify at a Small Business Committee hearing on veteran entrepreneurship.

We learned not only about the unique skill set veterans can bring to the small business environment, but also the obstacles they face when trying to open small businesses and live out the American Dream and the challenge of even finding the programs available through the Small Business Administration.

It was very important for all Members to hear how the committee and the Small Business Administration can better serve those who have served our great Nation.

As a result, my colleague Representative SHARICE DAVIDS of Kansas and I introduced the Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans, or SERV Act.

This bipartisan legislation, which passed through the Small Business Committee unanimously, will help veteran small business owners and entrepreneurs succeed by studying the barriers when starting a business.

This bill will commission a report on the outreach and promotion of existing veteran-focused small business programs to make sure that veterans can access all available resources, capital, and credit.

There are programs out there, but a lot of veterans have never heard of them, such as the Veterans Business Outreach Centers, the Boots to Business program, and service-disabled veteran-owned small business contracting programs.

This legislation also mandates the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development to devise an outreach and promotion strategy for these programs and many others available to veterans transitioning into the business world.

Veterans' service to our Nation should not end with difficulties in accessing capital and resources. With transparency and increased reporting, we can better ensure that they receive the support that they deserve.

I am proud to co-lead the SERV Act with my neighboring district Representative and colleague, Congresswoman SHARICE DAVIDS of Kansas, to promote veteran entrepreneurship in our great Nation.

This bill is a win for our districts. It is a win for veterans. It is a win for our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Kansas (Ms. DAVIDS).

Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in strong support of the Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans Act, or the SERV Act, which I introduced alongside my friend and colleague from Missouri (Mr. ALFORD).

The SERV Act not only honors our veterans; it honors their service. It empowers our veterans to embark on a new chapter as entrepreneurs and small business owners.

My mom served in the Army for 20 years. My grandfather served, as well. Through them, I learned so much about service, about leadership, and certainly about the dedication to country.

Our veterans have defended our freedoms from so many things and with unwavering commitment. We absolutely owe it to them to provide the support that they need to achieve personal and professional success as they return home.

The SERV Act is a testament to that commitment that we have to the brave veterans that have served, and it is necessary because veterans do face distinct barriers when transitioning to civilian life, specifically when starting a business.

Those challenges can include overcoming stigmas around physical disability or post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as difficulty accessing credit. It forces small businesses to sometimes turn to alternative lenders, which can be predatory or more expensive than traditional sources. While those challenges exist for all potential entrepreneurs and our small business owners, it can be especially difficult for our veterans who often have trouble accruing credit necessary to attract and attain capital.

These barriers have led to a 35 percent decrease in veterans starting small businesses since World War II, and the U.S. Small Business Administration currently works closely with the VA and the Department of Defense on several excellent programs that we heard about from my colleague, Mr. ALFORD, specifically designed to help our veterans transition to civilian life and entrepreneurship, but those programs are not always as easy to find as they should be.

The SERV Act recognizes those unique challenges and works to address them directly, fostering economic growth at the local level and harnessing the immense potential that our veteran communities have.

One key provision of this legislation is the commission of a Government Accountability Office report on the ability of veterans and reservists to access capital and credit, which are crucial building blocks to opening a business.

This report would include analysis on common sources of credit and how deployment of credit impacts our service-members and their individual credit.

Moreover, the bill requires an Interagency Task Force at the SBA to develop an action plan for greater outreach of programs that already exist for veterans transitioning into the

business world. That task force would report its findings annually to Congress on how the SBA can better support veterans, service-disabled veterans, reservists, and their families.

The district I represent in Kansas includes a large rural population, and we know that businesses with fewer than 500 employees account for a majority of our rural establishments and employers.

By supporting our veteran entrepreneurs and making it easier for them to start small businesses, we are boosting local economies in both urban and rural settings. I often say that due to the specialized training and learned skill set, there are few people that are as well suited to start and operate a small business as our veterans.

The SERV Act is going to help those folks who served in uniform do just that. By providing enhanced access to SBA resources and programs, we are investing in the entrepreneurial spirit of our veterans. We are fostering economic growth. We are strengthening our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues, alongside my friend, Mr. ALFORD, on both sides of the aisle to stand united in support of this crucial legislation which did pass the House in a largely bipartisan way in the last Congress.

Let us send a powerful message to our veterans that we appreciate their service, their sacrifice, and that we are dedicated to helping them succeed in their endeavors, both while serving and after they hang up their uniform.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, our country is experiencing a small business boom and veteran entrepreneurship is helping to lead the way.

SBA offers a number of counseling and training programs that can help them either launch or grow a small business. It is vitally important that we increase the awareness of SBA programs and services, particularly among veterans.

I applaud Ms. DAVIDS and Mr. ALFORD for their commitment to our Nation's veterans, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4480, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I thank Chairman WILLIAMS for bringing these six bills to the floor and for working in a bipartisan manner. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4480 is a step in the right direction. It is about our veterans, and what is more important than our veterans. Congressman ALFORD and Congresswoman DAVIDS have it right. It needs to be passed. We need to pass it tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ for her support, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) that the House suspend the

rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4480, 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.

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CALLING ON HAMAS TO IMMEDIATELY RELEASE HOSTAGES TAKEN DURING OCTOBER 2023 ATTACK ON ISRAEL

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 793) calling on Hamas to immediately release hostages taken during October 2023 attack on Israel.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 793

Whereas, on October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a brutal terrorist attack from Gaza into Israel and against the Israeli people;

Whereas, on October 16, 2023, the Israeli military confirmed that Hamas killed more than 1,400 people in the attack;

Whereas, on October 15, 2023, the United States Department of State confirmed that at least 30 Americans were killed in the attack;

Whereas, on October 16, 2023, the Israeli military confirmed that Hamas was holding 199 hostages in Gaza who were abducted during the attack;

Whereas Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions states that the taking of hostages is and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever;

Whereas, on October 10, 2023, President Joe Biden confirmed that Americans are known to be among the hostages;

Whereas it is reported that children and senior citizens are among the hostages; and

Whereas Hamas has threatened to execute hostages and videotape the killings: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns Hamas for its brutal attack on Israel;

(2) condemns Hamas for the taking of hostages;

(3) condemns Hamas for threats made against hostages;

(4) demands that Hamas immediately release all hostages and return them to safety;

(5) recognizes that the taking of hostages is a violation of international humanitarian law; and

(6) expresses sympathy to the hostages, wounded, deceased, and their families for this travesty to justice and personal hardship.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this measure.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, on October 7, Israel suffered one of the worst days in its history as it came under attack by the Hamas terror group. These terrorists stormed across the border at Gaza and murdered 1,200 people and took 240 innocent people hostage, dragging them against their will into Gaza.

From elderly Holocaust survivors to young babies, Hamas did not discriminate in its cruelty.

Mr. Speaker, American citizens are still among the hostages. Many of us in this House have met with these hostage families. The pain and suffering that these families are enduring is beyond what any human should have to go through.

Young children forced to be witness to their parents' murder right in front of them, babies ripped from their mothers arms, teenagers at a music festival gunned down.

The atrocities that were committed that day and the glee with which the terrorists acted is unimaginable, Mr. Speaker, and it is the height of human depravity.

Hamas filmed and broadcast these atrocities. This savage, sick terrorist group wanted to brag to the world about the massacre at their hands.

These terrorists, Mr. Speaker, are monsters, and we have not seen this type of violence and cruelty since ISIS was running rampant in the Levant. The Jewish people have not witnessed this much diabolical death in one day since the Holocaust.

After holding these hostages for 7 long weeks, Hamas has agreed to release some of these innocent women and children in an exchange for Israel temporarily pausing its military campaign and releasing Palestinians in jail.

All of us on this House floor are grateful for those hostage releases, and we are grateful for the leadership of the United States, Qatar, and the Government of Israel to achieve that modicum of peace and help for those families.

However, listen to the deal, Mr. Speaker. It was three jailed criminals for each innocent person captured and drug across the Gaza fence line on October 7. Despite the good news that we have witnessed in the last few days, Hamas is still holding over 150 innocent people.

Hamas must release all the remaining hostages. The United States continues to stand alongside our ally Israel in their fight to secure that safe release of all the hostages unconditionally and safely.

It was an honor and privilege working together with Congresswoman HALEY STEVENS, and I am so proud to be on the House floor tonight alongside Congresswoman HALEY STEVENS to introduce this resolution.

With this resolution, the House of Representatives strongly condemns Hamas' attack. It calls on Hamas to immediately and unconditionally release all the hostages taken on October 7.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee has marked up this legislation earlier in the month, and it received unanimous support. I expect it will receive that today on this House floor.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to stand with the hostages, with their families, and support this measure.

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

□ 1730

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 793, calling on Hamas to immediately release hostages taken during the October 7 gruesome and savage attack on Israel. I am grateful for my dear friend and colleague from Michigan, Representative HALEY STEVENS, for introducing the resolution together with my friend, Representative FRENCH HILL.

Representative STEVENS' extraordinary leadership on hostage and wrongful detention issues has given a voice to families of hostages and detainees and helped ensure that we never relent in our pursuit of bringing wrongfully detained Americans home.

The Hamas terror attack on October 7 resulted in the abduction of more than 240 innocent civilians and the heinous murder of more than 1,200 people.

In specifically targeting a civilian population, Hamas' abductions are among the greatest crimes against humanity. The sheer scale of the casualties and murder is the greatest attack against the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

Hamas has compounded the unimaginable human suffering it has caused through the use of its own people and the hostages as human shields, something we should never forget.

The hostages abducted by Hamas include civilians, soldiers, women, children, grandparents, and Holocaust survivors. Many are Israeli. Some are foreign or dual nationals, including American citizens.

Dozens of hostages have finally been released, thanks to the painstaking, difficult, and necessary negotiations assisted by the United States, including President Biden, and Qatar. I hope that, after this latest round of releases, we will continue to work to bring home all the remaining hostages.

This resolution calls attention to these abductions perpetrated by Hamas. Hamas specifically captured these innocent people so they could be used as bargaining chips and human shields while Hamas attempts to wipe Israel off the map.

Yet, while the situation is dire, there is hope. There are experienced public servants across the United States Government who have already helped secure the release of some Americans and dozens of other hostages from Hamas'