

the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP).

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

I rise today in support of H.R. 3800, the Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act. I am proud to lead this bill with my colleague EARL BLUMENAUER.

As a physician, I have seen firsthand the impact that chronic disease is having on patients. Six in ten Americans live with at least one chronic disease. According to the CDC, approximately 90 percent of the United States' healthcare spending is attributed to managing and treating patients with chronic diseases and mental health conditions.

Clearly, we must take action to help Americans living with chronic disease better manage and treat their conditions. This bill would give employers who offer high-deductible health plans the option to cover 14 chronic care management medical services before an individual reaches their deductible.

In doing this, this bill allows employers the flexibility that helps incentivize their employees to adhere to services that help manage their chronic condition and keep them healthier. This is a win-win-win. It is a win for the patient, a win for the employer, and a win for our Nation, where we manage healthy patients and keep them healthy so that they will be able to go to work and live a full life.

Surveys show that when you offer employers the opportunity to expand predeductible services, they see the value in doing so and choose to give their employees that very opportunity.

Every American deserves to live a healthy life or as healthy as possible considering their health situation. This bill would help Americans do just that, by better managing and treating chronic conditions that affect so many of our fellow citizens.

Patients are served well when their disease is treated before it progresses and gets worse. When patients with chronic disease can access care sooner, they can stay healthier longer. A healthy nation is a strong nation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, this legislation was approved by the Ways and Means Committee with overwhelming bipartisan support, and I hope we can show that same level of support here today. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EDWARDS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3800, 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.

□ 1700

FISCAL YEAR 2024 VETERANS AFFAIRS MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6324) to authorize major medical facility projects for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2024, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6324

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 "Fiscal Year 2024 Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Authorization Act".

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY PROJECTS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility projects in fiscal year 2024 at the locations specified and in an amount for each project not to exceed the amount specified for such location:

(1) Construction of a new specialty care building 201, renovation of building 18, and expansion of parking facilities in American Lake, Washington, in an amount not to exceed \$155,600,000.

(2) Expansion of clinical space for mental health, expansion of parking facilities, and land acquisition in Dallas, Texas, in an amount not to exceed \$93,100,000.

(3) Construction of a new health care center and utility plant in El Paso, Texas, in an amount not to exceed \$759,200,000.

(4) Replacement of community living center and expansion of parking facilities in Perry Point, Maryland, in an amount not to exceed \$274,310,000.

(5) Seismic retrofit and renovation of buildings 100 and 101, roadway and site improvements, construction of a new specialty care facility, and demolition and expansion of parking facilities in Portland, Oregon, in an amount not to exceed \$613,000,000.

(6) Initiation of replacement of the medical center of the Sierra Nevada Health Care System of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including land acquisition and preliminary site work, in Reno, Nevada, in an amount not to exceed \$223,800,000.

(7) Construction of a new spinal cord injury building, partial renovation of building 1, parking facilities, central utility plant upgrades, and the seismic retrofit of the existing spinal cord injury building 11 at the San Diego Health Care System of the Department in San Diego, California, in an amount not to exceed \$311,700,000.

(8) Construction of a new research facility, parking structure, and demolition in San Francisco, California, in an amount not to exceed \$264,500,000.

(9) Seismic corrections for building 1, construction of a new administrative building, and expansion of the outpatient clinic and parking structure in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in an amount not to exceed \$370,370,000.

(10) Phase 1 of the replacement of bed tower, expansion of clinical building, consolidation of administrative building and warehouse, water tower, and new utility plant and parking garages in St. Louis, Missouri, in an amount not to exceed \$135,340,000.

(11) Construction of a new surgical and clinical space tower, renovation of buildings 1 and 2, and demolition in West Haven, Con-

necticut, in an amount not to exceed \$153,128,000.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2024 or the year in which funds are appropriated for the Construction, Major Projects account, \$3,354,048,000 for the projects authorized in subsection (a).

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 H.R. 6324, as amended.

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 my bill, H.R. 6324, as amended. H.R. 6324 will authorize major VA medical construction projects in Washington, Texas, Maryland, Oregon, Nevada, California, Missouri, Connecticut, and Puerto Rico.

Updating VA's aging infrastructure is a constant process. In order to best serve our Nation's veterans and provide them with the modern healthcare that they deserve, it is essential that we fund projects like these.

The projects in this bill include new healthcare centers, a community living center, specialty care buildings, mental health clinics, research facilities, and others. The average VA medical center is decades older than the average private hospital.

I still believe the best way to solve the problem would be to align spending on VA facilities with the veteran population. Unfortunately, that is not being taken care of in the Senate. We have passed it out of here.

We also need to fund the construction projects VA is requesting right now. This legislation would deliver new facilities in communities throughout the country.

I recognize the work of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for helping with this legislation and bringing this bill to the floor on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6324, 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 H.R. 6324, the Fiscal Year 2024 Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Authorization Act, as amended.

I have always supported providing sufficient funding for VA construction projects which make critical investments in improving veterans' access to healthcare and modernizing the facilities where they receive their care.

These investments come at a critical time, when VA employees are being asked to do more with less and provide world-class care in aging and outdated buildings.

The average age of VA-owned buildings is approaching 60 years old, with 1,800 buildings still in active use that are designated as historic or eligible for historic status. Meanwhile, private-sector hospitals are less than 15 years old on average.

Despite its aging infrastructure and these challenges, the Department of Veterans Affairs continues to deliver high-quality healthcare, with VA hospitals once again this year outperforming private hospitals on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' annual hospital quality star ratings.

To ensure VA can continue providing exceptional care for years to come, we must invest appropriately in its infrastructure.

H.R. 6324, as amended, authorizes more than \$3.35 billion for major medical facility construction projects in 11 locations, including: \$759.2 million for construction of a new healthcare center and utility plant in El Paso, Texas; \$274.3 million for replacement of a community living center and expansion of parking facilities in Perry Point, Maryland; \$613 million for seismic retrofitting and renovation of buildings, construction of a new specialty care facility, and parking upgrades in Portland, Oregon; and \$311.7 million for construction of a new spinal cord injury building, utility plant upgrades, seismic retrofitting, and other projects in San Diego, California.

These projects will ensure the veterans in these communities have access to the highest level of care VA can provide. This legislation is a crucial step to continue our goal of making critical investments in the modernization of VA medical facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support H.R. 6324, as amended, I urge my colleagues to do the same, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I am ready to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 6324, the Fiscal Year 2024 Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Authorization Act, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support the legislation, and 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, H.R. 6324, 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.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2024

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7777) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2024, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7777

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 "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) **RATE ADJUSTMENT.**—Effective on December 1, 2024, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2024, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) **AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.**—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) **WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.**—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) **ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.**—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(d) of such title.

(3) **CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.**—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) **DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.**—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) **DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.**—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) **DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.**—Each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2024, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(d) **SPECIAL RULE.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 2(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2025.

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 H.R. 7777.

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 H.R. 7777, offered by my friend and fellow veteran, Representative LUTTRELL.

This bill will ensure that VA compensation benefits for veterans and their surviving loved ones keep pace with inflation and the increased cost of living.

Veterans and their families often depend on VA compensation benefits to pay for daily living expenses and to support their families. This bill would help them meet their financial needs by increasing the amount of certain disability compensation benefits by the same percentage as the cost-of-living increase for Social Security benefits recipients.

Congress must pass the cost-of-living adjustment every year to ensure that our veterans and their loved ones cover their expenses and keep food on the table for their families.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 7777, 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 H.R. 7777, the Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2024.

As we do every year, today, we are considering legislation to increase payments for wartime disability compensation, compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. Specifically, this bill mandates that the VA raise these benefit amounts by the same percentage as the cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, provided to Social Security recipients.

This ensures that veterans and their families maintain their quality of life and are protected from reductions in their earned benefits as economic conditions shift.

The cost-of-living adjustment reflects our Nation's ongoing gratitude for the service and sacrifice of not only those who have bravely worn our Nation's uniform but also to their families, who bear significant burdens as well. As the ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am honored to support this effort.