

not support our country getting into another endless war.

President Trump violated the United States Constitution by sending the United States troops to bomb Iran without congressional authorization.

Taking our country to war requires a vote in Congress. Every single one of us represents close to 800,000 people, and they deserve a vote.

The American people do not want another war. They do not want us spending endless amounts of money to invest in death and destruction. They want us to fund Medicaid, housing, and Head Start. They want access to clean water and so many critical programs that our communities desperately need.

We have seen our government manufacture consent for the invasion of Iraq that killed and displaced millions of people, our loved ones, and created total devastation and instability in the region.

We have seen our government lie about weapons of mass destruction before. We are not going to fall for it again. Instead of listening to the American people who are saying no more wars, Trump is listening to genocidal maniac war criminal Netanyahu who lied about Iraq and now is lying about Iran.

HONORING INGRID IZAGUIRRE

(Ms. HOULAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House and recognize the very hard work and the invaluable contributions of Ingrid Izaguirre to my office.

Ingrid has honorably served as a climate solutions fellow on my legislative team for the past 2 years. During her time with my office, she has stepped up to the plate to manage planning and programming for the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus, turning what was an inactive caucus into one of the most active caucuses on Capitol Hill.

Notably, she has facilitated dozens of cross-aisle conversations and educational opportunities for both Members and staff. She has built bipartisan support for permitting reform and for the Department of Energy programs. She has spearheaded numerous legislative proposals through the National Defense Authorization Act to keep our Nation's energy infrastructure more secure and so much more.

Our HoulaTeam will miss her quick wit, unrelenting work ethic, and friendship.

Mr. Speaker, Ingrid has proven that bipartisanship and cooperation on climate change is possible even during these divided times. She should be very proud. We will miss her and welcome her to the Houla alum network, and I have no doubt that she will be successful in her next role.

MEDICAID SHOULD SERVE THE TRULY NEEDY

(Mr. EDWARDS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of noise coming from the other side claiming that House Republicans are cutting Medicaid with our commonsense work requirements.

Let me be clear: That is just not true.

You can't cut something from someone who was never or is no longer eligible to receive it.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, of the 7.8 million people Democrats say would lose coverage, 4.8 million are able-bodied adults with no kids who could work, but don't. Another 1.4 million are in the country illegally and 2.2 million simply don't qualify under the law already.

Medicaid should serve the truly needy, not those who refuse to help themselves. House Republicans don't cut Medicaid. That is not what we are doing in this bill. We restore its integrity because work requirements are not a punishment. They are a path to dignity and independence.

AMERICANS OF ALL PARTIES DO NOT WANT MORE WAR

(Mr. KHANNA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KHANNA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose war in Iran or any wars of choice in the Middle East.

We need to be investing in good-paying jobs at home, healthcare at home, and childcare at home, not billions of dollars in missiles targeted at the Middle East that we can't afford. That is why Representative MASSIE and I introduced a resolution to prevent more wars of choice.

What did we achieve? The intelligence tells us that we just pushed Iran back 3 to 4 months in building a bomb. Vice President Vance says they still have enough nuclear fuel to have 10 nuclear missiles.

We need tough diplomacy to deny Iran a bomb, not more wars at the expense of the American people. Americans of all parties do not want more war.

HONORING SERGEANT FIRST CLASS JUAN SANTIAGO

(Mr. HARIDOPOLOS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Sergeant First Class Juan Santiago, a decorated veteran and American patriot residing in Melbourne, Florida.

Sergeant Santiago began his career in 1958 in the United States Army at

Fort Buchanan and completed basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. He went on to serve our Nation with distinction around the globe with deployments in Cuba, Italy, Germany, and five tours in Vietnam.

His exceptional service earned him a place in the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame as well as many other numerous honors, including the Honorable Order of St. Michael and two Purple Hearts.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of a grateful Nation, we thank Sergeant Santiago for his bravery.

RECOGNIZING SERVICE ACADEMY APPOINTEES

(Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and recognize five outstanding young leaders from eastern North Carolina who have earned appointments to our Nation's service academies.

Abel Dees and Parker Stokes are headed to the United States Military Academy.

Leo Fletcher-Fontana will attend the United States Air Force Academy.

Nicholas Santiago and Dylan Sawyer are bound for the United States Naval Academy.

These remarkable young leaders have achieved academic excellence. They reflect the best of our communities and are answering the call that goes way beyond themselves. Behind each of them is a community of supporters and families whose love is making it possible for them.

Mr. Speaker, to our appointees: Abel, Parker, Leo, Nicholas, and Dylan, eastern North Carolina believes in them and we are proud of them.

RECOGNIZING ST. MARYS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the St. Marys Area School District for launching a new agriculture education curriculum, an investment in both their students and the future of our Nation's food system.

Agricultural education is not just for those in rural areas. It is foundational to the future of our economy, environment, and our national security. Programs like this one help students understand where their food comes from, how it is produced, and the science and technology driving modern agriculture.

Beginning next school year, St. Marys will offer ag curriculum starting in seventh grade and extending through high school. Already nearly 100 students have signed up, proof that our young people are eager to learn more about the science, innovation, and business behind agriculture.

As chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, I applaud this effort. It is exactly the kind of hands-on, forward-thinking program we need to develop the next generation of farmers, scientists, and entrepreneurs.

Agriculture puts food on our tables, clothes on our backs, and fuel in our vehicles. Programs like this ensure it continues to do so for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the leadership, educators, and students of St. Marys for their vision, and I look forward to seeing the impact of this outstanding program.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2026

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 3944, and that I may include tabular material on the same.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HARIDOPOLOS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 530 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 3944.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LOUDERMILK) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1214

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 3944) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes, with Mr. LOUDERMILK in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. ALFORD) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am honored to present the fiscal year 2026 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill to the House today.

This bill supports our troops, their families, and our Nation's veterans.

The bill includes nearly \$18 billion for military construction efforts. It is critical that our servicemembers and their families have the infrastructure and support they need. This bill delivers to construct and improve military housing, childcare centers, and other quality-of-life components that are so important to those who risk so much.

This bill continues to build on investments that strengthen our national security through the construction of modern infrastructure and improvements to critical quality-of-life facilities for our servicemembers and their families.

Additionally, we continue to provide significant funding to build upon prior years' work to enable the Department of Defense to meet the challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

The bill honors our commitment to our Nation's veterans and to our troops. To honor that commitment, the bill provides full funding for healthcare and benefits for veterans. Our veterans have earned these benefits, and we are making good on our promises to them. That includes fully funding our commitment to the PACT Act.

The bill continues robust investments in women's health, rural health, veterans' homelessness issues, and mental health. The legislation maintains all the funding for medical and prosthetic research. It increases funding for VA infrastructure and supports Arlington National Cemetery. It invests in the improvement, operations, and maintenance of burial grounds for those who have sacrificed.

I thank Ranking Member WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I am glad we are at this step in the process and hope that we continue to work together to support our troops and our veterans.

Everyone—everyone, Mr. Chair—should understand that this bill cares for our veterans. It supports our troops and their families. This bill keeps the promises that we have made to our heroes.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3944, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I, unfortunately, could not possibly disagree with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. ALFORD), my friend, more on the description of this bill, which is why I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 3944, the fiscal year 2026 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies bill.

While I unfortunately cannot support the bill on the floor today, I will say in Chairman CARTER's absence that I am thankful and appreciative of the work that we have been able to accomplish together over the years on this subcommittee. I know he and I both prioritize quality of life for our servicemembers and their families and caring for our veterans.

Unfortunately, this bill hurtles us toward VA privatization, a top Project 2025 priority that undercuts what veterans consistently ask us for in Congress. They want high-quality medical care at the VA; not privatized care that takes longer to receive.

By transferring record funding from VA medical services to community care, which is a 67 percent increase of \$14 billion, this bill pushes veterans into private care, even though veteran polls and studies show that when given the option, veterans prefer to receive their medical care at the VA.

In 2024, veteran trust in VA healthcare rose to a record 92 percent. We should build on this success, not kick veterans to an already crowded private market. I understand that there is a need for community care, especially for veterans in rural areas and specialty care when necessary, and when appointments at the VA are scarce.

However, countless studies show that when veterans seek care at private hospitals and clinics, they wait longer to see providers, and they get worse care. They know VA medical professionals choose this work due to their mission to care for our veterans, and that is something the private sector simply cannot replicate.

We should invest more in VA provider recruitment and retention incentives, increase benefits counselors and adjudicators, not ignore veterans' wishes and speed recklessly into privatization.

On the military construction side, this bill underfunds military construction by \$904 million compared to the President's budget request, and fails to fund some specific needs such as installation resilience and NATO infrastructure commitments. As Russia continues to wage an illegal war in Ukraine and threaten Europe, we should be sending a clear sign that we stand with our NATO allies, allies who have stood by us for decades. We are talking about infrastructure for our troops who are over there, as well as our allies' troops.

We all know that warming global temperatures are having a devastating impact on our military installations, including sea level rise, recurrent flooding, hurricanes, and extreme weather, as well as extreme heat and drought, yet this bill includes zero dedicated funding to mitigate this extreme weather damage to our installations and force readiness.

We have seen time and again what devastating extreme weather can do to installations. In 2018, Hurricane Michael mauled Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida, my home State, and cost the Air Force \$4.9 billion to rebuild. When Typhoon Mawar ran through Guam and devastated the island, this Congress provided almost \$1.8 billion to begin recovering from the damage. Unfortunately, we know that future need from Typhoon Mawar will cost many billions more.