

EDITH NOURSE ROGERS STEM SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2034) to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the requirements of the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2034

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 “Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship Opportunity Act”.

SEC. 2. MODIFICATIONS TO EDITH NOURSE ROGERS STEM SCHOLARSHIP.

Section 3320 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

- (1) in subsection (b)—*
 - (A) by striking paragraph (2);*
 - (B) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and (4) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively; and*
 - (C) in paragraph (3), as so redesignated, in subparagraph (A)(ii)—*
 - (i) by striking “60” and inserting “45”; and*
 - (ii) by striking “90” and inserting “67.5”;*
 - (2) in subsection (c)(1)—*
 - (A) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as subparagraphs (C) and (D), respectively; and*
 - (B) by inserting before subparagraph (C), as so redesignated, the following new subparagraphs:*
 - “(A) Individuals who have used the most number of months of the educational assistance to which they are entitled under this chapter.*
 - “(B) Individuals who are using their entitlement under this chapter to pursue a program of post-secondary education and who have declared a major in a field referred to in subsection (b)(3)(A)(i).”; and*
 - (3) in subsection (d), by adding at the end the following new paragraph:*
 - “(5) An individual who receives a benefit under this section may only use such benefit after the individual has used all of the educational assistance to which the individual is entitled under this chapter.”.*

“(A) Individuals who have used the most number of months of the educational assistance to which they are entitled under this chapter.

“(B) Individuals who are using their entitlement under this chapter to pursue a program of post-secondary education and who have declared a major in a field referred to in subsection (b)(3)(A)(i).”; and

(3) in subsection (d), by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(5) An individual who receives a benefit under this section may only use such benefit after the individual has used all of the educational assistance to which the individual is entitled under this chapter.”.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN LIMITS ON PAYMENTS OF PENSION.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “November 30, 2031” and inserting “March 31, 2033”.

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. 2034, 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 H.R. 2034, as amended, offered by my colleague, Representative NIKKI BUDZINSKI of Illinois.

This bill would make needed improvements to the Edith Nourse Rogers

STEM Scholarship education benefits program.

Currently, the program is underused because of bureaucratic red tape that limits who is eligible for the scholarship. This mistake made by previous Congresses has prevented the STEM scholarship from helping those who are most in need.

While I believe more information is necessary to fully improve the program, this bill is a step in the right direction. I thank our colleague, NIKKI BUDZINSKI, for her support of this legislation. Additionally, I thank my friend and fellow Representative, ABRAHAM HAMADEH of Arizona, for cosponsoring this legislation.

Representative HAMADEH's advocacy on this bill has been pivotal to getting it on the House floor today to cut through the red tape and improve education benefit access.

Finally, I thank The American Legion and Paralyzed Veterans of America for their support of this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 2034, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to express my support for H.R. 2034, the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship Opportunity Act, as amended.

Edith Nourse Rogers was a trailblazer for veteran benefits, and the program we are amending today that bears her name was created to support the next generation of veteran trailblazers. She was instrumental in the creation of the original GI Bill and advocated for a greater role for women in the Armed Forces.

Congress created the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship in 2017 as part of the Forever GI Bill. However, since creation, we have learned of cases where improvements to the program would encourage more veterans to pursue dual degrees, degrees in STEM education, and degrees in healthcare.

Representative BUDZINSKI's legislation would improve the program to better fit student veteran needs by making two fundamental changes to the program to increase access.

First, the legislation allows veterans to apply for the scholarship while they are still finishing their undergraduate degrees. That means students won't have to delay their education for no reason or hit an arbitrary completed credit hour requirement if they are accepted into the program. Veterans can seamlessly progress to their next degree.

Second, the legislation removes the requirement that a student exhaust all credit hours on their GI Bill benefits, which makes enrollment easier for STEM-seeking students.

The scholarship is a wonderful tool, but these requirements, originally well-intended, have made the scholarship onerous to use and limited enrollment far below projections.

H.R. 2034 fixes those issues and clears the way for more trailblazers like Congresswoman Edith Nourse. I thank Representative BUDZINSKI for introducing this important bill, and I urge my colleagues in the House and the Senate, as well, to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. BUDZINSKI), my good friend and the author of the bill, the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Technology Modernization.

Ms. BUDZINSKI. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship Opportunity Act.

With the start of the new school year, the time is now to pass this bipartisan legislation that will help student veterans who are training for high-demand STEM fields.

I thank my colleague on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Congressman HAMADEH, for his collaboration and partnership on this bill. I also thank our veterans for their service and sacrifice.

Madam Speaker, this bill removes barriers for student veterans seeking a STEM education by modifying eligibility requirements for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship.

This scholarship has proven crucial to getting more veterans involved in STEM fields, but feedback from veterans in a 2022 GAO report has shown that current eligibility requirements are barriers for many of our student veterans.

The Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship Opportunity Act would address these barriers by lowering the minimum number of credit hours required. It would also allow student veterans to apply for the scholarship before their post-9/11 GI Bill benefits run out.

This would allow for a smooth transition of funding for their education. They have so greatly served us. It is time for us to serve them.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I have no more speakers at this time. I am ready to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 2034, the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship Opportunity Act, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, once again I encourage all Members to support this legislation. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. MALLIOTAKIS). 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. 2034, 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.

FALLEN SERVICEMEMBERS RELIGIOUS HERITAGE RESTORATION ACT

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2701) to direct the American Battle Monuments Commission to establish a program to identify American-Jewish servicemembers buried in United States military cemeteries overseas under markers that incorrectly represent their religion and heritage, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2701

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 "Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) An estimated 900 American-Jewish servicemembers of the Armed Forces, killed in World War I and World War II and buried overseas in United States military cemeteries were, for various reasons, mistakenly buried under Latin Crosses. In most instances, those mistakes were made inadvertently.

(2) In 2022, more than 2,000,000 people visited the United States World War I and World War II cemeteries in foreign countries.

(3) American-Jewish servicemembers played a vital role in the Allied victories in World War I and World War II.

(4) American-Jewish servicemembers who fought and died for the United States must have their heritage properly recognized and honored.

(5) The United States Government has a solemn responsibility to ensure that every American servicemember killed in action and buried overseas is properly honored.

(6) The work of properly identifying American-Jewish servicemembers buried overseas is vital and integral to the responsibility of the American Battle Monuments Commission to ensure that past mistakes in honoring those servicemembers who died in the line of duty are corrected.

SEC. 3. FALLEN SERVICEMEMBERS RELIGIOUS HERITAGE RESTORATION PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The American Battle Monuments Commission shall establish a program to identify covered members and to contact survivors and descendants of such covered members. Such program shall be known as the "Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Program".

(b) DURATION.—The Commission shall carry out the Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Program during the first five fiscal years that begin after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) CONTRACTS.—

(1) AUTHORITY.—During each fiscal year described in subsection (b), the Commission shall seek to enter into a contract with a nonprofit organization under which such nonprofit organization shall carry out the purpose described in subsection (a).

(2) TERM; AMOUNT.—Each contract under this subsection shall be for one year and in the amount of \$500,000 to the nonprofit organization.

(3) PRIORITY.—In awarding a contract under this subsection, the Commission shall give priority to a nonprofit organization that has demonstrated capability and expertise in carrying out the purpose described in subsection (a).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term "covered member" means a deceased member of the Armed Forces who was Jewish and buried—

(A) in a United States military cemetery located outside the United States; and

(B) under a marker that indicates such member was not Jewish.

(2) The term "nonprofit organization" means an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code.

SEC. 4. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN LIMITS ON PAYMENTS OF PENSION.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "November 30, 2031" and inserting "January 31, 2032".

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. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2701.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2701, as amended, offered by Representative WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

This bill would propel VA to identify and correct the gravestones of fallen American-Jewish servicemembers who were killed in World War I and World War II.

An estimated 900 American-Jewish servicemembers were mistakenly buried under a Latin cross headstone at overseas U.S. veterans cemeteries. This bill would seek to right this wrong by creating the Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Program. It would direct the ABMC, which maintains our cemeteries overseas, to contract with nonprofit organizations to identify these servicemembers and correct this to properly honor them.

Since the Revolutionary War, Jewish Americans have fought to defend our Nation's freedoms. Madam Speaker, it should go without saying that they deserve to be honored properly with the dignity that they have earned.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, H.R. 2701, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2701, the Fallen Servicemembers

Religious Heritage Restoration Act, as amended. I thank my good friend and colleague Representative DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for introducing this bill.

Madam Speaker, oftentimes veterans who were buried overseas during World Wars I and II were put to rest on foreign soil without the full picture of who they were as people. In life, these servicemen and -women showed courage, honor, respect, dignity, and sacrifice. In death, some have been unfortunately misrepresented.

Not because of malice, but more often circumstances of time, space, and uncertainty, roughly 900 American-Jewish servicemembers were buried under a Latin cross that does not accurately reflect their religious heritage.

The Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act seeks to correct this oversight. It formalizes a program with the American Battle Monuments Commission to identify and establish contact with descendants of those fallen servicemembers who were mistakenly buried under the Latin cross and works in partnership with a nonprofit organization to obtain the grave marker that accurately represents their religious heritage and replace the inaccurate headstone.

Acts like this provide a structure to identify our veterans not merely as markers in cemeteries, but as whole humans, with their belief in something greater than even their service—their creator.

I am thankful to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) for championing this effort and for ensuring we are accurately capturing the history and dignity of those who served overseas in some of our most trying conflicts.

Far too often, we think of Arlington National Cemetery or maybe your local veterans cemetery and don't even realize that we have servicemembers buried overseas in plots around the world.

The work of the American Battle Monuments Commission is broad, reaching across 26 permanent American military cemeteries, over 30 memorials, monuments, and markers, in 17 different countries. I encourage all those who have the opportunity to do so to visit one of these cemeteries.

If you find yourself overseas, do an internet search and see if you can stop by an ABMC location. You will be awed and humbled by the emotional sight of seeing the true cost of freedom and sacrifice. I can assure you, you will find a passionate group of caretakers, educators, historians, and advocates who take such care to keep these lands sacred.

It is people like this who continually work to ensure those buried far from home are done so in dignity and with their true heritage represented. Their efforts and the efforts of those who have worked so hard to bring this program and legislation to this point assure that we, as a nation, with our