

Through the apprenticeship programs offered by motor carriers, veterans can use GI Bill education benefits to launch a career in trucking.

Right now, a patchwork of State laws make it difficult for the VA to approve certain trucking apprenticeships.

Some companies opt out of offering apprenticeships due to the bureaucratic hurdles of obtaining approval from more than 20 different State approving agencies.

This legislation would allow interstate commercial carriers to obtain a single VA approval for all of their apprenticeships, simplifying program administration for motor carriers and increasing the number of opportunities that are available to veterans.

Cutting red tape so trucking companies can employ veterans and help our economy is just common sense.

This legislation is bipartisan and also has the support of the Disabled American Veterans and the American Trucking Association.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't resist saying it, but this legislation will help our veterans keep on trucking. I know the chairman gets the gist of that.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 2954, the Veterans' Transition to Trucking Act, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation. Let the veterans and the truckers roll.

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 Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2954, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to approve multi-State apprenticeship programs provided by commercial truck driving schools for purposes of Department of Veterans Affairs educational assistance programs, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1630

FISHER HOUSE AVAILABILITY ACT OF 2026

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3726) to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of

Veterans Affairs to make temporary lodging facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs available for certain TRICARE beneficiaries on a space-available basis, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3726

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 "Fisher House Availability Act of 2026".

SEC. 2. AVAILABILITY OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TEMPORARY LODGING TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.

Section 1708 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking "in connection with" and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting "in accordance with this section.";

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by inserting "described in paragraph (1)" after "family of a veteran"; and

(ii) by inserting "such" after "accompany"; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

"(3) On a space-available basis, a covered beneficiary who must travel a significant distance to receive care or services at a Department or non-Department facility.

"(4) On a space-available basis, a member of the family of a covered beneficiary described in paragraph (3) and others who accompany such a covered beneficiary who is receiving care or services and provide the equivalent of familial support for such beneficiary when the covered beneficiary or the family member is traveling to receive care or services at a Department or non-Department facility.

"(5) On a space-available basis, a veteran and a member of the family of a veteran and others who must travel a significant distance for a member of the veteran's family to receive care or services at a Department or non-Department facility.

"(6) On a space available basis, a covered beneficiary and a member of the family of a covered beneficiary and others who must travel a significant distance for a member of the covered beneficiary's family to receive care or services at a Department or non-Department facility.";

(3) by striking subsection (c) and redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (c) and (d), respectively;

(4) in subsection (d), as so redesignated—

(A) in paragraph (2), by striking "subsection (d)" and inserting "subsection (c)";

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking "under subsection (b)(2)" and inserting "or a covered beneficiary under subsection (b)";

(C) in paragraph (4), by striking "and" after the semicolon;

(D) by redesignating paragraph (5) as paragraph (6); and

(E) by inserting after paragraph (4) the following new paragraph (5):

"(5) establishing criteria for providing access to temporary lodging facilities on a space-available basis under paragraphs (3) through (6) of subsection (b); and"; and

(5) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(e) In this section:

"(1) The term 'covered beneficiary' means a member of the uniformed services performing active duty.

"(2) The term 'Fisher house' means a housing facility that—

"(A) is located at, or in proximity to, a Department medical facility;

"(B) is available for residential use on a temporary basis by patients of that facility and others described in subsection (b); and

"(C) is constructed by, and donated to the Secretary by, the Zachary and Elizabeth M. Fisher Armed Services Foundation or the Fisher House Foundation, Inc.".

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

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "January 31, 2033" and inserting "July 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. 3726, 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. 3726, the Fisher House Availability Act of 2026, offered by Representative Dr. MILLER-MEEKS.

The Fisher House Foundation has done great work for our military and veteran families by providing a place to stay while their loved one received medical care.

Helping to ease the emotional and financial burdens, this bill would further that mission by extending eligibility to servicemembers' families, allowing them to stay in these temporary VA lodging facilities.

Simply put, if these homes have space, our military families should be able to use them.

Dr. MILLER-MEEKS' bill would also improve coordination between VA and DOW, so that we can ensure our military families have the best quality of life.

This bill would also maximize the use of existing resources and help ensure veterans' families have access to safe and affordable lodging when they need it most.

This is a practical solution that makes better use of resources already available to support both those who have served our Nation and their families.

I thank my friend, our Health Subcommittee chairwoman, Dr. Miller-Meeks, for her work on expanding healthcare access.

Mr. Speaker, our servicemembers, veterans, and their families have sacrificed greatly on behalf of this country. I believe we should ensure they have the support and stability they have earned while receiving medical care. This bill answers the call.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3726, as amended.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3726, the Fisher House Availability Act of 2026, as amended.

Created in 1990, Fisher Houses have provided veteran and military families a cost-free, home-away-from-home environment while their loved ones receive medical care at nearby VA, DOD, and community hospitals.

Grounded in the understanding that social support is instrumental to the healing process, families of veterans and Active-Duty servicemembers can access these comfortable and welcoming houses without worry about cost and geographical distance from their loved ones who are receiving care.

Regrettably, since the fall of 2024, VA Fisher Houses have been restricted in their ability to serve the entire veteran and military community.

VA made guidance changes at that time that altered eligibility and only permitted families of veterans receiving care at a VA facility to stay at Fisher Houses.

Military families falling outside of this criteria, specifically, Active-Duty families receiving care at facilities near VA medical centers, have been turned away, even when rooms at Fisher Houses have been available.

The bipartisan Fisher House Availability Act of 2026 would restore the flexibility of VA Fisher Houses to not only accommodate veteran families but Active-Duty families on a space-available basis. As veteran families would still receive prioritization, veteran access to VA Fisher Houses will not change.

This bill will increase VA Fisher House usage by simply allowing for eligible DOD beneficiaries to be considered for a room when one is available, while also strengthening the partnership between the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense.

Mr. Speaker, veteran and military caregivers deserve access to VA Fisher Houses. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3726, the Fisher House Availability Act. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Iowa (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS), the sponsor of this bill.

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chair BOST for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, the Fisher House Availability Act. This life-changing bill would ease the burden on the families of veterans staying in Fisher Houses across the country by making lodging more accessible for veterans, servicemembers, and their families during treatment.

Thousands of American families travel long distances every year to accompany their veteran loved one so that they can receive serious medical treatment at VA facilities.

The Fisher House Foundation provides those families with a helping

hand through free, safe lodging. The Fisher House Foundation and their many volunteers make a painful time bearable.

Fisher Houses help bridge the gap for veterans and their families when care becomes difficult instead of easy. What better mission than to provide a place to stay while their loved one, service-member, or veteran receives the medical care they need.

The value of these homes can be understood by their numbers. Over the past 30 years, Fisher Houses have served 500,000 people, kept \$650 million in people's wallets, and offered 12.5 million nights of lodging.

More than the numbers, however, the value can be understood through the stories, as founder Zachary Fisher put it, hardships we helped ease and friendships we helped form.

U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant Andrew Wolfe and United States Army Specialist Sarah Beckstrom were tragically attacked last year here in D.C. Fisher House provided shelter to the loved ones of Staff Sergeant Wolfe while he received care at a VA-owned home. This is an example of the mission being met.

However, this story is an exception, not the standard. Staff Sergeant Wolfe's family required a waiver in order to stay in the lodging due to burdensome regulations. We must do better, and my bill, the Fisher House Availability Act, would make it so that we can do better.

Under current law, a VA-owned Fisher House cannot let the family of a servicemember stay, even if there is space available, and veterans and military are used to space available. The family of a veteran cannot stay, either, if the veteran happens to need care from a non-VA medical facility.

Mr. Speaker, this interpretation of the law forces the door shut to vacant rooms when space is available that is meant to serve those who serve or who have served.

My bill would fix this issue head-on by not displacing veterans or veterans' families. It would only open the door for more of them. Further, the bill simply ensures that servicemembers have access to available lodging.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Fisher House Foundation and to Chairman BOST for supporting this bill, and I am proud to address this issue on behalf of the veteran and military families I know it will help across the country.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL), cosponsor of this legislation.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3726, the Fisher House Availability Act.

I would first like to thank my colleague, Congresswoman MILLER-MEEKS, for her leadership on this effort. I am very proud to co-lead this bill with her. I thank the chair and ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee for making this happen.

This bill will ensure that servicemembers and their families are eligible to stay at VA lodging, the Fisher Houses, as we are discussing, when space allows, regardless of where care is provided. It doesn't matter if they are receiving care at a VA facility, a military hospital, or a civilian provider.

Fisher Houses are home away from home near VA and military hospitals. No veteran or servicemember who has served their country should have to face medical care or a hospital stay without the support of their loved ones by their side.

Fisher Houses has allowed these families to be where they are needed most, without worrying about whether they can afford a place to stay. This allows veterans and servicemembers to focus on what is important: the healing process.

I was with family at a military hospital, sitting in the intensive care waiting room, with a young mother whose husband was in intensive care in a coma, and she had a 3-year-old and a 5-year-old. She had no money for a motel or a hotel. She didn't know how she was feeding her children, and they were sleeping on couches in the intensive care.

□ 1640

I was not a Member of Congress then, but I called my friend, Alma Powell, and said that this is unacceptable. No family should not have support.

She introduced me to the Fisher family. At that point, there were just a couple of Fisher Houses. There are now more than 100.

We have two Fisher Houses in Michigan—yes—at the John D. Dingell Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Detroit and the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, and I visit them often. I know the work that they do and the comfort that they are able to provide to our military and veteran families during some of the most difficult times.

We must do the right thing for the families of our servicemembers and veterans, and we must always fight to stand up and support our veterans and those who fought to defend our freedoms. This should never be partisan. It is always important to give bipartisan support to our veterans and to our active military.

That is why this matters so much to me, and that is why I strongly support passage of H.R. 3726.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the wonderful history of the Fisher Houses and all of the support that my colleague from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL) has given over the years. What a wonderful story about Alma Powell.

Mr. Speaker, with all of that, I ask my colleagues to join me in passing

H.R. 3726, the Fisher House Availability Act, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation. This is an opportunity to take advantage of the kindness of family and to continue to do that with everybody who needs this.

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 Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3726, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make temporary lodging facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs available for certain individuals on a space available basis, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11 COMMEMORATIVE COIN ACT

Mr. HILL of Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1993) to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States and to support programs at the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1993

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 "25th Anniversary of 9/11 Commemorative Coin Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) On September 11, 2001, the United States suffered the deadliest terrorist attacks on United States soil (referred to in this section as "the attacks").

(2) 2,977 people were killed during the attacks, marking the single worst foreign attack on United States soil since Pearl Harbor in 1941.

(3) In New York City, 2 planes hit the Twin Towers during the attacks, causing both 110-story towers to collapse in less than 2 hours, as well as destroying 5 other buildings in the World Trade Center complex, leaving a death toll of 2,753 people, including all passengers and crew members of American Airlines Flight 11 and all passengers and crew members of United Airlines Flight 175.

(4) During the attacks, American Airlines Flight 77 struck the side of the Pentagon, killing 184 passengers, crew members, and personnel.

(5) In Pennsylvania, during the attacks, United Airlines Flight 93 crashed near Shanksville, killing all 40 passengers and crew members.

(6) The attacks took the lives of 441 first responders in New York, specifically 343 fire-

fighters from the New York City Fire Department, 37 officers from the Port Authority Police Department, 23 officers from the New York City Police Department, and 38 individuals from other agencies.

(7) The collapse of the towers following the attacks created massive dust clouds that left hundreds of densely populated city blocks covered with harmful contaminants, exposing first responders, local workers, residents, and students.

(8) More than 2 decades after these horrific terrorist attacks took place, the ongoing physical and mental health impacts continue to deeply affect tens of thousands of individuals across the country who were in lower Manhattan and the surrounding area following the attacks, as well as those from around the country who participated in the rescue, recovery, and relief efforts, due to their exposure to the dust, smoke, and debris. Thousands of others have died due to illnesses and injuries relating to the attacks.

(9) The National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center is continuously dedicated to remembering, reflecting, and educating for many generations to come so that the story of September 11, 2001, is never forgotten.

(10) The National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center is committed to supporting family members, survivors, rescue and recovery workers, and military personnel who were affected by the attacks by providing services, education, and programming.

SEC. 3. COIN SPECIFICATIONS.

(a) DENOMINATIONS.—The Secretary of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the "Secretary") shall mint and issue the following coins in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States and the establishment of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center:

(1) \$5 GOLD COINS.—Not more than 50,000 \$5 coins, each of which shall—

(A) weigh 8.359 grams;

(B) have a diameter of 0.850 inches; and

(C) contain not less than 90 percent gold.

(2) \$1 SILVER COINS.—Not more than 400,000 \$1 coins, each of which shall—

(A) weigh 26.73 grams;

(B) have a diameter of 1.500 inches; and

(C) contain not less than 90 percent silver.

(b) LEGAL TENDER.—The coins minted under this Act shall be legal tender, as provided in section 5103 of title 31, United States Code.

(c) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all coins minted under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

SEC. 4. DESIGN OF COINS.

(a) DESIGN REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The designs of the coins minted under this Act shall be emblematic of the courage, sacrifice, and strength of those individuals who perished in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the bravery of those who risked their lives to save others that day, and the endurance, resilience, and hope of those who survived. At least 1 such coin shall bear the inscription "Never Forget".

(2) DESIGNS AND INSCRIPTIONS.—On each coin minted under this Act, there shall be—

(A) a designation of the value of the coin;

(B) inscriptions of the words "Liberty", "In God We Trust", "United States of America", and "E Pluribus Unum"; and

(C) an inscription or other design element referencing the 25th Anniversary.

(b) SELECTION.—The designs for the coins minted under this Act shall be—

(1) selected by the Secretary, after consultation with—

(A) the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center; and

(B) the Commission of Fine Arts; and

(2) reviewed by the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee.

SEC. 5. ISSUANCE OF COINS.

(a) QUALITY OF COINS.—The coins minted under this Act may be issued in uncirculated and proof qualities.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the coins minted under this Act should be struck at the United States Mint at West Point, New York, to the greatest extent possible.

(c) PERIOD FOR ISSUANCE.—The Secretary may issue coins minted under this Act only during the 1-year period beginning on January 1, 2028.

SEC. 6. SALE OF COINS.

(a) SALE PRICE.—The coins issued under this Act shall be sold by the Secretary at the price equal to the sum of—

(1) the face value of the coins;

(2) the surcharge provided in section 7(a) with respect to the coins; and

(3) the cost of designing and issuing the coins (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, overhead expenses, marketing, and shipping).

(b) BULK SALES.—The Secretary shall make bulk sales of the coins issued under this Act at a reasonable discount.

(c) PREPAID ORDERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall accept prepaid orders for the coins minted under this Act before the issuance of the coins.

(2) DISCOUNT.—Sale prices with respect to prepaid orders under paragraph (1) shall be at a reasonable discount.

SEC. 7. SURCHARGES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—All sales of coins issued under this Act shall include a surcharge of—

(1) \$35 per coin for the \$5 gold coin; and

(2) \$10 per coin for the \$1 silver coin.

(b) DISTRIBUTION.—Subject to section 5134(f)(1) of title 31, United States Code, all surcharges received by the Secretary from the sale of coins issued under this Act shall be promptly paid by the Secretary to the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center to support the operations and maintenance of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center.

(c) AUDITS.—The National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center shall be subject to the audit requirements of section 5134(f)(2) of title 31, United States Code, with regard to the amounts received under subsection (b).

(d) LIMITATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding subsection (a), no surcharge may be included with respect to the issuance under this Act of any coin during a calendar year if, as of the time of that issuance, the issuance of that coin would result in the number of commemorative coin programs issued during that year to exceed the annual 2 commemorative coin program issuance limitation under section 5112(m)(1) of title 31, United States Code.

(2) GUIDANCE.—The Secretary may issue guidance to carry out this subsection.

SEC. 8. FINANCIAL ASSURANCES.

The Secretary shall take such actions as may be necessary to ensure that—

(1) minting and issuing coins under this Act result in no net cost to the Federal Government; and

(2) no funds, including applicable surcharges, are disbursed to any recipient designated in section 7(b) until the total cost of designing and issuing all of the coins authorized by this Act, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, overhead expenses,