

MALLIOTAKIS is right. There is an exact location, unless the President says that is not where he wants it.

This is the Congress. Article I—when I first came to Washington, Article I, it must have been said 1,000 times in my first few weeks—Article I prerogatives, the Congress, Article I, the first section of the Constitution, the legislative responsibilities herein lie with the Congress of the United States.

Yet, what are we doing, Mr. Speaker? We are passing legislation, which the President does have the right to sign or veto, in which case, if he vetoes, it comes back here for further action by the Houses. He gets one bite at the apple, but we are not content with that. We have to then give him unilateral power over what we have just passed to do whatever he wants. It is insanity.

There is no explanation for why we are not doing the original bill—None. I am still listening, and I still haven't heard it.

I will continue to listen for the explanation. Perhaps in the close by my colleagues and friends, we will hear why, finally, there is something wrong with passing the original bill.

By the way, this isn't going to clear it up because this bill is not going to become law. I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker, in a new Congress, when there is a new majority, we will put the actual location. We will put it in law. We will send it to the President, and we will see whether or not he insists on not only a bill that has a location, but insists more on the power to unilaterally do whatever he wants.

The only way this majority is willing to do anything in this House seems to be to ultimately give the power, complete power, to the President to do what he chooses to do without our input.

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

□ 1410

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

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

Mr. Speaker, do you want to know why I think so many Americans have given up on this institution? Think about what we are doing right now. Think about this debate. I hope people see it.

We were handed something extremely rare in this building nowadays, a finished, bipartisan bill sponsored by more than half the Members with over 100 Members on both sides agreeing to it, and we lit it on fire. We have basically thrown it out and put it in a dumpster.

And for what: to stroke the President's ego, to bully a vulnerable group of people who make up less than 1 percent of the population?

The worst part is that we are doing it at a museum that is intended to honor women and the enormous contributions of women to this country who suc-

ceeded despite a government that failed them at times. They overcame great obstacles. We manufactured ours. They had every excuse to fail and made history anyway. They overcame those obstacles. We have no excuses. Yet, here we are on the verge of failing them, once again.

They deserved better then and they deserve better now.

Mr. Speaker, I implore my colleagues one last time: Stop with the games. Bring the bipartisan version of this bill to the floor, along with the Latino museum build so we can finally get shovels in the ground on The National Mall for these critically important museums and honor the amazing people in this country who have written the chapter of American history that we all stand on the shoulders of and whose legacy we enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge defeat of this bill. Bring back the bipartisan bill. We will enthusiastically build it. We will put shovels in the ground and we will build these national museums as they should be.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 1329, the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum Act, as introduced by my colleague Representative MALLIOTAKIS from New York.

As we know, this year is the Nation's 250th anniversary, and we have an opportunity to place the Women's History Museum of the Smithsonian on The National Mall. The bill designates and takes an important step by designating the exact location of where that museum would be on The Mall and provides guardrails regarding the content of the museum.

Mr. Speaker, I thank, again, my colleague Representative MALLIOTAKIS for her hard work on this issue. I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1300, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 1(c) of rule XIX, further consideration of H.R. 1329 is postponed.

SHARRI BRILEY AND ERIC EDMUNDSON VETERANS BENEFITS EXPANSION ACT OF 2026

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1300, I call up the bill (H.R. 6047) to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the dollar amounts for the payment of certain

disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1300, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, printed in the bill, modified by the amendment printed in part A of House Report 119-653, is adopted, and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 6047

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 "Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act of 2026".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF CERTAIN DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) INCREASE TO RATES OF WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 1114 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(u) In the case of a veteran eligible for a monthly aid and attendance allowance under subsection (r) or subsection (t) of this section, the Secretary shall, in addition to the total amount of compensation for which the veteran is eligible under this section, pay the veteran a supplemental monthly allowance at the rate of \$833.33."

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE; APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (u) of such section (as added by paragraph (1)) shall take effect on December 1, 2026, and shall apply to months beginning on or after such date.

(b) INCREASE TO RATES OF DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.—Section 5312 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d)(1) Whenever there is an increase in benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) as a result of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)), the Secretary shall, except as provided in paragraph (2), effective on the date of such increase in benefit amounts, increase the dollar amounts in effect for the payment of dependency and indemnity compensation by the Secretary under paragraph (1) and paragraph (3) of section 1311(a) of this title, as such amounts were in effect immediately before the date of such increase in benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act, by a percentage equal to the sum of—

"(A) the percentage by which such benefit amounts are increased; and

"(B) one percent.

"(2) After the first increase under paragraph (1) to the dollar amounts in effect for the payment of dependency and indemnity compensation by the Secretary under paragraph (1) and paragraph (3) of section 1311(a) of this title, the Secretary shall carry out paragraph (1)(B) by substituting 'one half of one percent' for 'one percent'.

"(3) Whenever there is an increase under paragraph (1) in amounts in effect for the payment of dependency and indemnity compensation, the Secretary shall publish such amounts, as increased pursuant to such paragraph, in the Federal Register at the same time as the material required by section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social

Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) is published by reason of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

“(4) The requirement to increase, pursuant to paragraph (1), the amounts in effect for the payment of dependency and indemnity compensation under paragraph (1) and paragraph (3) of section 1311 (a) of this title by the Secretary shall—

“(A) take effect on December 1, 2026, and shall apply with respect to months beginning on or after such date; and

“(B) terminate after the date on which the second increase to such amounts pursuant to such paragraph occurs.”

SEC. 3. MODIFICATION OF WAIVERS OF FEES COLLECTED FOR HOUSING LOANS GUARANTEED, INSURED, OR MADE BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Section 3729(b)(2) of such title is amended, in the loan fee table—

(1) by striking “June 9, 2034” each place it appears and inserting “September 30, 2036”;

(2) in subparagraph (E), by striking “0.50” both places it appears and inserting “1.42”; and

(3) in subparagraph (I), by striking “0.50” each place it appears and inserting “1.0”.

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

Section 5503(d)(7) of such title is amended by striking “January 31, 2033” and inserting “September 30, 2036”.

SEC. 5. HOME AFFORDABILITY FOR GUARD AND RESERVE.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This section may be cited as the “Home Affordability for Guard and Reserve Act”.

(b) **ELIGIBILITY OF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE RESERVE COMPONENTS AND THE NATIONAL GUARD FOR GUARANTEED HOUSING LOANS.**—

(1) **EXPANDED DEFINITION OF “ACTIVE DUTY” FOR PURPOSES OF HOUSING LOANS.**—Section 3701(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(9) The term ‘active duty’ has the meanings as follows:

“(A) In the case of members of the regular components of the Armed Forces, the meaning given such term in section 101(21)(A).

“(B) In the case of members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces—

“(i) service on active duty (as defined in section 101(d) of title 10), inactive-duty training (as defined in section 101(d) of title 10), or annual training duty; or

“(ii) service on active duty under a call or order to active duty under section 688, 12301(a), 12301(d), 12301(g), 12301(h), 12302, 12304, 12304a, or 12304b of title 10 or section 713 of title 14, but not including inactive duty training (as defined in section 101(d) of title 10) or annual training duty.

“(C) In the case of a member of the Army National Guard of the United States or Air National Guard of the United States, in addition to service described in subparagraph (B), full-time service—

“(i) in the National Guard of a State for the purpose of organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training the National Guard;

“(ii) in the National Guard when performing full-time National Guard duty (as defined in section 101 of title 32); or

“(iii) in the National Guard when performing active duty (as defined in section 101 of title 32).”

(2) **RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY TO SERVICE PERFORMED.**—The amendments made by this subsection shall apply with respect to any service performed on or after September 11, 2001.

(c) **EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR GUARANTEED HOUSING LOANS TO CERTAIN ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL UPON PAYMENT OF ADDITIONAL LOAN FEE.**—

(1) **EXPANSION TO INDIVIDUALS WITH AT LEAST 14 DAYS OF SERVICE.**—Section 3701(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting

after paragraph (7) the following new paragraph:

“(8) The term ‘veteran’ also includes, for purposes of home loans (subject to the additional loan fee in section 3729(b)(4)(J) of this title), an individual who—

“(A) is not otherwise eligible for the benefits of this chapter;

“(B) has completed a total service of at least 14 days on active duty under paragraph (B) or (C) of paragraph (9); and

“(C) following completion of such service, continued to serve until the completion of entry level and skill training (as defined in section 3301(3) of this title).”

(2) **BASIC ENTITLEMENT.**—Section 3702(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(H) Each individual described in section 3701(b)(8) of this title.”

(3) **ADDITIONAL LOAN FEE FOR SUCH INDIVIDUALS.**—Section 3729(b)(4) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(J) In the case of a housing loan in which the veteran has eligibility under section 3701(b)(8) of this title and does not otherwise have eligibility, the loan fee table in paragraph (2) shall be applied to the veteran or other obligor (as applicable) by adding 1.00 to the percentage in the table.”

(4) **NOTIFICATION TO PERSONNEL.**—The Secretary of Veteran Affairs shall provide information about this benefit to the Secretary of Defense to ensure that each member of a reserve component or a member of the Army National Guard of the United States or Air National Guard of the United States who completes entry level and skill training (as defined in section 3301(3) of title 38, United States Code) after the date of the enactment of this Act is notified of their eligibility for housing loan benefits under chapter 37 of such title, including eligibility (subject to the additional loan fee) under section 3701(b)(8) of such title.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill, as amended, shall be debatable for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) each will control 30 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 and include extraneous material in the RECORD on H.R. 6047, 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. 6047, as amended, the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act, introduced by my friend and fellow veteran, Representative TOM BARRETT.

I will speak to you today about some of the great Americans this bill will impact.

Sharri Briley is the survivor and spouse of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Donovan “Bull” Briley, an Army Special Operations pilot killed in 1993 in Somalia.

Most Americans would be more familiar with the movie adaptation of that harrowing day, the film “Black Hawk Down,” but for Sharri Briley, this was not Hollywood.

This was her husband and the father of her then-5-year-old daughter.

Donovan gave his life in defense of freedom, the type of sacrifice we will commemorate on Memorial Day.

This legislation would provide the first meaningful increase in survivor benefits for families like Brileys since 1993.

Over 500,000 survivors like Sharri receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation from the VA.

DIC is a monthly payment of \$1,700 meant to help supplement lost income after a servicemember’s death.

It has only been adjusted for inflation over the last 30 years, but this bill would add an extra 1.5 percent to the DIC over the next 2 years.

I also will discuss Sergeant Eric Edmundson.

When Eric was 25, his vehicle was destroyed by an IED on the Syrian border. His spleen ruptured. His kneecap shattered. His spine fractured, and he sustained traumatic brain injury. For 30 minutes, Eric’s heart stopped beating.

Eric was transported to Walter Reed Army Medical Center to recover, but his injuries left him unable to walk or speak. For the past 20 years, his parents, Edgar and Bethany, and his wife, Stephanie, have been Eric’s full-time caregivers, supporting Eric as they work together to raise Eric’s two kids.

□ 1420

Despite these injuries, his family has empowered him to live as full a life as possible—hunting, painting, spending time with his children, and going to church.

As the Edmundson family recently wrote in an op-ed for Stars and Stripes: “Two incomes vanished. The expenses multiplied. When a service-connected injury permanently removes earning capacity, the math doesn’t bend for patriotism.”

This bill recognizes that and would provide a \$10,000 increase to the 7,000 severely disabled veterans like Eric, many of whom require 24/7 around-the-clock professional medical care.

Veterans like Eric receive the three highest tiers of disability compensation called R1, R2, and T. Many of these veterans will never work again and cannot perform basic tasks.

Eric’s family dedicate their lives making sure Eric, one of our Nation’s most wounded soldiers, continues living with dignity.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is for families like the Brileys and the Edmundsons.

As the families put it in their recent op-ed, the circumstances are different, but the consequences are the same: “The cost of military service does not end when the ceremony and the headlines fade. It echoes through decades—through college tuition bills, medical

equipment invoices, mortgage payments, retirement plans that must be deferred or abandoned altogether.”

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD the op-ed referred to published in Stars and Stripes.

[From the Stars and Stripes, May 18, 2026]
CONGRESS IS DEBATING THE DETAILS. OUR MILITARY FAMILIES ARE LIVING THE CONSEQUENCES

(By Sharri Briley and Edgar “Ed” Edmundson)

One of us lost her husband, Army Chief Warrant Officer Donovan “Bull” Briley, when he was killed in action in Somalia in 1993. In a single moment, I became a Gold Star widow—raising our children while trying to build a future shaped by grief and the long financial shadow that follows permanent sacrifice. The folded flag did not close a chapter; it began a lifetime of responsibility.

The other nearly lost his son. Eric Edmundson suffered a severe brain injury while serving in Iraq. He cannot walk. He cannot speak. He requires constant, round-the-clock care. He will never return to work—and his parents cashed in their retirement to care for him. Two incomes vanished. The expenses multiplied. When a service-connected injury permanently removes earning capacity, the math does not bend for patriotism.

Our circumstances are different, but the consequence is the same: the cost of military service does not end when the ceremony and the headlines fade. It echoes through decades—through college tuition bills, medical equipment invoices, mortgage payments and retirement plans that must be deferred or abandoned altogether.

That is why the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act of 2025 matters and why Congress must act. The legislation offers a long overdue increase in compensation for the most catastrophically wounded and ill veterans and offers a down payment on desperately needed increases to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for survivors. In plain terms, it would update benefits that have not kept pace with the true cost of severe injury or loss of life.

As reported by Military Times, the proposal would add roughly \$10,000 annually for veterans with the most severe disabilities and modestly increase monthly survivor benefits—an adjustment long overdue as living and care costs continue to rise.

What is being considered in Washington may look like numbers on a page. To families like ours and so many other Americans, it is the difference between a road toward stability and a financial cliff.

The impact of service is not confined to two households. A landmark Rand Corp. study estimates that 14.3 million Americans are caring for wounded, ill or injured service members and veterans. More than 500,000 Americans are navigating life as surviving spouses. The ripple effects of war extend far beyond the battlefield—and far beyond a single generation.

For decades, compensation for the most catastrophically disabled veterans and survivor benefits have not been meaningfully adjusted to reflect modern realities. Catastrophic injury is permanent. Widowhood caused by war is permanent. The obligations do not shrink with time—they compound.

Accessible housing must be maintained. Specialized equipment must be repaired or replaced. Therapy continues. Children grow up. Savings are stretched thin. None of this is abstract. It defines daily life.

We recognize that lawmakers have a responsibility to examine how legislation is

structured and funded. That scrutiny is part of governing. But delay is not neutral. Every year that passes without modernization forces those living with the most severe consequences of service to absorb costs that were never meant to be borne alone.

This is not about comfort. It is about dignity.

It is about ensuring that a veteran who cannot walk or speak can live with security. It is about ensuring that a surviving spouse can raise children without wondering whether gratitude from a nation will translate into financial stability.

We are grateful—for survival, for sacrifice, for the honor of loving those who served. But gratitude does not pay a mortgage. It does not fund adaptive equipment. It does not replace lost earning power.

Service members are not wounded as Republicans or Democrats. They are wounded as Americans. The promise to care for them—and for those who live with the lifelong consequences of their service—should rise above party lines just as clearly.

This legislation now stands before leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives. The question is not whether the need exists—it does. The question is whether Congress will act with the urgency that lifelong sacrifice demands.

Because the financial cliff facing those most profoundly affected by war—like our families—is not rhetorical. And once stability is lost, rebuilding can take years, if it is possible at all.

Our loved ones answered the call without hesitation. It is time for our leaders to do the same—not with speeches, but with action that honors veterans, survivors and the enduring cost of service. It is time for Congress to pass the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act of 2025.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, this bill would also expand VA home loan eligibility to members of the National Guard and Reserve who have at least 14 days of Active-Duty service at a 1 percent higher rate.

Today’s Guard and Reserve deploy along Active-Duty servicemembers. They deserve a broader access to VA homeownership opportunities, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I also will address the offsets in this legislation because there has been a great deal of misinformation surrounding them.

The fact is that House Republicans chose to follow the House rules and the law. We fully paid for this legislation so that we could get this bill done because promises made to veterans should be promises Congress can keep and not show votes or fake outrage to get clicks and votes.

Now, let me be clear about what this bill will not do. This bill will not eliminate or harm the VA Home Loan Program. It would also not impose a loan fee on any disabled veteran, and it would not eliminate zero percent down on a VA home loan.

Instead, this bill contains two bipartisan offsets that would extend current home loan fees and would extend the current cap on certain veterans’ pensions who are in government-funded nursing care. It also increases the home loan funding fee that families would pay when refinancing by a small amount.

During the 116th Congress, then-Chairman TAKANO supported and voted

in favor of a similar funding fee proposal on refinancing VA home loans. I find the arguments against our similar proposal today insincere. It reeks of the type of politics our veterans don’t deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I am a veteran. If I thought that this bill would harm veterans, you can trust I would not bring the bill to the floor. But, as the saying goes, don’t take my word for it, because over 22 veterans service organizations support this legislation as written. Let me repeat: The veterans groups like the VFW, The American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, and many others support the bill. These organizations represent millions of veterans and military families who support this legislation because they know these families cannot afford to wait another decade for Congress to act.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a joint letter from 20 veterans organizations supporting the bill.

FEBRUARY 9, 2026.

Hon. MIKE BOST,
Chairman, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. MARK TAKANO,
Ranking Member, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN & RANKING MEMBER: As the second session of the 119th Congress begins and the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs continues its work providing for the needs of our nation’s ill and injured veterans, their caregivers, and survivors, we write to share our strong support for the amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 6047, the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act. As you proceed with discussions around this bill, we urge you to remember those with whom the bill is intended to help—veterans with the profoundest of injuries and the survivors who have lost their loved ones. Provisions in this important legislation would increase the amount of Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) by \$10,000 annually for the most severely disabled veterans and raise the rate of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) by a total of 1.5 percent over a period of two years for the surviving family members of deceased servicemembers and veterans.

SMC is arguably the most important ancillary benefit for veterans with severe, service-connected disabilities. To be clear, given the extreme nature of the disabilities incurred by most veterans in receipt of SMC, we do not believe that the impact on quality of life can be totally compensated for; however, SMC does at least provide these veterans an opportunity to have the financial resources to accommodate their individual needs.

DIC is intended to protect against survivor impoverishment after the death of a service-connected veteran. These monthly payments were intended to provide surviving spouses with the means to maintain some semblance of economic stability after the loss of their loved one. DIC is also an indemnity payment from the government for the loss of life. Unfortunately, without an immediate increase, many survivors who, in many cases were once caregivers, face a financial cliff with catastrophic results. This legislation represents an initial downpayment on what is truly owed to veterans’ survivors, and we are committed to continuing to work to bring

DIC in parity with other federal survivor benefits.

Congress established the baseline rates for these crucial programs decades ago and updating them is long overdue. The time to act is now. For decades, the veteran community has urged Congress to strengthen these critical support programs and increasing SMC and DIC would be the first step in helping our most severely disabled and their survivors. Passing this important legislation will provide critical relief to these communities and we look forward to your swift action.

Sincerely,

Paralyzed Veterans of America; Elizabeth Dole Foundation; Wounded Warrior Project; Disabled American Veterans; Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors; Military Officers Association of America; Jewish War Veterans of the USA; Vietnam Veterans Association; Quality of Life Foundation; Gold Star Wives of America, Inc; Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS; AMVETS; The Independence Fund; Military Order of the Purple Heart; Blinded Veterans Association; Fleet Reserve Association; Marine Corps League; Gold Star Spouses of America; Armed Forces Retiree Association.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, additionally, I include in the RECORD a joint letter from ROA, MCRA, and EANGUS in support of expanding VA home loan programs to include Guard and Reserve members with 14 days of Active Duty.

JANUARY 13, 2026.

Hon. TOM BARRETT,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE BARRETT: On behalf of the members represented by our respective organizations, thank you for your leadership in offering the Home Affordability for Guard and Reserve Act as an amendment to H.R. 6047, the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act of 2025.

This amendment expands VA home loan eligibility to Reserve and National Guard servicemembers who are currently ineligible under law. Specifically, it broadens the definition of "active duty" to include qualifying service under Title 10, Title 14, and Title 32 orders, as well as training duties, and applies retroactively to service performed on or after September 11, 2001. Further, eligible individuals who have completed at least 14 days of qualifying service and remain in the Reserve or National Guard may access VA home loans, subject to an additional 1 percent funding fee.

Our organizations support this amendment. However, if the broader package does not advance, we urge you to move your amendment forward under regular order as a standalone measure.

At the same time, we reaffirm our longstanding support for provisions that guarantee equal fees for all servicemembers. Introducing different fee structures based on component or category of service risks creating inequities and discrimination within the program.

Accordingly, we urge a thorough review of the proposed additional fee in Section 3 of the amendment, along with the broader fee adjustments in the bill, to evaluate their impact on the VA home loan program's purchasing power, solvency, and the break-even horizon for veterans when refinancing. Without such scrutiny, these changes risk diminishing the program's affordability and pricing out the very servicemembers it was designed to support.

Should the review conclude that these adjustments make housing under the program unaffordable or significantly extend the

break-even horizon in a way that compromises the program's intended flexibility, we strongly recommend reconsideration and appropriate corrective action.

Thank you again, Congressman, for your leadership. We appreciate your attention to these concerns and stand ready to assist in moving this amendment forward.

Respectfully,

JOHN B. HASHEM,
Major General, USA Retired,
Executive Director, Reserve Organization of
America.

PAUL K. HOPPER,
Colonel, USMC Retired,
National President, U.S. Marine Corps
Reserve Association.

JOHN D. GIPE,
Command Sergeant Major, USA Retired,
Executive Director, Enlisted Association of the
National Guard.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, veterans deserve more than speeches. They deserve results.

If you support these benefit increases, then you need a serious plan to pay for them, because simply saying that someone else will figure it out later, that is not real leadership.

Mr. Speaker, this bill comes down to a simple question: When America sends our soldiers off to war, the result sometimes is life-changing injuries, grieving spouses, and full-time caregivers. Will this country stand behind them later in the years?

Again, I ask my Democrat colleagues: If veteran groups support the bill, then why in the world don't you?

Mr. Edgar Edmundson testified before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and he asked Congress to stop the politics and get this done.

Mr. Speaker, families like the Edmundsons and the Brileys deal with the reality most Americans never see. The Brileys answered the call to serve. The Edmundsons answered the call to serve. Now, Congress must answer their call.

This legislation, these families, and the thousands of families like them, we have your back. It is a distinct honor to advance this bill just before Memorial Day.

I urge all Members to support H.R. 6047.

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 with a very heavy heart and in opposition to this bill.

Representative BARRETT and House Republicans have engineered here an impossible choice. What they have said to the American people is that only by raising costs on one set of veterans can we afford to help another.

At a time when we are spending trillions on defense, trillions on tax cuts for the wealthy, and countless other frivolities, like ballrooms and a slush fund for the President's friends, to suggest that we can only help veterans by hurting them is patently ridiculous. That is why I oppose this bill.

I want to clearly state that we owe our servicemembers, veterans, their

families, and their survivors a debt of gratitude, as they have given everything to this Nation. The promise we made to them is something we strive to live up to every day. However, I believe this bill misses that mark.

We know that these groups desperately need more resources as our veteran population ages and requires more acute care. As I have mentioned before and as I am sure the majority will repeat, the catastrophically injured and survivor community has not seen an appreciable increase in their monthly rate since 2009.

□ 1430

I agree it is well past due that we correct that wrong. I certainly believe they are worth it. In fact, I wish we were increasing these benefits even more.

Unfortunately, this majority seeks to correct that wrong by inflicting harm on another community of veterans who are deserving of support and who are struggling veteran homeowners.

Just in case anyone needs a reminder, let's look at the last year and a half. Last spring, Secretary Doug Collins canceled the VA Servicing Purchase program, otherwise known as VASP, which assists veterans facing mortgage challenges prior to setting up their backstop program.

Chairman BOST and Representative VAN ORDEN cheered on this development as thousands of veterans suddenly faced tenuous financial circumstances and no resources to turn to as they faced foreclosure.

Let me say, in the past 12 months since the closure of the VASP program, 10,000 veterans have lost their homes due to foreclosure. We could call this the Secretary Collins, Representative VAN ORDEN, and Chairman BOST foreclosure program.

All the while, during this time of the past year, President Trump's affordability crisis has sent prices through the roof, making the dream of buying a house entirely out of reach for many Americans.

To recap, at a time when it is already hard to buy a home, Republicans want to make it even harder. They have made it easier for veterans to lose their homes when funds are tight. Now, they want to make it harder for veterans to even buy a home in the first place.

Not only do they want to make it unaffordable to buy a home, but they want to squeeze our veterans when they attempt to refinance. For many, it is a last-ditch effort to save their home. Remember, they already came after VASP. They canceled the program. They cheerleaded for the Secretary to cancel the program.

What we are seeing today is an attempt to take away affordable housing for veterans. These veterans I am talking about have used a home loan while in service to live with their families at a duty station and used it again when they moved on to the next tour.

Understand, the VA home loan is not just about veterans. It is also about

Active-Duty servicemembers. They are also eligible to use a veteran home loan to buy a home and, also, refinance a home.

I am talking about the transitioning servicemembers who want to buy a place back home, folks who have done their part in this country and want to transition to civilian life. Active-Duty servicemembers moving to a duty station, transitioning servicemembers who want to buy a home back where they want to settle. Even more critical, these are veterans attempting to keep their homes amidst rapidly rising foreclosures.

Now, we are asking veterans to shoulder the cost of survivors and catastrophically injured veterans—again, taking from one set of veterans in order to help another group of very deserving veterans.

Again, I will emphasize the impossible position we are putting our veteran community in. We are pitting one set of veterans against another, instituting a civil war in which we rack and stack which community is more deserving than the other. Frankly, it is shameful.

Before my Republican colleagues who have served stand up here and tell me that they would be happy to pay that benefit for their fellow veterans, I would ask them one thing: Why are we asking them to? Why are we asking our veterans to shoulder this cost? Why must we put the onus on veterans and servicemembers? Haven't they paid enough?

Yes, I agree that we need to be responsible with how we spend tax dollars, but I am curious: Why is it only when we are looking at benefits for the veteran and survivor community that we take this mindset?

We certainly didn't have this debate when we were offsetting a \$30 billion war of choice in Iran, which will only make more veterans, Trump's \$1 billion new ballroom, or a \$75 billion slush fund for ICE, which now the Senate is having trouble getting over to the House.

If my counterparts in the Republican Party truly gave a damn about veterans, they would not pit them against one another just to give them a meager downpayment on veteran benefits. No. If they did, they would enact meaningful change.

We could be, instead, bringing to the floor the Love Lives On Act. We would pass the Caring for Survivors Act, and we would ask the American people to pay for them. I have no doubt the American people would say: Yes, we should pay for these things. We shouldn't put this on veterans.

I could go on and on all day. We could expand access to toxic-exposed veterans, provide fertility care for our women veterans, and address traumatic brain and blast injury. Getting things done on behalf of our veterans requires bold action.

That is why, today, I have filed a discharge petition on the Major Richard

Star Act. It is live and ready for signature, and I invite my colleagues on the other side, as soon as we are done with this debate, to go down and sign that petition. I believe it will reach 218 very quickly.

Chairman BOST, Congressman BARRETT, and Congressman VAN ORDEN, I invite you right after this debate to go down and sign the discharge petition to bring the Major Richard Star Act to the floor.

I ask all of my colleagues to join me when they come to vote, in maybe 45 minutes or so, to sign the petition. We can get something meaningful done on behalf of veterans right now.

Let's end the wounded warrior tax. If we are not committed to caring for veterans and ensuring that they and their survivors get benefits that they were told they would be entitled to when they signed on the dotted line, then we need to stop making more veterans, full stop.

We can choose to do the right thing. We can choose to do the honorable thing. We can choose to do the moral thing and give survivors a meaningful benefit.

Right now, my colleagues across the aisle are choosing a Band-Aid for a wound that needs stitches. We cannot allow ourselves to accept veterans paying for their own benefits, and we should not tolerate forcing this community to fight each other in a pecking order of who matters most.

I hope to appeal to my colleagues' morality when I say that increasing compensation to survivors and catastrophically injured veterans is the right thing to do. We should do it, but we cannot do it at the expense of other veterans.

This legislation has pushed us to the point of having to make a hard decision out of what should have been an easy one. Waive paygo and pass meaningful legislation.

Today, we sit here debating a change on the margins that opens a Pandora's box to charge veterans for their own benefits. That is why I simply cannot support this legislation as written, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

I will say that was a wonderful post of all the veterans service organizations that support this legislation. Yes, they support raising the compensation for the catastrophically disabled. If you read their letter very carefully, they are silent on the pay-for. They are silent on the subject of should you ask our servicemembers who are serving right now in the waters around Iran whether they should be charged \$1,000 or more in fees to refinance their homes. There is not a single one of those veterans service organizations that says that they agree with that pay-for.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to oppose this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair.

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

Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate my colleagues for suddenly wanting to be fiscally responsible, I do not appreciate my colleagues implying that the home loan funding fee as an offset is unnecessary or inappropriate. Finding a way to pay for expenditures and benefits is not an option. It is a requirement.

May I remind my colleagues and Ranking Member TAKANO that he has supported dozens of bills that contain the home loan funding fee. My colleague has also submitted a manager's amendment on the floor to increase fees for refinancing loans in the 116th Congress. While the offer used by the ranking member only increased fees, refinancing loans by 0.5 percent and 0.85 percent, and was only a temporary increase, the concept still remains the same.

□ 1440

This legislative body has long understood that fiscal responsibility is not separated from caring for our veterans and their survivors. It is part of that responsibility.

The House has repeatedly relied on adjustments to the VA home loan funding fee to pay for veterans' benefits expansions. Members on both sides of the aisle have voted for that approach many times. As chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I don't just pay lip service to the veterans and survivors who we serve. I get things done for them.

Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate it if my colleagues across the aisle would stop caring about political wins and focus on getting a win for the most deserving population of veterans and surviving spouses, so let's get the bill paid for and across the finish line.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BARRETT), the sponsor of the bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6047, the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act, legislation that I am leading with Chairman BOST to support the servicemembers and families who sacrificed the most for our Nation.

When men and women sign up to serve in our Armed Forces, they willingly put their own lives on the line to defend the American people and the freedoms we too often take for granted.

Some of those heroes make the ultimate sacrifice. Others who are lucky enough to come home do so with life-changing injuries. While we can never fully repay the debts that we owe to these men and women, that will never stop us from doing everything that we can.

My bill will deliver a long overdue, historic increase in benefits to care for veterans who were severely injured in the line of duty, and it will support the Gold Star families who lost a spouse, a

parent, a child, or a loved one in service to our country.

H.R. 6047 is named in honor of two patriotic Americans. Sharri Briley persevered after her husband, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Donovan Lee “Bull” Briley, was tragically killed in action when his Black Hawk went down in Mogadishu. In the face of hardship, she continued raising their daughter and providing for their family after his great sacrifice.

Sergeant Eric Edmundson suffered a severe brain injury when his vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb in Iraq. His injuries have left him unable to speak, walk, or work, and his family provides full-time, around-the-clock care.

I have had the privilege to meet and share time with Sharri, Eric and his family, and families throughout this process. Eric Edmundson and his family were here in Washington, D.C., just yesterday meeting with Members of Congress. Sharri Briley is here this week and joins us in the Capitol today.

I can honestly say that we wouldn’t be at this point without their strength, dedication, and hope.

One thing that Sharri Briley told me as we were talking about this is that when she suffered this great tragedy, it was widows from the Vietnam and Korean war generation who stood up to help lead her through this process, and she is standing today to lead that effort on behalf of the generations of Americans who will follow behind her in hoping to lead and increase this benefit.

This bill, named in honor of these families to increase support for survivors like Sharri and Eric, the catastrophically disabled, and Gold Star families, is critically important. Some will be eligible for an additional \$10,000 a year to cover their expenses through a special monthly compensation for the catastrophically injured. For the first time since 1993, more than half a million surviving spouses, parents, and children will receive an additional disability indemnity compensation to help cover their needs as they continue without their loved ones.

In addition to that, we are expanding the VA home loan to National Guard and Reserve component, men and women who signed on the dotted line to serve our country, so that they can have an opportunity at the American Dream and build their own home.

My wife and I were fortunate to qualify for a VA home loan to buy our family home together years ago, and that is a benefit we want to extend to more families.

I thank Chairman BOST again for his work on this bill. It is reminding me of an experience I had in basic training. We would line up beside our bunks before going to bed at night and recite the “Soldier’s Creed,” and there is a line in the “Soldier’s Creed” that said that the brave soldiers of the past would be proud of me.

I know I am proud of the sacrifice that Sharri Briley, Eric Edmundson,

and their families have made on behalf of this country, and I think we stand here, on the eve of Memorial Day, proud of the efforts we are taking to build upon the benefits that they so desperately need, and I encourage my colleagues to vote “yes” on H.R. 6047.

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

Mr. Speaker, the chairman has referred to moments when I was chair of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee when we did look at pay-fors related to increasing the interest rate reduction refinance program.

We did pass a bill out of the House in 2020 that would have increased the interest rate reduction refinance loan fees by one-fourth of a percent, but it did not become law. When you strip away all of the context around that bill, you can try to set up a gotcha—you did what we are trying to do—but the reality is that we are in a much different situation now.

First, the proposed increase in 2020 returned to current levels just after a few years. Representative BARRETT’s and Chairman BOST’s proposed increase replaces the current level with their new fee level. It is not a temporary change. It is a permanent increase.

Today’s proposed increase is almost three times what was contemplated back in 2020. That translates into \$2,500 to \$3,000 more in fees that veterans would have to pay under Representative BARRETT’s plan. That cost doubles when the veteran has to pay interest on that fee increase.

Also back in 2020, home loan mortgage and refinance rates were at record lows. Fees had much less of an impact on veterans’ abilities to lower their housing costs. Today, interest rates are so much higher. Many more veterans are facing foreclosure. As I said, 10,000 veterans in the past 12 months, and thousands and thousands of veterans are in jeopardy of losing their homes in the coming months.

The Trump administration has gotten rid of VASP, as I said, with the cheerleading done by the chairman and Representative VAN ORDEN. VASP was the last-ditch program to keep veterans and their families in their homes. It has been a year, and the replacement, the partial claims program, which I supported in instituting, has still not been rolled out yet, and it won’t be rolled out for several months. Meanwhile, we will see more veterans foreclosed upon.

Refinancing, therefore, is currently the last line of defense in keeping veterans with distressed loans in their homes. Representative BARRETT is proposing that we raise costs at this very moment, in this financial environment and when this Congress has passed a reconciliation bill costing billions and billions of dollars that were not offset. Mind you, the \$70 billion that the Senate was hoping to send over here, the Republican Senate, that this House presumably would have also approved of, the Republican majority, that \$70 billion will not offset.

We are also looking at potentially a \$1.5 trillion defense budget increase, and there is talk about \$1 billion on the President’s ballroom.

How do we justify taxing veterans to access their own benefits? How do you justify that?

Let me just say that I offered an amendment. I offered an amendment to pay for this bill not with the money that would have gone to other veterans. I had an amendment that would have delayed for 3 years the implementation of a big, bad, ugly bill tax break we were giving to very wealthy people—people with \$15 million to pass on to their heirs. We wanted to delay the tax break that rich people get when they want to pass on their wealth to their heirs. We would delay that for 3 years. That would pay for the cost of this bill.

That amendment was rejected. I think that very wealthy people benefit from the bravery and the courage of our military servicemembers. It is not too much to ask the wealthiest people of our country to bear the cost of paying for the catastrophically disabled veterans.

I think the American people would countenance that much better than: Let’s take away the ability for our servicemembers who are currently serving in the waters surrounding Iran, or our veterans—we shouldn’t be asking them to have to pay more in home loan fees for benefits that they thought they were getting when they signed up.

□ 1450

It is the choices that we are making that bother me here. I don’t think we should be doing something that is very, very worthy by charging one set of veterans to pay for another set.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), my good friend and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies on the Appropriations Committee.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the ranking member of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee in opposition to the offset in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I was stunned to see this pay-for included in this bill and so disappointed that no one included appropriators in this discussion, but I was not surprised.

The benefits expansion that this bill would make are worthy changes that we absolutely should pass as a supplemental monthly allowance of \$833.33 for severely disabled veterans requiring aid and attendants. That is an issue we haven’t addressed since 1993.

I wish that we could have worked on this issue last week when our appropriations bill was on the House floor, or the month before when the bill was before the Appropriations Committee. Instead, House Members are going to

take a vote that will rob Peter to pay Paul. When we are talking about our veterans, that is just plain wrong.

This bill triples VA home loan fees, which amounts to hundreds or thousands of dollars on each home loan, which will make homeownership even harder for veterans. When a veteran refinances their home loan, they will get hit with this tripled fee, which will be cost prohibitive for many veterans.

Republicans are increasing, tripling fees for one group of veterans to pay for benefits for another. Do you know what I find the most despicable, though? It is that the veterans and their families were told that this pay-for was required or the bill would not become law. That is a flatout lie, and I speak as an appropriator and someone who understands the paygo rules.

At some point, if you recall, my friends on the other side of the aisle, we thought it was going to be tonight, but we will likely push that to next week or when we come back, you are going to push through a partisan spending bill that would include billions of dollars in spending that is completely unpaid for because the paygo rule would be waived, just like every point of order.

That is what you could do in this bill, but instead you are saddling one group of veterans with tripled fees to get a home loan to pay for benefits for the other, and that is why I must rise in opposition today.

This benefits expansion should be passed. It should. I firmly believe that we must honor our commitment to our veterans at every step, but let me be very clear: The precedent that we are being asked to set is a dangerous one. We will not take from one group of veterans to give to another, no matter how small we claim the pay-for would be.

Chairman BOST and Ranking Member TAKANO, I would ask that we all get together and meet—Chairman CARTER, myself, and the two of you—to talk about how we can accomplish this in a bipartisan way. We should not waste any of the House's time because the House and Senate are going to need to conference on MILCON-VA bills, and I want to make sure that this issue is addressed in that bill.

Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, when this bill drops the painful triple fee increase, you will have my vote.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, when this bill drops the painful, triple fee increase on VA home loans, you will have my vote. In the meantime, I must strongly urge my colleagues to vote "no" on this bill.

This is completely unnecessary. The pay-for is not required. They could waive it just like they do on nearly

every other bill. I would ask my friends on the majority side to seriously reflect on what this precedent would mean for our veterans in the future.

We should not be tripling the cost of a VA home loan to pay for benefits that are sorely needed and deserved, but it is completely unnecessary to hit one group of veterans. Coming from a party that says they are against fee and tax increases, this is pretty shocking. It is unacceptable, and it doesn't have to be this way, and you know it. I urge a "no" vote.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEWHOUSE). Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair.

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

Mr. Speaker, I find it deeply disingenuous for some of my colleagues to suggest Republicans are willing to pay for war but unwilling to pay for veterans.

As chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am closely aware of the true cost of war. We see it in disability compensation, in survivor benefits, in prosthetics, in mental health care, and in long-term care of catastrophically disabled veterans. Those costs exist because brave men and women answered the Nation's call and came home carrying the physical and invisible wounds of war. The VA budget continues to grow because America continues to honor the promises made for those who serve.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. VAN ORDEN), my good friend, who knows and understands what it is like to stand in the gap for the rights of this Nation.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Mr. Speaker, I am currently working with the appropriators to try to allocate some money for acting lessons for my colleagues so that some of their arguments could be more believable because they simply are not.

Let me explain what the VASP program did. There were unelected bureaucrats under the Biden administration who decided to start buying loans from lending institutions. That is not a VA home loan. It is a VA home loan guarantee. They did this without authorization. They did it contravening the will of Congress to the tune of \$6 billion, projected to be \$16 to \$20 billion.

Here is how incompetent the Veterans Administration was under the previous administration. The VA bought the loans from a lending institution and lowered the interest rate to 2½ percent. The rest of the American public paid for that because the lending institution was made whole. Then the VA had to contract back with the institutions they just bought the loan from to service the loan because they didn't know how to do it.

That is why that program went away. It would have tanked the entire VA home loan guarantee. We want every Active-Duty servicemember, veteran, and future veterans to have access to

that program, and the VASP program would have destroyed it.

I corrected the problem with the partial claim bill. What it did was simply aligned the home loan guarantee program with other Federal home loan guarantees. That was it. It was an elegant solution, and it is done. It will be implemented next month on the 15th.

Yes, there were veterans who lost their homes during this period of time, and that is very, very unfortunate. It truly is. My heart goes out to them, but we must make sure that we understand this program has to go on in perpetuity, and that is what we have done.

Let's talk about what we are actually here for today. There are profoundly handicapped veterans who need 24-hour care. Their caregivers need help, and they need to be able to live in dignity. That is what this bill is doing, and I strongly support Mr. BARRETT for doing this. This should have been done years and years ago, but it simply was not.

The offset for this, on average, will cost \$8 a month for a second home loan or a refinance. That is less than a cup of coffee at Starbucks. I am absolutely willing to pay that for my fellow veterans, 100 percent, \$8 a month increase to refinance or use your veteran home loan guarantee benefit a second time.

There is not a single member of the United States military that is off the coast of Iran that wouldn't willingly pay \$8 a month to make sure that our catastrophically handicapped veterans get what they need to live in dignity because that could be them tomorrow.

I find these arguments by my dear colleagues on the other side completely disingenuous. They are bamboozling the American public to think that we do not support our veterans. That is simply wrong. This should be an apolitical—not bipartisan—argument. It should be apolitical. Every single American should support this because fewer than 1 percent of American citizens serve in the military now, and my fellow veterans deserve what we can provide to them so that they can live in dignity.

□ 1500

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

I do think the gentleman doth protest too much. The gentleman cheerleaded and encouraged Secretary Collins to end the VASP program over a year ago, forthwith. He is now on the floor arguing to take away the last remaining tool that veterans who have distressed properties have to hang on to those properties, which is the ability to refinance their homes under the VA home loan program. He is advocating for the passage of a bill which will admirably address the catastrophically disabled, but cause veterans who are in distressed homes higher costs in refinancing.

Let me explain further. Veterans are experiencing record foreclosures. Unfortunately, it is not hard to explain

exactly why. It is because of the Trump administration's assault on the VA loan assistance options.

Just months into the Trump administration's second term, President Trump and Secretary Collins, at the urging of Chairman BOST and Chairman VAN ORDEN, ended the Veterans Affairs Servicing Purchase program, otherwise known as VASP.

The VASP program was a lifeline offered to veterans by President Biden that served as a last resort option for veterans before foreclosure. The program worked. For inane, extreme ideological reasons, Chairman BOST and Chairman VAN ORDEN urged Secretary Collins to end the VASP program.

It is no surprise that foreclosures for veterans have doubled since that action. Ten thousand veterans have lost their homes in the last year, and tens of thousands more are set to be foreclosed upon in this Trump economy.

The majority might claim that their partial claims law, which was finally enacted last fall, is the answer. The gentleman from Wisconsin says that it is going to be implemented next month. We will see. I hope he is right, but I believe that the law is still months away from being implemented. Based on the rollout, it is unlikely to save many of the veterans at risk due to limitations in the program and the delays in rollout.

At the very least, they could have urged Secretary Collins to continue the VASP program until the partial claims program was ready. But no, oops, it is unfortunate, says my colleague from the State of Wisconsin, that 10,000 veterans had to lose their homes.

Now, what brings us to this moment? With VASP gone and partial claims not ready for prime time, the only last true option for veterans is to refinance their loans so they can get current on their outstanding payments.

This very legislation we are considering right now puts that relief further away. Refinancing will become more expensive, which makes it no longer a viable option for many veterans. Veterans have less options than they did a year ago, and this bill will reduce those options even more.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. HAYES).

Mrs. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to oppose H.R. 6047.

For years, I have worked with Gold Star families to address the overdue need to increase benefits for surviving spouses of servicemembers and veterans who have given their lives in service to the United States of America.

This bill does not go far enough. The rate for dependency and indemnity compensation, or DIC, has been minimally adjusted since the Department of Veterans Affairs established the benefit in 1993.

The current DIC rate is lower and has more stringent rules than other Federal survivor programs. H.R. 6047 falls short of modernizing this program.

My bipartisan Caring for Survivors Act increases benefits and broadens eligibility in a comprehensive way to ensure families receive the financial compensation and support they deserve.

First, my bill would raise DIC benefits by more than \$450 per month per recipient, compared to the nominal \$16 being proposed in H.R. 6047. My Caring for Survivors Act would increase DIC benefit payments by 25 percent. The bill we are debating today would only have a 1-percent increase in the first year and cap out at 5 percent overall. Second, my bill also reduces the timeframe a veteran must be disabled to qualify for DIC benefits from 10 years to 5 years.

Together, these provisions would help surviving spouses who depend on DIC benefits to cover their basic expenses and make ends meet.

Supporting our veterans and military families is an intentional choice that we have the ability to make. Updating DIC benefits for the first time in decades would be an incredible show of support for surviving family members of our veterans who died in the line of service.

Generally, I wouldn't oppose legislation that I care so deeply about and have attempted to address for so many years, but as we have heard, this bill pays for that minimal 5-percent increase by taking money from veteran housing loans. That is a problem that also needs to be addressed.

I agree that veterans should be a priority. Why are we providing only a 5-percent increase instead of the 25 percent they deserve?

While I oppose H.R. 6047, I look forward to working with my colleagues to modernize DIC benefits, advance the Caring for Survivors Act to the floor, and have eventual passage so that veterans and their surviving families can get the benefits that they have earned.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL), the chairman of the Financial Services Committee.

Mr. HILL of Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act.

Central Arkansas is home to many of our brave veterans and Active-Duty servicemembers stationed at Little Rock Air Force Base and the Arkansas National Guard headquarters at Camp Robinson.

It is also home to Sharri Briley, the devoted surviving spouse of Donovan Lee "Bull" Briley, an Army Special Operations Black Hawk helicopter pilot tragically lost in Operation Gothic Serpent, known to all Americans as "Black Hawk Down."

Sharri is our Gold Star family voice for the people of Arkansas.

Central Arkansas and our Nation have benefited significantly from Sharri Briley's work, which helps families of deceased servicemembers. This bill is partially named after her because of that leadership.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this bill, which increases benefits for catastrophically injured veterans, their families, their survivors; raises survivor benefits by an extra 1.5 percent over 2 years; and expands VA home loan program eligibility requirements, importantly, Mr. Speaker, for the Guard and Reserves from 90 days of Active-Duty service to 14 days of Active-Duty service.

This bill is fiscally sensible and supported by over 20 veterans groups across this land, including the VFW and The American Legion.

This bill honors our Nation's promise to care for our veterans, their survivors, and their families. I urge support on both sides of the aisle.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have been searching my memory to recall such righteous indignation about costs when we prosecute wars.

The rhetoric about the true cost of war is very different. In fact, it is nonexistent. No one is prepared to handcuff our military at a time when they need equipment. Yet, the individual consequences of war can last a lifetime, and we must take them into account.

After 250 years, we have more than enough historical data to understand that the cost of these wars does not end at the last appropriation marked for battle.

We already promised to care for veterans. In this case, that means their families, as well. Congress should not turn away or hide from that fact. If we are to support the cost of starting and sustaining war, we must acknowledge the financial cost of supporting those veterans it creates when they come home.

We need to stop treating our work in Congress as something out of the "Hunger Games," that someone must suffer so that someone else can get what they need, that we need to force schoolchildren, small business owners, and veterans to compete for help from their government. We on our side of the aisle are not going to play that game with the benefits our veterans have earned.

□ 1510

We should provide funding to give veterans who have gone to war for this country healthcare and benefits. In fact, if you want to continue to increase funding for defense spending and military aid, I would say that you should be required to consider the long-term cost of taking care of the servicemembers whom we are sending into harm's way.

I personally would never ask for offsets for funding for the equipment our troops need because it is the right thing to do, just like taking care of veterans is also the right thing to do. I hope that our country and this Congress will not perpetuate a double

standard when we discuss funding and support for our servicemembers and for our veterans and their families. America deserves better.

Again, I will conclude by saying we should be taking care of the catastrophically disabled veterans of our country. It has been too long. They have gone without for too long, but we should not be asking other veterans to do that work. We, the American people, should be the ones who foot that bill, not our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate earlier in the debate the interest rate reduction and refinancing loans. That was all brought up, and I appreciate my colleague's comments on the interest rate reduction and refinancing loans.

I would also like to make it known that the ranking member is correct that he has not had legislation to increase the rates to the level that this bill is intending to do.

However, during the 116th Congress, the ranking member proposed an amendment to the bill on the floor that would have increased the same refinancing piece we are discussing today. Now, although the rate may not be the same, the concept is the same. I note that the small increase reference piece is the only change that we make after the mark-up version of this bill, which has been done, and that is to cover the cost incurred by expanding the VA home loan program to the National Guard and Reserve, which they wanted, by the way.

The ranking member is making this partisan when it does not need to be.

Instead of focusing on the delivery and an increase to the veterans and surviving spouses, those people who the VA really is focused on taking care of, regardless of who authored the bill, the ranking member has chosen to turn it into a political exercise, and I wonder why.

Earlier in a discussion on the committee's future, the Ranking Member TAKANO himself stated: We want our gavel back. That is what it is about. The statement speaks for itself.

This bill is not about committee gavels. This is not about partisan advantage. It is about thousands of American families who have waited long enough for the VA benefits to increase.

My fellow GOP colleagues and I are fighting for them, not the gavel. There are 22 veterans service organizations that agree with this.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard from my colleagues on this side of the aisle. Two of them were veterans. I am a veteran.

Why do we agree with it?

It is because we understand.

We also understand the rules of the House. With no disrespect for the ranking member and the other people who spoke, they never raised their hands. We did. We are asking to help those

who need the help, and this is the way to do it today.

In the future, if we want to increase it and we want to work towards a larger amount, which I believe they deserve, both of the groups that are mentioned in this, the families who survived and those who have received the most heinous and most difficult wounds that they have to suffer through the rest of their lives, then we will do that, but this is the bill before us today.

I am going to say this, and I will say it to the Members on the other side of the aisle: If you want to go home on Memorial Day weekend and go out there and stand in the parade and tell everybody how great you are for our veterans and vote "no" on this, you had better think about it. You had better think about it.

I am going to tell the other side; the veterans and their voices here have spoken. They want this bill.

Mr. Speaker, if they choose to vote "no," then they can answer to those veterans.

I am going to stand for them. I am going to stand for them because I am a grandson of a veteran; a son of a veteran; a nephew of a veteran, who had to have a lot of these services that we deal with in the VA; a son who still serves; a grandson who is going to have to receive some of these benefits; and another grandson who is serving at this time. I don't know what his career is going to be in the field, but it is possible that he could have to have this support too.

Is it personal to me?

You bet it is, Mr. Speaker. This is an important bill. It is important to the families who receive these benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote for it. I encourage all of my colleagues to vote against the motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1300, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Ferrari, one of its clerks, announced

that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1473. An act to amend the Export Control Reform Act of 2018 to establish a whistleblower incentive program and provide protections to whistleblowers.

S. 3023. An act to limit liability for certain entities storing child sexual abuse material for law enforcement agencies, and for other purposes.

S. 4460. An act to provide for an extension of the rural community hospital demonstration program.

S. 4631. An act to ensure that whistleblowers, including contractors, are protected from retaliation when a Federal employee orders a reprisal, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 105-292, as amended by Public Law 106-55, Public Law 107-228, and Public Law 112-75, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, upon the recommendation of the Majority Leader, appoints the following individual to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom:

CeCe Heil of Tennessee.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 18 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1630

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBER of Texas) at 4 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 1(c) of rule XIX, proceedings will resume on the bill (H.R. 1329) to permit the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum to be located within the Reserve of the National Mall, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Ms. RANDALL. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Ms. Randall of Washington moves to recommit the bill H.R. 1329 to the Committee on House Administration.

The material previously referred to by Ms. RANDALL is as follows:

Ms. Randall of Washington moves to recommit the bill H.R. 1329 to the Committee on House Administration with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Smithsonian American Women's History Museum and