

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I agree with the chairman in the sense that this is the perfect time of the year to bring these bills forward. These are excellent bills that will help our veterans, and I rise in strong support of S. 407, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Act of 2009.

I would like to thank my House colleagues, Mr. HALL of New York, chairman of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee, and the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN), the ranking Republican on the subcommittee, as well as the House bill's sponsor, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona, for their leadership on H.R. 1533 which passed on March 30, 2009.

Mr. Speaker, S. 407 would increase effective as of December 1, 2009, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans. The COLA adjustment includes veterans' disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, clothing allowance dependency, and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses and children.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important annual authorization which provides much-needed assistance to our Nation's veterans, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support the bill.

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Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Chairman John Hall and Ranking Member Doug Lamborn on these issues. I would also like to thank Committee Chairman Bob Filner and Ranking Member Steve Buyer for moving this bill forward for consideration.

I urge my colleagues to support S. 407 and yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. 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 on S. 407.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 407; with all good intended purpose, this bill will increase the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and rates of dependency indemnity compensation, DIC, for the survivors of certain disabled veterans. It will also increase of the Cost of Living Allowance, COLA. At this time, I would like to thank my good friend Senator DANIEL AKAKA, Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and majority ranking members for introducing this bill as well as the Committee Minority Member Senator RICHARD BURR who is the original cosponsor, so are Committee Members JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV, PATTY MURRAY, BERNARD SANDERS, SHERRON BROWN, JIM WEBB, JON TESTER, MARK BEGICH, ROLAND

BURRIS, ARLEN SPECTER, JOHNNY ISAKSON, ROGER F. WICKER, MIKE JOHANNIS, LINDSEY GRAHAM, Senators FRANK R. LAUTENBERG, BLANCHE LINCOLN, and OLYMPIA J. SNOWE.

Mr. Speaker, this very important legislation could not have come at a time then it is most critical to address the needs of service-connected disabled veterans and survivors during these challenging economic times in our country. The testimonies offered by Bradley G. Mayes, Director, Compensation and Pension Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veteran Affairs, etc., in the April 29, 2009 Committee hearing have further substantiated this measure and all voted in favor without dissent.

This measure will also mandate an increase in the Cost of Living Allowance, COLA, for our disabled veterans and survivors.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we take care of our veterans. According to VA, as set forth in its fiscal year 2010 budget, the department will provide disability compensation to 3,154,217 veterans with service-connected disabilities in fiscal year 2010. I am pleased with the undivided attention we give to this legislation which underscores how much we appreciate our veterans' selfless military service to protect our country and the freedom and liberty we enjoy.

Again, I thank Senator DANIEL AKAKA and his Veterans Committee for this legislation and strongly urge my colleagues for their full support.

Mr. FILNER. I urge my colleagues to unanimously support S. 407.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 407.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. BOOZMAN. 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 and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

WEB SITE INCLUSION OF VA SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1172) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs a list of organizations that provide scholarships to veterans and their survivors, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1172

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. PAT TILLMAN VETERANS' SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVE.

(a) AVAILABILITY OF SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION.—By not later than June 1, 2010, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall include on the Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs—

(1) a list of organizations that provide scholarships to veterans and their survivors and, for each such organization, a link to the Internet website of the organization;

(2) a statement that the information described in paragraph (1) is not an all-inclusive list of scholarships available to veterans and their survivors; and

(3) a statement that the Secretary has not verified the information available on the Internet websites of the organizations referred to in paragraph (1) and that the Secretary does not endorse any offer made by any sponsor of any such the website.

(b) MAINTENANCE OF SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make reasonable efforts to notify schools and other appropriate entities of the opportunity to be included on the Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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

I thank the Speaker and also I thank my distinguished colleague from Arkansas, Congressman BOOZMAN, for introducing this bill, H.R. 1172, and for his bipartisan leadership working as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity with Chair STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN of South Dakota. That committee is, I think, a model of bipartisan cooperation and we thank the gentleman from Arkansas for his efforts in that regard.

As many veterans service organizations have testified to our committee, the lack of program awareness continues to be a major barrier preventing veterans from accessing the benefits they have earned. The same is also true for non-VA related education assistance such as grants and scholarships. This legislation provides a common-sense solution to provide useful scholarship information to our Nation's veterans and their dependents. Providing a list of all available scholarships on the VA Web site will allow veteran advocates to reach a larger population and simplify the search for veterans and their families.

I am confident our Internet savvy veterans will come to rely on this tool to obtain up-to-date information on how to supplement their education benefits administered by the VA. Again I thank Congressman BOOZMAN for introducing this bill. I urge all my colleagues to join us.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1172, as amended, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the Internet Web site of the Department of Veterans Affairs a list of organizations that provide scholarships to veterans and their survivors.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of this bill, H.R. 1172, is to provide a place on the VA Web site that lists as many sources

of scholarships for veterans as reasonable possible.

Beginning with the World War II GI Bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs has administered education programs designed to provide a wide range of education and training opportunities to veterans. Over the years, that mission expanded to include veterans, dependents, and survivors.

Since World War II, the number of degree-granting institutions and non-degree-training schools has significantly increased. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are about 4,314 degree-granting institutions and about 2,222 nondegree-training entities that qualify for title IV education assistance programs.

Each of these may also offer non-Federal financial aid directly or indirectly to veterans through association with organizations such as foundations, but it is the very expansion of these sources that makes it imperative to assist veterans in accessing scholarship information.

With the proliferation of schools, the rapidly increasing cost of education and training, and the sources of potential financial assistance for veterans, there is a need for a centralized source of financial assistance where a veteran can find links to at least some of the aid available. For example, an Internet search for "veterans scholarships" yielded 8,570 sources of information. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the VA should also include sources of financial assistance for dependents and survivors if providers of such financial aid notify VA about the availability of such assistance.

During the legislative hearing on H.R. 1172, VA expressed some concerns about the bill. In response to their concerns, in cooperation with Chairwoman HERSETH SANDLIN of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, the committee amended the bill to better define the bill's objectives and to include appropriate limitations on VA's role in providing scholarship information to veterans. I appreciate the opportunity to work in bipartisan cooperation in making these changes. The substitute states that VA shall make reasonable efforts to notify schools and appropriate entities, such as foundations, of the opportunity to be linked by the VA Web site as a provider of scholarships for veterans.

The bill, as amended, also requires VA to include statements on its Web site noting that VA does not endorse or guarantee any assistance offered by an entity included on the Web site, nor should the individual consider the list to be all inclusive.

Finally, the amended bill sets an effective date of June 1, 2010, to enable VA to concentrate on getting the new post-9/11 GI Bill up and running, which is so important before adding to their workload. I believe this bill's provisions will help veterans identify scholarships intended for their use.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

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

Mr. FILNER. I would like to recognize the gentlelady from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN) for as much time as she may consume, but I also want to thank her for her incredible leadership as Chair of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. Lots of bills have come forward from this committee and will continue to do so, and we thank her for her leadership.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. I thank the gentleman, the distinguished chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, for yielding and for his kind words in support of the work of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1172, as amended. I would like to thank the chairman, Mr. FILNER, Ranking Member BUYER, and the sponsor of the bill, subcommittee ranking member, Mr. BOOZMAN, for their leadership and bipartisan support of this bill, which the full committee passed on June 10.

As Mr. BOOZMAN discussed, this legislation directs the Secretary of the VA to include a list of organizations that provide scholarships to veterans and their survivors on its official Web site. This list will help increase the educational opportunities available to veterans and their survivors by providing an easy-to-find portal to this information.

A key part of the VA's responsibility to our veterans is properly managing and providing the educational benefits our veterans have earned through their service. Legislation such as H.R. 1172 helps fulfill this responsibility and will give veterans and their survivors easier access to college scholarships for which they are eligible.

As Chair of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, I am extremely pleased to work with Ranking Member BOOZMAN in a bipartisan manner to improve educational benefits for veterans. We have held a series of important hearings on the post-9/11 GI bill, as well as other educational assistance programs, such as the Vocational Rehabilitation and Education Service. I appreciate Mr. BOOZMAN's efforts and cooperation on this important oversight, and I am pleased to support his bill today.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to again extend my thanks to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity chairwoman, STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN, for her assistance on this bill, and also for her leadership in so many ways. STEPHANIE has done a tremendous job.

Again, I would also like to thank the full committee chairman, BOB FILNER, the ranking member, STEVE BUYER, and the committee staff on both sides that have worked very hard on this.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to support H.R. 1172, as amended, and urge its immediate passage.

With that, having no further speakers, I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. 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 on H.R. 1172, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1172, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1172, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BOOZMAN. 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 and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE BUDGET REFORM AND TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2009

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1016) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide advance appropriations authority for certain medical care accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1016

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009".

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that the provision of health care services to veterans could be more effectively and efficiently planned and managed if funding was provided for the management and provision of such services in the form of advance appropriations.

SEC. 3. PRESIDENTS' BUDGET SUBMISSIONS.

Section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(36) information on estimates of appropriations for the fiscal year following the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted for the following accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs:

"(A) Medical Services.

"(B) Medical Support and Compliance.

"(C) Medical Facilities.

"(D) Information Technology Systems.

"(E) Medical and Prosthetic Research."