

I think I would be remiss if I did not say that this was landmark legislation in the waning hours of this session of Congress, and I want to congratulate the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. STUMP] and the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. MONTGOMERY], because in a Congress that has sometimes been very difficult, they have shown us that even in difficult times, civility can prevail.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate that in the 104th Congress where we have freely exercised our freedom of speech on both sides of the aisle, that we finish this Congress by passing major legislation to honor those who have fought and been willing to give their life to protect that freedom of speech, both on the floor of this House and for all Americans across this country. This legislation is a first step, not a last step.

Mr. Speaker, I will finish by saying that this is landmark legislation. It is not the final step in the effort toward increasing care for our veterans, but it is a major step, a significant step that would not have happened had it not been for the leadership of the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. STUMP] and the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. MONTGOMERY]. I want to express my thanks to both the gentlemen for their efforts on our veterans' behalf.

Finally, this is a win-win, not only for our veterans who will have simpler eligibility rules; they will know whether they can get VA care or not, but they will also be able to get outpatient care more easily. But it is a win also for our taxpayers because by providing outpatient care rather than more expensive inpatient care, our taxpayers will win from this major legislation.

To the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] also, the chairman of the Committee on Rules, I want to express my thanks to him for helping this bill become the law of the land at the end of this session.

To all, this is a great piece of legislation. It is a great day for our veterans. Certainly they have earned this right to receive the care that they were willing to give their lives for our Nation for.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

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

There was no objection.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the Senate amendments to H.R. 3118.

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

There was no objection.

□ 2230

#### VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 1996

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 3458) to increase, effective as of December 1, 1996, 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, with Senate amendments thereto, and concur in the Senate amendments.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Clerk read the Senate amendments, as follows:

Senate amendments:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 1996".

#### SEC. 2. INCREASE IN COMPENSATION RATES AND LIMITATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, as provided in paragraph (2), increase, effective December 1, 1996, the rates of and limitations on Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation.

(2) The Secretary shall increase each of the rates and limitations in sections 1114, 1115(1), 1162, 1311, 1313, and 1314 of title 38, United States Code, that were increased by the amendments made by the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 1995 (Public Law No. 104-57; 109 Stat. 555). This increase shall be made in such rates and limitations as in effect on November 30, 1996, and shall be by the same percentage that benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 1996, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(b) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a)(2), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons within the purview of section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who are not in receipt of compensation payable pursuant to chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

(c) PUBLICATION REQUIREMENT.—At the same time as the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 1996, the Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register the rates and limitations referred to in subsection (a)(2) as increased under this section.

Mr. STUMP (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate amendments be considered as read and printed in the record.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, and I will

not object, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona to explain the bill.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3458, as amended, the COLA bill, increases 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 increase would be effective on December 1, 1996, and would be the same percentage increase as applied to Social Security benefits.

I would like to take a minute to thank Chairman SIMPSON and Senator ROCKEFELLER and their staff for all of the hard work done on this and the two veterans bills just passed.

I also want to thank all our subcommittee chairman and ranking members on the VA Committee for their hard work and bipartisan approach on our legislation this Congress.

In addition, I want to thank the staff members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee for their support, hard work and willingness to do things in a bipartisan manner.

The veterans' service organizations have worked well with us on these bills and we appreciate their assistance and cooperation as well. I must take just a moment to express my deep appreciation and sincere thanks to the gentleman from Mississippi and my good friend SONNY MONTGOMERY, the ranking minority member of the full committee for his work on this measure, the final veterans bill to be passed during his career in the House. Without his efforts these bills would not be on the floor today.

And Mr. Speaker, without his leadership on veterans' issues over the past 30 years this country would not have fulfilled its obligation to our veterans of military service the way we have.

SONNY MONTGOMERY'S commitment and dedication to the men and women serving in our Armed Forces has rightfully earned him the title "Mr. Veteran".

The members of the National Security Committee and the Veterans' Affairs Committee will miss his energetic support for those individuals wearing our country's uniform and those who have worn it.

I will personally miss his friendship and counsel over the many years we have served together in this body.

We wish this great legislator and champion of veterans the very best in all his future endeavors.

I hope all Members will support this bill and I ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks and that all members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3458, as amended.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Speaker, further reserving the right to object, Mr. Chairman, BOB STUMP, thank you for the great ride. We have been together on a nonpartisan committee for