

VACATING ORDERING OF YEAS AND NAYS ON H. CON. RES. 262, EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL ANTHEM "SING-AMERICA" PROJECT

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to vacate the ordering of the yeas and nays on the motion to suspend the rules and adopt H. Con. Res. 262 to the end that the Chair put the question on the motion *de novo*.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 262.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the House concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SENSE OF CONGRESS ON CRISIS IN RECRUITING AND RETAINING DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 94) expressing the sense of the Congress that community inclusion and enhanced lives for individuals with mental retardation or other development disabilities is at serious risk because of the crisis in recruiting and retaining direct support professionals, which impedes the availability of a stable, quality direct support workforce, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 94

Whereas there are more than 8,000,000 Americans who have mental retardation or other developmental disabilities, including mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, epilepsy, and other related conditions;

Whereas individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities have substantial limitations on their functional capacities, including limitations in two or more of the areas of self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency, as well as the continuous need for individually planned and coordinated services;

Whereas for the past two decades individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities and their families have increasingly expressed their desire to live and work in their communities, joining the mainstream of American life;

Whereas the Supreme Court, in its *Olmstead* decision, affirmed the right of individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities to receive community-based services as an alternative to institutional care;

Whereas the demand for community supports and services is rapidly growing, as States comply with the *Olmstead* decision and continue to move more individuals from institutions into the community;

Whereas the demand will also continue to grow as family caregivers age, individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities live longer, waiting lists grow, and services expand;

Whereas outside of families, private providers that employ direct support professionals deliver the majority of supports and services for individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities in the community;

Whereas direct support professionals provide a wide range of supportive services to individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities on a day-to-day basis, including habilitation, health needs, personal care and hygiene, employment, transportation, recreation, and housekeeping and other home management-related supports and services so that these individuals can live and work in their communities;

Whereas direct support professionals generally assist individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities to lead a self-directed family, community, and social life;

Whereas private providers and the individuals for whom they provide supports and services are in jeopardy as a result of the growing crisis in recruiting and retaining a direct support workforce;

Whereas providers of supports and services to individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities typically draw from a labor market that competes with other entry-level jobs that provide less physically and emotionally demanding work, and higher pay and other benefits, and therefore these direct support jobs are not currently competitive in today's labor market;

Whereas annual turnover rates of direct support workers range from 40 to 75 percent;

Whereas high rates of employee vacancies and turnover threaten the ability of providers to achieve their core mission, which is the provision of safe and high-quality supports to individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities;

Whereas direct support staff turnover is emotionally difficult for the individuals being served;

Whereas many parents are becoming increasingly afraid that there will be no one available to take care of their sons and daughters with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities who are living in the community; and

Whereas this workforce shortage is the most significant barrier to implementing the *Olmstead* decision and undermines the expansion of community integration as called for by President Bush's New Freedom Initiative, placing the community support infrastructure at risk: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This resolution may be cited as the "Direct Support Professional Recognition Resolution".

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING SERVICES OF DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.

It is the sense of the Congress that the Federal Government and the States should make it a priority to promote a stable, quality direct support workforce for individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities that advances our Nation's commitment to community integration for such individuals and to personal security for them and their families.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 94.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 94, which expresses the sense of the Congress that community inclusion and enhanced lives for individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities is at serious risk because of the crisis of recruiting and retaining direct support professionals.

I want to congratulate and thank my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS), for introducing this resolution to highlight a very serious problem facing this country and the disability community.

As the resolution states, it is vitally important that our Nation increase its attention on recruiting and retaining these support personnel who work directly with individuals with disabilities and help them to become a contributing member of society.

From developing the skills of existing personnel to preparing new leaders and researchers to replace those who are leaving or retiring from the field, we must expand our capacity to recruit new and retain existing personnel.

Last month, the Department of Health and Human Services announced five new demonstration grants aimed at helping recruit, train, and retain direct service workers to aid those who need help with eating, bathing, dressing, and other activities of daily living. These grants will also test offering health insurance benefits to workers to determine if that helps keep workers on the job.

These grants were offered through the President's New Freedom Initiative which promotes the goal of removing barriers to community living for people with disabilities. Under this initiative, 10 Federal agencies have collaborated to remove barriers to community living for people with disabilities. Secretary Thompson and others who have championed the New Freedom Initiative should be commended for their hard work to improving the lives of individuals with special needs.

But we all know that much more needs to be done. As a Nation, we have a commitment to improve the opportunities available for all of our citizens, especially individuals with disabilities.

Over the past 30 years, we have made important strides in enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities. The Workforce Investment Act, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, and the Assistive Technology Act are a short list of the important laws that the