

number of areas in addition to the assistance for blinded veterans, including:

Increasing apprenticeship, on-the-job training and flight training educational benefits through the Montgomery G.I. Bill.

Extending authorization for the VA's work-study program for student veterans to 2020 and authorizing new program standards to allow these veterans to work in Congressional offices as part of their work-study.

Temporarily reducing, for the three years, the requirement for private employers to provide a wage increase for veterans participating in an approved on-the-job training program.

Reauthorizing the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education.

Improving the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program by providing reimbursement for certified child care assistance for single parents as well as increasing the subsistence allowance payable to veterans participating in VR&E by 5.2 percent.

Updating regulations for VA educational benefit programs to increase the reporting fees payable to educational institutions as well as modifying the rules for advance payment of educational assistance to prevent any break in educational benefits.

Giving the Department of Labor the authority to make grants to programs and facilities to provide services for homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children.

Again, I wish to thank Ranking Member BOOZMAN and the rest of my colleagues on the committee for the cooperative and bipartisan spirit in which they worked to better serve our veterans through this legislation. I urge my colleagues to pass H.R. 5360, the HELP Veterans Act.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my strong support for another bipartisan bill H.R. 5360, despite my deep disappointment that certain veteran-friendly small business provisions passed unanimously by the Veterans Affairs Committee have been stricken from the bill before us today. Those provisions directly would have improved opportunities for small businesses owned and controlled by service disabled veterans.

H.R. 5360, is a bill that is a compilation of several bills reported to the Veterans Affairs Committee by the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity under the leadership of the distinguished Chairwoman STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN and I appreciate her work and that of Ranking Member BOOZMAN and Chairman FILNER for bringing this bill to the floor.

At a time when small businesses are facing a continuing shortage of credit, I am delighted to see that the bill includes section five which I introduced to reestablish the VA's small business loan program that expired in 1986. Under section five, VA would be authorized to guarantee small business loans up to \$200,000 made by financial institutions. VA would also be required to contract with a financial institution experienced in this field to manage the program. I had originally introduced a similar provision in H.R. 293 and H.R. 4220.

However, I am deeply disappointed that the Democrats on the Small Business Committee led by Chairwoman NADIA VELÁZQUEZ once again chose to favor other small business set aside groups over service disabled veteran-owned small business by objecting to section 21 which I also included in this bill by amendment at the Full Committee markup. Section 21 would have merely leveled the playing field

for service disabled veteran-owned small businesses when competing with other set aside groups for VA contracts by changing the word "may" to "shall" when awarding sole source contracts to service disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

The Veterans Affairs Committee unanimously passed both of these provisions in hope that an additional source of credit backed by the VA will encourage lenders to increase the amount of credit and that a level playing field is the right thing to do for small businesses owned and controlled by service disabled veterans. It is truly unfortunate that Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ and Speaker PELOSI continue their history of opposing provisions that would benefit disabled veteran-owned small business.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate indeed that about 10 percent of homeless veterans are women and a significant percentage of those veterans bring children with them. So I am also pleased that the bill includes another provision which I introduced to establish a Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program for Women or HVRP-W. This program will focus on homeless programs specially designed to serve homeless women veterans and veterans with children. A veteran, especially one with children at their side should never be homeless.

Section 13 of the bill contains a provision introduced by Mr. BOOZMAN to encourage research and development in the field of assistive technologies used to adapt the homes of severely injured veterans. This authority will make a disabled veterans' homes just a bit more livable.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that our young people need positive role models. That is why the provisions I introduced as part of H.R. 4220 are an important part in this bill. Section 19 would provide a small temporary stipend to veterans who are new teachers in rural areas. Therefore, we are not only helping veterans to become teachers in rural areas, but we are also showing our next generation of America's what it means to make a commitment to the nation.

Section 20 would also provide one-year internship jobs at VA for up to 2,000 graduates of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program. These positions will provide service disabled veterans with work experience while helping VA meet the needs of their fellow veterans.

Anyone who has renovated a home recently knows the cost of construction continues to climb more rapidly than the overall inflation rate. Severely disabled veteran often need their homes adapted to make them more livable. That is why Mr. BOOZMAN introduced provisions to make a small increase in the grants made under VA's Specially Adapted Home program. These provisions would increase the existing small grant to \$13,756 and the large grant to \$65,780.

Mr. Speaker, section 24 contains provisions also introduced by Mr. BOOZMAN as H.R. 4259 known as the WARMER Act. This bill updates the types and maximum values of energy efficiency loans that VA may guarantee while directing VA to standardize its appraisal process to ensure energy efficiency improvements are properly valued.

Finally, section 25 is a provision introduced by Mr. MORAN of Kansas to make it easier for severely disabled veterans to use the Tem-

porary Residence Adaptation or TRA grant. TRA grants make small grants up to \$12,000 available to adapt the homes of family members with whom a severely injured veteran is living. Normally, TRA grants are deducted from the veterans overall grant, thus reducing subsequent grants. The provision would allow VA to issue up to 25 grants in Fiscal Year 2011 without reducing the veterans total award. This will help determine whether disabled veterans would be more likely to use the TRA grant.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ensure the Members of my support for this excellent bill despite the removal of several provisions that would benefit veteran-owned small businesses at this critical time and urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5360.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. 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. 5360, as amended.

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

The title was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS BENEFITS AND ECONOMIC WELFARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2010

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6132) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a transition program for new veterans, to improve the disability claim system, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6132

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Benefits and Economic Welfare Improvement Act of 2010".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Military transition program.
- Sec. 3. Waiver of claim development period for claims under laws administered by Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
- Sec. 4. Tolling of timing of review for appeals of final decisions of Board of Veterans' Appeals.
- Sec. 5. Exclusion of certain amounts from determination of annual income with respect to pensions for veterans and surviving spouses and children of veterans.

Sec. 6. Extension of authority of Secretary of Veterans Affairs to obtain certain income information from other agencies.

Sec. 7. VetStar Award program.

Sec. 8. Increase in amount of pension for Medal of Honor recipients.

Sec. 9. Compliance with Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010.

SEC. 2. MILITARY TRANSITION PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 41 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 4114 the following new section: “§ 4115. Military transition program

“(a) ESTABLISHMENT; ELIGIBILITY.—(1) Subject to the availability of appropriations for such purpose, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans’ Employment and Training shall jointly carry out a program of training to provide eligible veterans with skills relevant to the job market.

“(2) For purposes of this section, the term ‘eligible veteran’ means any veteran whom the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines—

“(A) is not otherwise eligible for education or training services under this title;

“(B) has not acquired a marketable skill since being separated or released from service in the Armed Forces;

“(C) was discharged under honorable conditions; and

“(D)(i) has been unemployed for at least 90 days during the 180-day period preceding the date of application for the program established under this section; or

“(ii) during such 180-day period received a maximum hourly rate of pay of not more than 150 percent of the Federal minimum wage.

“(b) APPRENTICESHIP OR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING PROGRAM.—The program established under this section shall provide for payments to employers who provide for eligible veterans a program of apprenticeship or on-the-job training if—

“(1) such program is approved as provided in paragraph (1) or (2) of section 3687(a) of this title;

“(2) the rate of pay for veterans participating in the program is not less than the rate of pay for nonveterans in similar jobs; and

“(3) the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans’ Employment and Training reasonably expects that—

“(A) the veteran will be qualified for employment in that field upon completion of training; and

“(B) the employer providing the program will continue to employ the veteran at the completion of training.

“(c) PAYMENTS TO EMPLOYERS.—(1) Subject to the availability of appropriations for such purpose, the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans’ Employment and Training shall enter into contracts with employers to provide programs of apprenticeship or on-the-job training that meet the requirements of this section. Each such contract shall provide for the payment of the amounts described in paragraph (2) to employers whose programs meet such requirements.

“(2) The amount paid under this section with respect to any eligible veteran for any period shall be 50 percent of the wages paid by the employer to such veteran for such period. Wages shall be calculated on an hourly basis.

“(3)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B)—

“(i) the amount paid under this section with respect to a veteran participating in the program established under this section may not exceed \$20,000 in the aggregate or \$1,666.67 per month; and

“(ii) such payments may only be made during the first 12 months of such veteran’s participation in the program.

“(B) In the case of a veteran participating in the program on a less than full-time basis, the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans’ Employment and Training may extend the number of months of payments under subparagraph (A) and proportionally adjust the amount of such payments, but the aggregate amount paid with respect to such veteran may not exceed \$20,000 and the maximum number of months of such payments may not exceed 24 months.

“(4) Payments under this section shall be made on a quarterly basis.

“(5) Each employer providing a program of apprenticeship or on-the-job training pursuant to this section shall submit to the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans’ Employment and Training on a quarterly basis a report certifying the wages paid to eligible veterans under such program (which shall be certified by the veteran as being correct) and containing such other information as the Assistant Secretary may specify. Such report shall be submitted in the form and manner required by the Assistant Secretary.

“(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$10,000,000 for each fiscal year for which the program is carried out.

“(e) REPORTING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans’ Employment and Training, shall include a description of activities carried out under this section in the annual report prepared submitted under section 529 of this title.

“(f) TERMINATION.—The authority to carry out a program under this section shall terminate on September 30, 2016.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 4114 the following new item: “4115. Military transition program”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Subsection (a)(1) of section 3034 of such title is amended by striking “and 3687” and inserting “3687, and 4115”.

(2) Subsections (a)(1) and (c) of section 3241 of such title are each amended by striking “section 3687” and inserting “sections 3687 and 4115”.

(3) Subsection (d)(1) of section 3672 of such title is amended by striking “and 3687” and inserting “3687, and 4115”.

(4) Paragraph (3) of section 4102A(b) of such title is amended by striking “section 3687” and inserting “section 3687 or 4115”.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. WAIVER OF CLAIM DEVELOPMENT PERIOD FOR CLAIMS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d)(1) If a claimant submits to the Secretary a claim that the Secretary determines is a fully developed claim, the Secretary shall provide—

“(A) the claimant with the opportunity to waive any claim development period otherwise made available by the Secretary with respect to such claim; and

“(B) expeditious treatment to such claim.

“(2) If a person submits to the Secretary any written notification sufficient to inform the Secretary that the person plans to submit a fully developed claim and, not later than one year after submitting such notification

submits to the Secretary a claim that the Secretary determines is a fully developed claim, the Secretary shall provide expeditious treatment to the claim.

“(3) If the Secretary determines that a claim submitted by a claimant as a fully developed claim is not fully developed, the Secretary shall provide such claimant with the notice described in section 5103(a) within 30 days after the Secretary makes such determination.

“(4) For purposes of this section:

“(A) The term ‘fully developed claim’ means a claim—

“(i) for which the claimant—

“(I) received assistance from a veterans service officer, a State or county veterans service organization, an agent, or an attorney; or

“(II) submits, together with the claim, an appropriate indication that the claimant does not intend to submit any additional information or evidence in support of the claim and does not require additional assistance with respect to the claim; and

“(ii) for which the claimant or the claimant’s representative, if any, each signs, dates, and submits a certification in writing stating that, as of such date, no additional information or evidence is available or needs to be submitted in order for the claim to be adjudicated.

“(B) The term ‘expeditious treatment’ means, with respect to a claim for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary, treatment of such claim so that the claim is fully processed and adjudicated within 90 days after the Secretary receives an application for such claim.”.

(b) APPEALS FORM AVAILABILITY.—Subsection (b) of section 5104 of such title is amended—

(1) by striking “and (2)” and inserting “(2)”; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: “, and (3) any form or application required by the Secretary to appeal such decision”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to claims submitted on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. TOLLING OF TIMING OF REVIEW FOR APPEALS OF FINAL DECISIONS OF BOARD OF VETERANS’ APPEALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7266(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking “In order” and inserting “(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), in order”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(2)(A) The 120-day period described in paragraph (1) shall be extended upon a showing of good cause for such time as justice may require.

“(B) For purposes of this paragraph, it shall be considered good cause if a person was unable to file a notice of appeal within the 120-day period because of the person’s service-connected disability.”.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (2) of section 7266(a) of such title, as added by subsection (a), shall apply to a notice of appeal filed with respect to a final decision of the Board of Veterans’ Appeals that was issued on or after July 24, 2008.

(2) REINSTATEMENT.—Any petition for review filed with the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims that was dismissed by such Court on or after July 24, 2008, as untimely, shall, upon the filing of a petition by an adversely affected person filed not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, be reinstated upon a showing that the petitioner had good cause for filing the petition on the date it was filed.

SEC. 5. EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN AMOUNTS FROM DETERMINATION OF ANNUAL INCOME WITH RESPECT TO PENSIONS FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVING SPOUSES AND CHILDREN OF VETERANS.

(a) CERTAIN AMOUNTS PAID FOR REIMBURSEMENTS AND FOR PAIN AND SUFFERING.—Paragraph (5) of section 1503(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(5) payments regarding—

“(A) reimbursements of any kind (including insurance settlement payments) for—

“(i) expenses related to the repayment, replacement, or repair of equipment, vehicles, items, money, or property resulting from—

“(I) any accident (as defined in regulations which the Secretary shall prescribe), but the amount excluded under this subclause shall not exceed the greater of the fair market value or reasonable replacement value of the equipment or vehicle involved at the time immediately preceding the accident;

“(II) any theft or loss (as defined in regulations which the Secretary shall prescribe), but the amount excluded under this subclause shall not exceed the greater of the fair market value or reasonable replacement value of the item or the amount of the money (including legal tender of the United States or of a foreign country) involved at the time immediately preceding the theft or loss; or

“(III) any casualty loss (as defined in regulations which the Secretary shall prescribe), but the amount excluded under this subclause shall not exceed the greater of the fair market value or reasonable replacement value of the property involved at the time immediately preceding the casualty loss; and

“(ii) medical expenses resulting from any accident, theft, loss, or casualty loss (as defined in regulations which the Secretary shall prescribe), but the amount excluded under this clause shall not exceed the costs of medical care provided to the victim of the accident, theft, loss, or casualty loss; and

“(B) pain and suffering (including insurance settlement payments and general damages awarded by a court) related to an accident, theft, loss, or casualty loss, but the amount excluded under this subparagraph shall not exceed an amount determined by the Secretary on a case-by-case basis;”.

(b) CERTAIN AMOUNTS PAID BY STATES AND MUNICIPALITIES AS VETERANS BENEFITS.—Section 1503(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph (10);

(2) by redesignating paragraph (11) as paragraph (12); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (10) the following new paragraph (11):

“(11) payment of a monetary amount of up to \$5,000 to a veteran from a State or municipality that is paid as a veterans’ benefit due to injury or disease; and”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall apply with respect to determinations of income for calendar years beginning after October 1, 2011.

SEC. 6. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO OBTAIN CERTAIN INCOME INFORMATION FROM OTHER AGENCIES.

Section 5317 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “September 30, 2011” and inserting “September 30, 2015”.

SEC. 7. VETSTAR AWARD PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish an award program, to be known as the “VetStar Award Program”, to annually recognize businesses for their contributions to veterans’ employment.

(b) ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary shall establish a process for the administration of the award program, including criteria for—

(1) categories and sectors of businesses eligible for recognition each year; and

(2) objective measures to be used in selecting businesses to receive the award.

(c) VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term “veteran” has the meaning given that term in section 101(2) of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 8. INCREASE IN AMOUNT OF PENSION FOR MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS.

Section 1562(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “\$1,000” and inserting “\$2,000”.

SEC. 9. COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY PAY-AS-YOU-GO ACT OF 2010.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 6132, 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 yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill, H.R. 6132.

Once again, this attacks a part of the employment problem that I mentioned earlier, and many members of our committee worked on this. Not only Chairwoman HERSETH SANDLIN of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity but its ranking member, Mr. BOOZMAN, plus our colleagues Mr. WELCH from Vermont and Mr. TEAGUE from New Mexico. It again helps our veterans find jobs. And Congressman DONNELLY from Indiana, Congressman ADLER from New Jersey, and Congressman HASTINGS of Florida all contributed to this, along with Chairman HALL of the Disability Assistance Subcommittee and his Ranking Member LAMBORN of Colorado.

I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1300

Mr. BUYER. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, you are moving fast today. Had I known, I would have been here for the first bill. And I am serious about that comment. You have to give us adequate time to get to the floor so we can respond to the bills.

I am recognized, and I am making a statement, because I am really upset. I

am upset because this is the way the majority has been running the Congress, Mr. Speaker.

If you want to know why the American people are upset with the majority, it is because of this. If you don’t give adequate notice to even a ranking member to be on the floor on bills, people are going to know. Do you know why they are going to know? Because I am going to tell the story. Rules matter around this place.

Now, let me go back to the first bill. The only reason I mention this is because I want to thank—you just passed it, by voice vote.

Let me tell you what is upsetting, something else that matters around here, and it is the Parliamentarian. You drop that bill, and the Parliamentarian makes those bills go to the appropriate jurisdictions. Something may get added by amendment to a particular bill that some other committee thinks that they want a view on it. Then what happens is the majority, not giving a doggone about the minority, puts bills onto this floor, whatever they want to do, so long as it is in comfort with someone else. They don’t care about the minority or what our views are, so they just put it on the floor.

So once again we try to change the “may” to “shall” language in the last bill. The Small Business Committee prevents it. Now, why would you do that? Why would the Small Business Committee, run by the Democrat majority, alienate the disabled veterans? Why do you keep doing this? We keep appealing to you to place the disabled veteran in a higher position with regard to other set-asides, and you won’t do it.

Mr. President, don’t stand up and tell the American people, well, now we are going to focus on small business. Or, Madam Speaker, don’t stand up and say we are now going to focus on small business. What did you do at the moment of calling? At the moment of calling, when you had an opportunity to do something about it, what did you do? Don’t give the American people rhetoric. What did you do at the moment of acting? Oh, no, no, no, we are not going to do it.

Oh, you do your stimulus bill. I want to respond to a \$1 billion small business bill on veterans. No, we’re not going to do that; we are going to do VA construction.

Now you say, oh, my gosh, what are we going to do to stimulate small business? You had your opportunity over and over and over.

So, yes, I am pretty upset, Mr. Speaker. I am really upset. I am upset at what happened on that last bill. I am retiring. I am leaving Congress. And I am hopeful that the chairman—that you are as pugnacious as you can be and focus on that to help that disabled veteran, and change that language, Mr. FILNER, from “may” to “shall,” and I think it will go a very long way.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the bill in front of us, I rise in support of it. It

is the Veterans Benefits and Economic Welfare Improvement Act of 2010. It is a bipartisan, omnibus veterans benefits bill that includes many provisions that help veterans and their families.

H.R. 6132 will assist transitioning servicemembers by creating a new program through the Veterans Employment and Training Service to assist unemployed veterans who are not eligible for other VA education programs by creating a new on-the-job training and apprenticeship program.

The bill also codifies programs that the VA is currently using to transform its disability claims processing system and provide veterans the right to equitable tolling when a claim reaches the Board of Veterans' Claims.

The bill would assist pensioners by excluding the repayment of medical expenses or medical insurance awards or settlements from the veteran's annual income when determining their pension amount.

I am also pleased and also appreciate the chairman's supporting of the provision by the ranking member, HENRY BROWN of the Subcommittee on Health to increase the pension for Medal of Honor recipients to \$2,000 a month.

Mr. Speaker, while I am sure we all agree that the provisions in this bill are laudable, it is unfortunate that certain provisions have also been left out.

Ranking Member BOOZMAN of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity was also successful at the full committee markup of this bill in adding a provision that would have protected the veteran's Second Amendment right to bear arms. His amendment would have prevented veterans from losing this right without a judicial decision or due process. The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.

The provision was supported by the American Legion, AMVETS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the NRA, and the Gun Owners of America. Chairman CONYERS of the Judiciary Committee raised questions on the jurisdictional issue regarding the provision and insisted that it be taken out.

Here we go again. So to America, bills are coming to the floor, people are yanking things out of the bill. So what is happening is we are rushing bills to the floor, rather than allow them to be properly vetted through all jurisdictions. We are not going to do that.

So what do we have? We have a bill now on the floor that had a gun provision taken out of it right before an election. That is great. I am not running again, so those of you who are pleased that I guess the gun provision was taken out of the bill, you can answer to your constituents about why that happened.

So I'm, once again, bothered. It's unfortunate. I am leaving an institution that I love and respect, but, boy, am I bothered with the way it is being run.

I ask Members to support this bill.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 6132, the Vet-

erans Benefits and Economic Welfare Improvement Act of 2010. I want to thank the author, the gentleman from California and Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (VA), Mr. BOB FILNER, and also members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for their support of our men and women who have served our country in the military.

Mr. Speaker, this bill incorporates language from H.R. 5549, the Rating and Processing Individuals' Disability Claims (RAPID) Act, which I have cosponsored. I thank Chairman FILNER for including this language in H.R. 6132 and I thank the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. JOE DONNELLY, for his leadership on the RAPID provision, which adds more accountability and transparency to the process by which the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs (VA) reviews veterans' disability claims.

In addition to the language on disability claims, H.R. 6132 also directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training to carry out a joint training program to assist veterans in acquiring critical skills that are needed in the job market. At a time when opportunities are limited, the program provided for under this bill will help our veterans compete in the job market.

Veterans across the nation are facing many challenges as they assimilate back into a civilian lifestyle. Our most recent veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom have experienced greater frequency of deployment, increased mental health problem, and strains on their families that continue long after they return from war. Given these immense challenges, it is only fitting that Congress works towards helping these brave men and women who risked their lives for our freedom.

I urge my colleagues to support and pass the Veterans Benefits and Economic Welfare Improvement Act.

Mr. DONNELLY of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of H.R. 6132, The Veterans Benefits and Economic Welfare Improvement Act. This bill combines several measures into one solid piece of legislation that will serve our veterans by helping them transition into the job market and improving the disability claims and appeals process, among other things.

Included in this legislation is a bill I introduced to help improve the disability claims process, H.R. 5549, The RAPID Claims Act. The RAPID Claims Act codifies the already successful Fully Developed Claim pilot program that Congress created in 2008, with a few improvements.

Since veterans who participate in the Fully Developed Claim program are gathering their evidence without VA assistance, they should be able to notify VA to mark their date of disability compensation as soon as they begin to put their case together. The RAPID Claims Act ensures this date is protected.

Additionally, if VA decides that a claim submitted by a veteran for the Fully Developed Claim program is actually ineligible for that program, VA should immediately notify the veteran of what is needed to substantiate the claim to allow it to proceed efficiently through the normal disability claim process. If VA adjudicates an incomplete claim without notifying the veteran, the result would be more inaccurately processed claims and a longer appeals backlog. The RAPID Claims Act requires

VA to assist such veterans in putting together a regular disability claim to prevent unsatisfactory decisions and unnecessary appeals.

Finally, The RAPID Claims Act ensures that veterans receive an appeals form at the same time as the decision on their disability claim. This will help veterans more quickly prepare and file an appeal if necessary.

I am proud to have worked with the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and the Disabled American Veterans in crafting this legislation, as well as 60 bipartisan colleagues who support it.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6132, the Veterans Benefits and Economic Welfare Improvement Act of 2010, which the Veterans Affairs Committee approved with bipartisan support on September 15th.

I would like to thank Veterans Affairs Chairman FILNER for his leadership in introducing H.R. 6132, as well as the support and leadership of Ranking Member BUYER.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation, which contains a number of important provisions that will directly improve the lives of veterans and the services available to those veterans and their families. Included among these provisions are four bills that I originally introduced. All four of these bills—H.R. 1088, H.R. 1089, H.R. 2461, and H.R. 1037—have previously passed the House, and I am pleased they have been included in this legislation.

H.R. 1089, the Veterans Employment Rights Realignment Act, originally passed the House without opposition by a vote of 423 to 0 on May 19, 2009. The provisions before us today create a three-year demonstration project to move the enforcement of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) protections of veterans and members of the Armed Services employed by Federal executive agencies to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC).

Under a previous demonstration project established by Public Law 108-454, OSC investigated some federal sector USERRA claims from 2004 to 2007. This demonstration project showed that the OSC had the expertise and ability to quickly obtain corrective action for federally employed veterans, and that success warranted a further continuation of this study.

H.R. 1088, the Mandatory Veteran Specialist Training Act, originally passed the House by voice vote on May 19, 2009. The provisions before us today take an important step toward providing better employment assistance to those who have bravely served their country.

These provisions reduce from 3 years to 18 months the period during which Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists or Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) with the Department of Labor (DOL) must complete the specialized veterans employment training program provided by the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI).

Through several Economic Opportunity Subcommittee hearings I chaired during the 110th Congress, I learned it was taking, on average, 2.5 years before DOL veterans employment specialists were completing the NVTI program. This leaves untrained specialists who don't have the necessary skills trying to help veterans with their employment needs, and this bill helps correct that situation.

H.R. 2461, the Veterans Small Business Verification Act, passed the House as part of

H.R. 3949 with overwhelming bipartisan support on November 3, 2009. The provisions before us today clarify the responsibility of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to verify the veteran status of owners of small businesses listed in the VetBiz Vendor Information Pages database. Furthermore, it requires that the VA notify small businesses already listed in the database of the need to verify their status.

The Economic Opportunity Subcommittee learned through hearings, and meetings with VA staff and the veterans community that the database contained firms that didn't qualify because the verification process was voluntary. Since firms registered in the database can qualify to receive set-aside or sole-source awards, this new legislation will help ensure our veterans are afforded the small business opportunities they are due.

H.R. 1037, the Pilot College Work Study Programs for Veterans Act of 2009, originally passed the House on July 14, 2009 without opposition by a vote of 422 to 0. The provisions before us today improve the educational benefits available to our country's veterans by expanding the scope of work-study activities available to veterans receiving educational benefits through the VA.

Currently, eligible student veterans enrolled in college degree programs, vocational programs or professional programs are eligible to participate in the work-study allowance program. However, they are limited to positions involving VA related work, such as processing VA paperwork, performing outreach services, and assisting staff at medical facilities or the offices of the National Cemetery Administration.

This legislation both reauthorizes the work-study program for 3 additional years and expands the list of qualifying work-study activities to include positions with State veterans agencies, Centers for Excellence for Veterans Student Success and other veterans-related positions at institutions of higher learning.

Given the wide variety of tasks our men and women in uniform perform while serving their country, our Nation should be capitalizing on the unique training and skill sets that veterans who are pursuing their degrees bring to their educational institutions.

In conclusion, H.R. 6132 takes a number of important steps toward helping veterans who have bravely served their country. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6132.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 6132, the Veterans Benefits and Economic Welfare Improvement Act of 2010. This important legislation extends much-needed improvements to benefits and services for our Nation's veterans, who deserve the best we can offer. This legislation makes a number of critical corrections and updates to streamline services, expedite benefits, and ensure that veterans can take advantage of educational and vocational training opportunities to develop skills relevant to today's job market.

I am extremely pleased that the underlying legislation includes my bill, H.R. 4541, the Veterans Pensions Protection Act of 2010. This legislation protects veterans from losing their pension benefits because they received payments to cover expenses incurred after an accident, theft, loss or casualty loss.

Under current law, if a veteran is seriously injured in an accident or is the victim of a theft and receives insurance compensation, he or

she may lose their pension if the money exceeds the income limit set by the VA. This means that the law effectively punishes veterans when they suffer from such an accident or theft.

Such a tragedy happened to one of my constituents, a Navy veteran with muscular dystrophy who was hit by a truck when crossing the street in his wheelchair. His pension was abruptly cut off after he received an insurance settlement payment to cover medical expenses for himself and his service dog, and material expenses to replace his wheelchair. As a result, he could not cover his daily expenses and mortgage payments and almost lost his home. This is unacceptable.

The Veterans Pensions Protection Act exempts the reimbursement of expenses related to accidents, theft, loss or casualty loss from being included into the determination of a veteran's income.

I want to thank Chairman BOB FILNER as well as Subcommittee Chairman JOHN HALL and Ranking Member DOUG LAMBORN for their support on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when our Nation's service men and women are fighting two wars abroad and engaged in action in other parts of the world, we have a duty to our past, present, and future veterans to provide the very best in health care, job training, housing assistance, educational opportunities, and other services and benefits. We owe our veterans an enormous debt, and cannot thank them enough for their service. I urge my colleagues to give their unanimous support to this legislation.

Mr. BUYER. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, 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. 6132, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REQUIRING HYPERLINK TO VETSUCCESS WEBSITE

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3685) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the main page of the Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs a hyperlink to the VetSuccess Internet website and to publicize such Internet website.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3685

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

SECTION 1. PROMOTION OF THE VETSUCCESS INTERNET WEBSITE.

(a) INCLUSION OF HYPERLINK.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall include on the main page of the Inter-

net website of the Department of Veterans Affairs a new hyperlink with a drop-down menu entitled "Veterans Employment". The drop-down menu shall include a direct hyperlink to the VetSuccess Internet website, the USA Jobs Internet website, the Job Central website, and any other appropriate employment Internet websites, as determined by the Secretary, especially such websites that focus on jobs for veterans.

(b) ADVERTISEMENT OF INTERNET WEBSITE.—Subject to the availability of appropriations for such purpose, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, in accordance with section 532 of title 38, United States Code, purchase advertising in national media outlets for the purpose of promoting awareness of the VetSuccess Internet website to veterans.

(c) OUTREACH TO VETERANS OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AND OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct outreach to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom to inform such veterans of the VetSuccess Internet website.

(d) VETSUCCESS INTERNET WEBSITE DEFINED.—In this section, the term "VetSuccess Internet website" means www.vetsuccess.gov or any successor Internet website maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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 the bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Congressman CLIFF STEARNS of Florida for introducing this bill, which seeks to include an important link to the VetSuccess program on the home page of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Web site. Like the other two bills before us today, it helps those veterans seeking employment.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3685, which was introduced by my good friend, the deputy ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, CLIFF STEARNS of Florida.

This bill would make it easier to find employment opportunities in their area and promote the VetSuccess Web site.

I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) to discuss his legislation.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished ranking member, and I also thank Chairman FILNER for allowing this bill to come to the floor.

My colleagues, today unemployment continues to be record high, particularly in my congressional district. In