

from Tennessee. Of this brigade that has just returned from a theater of war, 40 percent do not have jobs waiting on them. Think about that. Forty percent of those just now coming back from a theater of war don't have a job waiting on them. So it is not just the veterans who may have served the Nation many years ago. It is those who are returning who are still active guardsmen and reservists, yet now they don't have that job to come back to. We had better be leaning forward on this one.

Mr. STEARNS, I want to thank you for your legislation. I want to thank the chairman for supporting the legislation.

I urge all Members to support H.R. 3685.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. I urge my colleagues to unanimously support H.R. 3685, 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. 3685.

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. BUYER. 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.

PROVIDING HONORARY TITLE FOR ARMY RESERVISTS

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3787) to amend title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the reserve components as active service for purposes of laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3787

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

SECTION 1. PROVISION OF STATUS UNDER LAW BY HONORING CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE RESERVE COMPONENTS AS VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 107 the following new section:

“§107A. Honoring as veterans certain persons who performed service in the reserve components

“Any person who is entitled under chapter 1223 of title 10 to retired pay for nonregular service or, but for age, would be entitled under such chapter to retired pay for nonregular service shall be honored as a veteran but shall not be entitled to any benefit by reason of this section.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 107 the following new item:

“107A. Honoring as veterans certain persons who performed service in the reserve components.”

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 H.R. 3787, 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, today there are over a million men and women serving in our country in the National Guard and Reserves performing a wide variety of duties from combat operations around the world to responding to natural disasters at home. Members in the National Guard serve two commanders—the President, if called upon to join active duty components of the armed services, and the Governor of their State. Because of this, they were some of the first on the scene to bring calm following Hurricane Katrina. And during the recent British Petroleum oil spill in the gulf, over 1,600 members of National Guard units from four States were mobilized to protect our treasured coastline.

At age 60, members of the Guard with 20 years of service qualify for benefits similar to military retirees but cannot be designated as veterans of the armed services. As such, these so-called gray-area retirees cannot call themselves veterans even for honorary purposes. As such, they are not saluted during veterans' tributes and don't enjoy other ceremonial veterans' honors.

This bill would allow the members of the Reserve component the honor of calling themselves veterans. Specifically, this bill would establish members of the National Guard who are eligible for a non-regular retirement, but who were never called to active duty during their careers, to be called veterans for honorary purposes.

The chief sponsor of this bill is Representative WALZ from Minnesota. He served 24 years in the National Guard, rising to the rank of Command Sergeant Major; and in fact is the highest ranking enlisted man ever elected to this Congress. When he was called to active duty for the period required to earn him full veteran status, he realized that many of his brothers and sisters at arms were denied that honor.

This legislation is supported by members of the Military Coalition and the National Military Veterans Alliance, which together represent several million active duty servicemembers, veterans, and their families. I urge my

colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3787.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise also in support of H.R. 3787, as amended, introduced by my good friend, the former Command Sergeant Major TIM WALZ of the Minnesota National Guard. I know where he wanted to go with this legislation. I think what he has done is really struck the right compromise. I discussed this even at the time in the committee. We don't like to think of America as a coalition government, but in fact that's what we are. We are States out there for which we all have to recognize the constitutions of each of the States and we are bound together by a U.S. Constitution. Different States have their own militia but at the same time they're also under the United States Code, and can be called upon. When they're called upon to serve in Federal status, in particular serving the Nation at war for a period of greater than 180 days or are injured on active duty, they gain access to not only being called a veteran but also to veterans' benefits.

But this is a pretty good title. It is an honorary title with regard to those who served greater than 20 years in the National Guard and they had not been called to active duty for an extended period of time, which would make them eligible for VA benefits under the statute. So I think what the gentleman from Minnesota has tried to do is to strike the appropriate balance, and I believe that he has found it.

I urge all Members to support H.R. 3787, as amended. I congratulate the former Sergeant Major on a job well done.

□ 1320

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

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, 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. 3787, 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 recognize the service in the reserve components of certain persons by honoring them with status as veterans under law.”

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CHANGING CERTIFICATION RE- QUIREMENTS FOR VA COUN- SELORS

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5630) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for qualifications for vocational rehabilitation