

comprehensive risk assessment perimeter access control with the most currently available intelligence. It requires that it conduct a thorough assessment of airport perimeters and access control points, such as the unique geography each individual airport entails. And it determines a future strategy of regular updates.

Further, the bill incorporates the input of major airport operators, which we met with here in D.C. with the Committee on Homeland Security. We heard firsthand their concern of the lack of an individualized security strategy.

A recent report of the Associated Press investigation found that intruders breach airport fences approximately every 10 days. Altogether, there were at least 39 breaches nationwide in 2015, which was also the annual average from 2012 to 2015. TSA's own calculation over a 10-year period ending in 2011 showed 1,300 perimeter breaches in the 450 domestic airports, but that figure does not account for continued perimeter security breaches since 2011, including stowaways, trespassing across tarmacs, scaling of perimeter fences, and driving vehicles through barriers across airport property.

The landscape in which terrorists operate is constantly changing and it is challenging. We have to stay ahead of it. We have to look no further than the recent attacks in Paris, Brussels, and Istanbul to see what the threats are within access points and perimeters of airports. We were lucky here in the U.S. that the individuals that breach these access points and perimeters did not have the same nefarious intentions, but that doesn't mitigate the risk. It doesn't mitigate the fact that these people pose dangerous behavior potentially to our airports, to our employees and, of course, the passengers and travelers who rely on TSA officers and airport operators for their security.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5056.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, the attacks on airports currently in Europe show the challenging terrorist attack efforts that are currently a threat here in the United States. This bipartisan legislation will close loopholes in our airport security practices and procedures and bring us closer to ensuring that access control points and perimeters of all design are as secure as possible.

Passage of this bill is an important step in the safety for passengers, pilots, and airport employees as well.

I thank the chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security's Transportation Security Subcommittee, Mr. KATKO; our ranking member, Miss RICE; full committee ranking member, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi; Mr. KING;

Mr. RICHMOND; Mr. SWALWELL; and Mrs. TORRES for joining me and supporting this legislation.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5056.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank my colleague from Massachusetts for his well-thought-out, well-placed, and long-overdue legislation. It makes me think of my time serving in the United States military as an airfield commander charged with many things, including the security of the airfield.

Knowing that our adversaries, at any level, whether it is on the civilian side or the military side, continuously probe and look for ways to thwart us in our efforts to maintain our security, ever changing their tactics, techniques, and procedures—you can see from the recent attacks where they figured they could not get their device or their activities onto the plane. They just simply attacked prior to getting on the plane and actually attacking prior to going through security—so it is in that spirit that we know that we must be right every single bit of the time. There is no margin for error, which is why this legislation is so well placed and so timely.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5056.

I yield back the balance of my time. Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5056, the Airport Perimeter and Access Control Security Act of 2016, which amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to reform programs of the Transportation Security Administration, and streamline transportation security regulations.

As a senior member of the House Homeland Security Committee and the Former Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, I believe that this bill is of the utmost importance in securing safe airports in our country.

The objective of the bill is to establish a risk-based, intelligence-driven model for the screening of employees at airports based on level of access and employment positions at domestic airports.

The purpose of H.R. 5056 is to modernize and enhance airport perimeter and access control security by requiring updated risk assessments and the development of security strategies.

An important part of keeping our airports safe from attacks is to make sure that the perimeters and the security check points are safeguarded and secure.

TSA has kept American citizens safe by conducting incredibly thorough airport searches.

The same detailed precautions need to be taken for people commuting around and near airport perimeters.

This legislation seeks to bolster perimeter security and access controls at domestic airports by requiring the Transportation Security Administration to update relevant risk assessments and leveraging system-wide incident reporting to analyze trends contributing to the threat environment.

This bill would require the Department of Homeland Security to develop and conduct an

exercise related to the terrorist and foreign fighter threat in order to enhance domestic preparedness for and the collective response to terrorism, promote the dissemination of homeland security information, and test the U.S. security posture.

H.R. 5056 would also test the security posture of the United States and the Secretary of Homeland Security through appropriate offices and components of the Department of Homeland Security.

The Department of Homeland Security should immediately engage the local and state law enforcement agencies to ensure that city and state governments have the funds to increase the utilization of the local law enforcement to provide that added protection.

Mr. Speaker, the state of access controls at domestic airports is in need of direct and thorough scrutiny in order to mitigate perimeter breaches and insider threats to aviation security.

H.R. 5056 ensures that scrutiny will take place.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5056.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

TERRORIST AND FOREIGN FIGHTER TRAVEL EXERCISE ACT OF 2016

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4404) to require an exercise related to terrorist and foreign fighter travel, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4404

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 "Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel Exercise Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. EXERCISE ON TERRORIST AND FOREIGN FIGHTER TRAVEL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In addition to, or as part of exercise programs currently carried out by the Department of Homeland Security, to enhance domestic preparedness for and collective response to terrorism, promote the dissemination of homeland security information, and test the security posture of the United States, the Secretary of Homeland Security, through appropriate offices and components of the Department and in coordination with the relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall, not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, develop and conduct an exercise related to the terrorist and foreign fighter threat.

(b) EXERCISE REQUIREMENTS.—The exercise required under subsection (a) shall include—

(1) a scenario involving—

(A) persons traveling from the United States to join or provide material support or resources to a terrorist organization abroad; and

(B) terrorist infiltration into the United States, including United States citizens and foreign nationals; and

(2) coordination with appropriate Federal departments and agencies, foreign governments, and State, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector stakeholders.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after the completion of the exercise required under subsection (a), the Secretary of Homeland Security shall, consistent with the protection of classified information, submit an after-action report to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate presenting the initial findings of such exercise, including any identified or potential vulnerabilities in United States defenses and any legislative changes requested in light of the findings. The report shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

(d) PROHIBITION ON ADDITIONAL FUNDING.—No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section.

(e) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “material support or resources” has the meaning given such term in section 2339A of title 18, United States Code.

SEC. 3. EMERGING THREATS IN THE NATIONAL EXERCISE PROGRAM.

Subparagraph (A) of section 648(b)(2) of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (6 U.S.C. 748(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) in clause (v), by striking “and” at the end; and

(2) by adding after clause (vi) the following new clause:

“(vii) designed, to the extent practicable, to include exercises addressing emerging terrorist threats, such as scenarios involving United States citizens departing the United States to enlist with or provide material support or resources to terrorist organizations abroad or terrorist infiltration into the United States, including United States citizens and foreign nationals; and”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KEATING) each will control 20 minutes. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Arizona.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4404, the Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel Exercise Act. This legislation furthers the efforts that I and several of my colleagues on the House Homeland Security Committee have been engaged in for much of the 114th Congress as members of the bipartisan Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel.

For 6 months, our task force investigated our security vulnerabilities and the threat posed by ISIS. Our work produced 32 key findings and over 50 recommendations to make Americans safer.

In our findings, the task force found that the growing complexity and

changing nature of the foreign fighter phenomenon may be creating unseen gaps in our defenses. Yet, it has been years since any large-scale stress test has been conducted on U.S. Government protection and prevention programs against terrorist travel.

The last major government exercise on terrorist travel occurred in 2009 when the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, conducted an exercise focused on the “aftermath of a notional terrorist event outside of the United States” and how to prevent subsequent efforts by the terrorists to enter the United States and carry out additional attacks. The objective of that exercise was to determine how government agencies at all levels would respond in such an environment. However, the threat environment in 2016 has changed considerably, and relying on information gathered during an exercise that took place 7 years ago is simply unacceptable and puts American lives at risk.

The exercise conducted in 2009 also focused primarily on terrorists attempting to infiltrate the United States from overseas. However, our task force found that officials today should be just as concerned about Americans leaving the country to train overseas with terrorist groups as foreign fighters.

The ability of these hardened fighters to then return to the United States is a legitimate security threat to the homeland. Catching individuals who are looking to join the ranks and train with ISIS and other terrorist organizations prior to their initial departure is equally important, and it should be a goal for law enforcement as well.

□ 1545

As such, H.R. 4404 would require that the Obama administration conduct an exercise to evaluate the Nation’s preparedness against all phases of foreign fighter planning and travel. Carrying out such a test would be beneficial in understanding how partners at all levels of government—and abroad—are currently responding to these scenarios.

The feeble response to ISIS by this administration is irresponsible, and we must take decisive action to defeat this threat that they and other terrorist organizations pose to us.

The findings of the exercise required by this legislation will identify weaknesses at home and abroad that might be exploited by terrorists and foreign fighters, particularly to infiltrate the United States to conduct attacks. These findings will also be provided to Congress and Federal law enforcement and intelligence officials and provide information on how we can best address these weaknesses.

I am pleased that over the last several months, the House has passed numerous pieces of legislation that were products of this bipartisan task force’s work, including some recommendations that are now law. Passage of the

Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel Exercise Act today represents continued action by this body to fight against ISIS and ensure we keep Americans safe.

I want to thank Chairman MCCAUL and Ranking Member THOMPSON for establishing the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel. I would also like to thank the chairman of the task force, Congressman KATKO, for his leadership and the other Members who served on the task force for their continued dedication to seeing our recommendations through.

I look forward to implementation of many more of the task force’s findings. I urge all Members to join me in supporting this commonsense, bipartisan bill.

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

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, March 9, 2016.

Hon. MICHAEL MCCAUL,
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN MCCAUL: I write concerning H.R. 4404, the “Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel Exercise Act of 2016”. This legislation, as amended by the Committee on Homeland Security, includes matters that fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

In order to expedite Floor consideration of H.R. 4404, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will forgo action on this bill. However, this is conditional on our mutual understanding that forgoing consideration of the bill does not prejudice the Committee with respect to the appointment of conferees or to any future jurisdictional claim over the subject matters contained in the bill or similar legislation that fall within the Committee’s Rule X jurisdiction. I request you urge the Speaker to name members of the Committee to any conference committee named to consider such provisions.

Please place a copy of this letter and your response acknowledging our jurisdictional interest in the Committee report for H.R. 4404, as well as in the Congressional Record dining House Floor consideration of the bill. I look forward to working with the Committee on Homeland Security as the bill moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

BILL SHUSTER,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC, March 11, 2016.

Hon. BILL SHUSTER,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SHUSTER: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 4404, the “Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel Exercise Act of 2016.” I appreciate your support in bringing this legislation before the House of Representatives, and accordingly, understand that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will forego consideration of the bill.

The Committee on Homeland Security concurs with the mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration on this bill at this time, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure does not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in

this bill or similar legislation in the future. In addition, should a conference on this bill be necessary, I would support a request by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for conferees on those provisions within your jurisdiction.

I will insert copies of this exchange in the Congressional Record during consideration of this bill on the House floor. I thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL T. McCAUL,
Chairman.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 4404, the Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel Exercise Act, sponsored by the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY), a colleague on the Committee on Homeland Security.

Mr. Speaker, the threats our communities face are evolving rapidly, and we need to make sure our communities are prepared to respond. My community knows all too well the benefit exercises have on the ability of first responders to do their jobs safely and effectively.

The year before the Boston Marathon bombings, through the UASI grant, Boston participated in Urban Shield, a 24-hour exercise during which responders were rotated through various training scenarios. More than 1,800 emergency response personnel from over 50 Federal, State, and local agencies participated. The goal of Urban Shield was to assess capabilities achieved through grant investments, improve proficiency at core capabilities, and identify capability gaps.

Prior to that, the city of Boston participated in a Joint Counterterrorism Awareness Workshop, where more than 200 participants from Federal, State, and local governments took part in a 24-hour-long integrated response exercise in which multiple coordinated assaults were simulated, much like the terrorist attacks in India in November of 2008.

Regarding that 2011 exercise, then-Police Commissioner Ed Davis said: "This workshop is like no other terrorism training exercise in which I've participated. The diversity of voices provides for robust and honest discussion about the common challenges we face—and new solutions necessary to address them."

These and other exercises supported by the Urban Areas Security Initiative grant funds are what prepared our first responders to respond so bravely and heroically and effectively to the Boston Marathon bombings.

As we are learning through events in San Bernardino, Orlando, and abroad, the tactics of our adversaries are constantly changing, and we must ensure our first responders have the training they need to address them.

H.R. 4404 requires the DHS Secretary to carry out an exercise related to terrorist and foreign fighter travel. Additionally, the bill ensures that FEMA and FEMA's National Exercise Program includes scenarios designed, to the extent practicable, to include emerging terrorist threats.

To be clear, this language would not require FEMA's National Exercise Program to focus exclusively on terrorist threats but, rather, seeks to ensure that FEMA continues to develop exercises that are responsive to threats as they emerge.

In light of recent events, it is critical that we emphasize preparedness to evolving terrorist threats. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4404.

Mr. Speaker, one thing we learned in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombings is that training and preparatory exercises contribute to preparedness. The lessons learned from the first responder exercise that occurred in Boston prior to the bombings saved lives.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4404 so that our first responders will continue to benefit from exercises that are responsive to the evolving threat environment.

I thank the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) for her work in this regard. I am proud to be a cosponsor and proud to have the bipartisan effort that we do, as a whole, in the Committee on Homeland Security to try to work hard together to make our country safer.

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

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I once again urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4404.

I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts and our other colleagues for their cosponsorship of this.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4404, the Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel Exercise Act of 2016, which requires the Department of Homeland Security to develop and conduct an exercise related to the terrorist and foreign fighter threat in order to enhance domestic preparedness for the collective response to terrorism.

As a senior member of the House Committee on Homeland Security and Ranking Member of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, I understand that threats to homeland security are increasing and being prepared to defeat them is of the utmost importance.

It is estimated that 250 U.S. citizens are among the number of foreign recruits who have traveled to Syria since the beginning of the conflict.

In 2014, the total number of foreign fighters entering Syria was estimated to be 14,000.

This disturbing news coupled with the massive migration of people seeking to flee from war torn Syria now entering Europe by the thousands raises important concerns regarding security.

H.R. 4404 requires the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop and carry out national exercises to evaluate the nation's preparedness against the threat of foreign fighters and terrorists.

Under this legislation, FEMA would develop and conduct an exercise to test the ability to respond to the threat of persons leaving the United States to provide material or support to terrorist organizations or of foreign fighters attempting to enter the United States.

I have on several prior occasions outlined several areas of particular concern regarding Worldwide Threats and Homeland Security Challenges.

The United States has seen several instances of domestic terrorism at the hands of U.S. citizens within our borders, such as the tragedies in San Bernardino, Orlando, and most recently, Dallas.

In response to these tragedies, it is our duty to address issues surrounding domestic violence at the hands of extremists and the availability of assault weapons.

H.R. 4404 is a positive step in the right direction and I urge its support by all members.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express concern with a provision of H.R. 4404, the "Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel Exercise Act of 2016", as amended.

Although I appreciate the intent of this legislation, I believe section 3 of the bill should be clarified to avoid unintended consequences.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Exercise Program (Program) tests and evaluates the Nation's preparedness goal, systems, plans and strategies for all hazards. The main objective of the Program is to examine and validate core capabilities to perform missions and functions that prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards. All hazards include terrorist attacks. From the outcome of the exercises, we are able to determine the progress made in reaching the National Preparedness Goal.

I am concerned because H.R. 4404 may be interpreted to mandate that the Program focus on emerging terrorist threats. On its face, the provision mandating that FEMA shall, to the extent practicable, design the Program to include emerging terrorist threats could be interpreted to limit FEMA's ability to design exercises for all hazards, instead requiring a specific scenario for Program exercises. I do not believe that this is Congress' intent and urge FEMA to interpret the bill broadly.

Natural disasters cause devastating impacts to our citizens, communities, and the Nation as a whole. Each year, the Federal Government spends hundreds of millions of dollars (if not billions of dollars) responding to and recovering from weather-related events. The amount that the Federal Government spends on natural disasters is increasing as a percentage of our gross domestic product and as a percentage of the Federal budget.

Being prepared for these events helps the Nation reduce injury, death, and property damage. We need to ensure that the National Exercise Program continues to test our preparedness for natural events.

Similarly, testing our capabilities for emerging terrorist threats is a worthy endeavor. It should and already does occur. I do not believe that the intent of section 3 of the bill is that all Program exercises must include emerging terrorist threats. Rather, the bill provides that our capabilities to handle emerging terrorist threats can and should be tested within the Program. Any other interpretation would undermine the progress that the Nation has made to prepare for all hazards, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

In addition, it should be noted that FEMA is already required, at least once every two years, to perform a national level exercise to test and evaluate the Nation's capability to detect, disrupt, and prevent threatened or actual

catastrophic acts of terrorism, or to test and evaluate the readiness of governments to respond to and recover from catastrophic incidents. Both of these requirements can include exercises for emerging terrorist threats.

As this bill moves to the other body, I hope that we can work together to clarify the purpose and intent of section 3 of this legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4404, 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.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COLA ACT OF 2016

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5588) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2016, 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, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5588

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' Compensation COLA Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2016, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2016, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—Each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2016, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively,

consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 2(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which 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 2017.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous materials on H.R. 5588.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have introduced H.R. 5588, the Veterans' Compensation COLA Act of 2016. This bill would provide a cost-of-living increase for wartime disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, clothing allowance, dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses, and dependency and indemnity compensation to children paid to our wounded warriors and their families for injuries they suffered while serving in uniform for our Nation.

Many of these veterans are suffering from serious conditions, such as traumatic brain injury, that may make it difficult for them to find gainful employment and provide for their families, and this clean cost-of-living increase will help them keep pace with inflation. Benefits are also paid to the spouses and children of those who have tragically made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of this great Nation.

H.R. 5588 would give veterans and their families the same cost-of-living increase that Social Security recipients receive. The men and women who were disabled as a result of their military service should not have to struggle to put food on the table and pay for housing and other necessities.

Members on both sides of the aisle have historically supported legislation that provides an annual COLA for disabled veterans because we know it is the right thing to do. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5588.

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

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

I rise in support of H.R. 5588, the Veterans' Compensation COLA Act of 2016. This bill is our annual veterans cost-of-living adjustment. It would ensure that, beginning on December 1, 2016, our disabled veterans receive the same increases as those receiving Social Security benefits.

Specifically, H.R. 5588 directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the rates of basic compensation for disabled veterans and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation, or DIC, to their survivors and dependents. It also increases other benefits, such as clothing allowance and wartime disability, to keep pace with the rising cost of living.

This bill sends a strong and important message that we are going to honor our commitment to supporting our veterans. This is the least we can do to repay their service.

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) for his kind words and his support. I have no speakers, so once again, I just encourage all Members to support H.R. 5588.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I, too, have no additional speakers. I thank the gentleman from Louisiana for his work on this issue. It is a pleasure working with him in committee.

I once again ask all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 5588 and the Veterans' Compensation COLA Act of 2016.

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5588, the "Veterans' Compensation COLA Act of 2016," which authorizes for the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase the rates of compensation for veterans.

As the friends, family, co-workers and neighbors to veterans, we have an obligation to ensure that they feel their service to this country is appreciated by their fellow Americans.

These honorable men and women are major contributors to our military presence and many have given their lives to keep our nation safe.

In the State of Texas we have 1,099,141 veterans under the age of 65 and 590,618 who are over the age of 65—there are over 1,689,759 veterans living in our state.

The 18th Congressional District has 20,607 under age 65 and 9,844 veterans over the age of 65.

H.R. 5588 increases the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities.

Additionally, the bill provides for an increase in the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans and surviving spouses and children.

The increase will be the same percentage as that provided under title II (Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance) of the Social Security Act.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation.