

passing this important piece of legislation, H.R. 2788.

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. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2788.

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. ROSENDALE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

VA TRANSPARENCY & TRUST ACT OF 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2911) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a plan for obligating and expending Coronavirus pandemic funding made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2911

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 “VA Transparency & Trust Act of 2021”.

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC FUNDING MADE AVAILABLE TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PLAN AND REPORTS BY SECRETARY.—

(1) PLAN.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a detailed plan for obligating and expending covered funds, including a detailed justification for each type of obligation of such funds.

(2) BIWEEKLY REPORTS.—Every 14 days during the period beginning on the date on which the plan under paragraph (1) is submitted and ending seven days after the date on which the Secretary has expended all covered funds, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report detailing the obligation and expenditure of, and the planned uses for, such funds during the period covered by the report, including a written justification for any deviation in such obligations, expenditures, or planned uses from such plan.

(b) INSPECTOR GENERAL AUDITS.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and semiannually thereafter for three years or until the Secretary has expended all covered funds, whichever occurs first, the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report examining the obligations and expenditures made using covered funds during the period covered by the report. Each such report shall include—

(1) a comparison of how the funds are being obligated and expended to how the funds were planned to be obligated and expended in the plan under subsection (a)(1);

(2) areas of waste, fraud, and abuse, if any; and

(3) any other matter the Inspector General determines relevant.

(c) COMPTROLLER GENERAL REVIEWS.—

(1) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than September 30, 2022, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate an interim report containing a review of obligations and expenditures made using covered funds. The report shall include—

(A) a review of the process of the Department of Veterans Affairs for preparing the request for funds;

(B) an explanation of how the expenditure of such funds met the goals of the Department during the public health emergency for which the funds were made available;

(C) any recommendations to improve the process of identifying needs and expending funds during similar situations in the future; and

(D) a review of the plans of the Department to continue programs or investments that were begun with such funds but will continue after such funds are expended.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than September 30, 2024, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a final report on the matters specified under paragraph (1).

(d) COVERED FUNDS DEFINED.—In this section, the term “covered funds” means funds that are made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to—

(1) the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (Public Law 116-127);

(2) the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (Public Law 116-136); or

(3) the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law 117-2).

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 2911.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support Representative BOST’s bipartisan legislation, the VA Transparency & Trust Act, for which Representative PAPPAS, Representative MANN, and I are original cosponsors.

This bill provides additional oversight for the funds Congress made available to the VA through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the CARES Act in 2020, as well as the American Rescue Plan, which we passed earlier this year.

In addition to requiring the VA to report biweekly on how it spends these

supplemental funds, the bill mandates the VA Office of Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office to periodically report on VA’s spending of these funds.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2911 adds to the existing oversight on VA’s spending and will enable greater transparency for Congress and the public to ensure that these funds are spent efficiently and effectively to support critical VA programs and services as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2911, the VA Transparency & Trust Act of 2021.

In the American Rescue Plan, the VA requested and received \$17.1 billion in emergency funding. I demanded justification from the VA to support that funding, and very little came. I asked why the VA needed additional money since roughly \$10 billion in CARES Act funding was still available, and no one answered.

Ranking Member TRACEY MANN offered an amendment to oversee the use of those funds during the committee’s markup of the American Rescue Plan. It was voted down on party lines.

What I feared at that time I can now confirm. The American Rescue Plan has essentially become a blank check for the VA to the tune of \$17.1 billion.

H.R. 2911 would establish strict oversight and reporting requirements over all remaining COVID supplemental funds. It would also require the VA inspector general to conduct regular audits of these funds.

Lastly, it would require the GAO to conduct a complete review after all funds have been spent.

I believe these requirements are appropriate given that we are talking about tens of billions in taxpayer dollars. We should all expect full transparency on the use of these funds.

I thank Chairman PAPPAS and Ranking Member MANN for joining me in introducing this bill. I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. PAPPAS), my good friend and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Ranking Member BOST, for introducing this legislation. I was proud to support it alongside my colleague, TRACEY MANN, from the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. It is the VA Transparency & Trust Act of 2021.

Now, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis turned our world upside down, and it hit our veteran community especially hard. The issues our veterans faced before the pandemic

have only been exacerbated by COVID-19, and they contend with a new host of health and financial hardships.

That is why I joined with many in this Chamber to strongly urge for support to our veterans in COVID-19 relief packages, including the American Rescue Plan. That plan provided a much-needed investment in the VA, but we must all work together to ensure that this funding is used effectively to support our veterans and to increase the quality care that they receive.

As chair of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse, and ensuring veterans get the care they have earned is a top priority.

This legislation would require the VA to report to Congress on the emergency funding that it has already received. It will provide the enhanced oversight that is warranted to ensure funds are being used efficiently and in ways that are truly meeting the needs of those who have served us all.

Mr. Speaker, I urge swift passage of this legislation.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I also ask all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 2911, 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. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2911.

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. ROSENDALE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

□ 1430

HOMELESS VETERANS WITH CHILDREN REINTEGRATION ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 240) to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Labor to prioritize the provision of services to homeless veterans with dependents in carrying out homeless veterans reintegration programs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 240

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 "Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act".

SEC. 2. PRIORITY UNDER HOMELESS VETERANS REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS WITH DEPENDENTS.

(a) PRIORITY FOR HOMELESS VETERANS WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN.—Subsection (a) of section 2021 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking "Subject to" and inserting "(1) Subject to";

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (5) as subparagraphs (A) through (E), respectively; and

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

"(2) In conducting programs under this section, the Secretary shall prioritize the provision of services to homeless veterans with dependents."

(b) ADDITIONAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended—

(1) by striking "the report an evaluation of services" and all that follows and inserting "each such report—"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(1) an evaluation of services furnished to veterans under this section and an analysis of the information collected under subsection (b);

"(2) an analysis of any gaps in access to shelter, safety, and services for homeless veterans with dependent children; and

"(3) recommendations for improving any gaps identified under paragraph (2)."

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 240.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on H.R. 240, the Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act introduced by Congresswoman JULIA BROWNLEY.

There is increasing concern that shelters and homeless veteran housing is not created to serve families, and that homeless veterans with children may avoid seeking out services because they are afraid of being separated from their children.

Representative BROWNLEY's legislation seeks to start addressing the issue by ensuring that veterans with families are prioritized within the homeless veterans reintegration program, or HVRP. HVRP seeks to address reintegrating homeless veterans into the workforce through grants to partner organizations.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018, the Department of Labor identified homeless female veterans and veterans with families as one of the three priority populations for HVRP services. H.R. 240 would prioritize homeless veterans with dependent children within the homeless

veteran reintegration program to ensure they get the resources they need to return to housing without the fear of losing their children should they seek help.

I applaud Representative BROWNLEY for her work on this legislation, and I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting the Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 240, the Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act.

This legislation would direct the Secretary of Labor to prioritize homeless veterans with dependents when administering homeless reintegration programs.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development recently released 2020's Point-in-Time count for homeless veterans. This count showed that on a single night in 2020, there were 37,252 veterans living on the street. This is a slight increase of 0.4 percent from 2019.

With COVID-19 impacting the economy and increasing unemployment, we must do everything we can to help our homeless veterans find work.

By passing this bill to prioritize job training for homeless veterans with dependents, we are ensuring this vulnerable population is at the front of the line for help.

I thank Congresswoman BROWNLEY for her hard work on drafting this bill, and I am proud to support it today.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BROWNLEY), my good friend, the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Health, and also the author of this important piece of legislation.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, the Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act.

On any given day, there are more than 550,000 people experiencing homelessness in our country. An estimated 40,000 of them are veterans. This is categorically unacceptable.

Although the Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA have made progress toward eliminating veterans' homelessness, there is still more that must be done to ensure that every veteran has a home.

We know it is 10 times cheaper to provide resources to prevent homelessness in the first place than it is to house someone once they have become homeless.

We also know that so many of our veterans suffer from PTSD related to combat or, far too often, military sexual trauma. These traumatic experiences put veterans at increased risk of mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and homelessness.