

alongside. They served our country honorably in uniform and did so again when they were called.

The administration's withdrawal has been a failure, but these individuals who have volunteered to be on the front lines of saving lives are heroes, and they have shown the world why we are an exceptional people. This is not about politics; this is about America keeping the promises we made. Our mission is not over.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 4:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1631

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR) at 4 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EXPIRING AUTHORITIES ACT OF 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5293) to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend and modify certain authorities and requirements relating 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. 5293

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 "Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY FOR DENTAL INSURANCE PLAN FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS OF VETERANS.

Section 1712C of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking subsection (j).

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY EXPANSION OF PAYMENTS AND ALLOWANCES FOR BENEFICIARY TRAVEL IN CONNECTION WITH VETERANS RECEIVING CARE FROM VET CENTERS.

Section 104(a) of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-154; 126 Stat. 1169), as most recently amended by section 5109 of the Continuing Appropriations Act,

2021 and Other Extensions Act (Public Law 116-159; 134 Stat. 749), is further amended by striking "September 30, 2021" and inserting "September 30, 2022".

SEC. 4. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY FOR PILOT PROGRAM ON ACCEPTANCE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF DONATED FACILITIES AND RELATED IMPROVEMENTS.

Section 2(i) of the Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed for Veterans Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-294; 38 U.S.C. 8103 note) is amended by striking "the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act" and inserting "December 16, 2026".

SEC. 5. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

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. 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. 5293.

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 to speak today in support of H.R. 5293, the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2021, offered by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MRVAN), the chairman of our Technology Modernization Subcommittee and my good friend.

This package ensures continued operations of several programs that are vital to addressing the needs of veterans we serve.

First, this bill removes the December 31, 2021, expiration date and makes permanent VA's dental insurance program. This benefit allows qualifying veterans, survivors, and dependents the opportunity to purchase discounted dental insurance coverage that includes preventive, diagnostic, endodontic, restorative, surgical, and emergency dental services.

Each individual covered by the program pays the entire premium for coverage in addition to the full cost of any copays. Enrollment is voluntary and does not affect eligible individuals' entitlement to existing VHA outpatient dental services and treatment.

Second, H.R. 5293 will extend VA's authority to provide travel reimbursement for certain veterans living in highly rural areas to receive care at vet centers. These centers serve as a

lifeline for veterans who may not feel comfortable seeking services at traditional VA medical facilities. They offer individual and group therapy, marriage and family counseling, and assist veterans in connecting to other VA benefits.

H.R. 5293 extends VA's authority to reimburse mileage, tolls, and other travel expenses veterans from highly rural areas may incur when traveling to vet centers.

Finally, H.R. 5293 will extend for 5 years VA's authority to operate the Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed for Veterans Act of 2016 or the CHIP IN Act.

This program allows VA to accept donations from non-Federal entities of buildings and land that VA will use to address long-term infrastructure needs, including the delivery of healthcare services.

Examples of non-Federal entities that can make donations under the pilot include State and local authorities, a donor or donor group, limited liability corporations, or tax-exempt organizations.

The CHIP IN Act allows VA to use funds that have already been appropriated for a particular facility's construction project to assist a donor of real property and improvements with financing, designing, or constructing the facility to suit VA's needs.

Thus far, VA has accepted two donations: design and construction of a facility on the grounds of the VA Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska; and construction of an inpatient facility in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This bill will extend VA's authority to accept similar donations in other locations.

Once again, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5293, which will authorize the continued operation of these important programs.

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 today in support of H.R. 5293, the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2021. This bill is sponsored by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MRVAN), and I thank him for introducing this bill to extend expiring authorities and programs.

The VA Expiring Authorities Act of 2021 would make VA dental insurance programs permanent so that veterans under VA's care are able to buy low-cost dental insurance coverage.

It would also allow veterans to continue to receive travel benefits when seeking support at vet centers.

It would also extend VA's Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed, or CHIP IN for Vets pilot program by an additional 5 years.

The CHIP IN program allows VA to accept real property donations from nongovernment entities. The program was established by Congress in 2016. It

has already proven successful in delivering VA medical facilities to veterans in Nebraska and Oklahoma.

Extending this program has been a priority of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. JACKSON) and the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON). I appreciate their leadership on this.

I am also grateful to my fellow House and Senate committee leaders—Chairman TAKANO, Chairman TESTER, and Ranking Member MORAN—for their work on this bill.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 5293. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I just urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 5293, 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. 5293.

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. TAKANO. 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.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 189) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2021, 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:

S. 189

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 Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2021”.

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

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2021, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2021, 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, 2021, 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 2022.

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 S. 189.

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, S. 189, the Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2021, would require the Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs to increase the rates of disability compensation for service-connected veterans and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of veterans, effective December 1, 2021.

This bill would also increase these rates by the same percentage as the percentage by which Social Security benefits are increased, effective December 1, 2021, and require that the VA publish the increased rates in the Federal Register.

To me, the actual cost-of-living adjustment to veterans’ benefits, other-

wise known as COLA, is much more than a rate adjustment tied to inflation. In reality, it is a quality-of-life guarantee in the retirement years, especially for veterans suffering with service-connected disabilities and ailments.

It also comes with the assurance for veterans that their survivors will not see a steady decline in benefits if the economy changes and costs rise after they have passed. This guarantee is a great source of comfort for veterans as they age. I know this because they tell me this everywhere I go.

The yearly COLA increase demonstrates the appreciation from a grateful nation in recognition of the service and sacrifice of those who volunteer to wear the uniform of our country.

Participating in this gesture of gratitude is one of the most rewarding responsibilities of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. As chairman, I am honored to be leading this effort to say thank you.

I want to recognize the work of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee chair, ELAINE LURIA, and ranking member TROY NEHLS for sponsoring S. 189’s House companion, H.R. 3909, and for bringing this legislation to the floor with me today.

I am pleased that we are considering this bill early this year so veterans will not be concerned about its passage by the December 1 deadline. This is especially important to so many feeling the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I wholeheartedly support S. 189, and I urge all my colleagues to do so as well.

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 today in support of S. 189, the Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2021. This bill will help ensure that benefits paid to veterans who are disabled as a result of their military service do not lose value because of inflation.

S. 189 authorizes a cost-of-living increase for veterans and their families next year as long as Social Security recipients receive an increase.

Many disabled veterans and their families rely on these compensation benefits to pay their bills, such as mortgage payments and groceries. In some cases, these benefits may even be the veteran’s only income. Moreover, VA benefits are providing much-needed financial support to many veterans facing uncertainty due to this pandemic.

We must pass this bill and ensure that compensation benefits for our disabled veterans keep pace with rising costs.

I would like to thank Senator THUNE for introducing this important legislation. I urge my colleagues to support S. 189.

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