

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. 2724, as amended.

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 rise in strong support of H.R. 2724, as amended, the VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act, introduced by the gentleman from New York (Mr. DELGADO).

VA has provided peer support specialists for recently discharged veterans transitioning to civilian life, veterans with mental health or substance abuse issues, and caregivers of veterans.

Peer support programs have proven successful for these communities and may prove to be a beneficial tool during the claims process for survivors of military sexual trauma. Victim advocacy can serve as a bridge between survivors and the Veterans Benefits Administration adjudicators processing their cases.

Within the MST context, a highly trained peer support specialist can serve as an advocate who can provide counsel, assistance, and coordination to navigate a process that may be stress-inducing and anxiety-provoking.

If the MST claimant chooses to utilize the services of a peer support specialist, the MST claims experience may go more smoothly and potentially reduce the emotional strain on an inherently difficult process.

This bill was amended in committee with thoughtful input from Ranking Member BOST, who sought to clarify that the role of the peer support specialist in assisting an MST claimant is to act as a shepherd for the MST claimant rather than a surrogate who speaks on behalf of a claimant during proceedings. As such, a peer support specialist can provide guidance, support, and counseling and help claimants navigate a difficult and potentially re-traumatizing process.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important 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. 2724, the VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act, which is sponsored by the gentleman from New York (Mr. DELGADO).

Veterans who file disability claims based on MST report that the process can be difficult and emotional. Peer support specialists can help these vet-

erans through this stressful time. Peer support specialists provide critical help to veterans.

Unfortunately, many veterans who file a claim for conditions based on MST may not be aware of, or eligible for, VHA peer support services. This bill would better ensure that these claimants are eligible for peer support services or are connected with an MST coordinator at VHA.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 2724, as amended, and maybe, hopefully, the gentleman from Montana will allow this to go on a voice vote. I thought I would just mention that. 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. 2724, as amended.

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.

VETERANS RAPID RETRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM RESTORATION AND RECOVERY ACT OF 2022

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 4089) to restore entitlement to educational assistance under Veterans Rapid Retraining Program in cases of a closure of an educational institution or a disapproval of a program of education, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 4089

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 Rapid Retraining Assistance Program Restoration and Recovery Act of 2022”.

SEC. 2. RESTORATION OF ENTITLEMENT UNDER VETERANS RAPID RETRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8006 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law 117–2), as amended by the Training in High-demand Roles to Improve Veteran Employment Act (Public Law 117–16), is further amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (n) as subsection (o); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (m), the following new subsection (n):

“(n) EFFECTS OF CLOSURE OF AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OR DISAPPROVAL OF A PROGRAM OF EDUCATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Any payment of retraining assistance under subsection (d)(1) shall

not be charged against any entitlement to retraining assistance described in subsection (a) if the Secretary determines that an individual was unable to complete a course or program of education as a result of—

“(A) the closure of an educational institution; or

“(B) the disapproval of a program of education by the State approving agency or the Secretary when acting in the role of the State approving agency.

“(2) PERIOD NOT CHARGED.—The period for which, by reason of this subsection, retraining assistance is not charged shall be equal to the full amount of retraining assistance provided for enrollment in the program of education.

“(3) HALT OF PAYMENTS TO CERTAIN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.—In the event of a closure or disapproval, as described in paragraph (1), the educational institution shall not receive any further payments under subsection (d).

“(4) RECOVERY OF FUNDS.—In the event of a closure or disapproval, as described in paragraph (1), any payment already made under subsection (d) to the educational institution shall be considered an overpayment and constitute a liability of such institution to the United States.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—In subsection (b)(3) of such section, strike the period and insert “, except for an individual described in subsection (n).”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply as if included in 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 S. 4089.

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 rise in support of S. 4089, the Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program Restoration and Recovery Act.

This legislation was introduced by Senator DURBIN and passed by unanimous consent in the Senate. I also thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS) for introducing this legislation in the House.

Mr. Speaker, during the most difficult period of the COVID–19 pandemic, Congress and President Biden worked together to pass the American Rescue Plan into law, one of the most significant investments in American workers and the American economy since the New Deal.

The Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program, which was included in the American Rescue Plan, created a new program to retrain and employ unemployed veterans.

Since passage, over 5,000 veterans have used this program, many to great

success. However, not every veteran has had the same experience. Some have been subject to school closures, which risk robbing them of this one-time benefit. For example, in Illinois, more than 300 veterans were scammed by a for-profit school that took their money and abruptly closed its doors.

This legislation restores these education benefits to veterans defrauded by schools and gives these veterans a second chance to gain new skills in a booming labor market.

I thank the Senate for getting this bill to us so quickly and Senator DURBIN and Congressman DANNY K. DAVIS for their leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this important 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 in support of S. 4089, the Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program Restoration and Recovery Act.

One of the few positive provisions that was enacted as part of the American Rescue Plan was the creation of the Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program, or VRRAP. This program authorizes 1 year of GI Bill-style education benefits for training for an in-demand occupation for unemployed veterans.

VRRAP was originally authored during the peak of COVID veteran unemployment by our former colleague Dr. Phil Roe and Congressman LEVIN. I was pleased to introduce the bill this year and was glad that it was made part of the American Rescue Plan.

Under this program, eligible veterans only have one chance to participate in VRRAP. This became a problem for hundreds of students at Future Tech Career Institute in Chicago when the training provider lost their ability to administer GI Bill benefits earlier this year.

If those students had been using a traditional GI Bill program, they would be eligible to have their benefits restored to continue their studies at another school. However, with VRRAP, that was not possible.

This bill will fix that issue, authorizing VRRAP users to have another chance to use the program if their school closes or loses GI Bill approval in the middle of the semester.

While I am very supportive of the policy in this bill, I do have concerns about the cost. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated the cost of this bill to be at \$6 million in mandatory costs over 10 years.

For whatever reason, the Senate chose not to offset these costs before passing this bill. This decision is, unfortunately, not surprising, as we have seen repeatedly that the Democrat majority in both the House and the Senate loves to ignore costs and increase spending.

Their overstimulation of the economy has led to soaring inflation and staggering price increases that Ameri-

cans see every day. We must stop mortgaging our children's and grandchildren's futures. Our current level of spending is simply not sustainable.

That being said, I am not going to stand in the way of providing restored benefits to unemployed veterans who need our help in this struggling economy. That is why I am going to reluctantly support the passage of this bill today. However, I caution my friends that this practice of un-offset spending must end.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS), my good friend who serves as a subcommittee chair on the Ways and Means Committee and is a member of the Oversight and Reform Committee.

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program Restoration and Recovery Act. I introduced this bill with Senator DURBIN and Representative UNDERWOOD to ensure veterans receive the rapid retraining benefits they earned.

I thank Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman TAKANO and Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Chairman LEVIN for their leadership in advancing this bill quickly to meet the urgent need of affected veterans.

I also thank the multiple veterans' advocates for their support for swift passage to assist affected students.

Veterans serving our country with honor have earned their rapid retraining assistance education benefits. The American Rescue Plan established these benefits, known as VRRAP, to help veterans gain new skills to meet the changing workforce demands during the pandemic.

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Unfortunately, the Veterans Administration lacks the authority to restore benefits to veterans who attended institutions that closed or experienced a disapproval of educational programming.

This legislation emerged from casework in Illinois, where more than 300 Illinois veterans were scammed out of their benefits by an unaccredited for-profit institute.

I am indeed proud to work with Senator DURBIN and Representative UNDERWOOD to restore these benefits to these Illinois veterans and protect any other veteran in similar circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support it, and I thank the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for bringing it to us so quickly.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me in passing this important

legislation. I remind my colleagues that it was sent to us by the Senate by unanimous consent, and we can express that same sense of unanimity by allowing this bill to pass on suspension by voice vote. The Senate has indicated unanimity. As my colleagues well know, to even get to the floor requires a 60-vote super majority.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to my friend from Montana, the Big Sky State, have a big heart as well as be from the Big Sky State. To my colleague, the ranking member, I take to heart your consternation over a \$6 million non-offsetted cost, but I will remind you of a \$2 trillion tax cut which was not offset.

So we will wring our hands over \$6 million for our veterans but yet, look the other way when \$2.9 trillion is blithely moved through this Chamber with nary a hearing. I plead to a big heart in this institution that we may get through these votes quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support S. 4089, 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, S. 4089.

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.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL TRAINING ACT OF 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6052) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to require the employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive training developed by the Inspector General of the Department on reporting wrongdoing to, responding to requests from, and cooperating with the Office of Inspector General, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6052

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 Office of Inspector General Training Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EMPLOYEE TRAINING REGARDING OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.

(a) TRAINING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall require each employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive training that the Inspector General of the Department shall develop on the reporting of