

□ 1715

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I realize the chairman and all of us in the veteran space have had our differences with the way the Congressional Budget Office scores the TEF. However, I would assert that we cannot use that as an excuse for why we don't address veteran homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, the expansion of VET-TEC as a program is to the tune of nearly one-half billion dollars—\$413 million—at a time when my colleagues on the other side are looking to make draconian cuts to the nondefense side of the ledger, which veterans do fall within. They are expanding a program that addresses veteran employment at a time when veteran unemployment is at its lowest.

What I want to compare is the \$6 million to the nearly one-half billion dollars that the Republicans want to expand this program by. I, too, stand behind veteran employment programs and effective ones at that. However, should we be expanding it and authorizing for 5 years this program, VET-TEC, when we are allowing a \$6 million program to care for homeless veterans, to get them off the streets, to expire?

It is a rather rich situation that my colleagues want to expand spending and spend more on a program whose urgency is really in question because the Biden economy, as I explained, has brought veteran unemployment to its lowest levels ever. They want to expand spending in that program by an enormous amount, yet they want to eliminate \$6 million in authorizations to take care of our homeless veterans. This makes no sense at all to me.

I support the chairman's bill, but I hope he will work with us to solve this problem in a matter of days and not months.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am going to say a couple of things that I have said on this House floor before. I am going to say them again.

The gentleman referred to our cutting veterans. Actually, we are increasing over the President's budget. We will get more into that later this week in committee.

Let me also say this, Mr. Speaker. I will repeat my plea right now that our friends on the other side of the aisle join me in developing a solution to an issue that he has decided is not anything more than a political ploy, trying to say that we are going to cut benefits by straightening this problem out.

We are not. We will not. Let me say this again on this floor: Veterans are not being cut, period.

This is a good piece of legislation. It is bipartisan.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all the people on our side of the aisle and on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YAKYM). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1669, 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. BOST. 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, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2023

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 777) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2023, 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. 777

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 2023" or the "Veterans' COLA Act of 2023".

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

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2023, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2023, 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, 2023, 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 2024.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 777.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 777. I appreciate Senator TESTER and Senator MORAN for their leadership on this important bill. I also thank Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Chairman LUTTRELL and Ranking Member PAPPAS for leading the House companion to S. 777.

Our bipartisan collaboration on this legislation each year is vitally important. The Veterans' COLA Act of 2023 would increase the rates of compensation for our veterans and their survivors to keep pace with inflation and the rising cost of living.

Many veterans fought for our country and came back with visible and invisible injuries. Their disability compensation benefits provide financial security for service-disabled veterans and their families.

Mr. Speaker, veterans should not have to worry whether their earned benefits can cover their basic needs. They should not have to choose between gas to get to work or groceries for their family.

However, unfortunately, because of the Biden inflation problem that has occurred because of out-of-control spending, this is a reality for thousands of veterans' families. The least we can do for them is to provide a cost-of-living adjustment this year so they can continue to pay their bills and put food on their tables.

I am proud to support this bill today, and I hope all my colleagues will join me in sending this bill to the President's desk.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for S. 777, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2023.

As we do annually, today, we are taking up legislation to increase the amounts paid for wartime disability compensation, compensation for dependents, clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children.

Specifically, the bill requires VA to raise these benefit amounts by the same percentage as the cost-of-living increase provided to Social Security recipients, serving as a guarantee of quality of life for veterans and their families and ensuring that they will not experience a decline in earned benefits as economic conditions fluctuate.

The cost-of-living adjustment is a continued recognition by our grateful Nation of the service and sacrifice not just of those who have courageously worn our Nation's uniforms but those families who have supported them and also bear a great burden.

As ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, it is an honor for me to support this effort.

I will note, however, that particularly with respect to dependency and indemnity compensation, more needs to be done beyond the annual COLA to bring that program on par with other Federal survivors' benefits. It has lagged behind for far too long, which is a disservice to the survivors of our veterans. I hope this committee can see fit to advance that cause this Congress, as well.

Typically, we alternate primary sponsorship of this bill with the Senate, and this year it happens to be the Senate's turn. I acknowledge the Senate for promptly sending us their version.

I also commend the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs and extend my gratitude to Ranking Member PAPPAS and Chair LUTTRELL for their sponsorship of the House companion to this bill and for their unwavering support for our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support S. 777, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LUTTRELL), who is the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. LUTTRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 777.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Senator TESTER and Senator MORAN for leading this bill through the Senate. I also thank the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee's ranking member, Mr. PAPPAS, for joining me and co-leading the House companion to S. 777.

As Chairman BOST said, this legislation is necessary to ensure that veterans' and survivors' compensation benefits keep pace with rising inflation.

There are veterans in my district who are struggling to make ends meet. Without their disability compensation benefits, they may not be able to do just that.

Finances and the ability to pay bills can be a major source of stress and anxiety for so many veterans, survivors, and their families. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in just 1 year, the consumer price index has risen 4.9 percent, with housing and gas prices at the front of the charge. This bill is crucial to ensure that veterans can keep pace with this widespread inflation.

Mr. Speaker, I know many of my colleagues are committed to helping their veteran constituents, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. PAPPAS), the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member TAKANO for yielding the time and Chairman BOST, as well, for his support of this legislation. It was an honor to be able to work with subcommittee Chair LUTTRELL on this important issue, S. 777, the Veterans' COLA Act of 2023.

We all know we have a sacred and solemn obligation to make sure that the needs of our veterans are met. My home State of New Hampshire is home to over 100,000 veterans from all branches, with service dating from the Second World War to today. Some of those veterans returned home with service-connected disabilities and required extra care and support.

As we all continue to feel the impact of inflation and higher costs, those pressures can be particularly challenging for our veteran community.

Our veterans swear to give everything, up to and including their lives, in service to our country. They shouldn't have to worry if they can afford groceries this week or pay their electric bill the next week.

Their VA benefits should keep pace with economic trends, and their financial and overall well-being should never be left to hang in the balance.

This legislation would increase the rates of VA benefits equal to the cost-of-living increase provided for Social Security benefits for veterans with service-connected disabilities, as well as the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for their survivors and families.

This will help ensure that veterans with service-connected disabilities and families and loved ones of veterans who have been lost can rest assured that their benefits will support them even as our economy changes.

We owe our veterans and their families a tremendous debt of gratitude, and the legislation we propose today is another way that we can all work to honor their sacrifice and work to pay down that debt that we all bear.

Mr. Speaker, I urge swift passage of this bipartisan bill so we can send it to the President's desk for his signature.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), my good friend who serves on the Judiciary Committee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank very much the ranking member; Mr. BOST; my good friend from Texas; the ranking member, the gentleman from New Hampshire; and, of course, in the other body, Senator TESTER for a very instructive and important initiative dealing with the cost of living for our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, if my colleagues are embraced and engaged with veterans—which many of us do every time we are home in the district—they realize that they, in many instances, continue their service in the kinds of work that they do. Realize, however, that they have any number of additional challenges in many instances. That, of course, includes some of the health issues, housing issues, and ability-to-support-family issues.

The cost of living is, in essence, something that we should make as a commitment for the service that they have given.

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I know that we often say thank you for your service, and we often have a smile on our face. I want it to be well known, well known, that it is by our action and our deeds, not just by our words.

The veterans that we see across our districts and across America have fought in many wars. Many of them believe that they have not been given the full amount of their veteran benefits.

They believe that they are still trying to petition for a level of disability, if you will. Some are at a certain percentage and feel that they deserve another percentage because they are in a financial condition that causes them to wonder about their service and their service-connected disability. We get all of those questions.

I think the overall statement that has been made about the cost of living is to recognize the difficulty our veterans have, the increasing amount of moneys that it requires for us to take care of our veterans, and that this is a responsible and respectable way of doing so.

I hope that we will pass this quickly. I hope that it will go to the President's desk. I hope that when we see our veterans, we will be able to be an exhibitor of deeds, that we stood on the floor of the House to say thank you.

We stood on the floor of the House to say we recognize the needs that you have from the veterans hospitals, veterans clinics, and certainly for the need of increased compensation.

This is an important statement not only for veterans but for their families.

It is an important statement for the young men and women who put on the uniform today unselfishly.

They will ultimately be veterans, and we hope that they will be able to serve, and they will be able to come out as veterans.

Please be reminded as we celebrate Memorial Day there are those who put on the uniform unselfishly, and they never made it home.

We want to be able to honor those, but as well, we want to honor living veterans. I support this legislation that provides for a veterans COLA of 2023.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I have no more speakers. I am ready to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to pass S. 777, Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2023, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I also encourage all of our Members to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 777.

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.

NOTAM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2023

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 346) to establish a task force on improvements for notices to air missions, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendment is as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "NOTAM Improvement Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. FAA TASK FORCE ON NOTAM IMPROVEMENT.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall establish a task force to be known as the FAA Task Force on NOTAM Improvement (in this section referred to as the "Task Force").

(b) **COMPOSITION.**—The Task Force shall consist of members appointed by the Administrator, including at least one member of each of the following:

- (1) Air carrier representatives.
- (2) Airport representatives.
- (3) Labor union representatives of airline pilots.
- (4) Labor union representatives of aircraft dispatchers.
- (5) The labor union certified under section 7111 of title 5, United States Code, to represent FAA air traffic control specialists assigned to the United States NOTAMs Office.
- (6) The labor union certified under section 7111 of title 5, United States Code, to represent FAA aeronautical information specialists.

(7) General and business aviation representatives.

(8) Aviation safety experts with knowledge of NOTAMs.

(9) Human factors experts.

(10) Computer system architecture and cybersecurity experts.

(c) **DUTIES.**—The duties of the Task Force shall include—

(1) reviewing existing methods for publishing NOTAMs and flight operations information to pilots;

(2) reviewing regulations, policies, systems, and international standards relating to NOTAMs, including their content and presentation to pilots;

(3) evaluating and determining best practices to organize, prioritize, and present flight operations information in a manner that optimizes pilot review and retention of relevant information; and

(4) providing recommendations for—

(A) improving the publication and delivery of NOTAM information in a manner that prioritizes or highlights the most important information, and optimizes pilot review and retention of relevant information;

(B) ways to ensure that NOTAMs are complete, accurate, timely, relevant to safe flight operations, and contain pertinent information;

(C) any best practices that the FAA should consider to improve the accuracy and understandability of NOTAMs and the display of flight operations information;

(D) ways to work with air carriers, other airspace users, and aviation service providers to implement solutions that are aligned with the recommendations under this paragraph; and

(E) ways to ensure the stability, resiliency, and cybersecurity of the NOTAM computer system.

(d) **REPORT.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of the establishment of the Task Force, the Task Force shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report detailing—

(1) the results of the reviews and evaluations of the Task Force under paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (c);

(2) the best practices identified and recommendations provided by the Task Force under subsection (c)(4);

(3) any recommendations of the Task Force for additional regulatory or policy actions to improve the publication of NOTAMs; and

(4) the degree to which implementing the recommendations of the Task Force described under paragraph (2) will address National Transportation Safety Board Safety Recommendation A-18-024.

(e) **APPLICABLE LAW.**—Chapter 10 of title 5, United States Code, shall not apply to the Task Force.

(f) **SUNSET.**—The Task Force shall terminate on the later of—

(1) the date on which the Task Force submits the report required under subsection (d); or

(2) the date that is 18 months after the date on which the Task Force is established under subsection (a).

(g) **AUTHORITY.**—The Administrator shall have the authority to carry out the recommendations of the Task Force detailed in the report required under subsection (d).

(h) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this section may be construed to require the FAA to duplicate any prior, ongoing, or planned efforts related to the improvement of NOTAMs, including any efforts related to implementing any previously enacted requirements.

(i) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **FAA.**—The term "FAA" means the Federal Aviation Administration.

(2) **NOTAM.**—The term "NOTAM" means a notice containing information (which is not known sufficiently in advance to publicize by

other means) concerning the establishment, condition, or change in any component (including a facility, service, or procedure thereof) or hazard in the National Airspace System, the timely knowledge of which is essential to personnel concerned with flight operations.

SEC. 3. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

Not later than September 30, 2024, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall make the following improvements:

(1) Complete implementation of a Federal NOTAM System (in this section referred to as a "FNS").

(2) Implement a back-up system to the FNS.

(3) Brief the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate on a plan to enhance the capability to deliver information through the FNS that is machine-readable, filterable, and in the format used by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to promote further global harmonization among neighboring Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) and provide users of the National Airspace System with one consistent format for domestic and international operations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. STAUBER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DESAULNIER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STAUBER. 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 in the RECORD on the Senate amendment to H.R. 346.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of my bipartisan legislation that improves the safety of air travel.

NOTAMs provide current, up-to-the-minute data to pilots on any aspect of their flight. Unfortunately, NOTAMs are often buried in lengthy reports, conflating important safety information with more common alerts. These inefficiencies have created some life-threatening situations over the years.

On January 11, 2023, all U.S. domestic flights were grounded for the first time since 9/11. The NOTAM system crashed. Old and antiquated, it comes as no real surprise that the system easily went down.

Unfortunately, leadership at the Department of Transportation has left me uninspired. Instead of focusing resources on safety improvements and upgrades, Secretary Buttigieg has spent his time retitling programs and systems.

I will tell you that no pilot cares what the system is called, just that it works and provides her with the information she needs to get her crew and her passengers to safety.

Mr. Speaker, I have been advocating for NOTAM upgrades for 4 years. My