

# ENCOURAGING THE CONNECTING OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THE UNITED STATES TO SUPPORT STRUCTURES NECESSARY TO TRANSITION FROM THE BATTLEFIELD

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 848) encouraging the connecting of members of the Armed Forces in the United States to support structures necessary to transition from the battlefield.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

## H. RES. 848

Whereas the number of suicides of members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty increased to 377 in 2020, an increase from 348 in 2019;

Whereas the suicide rate for veterans has steadily increased since 2006, with 6,261 veterans taking their own lives in 2019;

Whereas, after adjusting for sex and age, the rate of veteran suicide in 2018 was 27.5 per 100,000 individuals, higher than the rate among all United States adults, which was 18.3 per 100,000 individuals;

Whereas more veterans have died by suicide in the last 10 years than members of the Armed Forces who died from combat in Vietnam;

Whereas many of the veterans who take their own lives have had no contact with the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic can lead to increased isolation and disconnection, further exacerbating mental and physical ailments such as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury;

Whereas the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that law enforcement officers and firefighters are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty, and emergency medical services providers are 1.39 times more likely to die by suicide than members of the general public;

Whereas invisible wounds linked to an underlying and undiagnosed traumatic brain injury can mirror many mental health conditions, a problem that can be addressed through appropriate medical treatment; and

Whereas additional research is needed to highlight the connection between traumatic brain injury as a root cause of invisible wounds and suicide by members of the Armed Forces and veterans: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) encourages all individuals in the United States, especially members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty and veterans, to call a warrior, have an honest conversation, and connect them with support, understanding that making a warrior call could save a life; and

(2) implores all individuals in the United States to commit themselves to engaging with members of the Armed Forces and veterans to promote solutions and treatment for the invisible scars that members of the Armed Forces carry.

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 H. Res. 848.

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 H. Res. 848, and I thank my fellow veteran, Representative VAN ORDEN, for his leadership on this resolution.

As the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I believe that we should celebrate the service of our veterans every day, not just like we did this weekend for Veterans Day. Every day, I am grateful to our veterans for their service to our country.

That is why this resolution is so important. Too many of our veterans are suffering in silence. Too many of our veterans are struggling to find their way. We owe it to them to do our part and reach out to let them know they are not alone.

This resolution encourages all Americans to connect with the persons in their lives who have served and offer a listening ear. Representative VAN ORDEN's resolution implores all Americans to help servicemembers and veterans find solutions and treatment for the wounds of battle that may not be visible. This resolution also highlights the importance of taking care of our brothers and sisters in arms before, during, and after their service.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my colleague for introducing it, and I urge all Members to support it.

To any veteran who may be watching, please reach out to talk. Hope and help are available by dialing 988 and pressing 1. We need you, and we want to help you.

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 H. Res. 848, encouraging the connecting of members of the Armed Forces in the United States to support structures necessary to transition from the battlefield.

While I support this resolution and urge my colleagues to vote in support of it, I must register my disappointment that this is one of only two veteran- or servicemember-related measures that House leadership has chosen to work on this week, the week following Veterans Day.

The resolution asks members of the public to join Congress in thanking and supporting servicemembers in their transition out of the military into civilian life. That is worthwhile, but it does not come with any concrete action.

Our committee has favorably reported several bills to help our most vulnerable veterans. Those bills are waiting for action and have been for

months now. If we really wanted to honor servicemembers and veterans, we would be voting on those bills this week.

Mr. Speaker, we know that homeless veterans are eight times more likely to die by suicide, so we urgently need to get homeless veterans housed before the coldest and cruelest months of the year come upon us. Every day we fail to act, more disabled and elderly veterans are forced into the care of nursing homes and other institutional long-term care settings, even though they would prefer to be taken care of at home surrounded by their loved ones.

Let me also point out that while I find it telling that while jurisdiction over this resolution about servicemember transition lies primarily with the House Armed Services Committee, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs is here managing floor time. I am glad for this because our committee has been pushing to take primary oversight responsibility for the administration of the TAP program for years.

We hear from countless veterans that the administration of TAP by DOD falls flat. DOD is focused on readiness and making sure that servicemembers are focused on their mission of protecting our country, as they should be. Nevertheless, the bookend to that mission is helping servicemembers find success as civilians.

Because DOD has not focused on that transition, too many servicemembers separate from the military without a full picture of the earned benefits available to them as veterans, and it leaves them more vulnerable at an already stressful time.

I believe that it would make more sense for us to have primary jurisdiction over the TAP program to make sure the transition from the military to civilian life is as smooth as possible. We work with VA on healthcare and benefits delivery every single day, and we are better positioned than the Armed Services Committee to ensure veterans understand what life will look like out of the military.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see House leadership acknowledging our leadership role in the transition of servicemembers. I will continue to advocate that TAP be included as primarily within the Veterans' Affairs Committee's jurisdiction in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative VAN ORDEN for introducing this resolution, and I hope we can continue working together on continued improvements to the TAP program.

I urge this House to bring up additional veterans bills. We should not only thank veterans and servicemembers for their service. We should be backing up those thank-yous with action.

As we face yet another threat of a shutdown, I hope this Congress can stop operating from the brink and begin to do the work that is demanded of us. It is what we owe to veterans, and we should not abide by reneging on our promises.

Mr. Speaker, I support H. Res. 848, but let's act on more than the words of a resolution. I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, while I understand the concerns of the minority, I would remind the minority that both sides of the aisle on this committee are committed to this legislation. The Colmery Act and reducing veteran homelessness is a priority for us, and now that the House is back in business, I hope to see it on the floor very soon.

Mr. Speaker, if 208 Democrats had put their country first and not voted for the chaos of the 3 weeks of being without a Speaker, then maybe they have a complaint. Nonetheless, now, because of that chaos, maybe we would have already had these things picked up. I disagreed.

I look forward to working with both leadership and the minority to pass it out of the House with bipartisan support.

Mr. Speaker, I also respectfully remind the ranking member that Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal to increase the grant per diem rate during the COVID pandemic would have helped address this problem. However, Democrats, who were in the majority at the time, made us reduce the rate and put veterans homelessness providers in the situation we are in today with GPD. Rates are not in line with rising inflation.

We have been very successful in making smart investments in the VA program in recent years to reduce veteran homelessness. I agree with the minority that now is not the time to take our foot off the gas. I will agree with them on that.

Important legislation, such as Representative CHAVEZ-DEREMER's bill, is one of the best ways to build our success and get veterans housed, which is why we are not going to stop improving these programs now.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I will get back to the resolution we have in front of us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. VAN ORDEN), who is the sponsor of this resolution.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my resolution, H. Res. 848, urging all Americans, especially those who have worn the uniform, to reach out and connect with a fellow warrior.

In my 26 years of service, 22 of which I spent as a Navy SEAL, I have forged unbreakable bonds that only those who have served truly understand. These bonds are not predicated on politics. They are based solely on service over self. I don't ever recall asking a fellow servicemember what party they were affiliated with, only if they could perform the duties that were expected of them by their fellow Americans.

During my service, I bore witness to the greatest virtues that can be attrib-

uted to the human condition. I have also witnessed the profound sense of sorrow when we lost one of our own.

Among those whom we lost is my friend and former teammate, Navy SEAL Ryan Larkin, who tragically took his own life on April 23, 2017. Ryan's story speaks to the silent battles faced by many servicemembers and our veterans.

However, out of that darkness that is Ryan's loss, the Warrior Call resolution was born. It was inspired by Ryan's father, Frank Larkin, a former Navy SEAL and the 40th Sergeant At Arms of the United States Senate. His sincere wish is that no parent, spouse, friend, or teammate should ever again have to experience the loss of a loved one due to suicide. This resolution reflects the ongoing need to support those who grapple with isolation and mental health challenges.

Every year, our Nation sets aside a day for the men and women who gave their lives for freedom, and that is Memorial Day. For those who previously defended our freedoms, that is Veterans Day. For those who are currently defending our freedoms, that is Armed Forces Day.

This resolution serves a different purpose. It pays tribute to those we have lost by trying to prevent those who have come through the crucible of service from taking their own lives.

Every day, over 20 veterans commit suicide. We have lost more veterans to suicide in the last 10 years than we have in the cumulative total of all combat losses during the Vietnam war. We are doing something wrong, and it is time for a change.

Preventing veteran suicide is my number one legislative priority in terms of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee on the Veterans' Affairs Committee being led by Chairman BOST. I am thankful to my fellow Members from both sides of the aisle and Ranking Member LEVIN for showing such commitment to this noble cause.

We know that one of the first outward signs of suicidal ideation is self-isolation, and that is why it is so critical that our veterans get involved in veterans service organizations and the VA itself. Nevertheless, not all Americans have access to VSOs or the VA, and this resolution empowers them to help end the scourge that is veteran suicide by simply picking up the phone and checking in with a warrior they have in their life, whether it is a brother, sister, friend, or neighbor, and have an honest conversation with them.

They will let them know that they are important to them and that they truly do value the veteran's sacrifice. It puts meaning behind the oft-spoken phrase: "Thank you for your service."

I acknowledge that there is a lot more work to be done with the VA, with the Transition Assistance Program, and in how medical and mental health services are provided. We are working on those every day. They take time, but we can do this now.

If we can put aside our differences and understand that by passing this resolution we could save even a single veteran's life, then all the time we spend here arguing with each other just might be worth it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support my resolution to recognize the selfless gift these individuals have given us.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. What I would like to do on the floor today is not more bickering and arguing. It is a plea. It is a plea to the Speaker and the leadership of this House to bring the home act to the floor. It is a Republican bill. It is a bipartisan bill. We can do more than this resolution. With all due credit to my colleague from Wisconsin for this resolution, we can do more than words on a resolution. We can take action.

We can help veterans who are going to be forced out of aging at home and into a nursing home. We can help those veterans stay in their homes with the legislation offered by my colleague from California, JULIA BROWNLEY, the Elizabeth Dole act.

Mr. Speaker, let me respond to my colleague, the chairman. I did not bring up the issue of the lost time with a Speakerless House. I would reject the suggestion that the 21 days we lost of floor time was because Democrats voted to do what they would normally do, which is they vote for their own nominee for Speaker.

□ 1730

I am not even arguing about lost time. I am arguing that we do have time that could be better used.

Instead of endless 2-minute votes on amendments that both sides have voted against stacked on top of each other, we could have used that time to bring the HOME Act to the floor. We could have used that time to bring the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act to the floor.

Both bills are bipartisan. Both bills have wide support by the veterans service organization community. I just say to the chairman—and I know the chairman himself has urged the Speaker to do this—my question is, even with all of these useless votes on amendments, we had time this week. We had enough time to bring those bills to the floor. Let's bring them to the floor immediately. We need to get veterans housed before the winter sets in.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to vote in favor of the resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in supporting the resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, the ranking member knows that H.R. 542, the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act of 2023 has my full support, but in spite of the incredible efforts to get a realistic CBO

score, the bill still comes with a cost and the cost is one that we need to resolve, along with the Toxic Exposure Fund, or the TEF issue.

We are working closely with our Senate counterparts to get this bill and several other high-priority pieces of legislation through both Chambers by the end of the year, and you know that I support them.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about the resolution that is in front of us. I do know and understand that this is an excellent bill, and I encourage all Members to support this resolution.

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 Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 848.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### JOHN GIBSON, DAN JAMES, WILLIAM SAPP, AND FRANKIE SMILEY VA CLINIC

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 593) to rename the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Hinesville, Georgia, as the "John Gibson, Dan James, William Sapp, and Frankie Smiley VA Clinic."

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 593

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. NAME OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC, HINESVILLE, GEORGIA.

The Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Hinesville, Georgia, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the "John Gibson, Dan James, William Sapp, and Frankie Smiley VA Clinic". Any reference to such clinic in any law, regulation, map, document, record, or other paper of the United States shall be considered to be a reference to the John Gibson, Dan James, William Sapp, and Frankie Smiley VA Clinic.

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 may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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 H.R. 593, a bill to rename the Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Hinesville, Georgia, as the John Gibson, Dan James, William Sapp, Frankie Smiley VA Clinic.

I would take a moment to tell each of these Americans' stories of service.

John Gibson was born in Riceboro, Georgia, and later joined the Marine Corps where he rose to the rank of private first class. He deployed to Vietnam in 1967, served 100 days in-country, 65 of which were in combat. He was killed by small arms fire on February 7, 1968, in Quang Nam, South Vietnam, during the Tet Offensive at just 21 years old.

Dan Ninkey James was also a native of Riceboro, Georgia, and deployed to Vietnam in 1968. He was an SP4 in the Army's 25th Infantry Division. While in Vietnam, out of a total of 100 days in theater, he also saw 65 days of combat. Dan James was killed in action by small arms fire on December 29, 1968, in Hua Nghia, South Vietnam. He was recently married and was just 20 years old.

Their fellow Georgian, William Edward Sapp, was born on March 12, 1943. He joined the Army's 4th Infantry Division during the war, reaching the rank of SP4. While deployed in Vietnam, he served 114 days in combat out of a total of 175 days in theater. William Sapp was killed in action on June 7, 1968, in Kon Tum, South Vietnam, at the age of 25.

Last, but certainly not least, Frankie Lee Smiley was born in Miami, Florida. He joined the Marine Corps and rose to the rank of lance corporal in the 1st Marine Division.

He deployed to Vietnam in 1968. He served 205 days in theater, with 133 days of combat. Lance Corporal Smiley was killed by small arms fire on August 25, 1968, in Quang Nam, South Vietnam, at the age of 24. He is buried in Cay Cemetery in Dorchester, Georgia.

All of these men rose to the call of the Nation and made the ultimate sacrifice. All of these men were 25 years old or less. To give your life for your country at the dawn of your life is an incredible sacrifice and one we can't forget. By naming the clinic after these men, they will continue to be remembered and honored in the place they called home.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative BUDDY CARTER for introducing this bill and his work in making this happen.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 593, and 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 H.R. 593, a bill to rename the outpatient clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Hinesville, Georgia, as the John Gibson, Dan James, William Sapp, and Frankie Smiley VA Clinic.

I thank Representative CARTER for introducing it and the Georgia delegation for its support.

These individuals, all hailing from Liberty County, Georgia, were killed in action during the Vietnam war. Four young men who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Private First Class John Gibson, a marine, was killed by small arms fire in the Tet Offensive on February 7, 1968. He was 21 years old.

Specialist Dan James served in the Army's 25th Infantry Division and was killed on December 29, 1968. He was 20 years old.

Specialist William Sapp served in the Army's 4th Infantry Division. He was killed on June 7, 1968. He was 25 years old.

Marine Lance Corporal Frankie Smiley served in the 1st Marine Division. He was killed on August 25, 1968. He was 24 years old.

These are four names out of the 58,000 who died in the Vietnam war that we honor for their service and sacrifice. These four names will continue to be honored at the VA clinic in Liberty County as it carries on its mission to serve veterans.

The sacrifices of those who served in Vietnam and in other wars and conflicts is particularly salient as we just commemorated Veterans Day, and as we had the opportunity to reflect on the sacred obligation we owe to veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER), a very close friend.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 593, which will rename the Department of Veterans Affairs, as you have heard, the community-based outpatient clinic in Hinesville as the John Gibson, Dan James, William Sapp, and Frankie Smiley VA Clinic.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honor and privilege of representing the First Congressional District of Georgia. We have much to be proud of in the First Congressional District of Georgia. We have a strong military presence in our district. We are home to Hunter Army Airfield, to Kings Bay Naval Base, and to Fort Stewart.

Fort Stewart is located in Hinesville, Georgia, in Liberty County. Whenever I travel to Fort Stewart, whenever I travel to Liberty County, I know that they know what they are talking about when they talk about military affairs.

I submit to you that the community of Hinesville, Georgia, supports their military as much if not more than any community in America.

However, I have to be quite honest with you. Last fall, I was called to a meeting with them and with some community leaders in Liberty County and they told me they wanted to name a VA clinic in Hinesville after four veterans who gave the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam war.