

of sailors, marines, coast guardsmen, and their families as they navigate the daily challenges of military service.

Lord, empower our Nation to send Navy chaplains to care for its greatest treasure: our sons and daughters.

Into Your divine hands we commit our prayer, trusting in Your divine mercy.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MORAN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MORAN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would now entertain requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

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.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVISTS DEBT RELIEF EXTENSION ACT OF 2023

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3315) to exempt for an additional 4-year period, from the application of the means-test presumption of abuse under chapter 7, qualifying members of reserve components of the Armed Forces and members of the National Guard who, after September 11, 2001, are called to active duty or to perform a homeland defense activity for not less than 90 days.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3315

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 "National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Extension Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVISTS DEBT RELIEF AMENDMENT.

Section 4(b) of the National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-438; 122 Stat. 5000) is amended by striking "15-year" and inserting "19-year".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MORAN) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MORAN. 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. 3315.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3315, the National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Extension Act of 2023.

The bill before us today is an important piece of legislation. It will help National Guard members and Armed Services reservists who serve our country.

Some of these individuals face financial hardships during or after Active Duty. Bankruptcy may be needed to resolve these hardships.

In 2008, Congress recognized that guardsmen and reservists sometimes confront unique financial challenges when returning home from Active Duty.

Congress enacted the National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Act in 2008 to respond to these challenges and has extended its protection several times since. Those protections are set to expire later this month.

Under current law, certain guardsmen and reservists are exempt from the Bankruptcy Code's means test. This test helps decide whether a debtor is eligible for debt forgiveness under chapter 7 of the Bankruptcy Code.

The test looks at recent income and expense data to gauge a consumer's ability to repay their debt, but the means test can be an obstacle to debt forgiveness for guardsmen and reservists. Their income and expenses can change dramatically when transitioning from civilian life to Active Duty and back.

The means test does not account for these changes in income and expenses due to Active-Duty service.

The National Guard and Reservists Debt Relief Extension Act of 2023 responds to this concern. This bill would extend for an additional 4 years the existing means test exemption for certain qualifying National Guard members and Armed Services reservists.

We continue to call on our guardsmen and our reservists to put their careers on hold to serve our country. We should ensure that those military per-

sonnel who fall on hard times are not denied access to bankruptcy because of their Active-Duty status.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, according to a 2022 lifestyle survey of servicemembers and veterans, financial issues were the top lifestyle stressor, and unfortunately, bankruptcy sometimes is the best answer for those in financial distress.

Under current law, National Guard members and reservists who serve on Active Duty are, like other active servicemembers, exempt from the Bankruptcy Code means test which determines whether a debtor's income is too high to have all of his or her debts erased in bankruptcy. This critical protection for National Guard members and reservists has to be extended every 4 years, and this is the time to do it.

Unless otherwise exempted, these servicemembers and veterans must complete the required forms and submit the specified paperwork to satisfy the Bankruptcy Code's means test.

This burdensome requirement would even apply to National Guard and reservists who have returned to the United States from active service and thus no longer receive combat pay.

Under the means test, such servicemember must calculate his or her income based on the average monthly income that he or she received during the 6-month period preceding the filing date of the bankruptcy case, rather than the debtor's actual income, which may be less because of the debtor's noncombat status.

Without this exemption, some servicemembers and veterans may be prevented from seeking the financial relief that they need and deserve. We should not deny the reservists and the National Guard these benefits.

This extension is an immediate concern. The bill would extend for 4 years the temporary authorization exempting certain qualifying reserve component members of the Armed Services and National Guard members from this means test.

I am proud to have led the effort to exempt the National Guard and reservists from the means test in 2008 and the extensions of this successful program in 2015 and 2019. If we do not act today, this critical protection for National Guard members and reservists will expire in a matter of weeks.

I hope we can act on a bipartisan basis, as we have always done, to extend the authority.

I thank my cosponsors Representatives BEN CLINE, MADELEINE DEAN, TIM BURCHETT, and leaders of the companion effort in the Senate, Senators DURBIN and GRAHAM.

This is truly a bipartisan, bicameral effort.

I thank Chairman JORDAN, who moved this bill through the Judiciary Committee and advocated for its quick

consideration on the floor, and I all urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes people think we don't work together, but in the military we do work together. I am proud to support this, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I urge a voice vote on this measure, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, to close, I reemphasize what Mr. COHEN from Tennessee said.

This is a bipartisan and bicameral effort to protect our guardsmen and our reservists as they are returning back after having served in Active Duty. This is an important measure to protect those individuals who have fallen on hard times financially and need the protections of bankruptcy court.

This exemption to the means test is important because of the variations of the income and the expenses that we see coming in and out of civilian life for these individuals.

As a result of the efforts of both the Democrats and the Republicans in the House and the Senate, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MORAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3315.

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.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 7, 2023.

Hon. MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on December 7, 2023, at 3:37 p.m.

That the Senate passed S. 3250.

Appointment:

Member of the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys

Member of the Commission on Reform and Modernization of the Department of State

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

KEVIN F. MCCUMBER,
Acting Clerk.

AMENDING THE FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN ACT OF 1971 TO EXTEND THE ADMINISTRATIVE FINE PROGRAM FOR CERTAIN REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 2747) to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to extend the Administrative Fine Program for certain reporting violations.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2747

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF ADMINISTRATIVE FINE PROGRAM.

Section 309(a)(4)(C)(v) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (52 U.S.C. 30109(a)(4)(C)(v)) is amended by striking "December 31, 2023" and inserting "December 31, 2033".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MORELLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2747, a bill to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to extend the Administrative Fine Program for certain reporting violations for an additional 10 years.

Congress has previously extended this program six times, each time on a nonpartisan basis. I rise today to encourage my colleagues to again extend the authorization of this crucial program.

The Federal Elections Commission, commonly referred to as the FEC, enforces Federal law that requires political committees to file reports of receipts and disbursements by a certain date.

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Under the Administrative Fine Program, the FEC is able to swiftly resolve infractions related to late-filed or unfiled reports, ensuring transparency and accountability in our political process.

Currently, the Administrative Fine Program is set to expire on December 31, 2023. By passing this bill today, the House will extend the program for an additional 10 years, ensuring the FEC can expeditiously assess and enforce fines against campaign committees for their late-filed or unfiled reports.

Without the Administrative Fine Program, the FEC would be required to

go through its traditional enforcement process to achieve compliance. This process is more costly and more time consuming. It would result in fewer available resources for the agency to devote to serious violations of campaign finance law.

The Administrative Fine Program has been successful. Before the inception of the Administrative Fine Program, an average of 21 percent of campaign finance reports were filed late. Now, late-filed reports are below 10 percent, and the agency has assessed over \$9 million in fines. It is important to note that these fines do not fund the agency but are deposited in the U.S. Treasury.

Fewer late-filed reports means greater transparency for the American public. Greater transparency builds Americans' confidence in our elections.

The bill not only accomplishes the immediate goal of efficient campaign finance regulation, but it also aligns with the broader objectives of the American Confidence in Elections Act, or ACE Act: transparency and our shared goal to ensure confidence in our elections.

By passing this bill today, we can ensure the FEC enforcement operations continue to run smoothly. In late September, the Committee on House Administration considered an identical bill, H.R. 5734, and reported it to the full House by voice vote.

Our Senate colleagues passed S. 2747 by voice earlier this fall, which means this important bill would go to the President's desk following passage in the House.

I am urging my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join the bipartisan membership of the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Rules Committee to support this important measure today.

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

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend and colleague from Wisconsin for advancing this bill.

I rise in strong support of S. 2747, and I will probably be repeating and underscoring some of the things my good friend said, because this is important legislation. We should take time out to acknowledge how important it is.

This bill extends the Federal Election Commission's Administrative Fine Program for certain campaign finance reporting violations, which, as my good friend mentioned, has been extended several times in the past, last time through President Trump, and this will take it through the end of 2033.

The important program allows the FEC to assess administrative fines against those who fail to timely report their receipts and disbursements. The FEC relies heavily on the Administrative Fine Program to enforce campaign finance law.

It has been remarkably successful, as has been said. Since the year 2000, the FEC has made public more than 4,000 violations, and, through the program,