

Mr. McCAUL. 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 question will be postponed.

□ 1200

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2025

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 8580, and that I may include tabular material on the same.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 8580.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROSE) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1204

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 8580) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025, and for other purposes, with Mr. ROSE in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CLINE) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased today to speak in support of this year's Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Under current leadership, the Veterans Health Administration has been distracted from its core mission, using official resources for political purposes such as lobbying Congress, pushing for DEI policies, and even going so far as to process medical care claims for illegal aliens.

Our veterans deserve better. Therefore, House Republicans are moving forward with a bill that refocuses the VA back to its core mission by fully funding veterans' healthcare programs and benefits while cutting out radical prerogatives that divert resources away from critical veteran care.

In addition to supporting those who have served, this bill would bolster our national security interests in the Indo-Pacific region to counter China by improving our defense posture in the region.

The funding allocated in this bill would equip our Active-Duty servicemembers by constructing the facilities they so desperately need and honor our commitment to the veterans who have so dutifully served us here at home.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chair, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 8580, the fiscal year 2025 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies bill.

While I unfortunately cannot support the bill on the floor today, I am grateful to Chairman CARTER for the work that we have been able to accomplish together over the years on this subcommittee.

I know we both prioritize quality of life for our servicemembers and their families and caring for our veterans, but, sadly, the bill before us today is built on a framework that once again walks away from the bipartisan Fiscal Responsibility Act agreement, which is law, which was the basis for the bills that we passed just a couple of months ago.

While the FY25 MILCON-VA bill doesn't face cuts nearly as dramatic as the other bills, veterans, servicemembers, and their families rely on programs throughout the Federal Government.

These funding levels only move us further from a bipartisan agreement on all of the funding bills that those who served our Nation rely on.

On the military construction side, this bill cuts funding for servicemembers and their families by \$718 million, compared to last year's bill. This cut will slow crucial progress to modernize and improve DOD's infrastructure.

In fiscal year '24, we provided DOD with \$30 million in dedicated funding for resiliency, a comparatively small sum of funding now, which will pay huge dividends in the future and ensure our national security in the face of our changing climate.

By eliminating the dedicated resiliency funding this year, this bill will threaten future military readiness because we are not making sure we invest in hardening facilities to make sure that they can withstand the impact of natural disasters.

Cutting military construction now slows our historically bipartisan efforts to reduce the infrastructure back-

log to strengthen our national security and to improve the quality of life of our servicemembers and their families.

Perhaps the most egregious part of the bill is all the partisan riders it includes. This bill is usually first up on the floor, like we are this fiscal year, because we have a bipartisan process.

Unfortunately, partisan culture war riders have distracted from our ability to accomplish that. We have riders that include preventing the VA from implementing its interim final rule on abortion care, which is now final, by the way, to provide abortion services under limited circumstances, abortion counseling, and to ensure that veterans have equal access to healthcare regardless of what State they live in, especially in a time when reproductive rights are under attack around the country.

A woman's decision whether or not to have an abortion should be made between her and her doctor and her family. It should not be made by politicians in this Chamber.

This bill includes riders that do everything from prohibiting VA from implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, as well as training, to a petty, bigoted prohibition from flying the Pride flag over VA facilities during Pride Month, to add insult to injury, from protecting people who speak or act under the guise of religious freedom, essentially authorizing the arbitrary discrimination against LGBTQI+ people and to prohibiting access to gender-affirming care, just to name a few, all aimed to disenfranchise veterans from the VA.

Let me just note: The United States did not make exceptions to the promises that we made our servicemembers in exchange for their service and sacrifice. We made promises to everyone.

This bill undermines VA's ability to report a beneficiary to the National Instant Criminal Background Check system to keep guns out of the hands of people who are prohibited under Federal law from purchasing or possessing firearms. It is prohibiting VA from following the law that is intended to protect veterans and those around them.

We have a dramatic suicide problem among our veteran population, and allowing people who are prohibited by law to possess a gun makes that suicide more likely, not less, and puts other people around them in their care circle at risk. That is unacceptable, irresponsible, and unnecessary.

This bill prioritizes guns over protecting veterans. It is truly a shame that this bill includes these poison pill riders.

They create division between us when we all should have a shared goal of providing healthcare and benefits to our veterans.

These culture war riders were rejected in conference negotiations last year, and we know that they will be rejected again this year in order to reach a final agreement. This bill can't pass with all of these poison pill riders attached to it.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Chair, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER).

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I am honored to present the FY25 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill to the House today.

This bill supports our troops, their families, and the Nation's veterans. The bill makes good on the Republican commitment to bring bills to the floor that comply with the Fiscal Responsibility Act while honoring our commitment to our Nation's veterans and our troops.

To honor that commitment, the bill provides full funding for healthcare and benefits for veterans. They have earned these benefits, and we are making good on our promises to them.

To provide for those who wear the uniform now, the bill includes \$412 million over the budget request to support crucial investments in barracks and family housing. We must keep our word to our servicemembers and their families.

In addition, we provide robust funding to build upon last year's work to enable the Department of Defense to meet the challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

We also have multiple provisions in our bill to protect Americans' core values; namely, freedom, equality, and justice, from being trampled on by unaccountable bureaucrats.

I thank Ranking Member WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for her work on this bill. Though we have our policy differences, I am glad we are at this step in the process and hope we can continue to work together in support of our troops and our veterans.

This bill cares for our veterans, and it supports our troops and their families, and it stands up for American values.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 8580, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1215

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO), the distinguished ranking member of the Appropriations Committee.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Chair, I thank the ranking member for yielding.

I rise in opposition to this bill that shortchanges our servicemembers and endangers military families.

Before I begin, I thank the majority and minority subcommittee staff, particularly Farouk Ophaso and Tyler Coe. After nearly 10 years on the committee, Jennifer Neuscheler departed at the end of May. In her place, Farouk is now the minority clerk for the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies. I congratulate Farouk and wel-

come him to his first House floor debate as a subcommittee clerk.

Now, to the bill.

This bill would hurt our veterans and military readiness and would worsen the quality of life for servicemembers and their families. It leaves military installations, servicemembers, veterans, and their families vulnerable to natural disasters. It harms women and moves us closer to a national abortion ban.

This bill disarms our military in the face of the climate crisis by failing to include dedicated funding for resilience projects to help protect our bases and installations from rising sea levels and extreme weather. The bill walks back investments in natural disaster recovery that help our military rebuild after disasters strike, and it includes harmful policy riders preventing the implementation of executive orders on climate change and clean energy. Impeding our military's efforts to confront climate change puts servicemembers in harm's way and hurts America's readiness and national security.

Military leaders, including under former President Trump, have cautioned of the dangers climate change poses to our military. Former Secretary Mattis warned that climate change threatens American interests and our military assets around the world and said: "Climate change is a challenge that requires a broader, whole-of-government response."

This bill endangers veterans by recklessly undermining the ability to keep guns out of the hands of those prohibited under Federal law from purchasing or possessing firearms who could be a harm to themselves or others.

This bill attacks the rights of women veterans by limiting abortion access and prohibiting abortion counseling.

The women who volunteer to serve and defend this Nation should not come home to find their medical and family planning decisions being made by anyone other than themselves, their families, and their doctors. We will defeat all of the majority's anti-choice riders, as we did last year, but I am dismayed this body is being forced to waste time with this charade yet again.

House Republicans are taking us down an already well-trodden path toward chaos, division, and shutdown threats. Like last year, we are beginning this process with top-line funding levels that fall short of the American people's needs and short of what both parties just agreed to in March, when 80 percent of the Appropriations Committee voted to pass the final 2024 appropriations acts. The majority is pursuing harmful policies that needlessly divide the country, divide the Congress, and harm Americans.

Like last year, the final 2025 spending bills will be the product of negotiations between Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate. We can begin that process now, or we can squander yet another summer on bills that will never become law.

Our starting point for 2025 must provide, at a minimum, a 1 percent increase in defense and nondefense funding, consistent with the framework set in the Fiscal Responsibility Act that House Republicans demanded as the price for averting a catastrophic default last year.

Let me reiterate: Democrats will accept nothing less than a 1 percent increase over 2024 in nondefense and defense funding.

Last month, we received a letter from dozens of stakeholder organizations already frustrated by the House majority's stance, and it reads: "We ask that you take the opportunity in FY25 to restore some normalcy by rejecting these extreme and polarizing provisions and cuts, which are as damaging as they are unrealistic."

The majority may want to suggest they are supporting veterans, but this bill does not contain all of the programs the most vulnerable veterans depend on. At least 1.2 million veterans rely on food stamps. Tens of thousands of veterans rely on housing vouchers. Thousands of veterans utilize job training programs to reenter civilian life. All of these programs and many others face severe cuts under the majority's funding levels across all appropriations bills.

I cannot support this bill. I hope Republicans will abandon their partisan strategy and join Democrats at the table to support veterans, servicemembers, and military families. It is time to govern.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. WAGNER).

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Chair, I thank the chairman for his courtesy in yielding to me.

I rise in support of my bipartisan amendment, which supports critical relief for certain defense contractors who faced crippling cost overruns due to inflation.

As so many of us have heard from our families across our districts, the administration's harmful inflation is cutting deep into constituents' pocketbooks. Many American businesses working on projects, which are critical to U.S. national security, are facing the same staggering price increases.

Because of the importance of their work to our safety and security, local employers, like those working on the National Geospatial Agency project in St. Louis, were forced to pay steep, unanticipated price increases in order to meet the projects' original deadlines.

I am proud of the St. Louis area companies and workers who made tough sacrifices while doing their part to safeguard our national security and keep construction of the new NGA West headquarters on track. These economic disruptions and runaway price increases threaten to trigger a crisis that could significantly weaken our defense industrial base.

Twice, on a bipartisan basis, Congress has narrowly authorized the Department of Defense to provide extraordinary relief for these companies in order to preserve a healthy and competitive defense industrial base, but that funding has never been appropriated.

I urge my colleagues to vote “yes” on my amendment supporting necessary and carefully tailored relief that will stabilize our defense industrial base.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP), the current distinguished ranking member of the Agriculture-Rural Development Subcommittee and the former ranking member of the MILCON-VA Subcommittee.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chair, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

I rise today to voice strong opposition to the FY25 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill that is being presented by our colleagues from across the aisle.

This bill should reflect our Nation's values, priorities, and commitments. It should reflect who we are and should help move us toward who we aim to be. Though we have the difficult task of balancing financial figures, we cannot sacrifice our potential or jeopardize the well-being of our military families, veterans, and our national security.

While I believe in principle as professed supporters of our national security, my colleagues would want to prioritize caring for veterans, supporting our servicemembers and their families, and bolstering our national defense in theory. The bill they have presented today, however, fails to acknowledge the diverse individuals who make up our armed forces and it falls short of addressing their needs.

I echo the concerns of many Americans who recognize that embracing the diversity of our Nation and empowering those who seek to serve strengthens our military force. This inclusive approach not only fosters a deeper sense of patriotism and service among all Americans but encourages more individuals to consider military service when they see themselves represented within it. Leveraging our Nation's full potential enhances our military's ability to effectively respond to the global challenges we confront.

My additional concern lies in the proposed \$718 million cut in military construction funding compared to last year, along with partisan riders that undermine our commitment to all of our servicemembers, our veterans, and their families. This bill would jeopardize the well-being and safety of our servicemembers and their loved ones.

Additionally, cutting vital funding for education, job opportunities, housing, and food assistance undermines the crucial support systems relied upon by veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

Such actions compromise the ability of our servicemembers to focus on their duties abroad when they are concerned about the well-being of their families back home.

This bill, in its current form, does not align with the principles of our democracy and denies equal opportunity for all Americans to patriotically serve their country.

We must reevaluate its provisions and make necessary adjustments to ensure it genuinely serves our national interests and does not compromise military readiness. Our Nation and those who serve it deserve nothing less.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill. Let's make it better.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DELUZIO), a veteran of our Armed Forces.

Mr. DELUZIO. Madam Chair, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for yielding.

I rise in opposition to the bill. I think that at this moment, my fellow veterans and the VA are at a critical point in time. We are seeing folks come in, because of the PACT Act, who served in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, who were exposed to burn pits. We need to meet that moment by investing in the VA.

Unfortunately, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have decided to use this bill to attack abortion rights and to attack reproductive freedom. I think every veteran who raised their right hand was writing a blank check to this country, and my fellow veterans who are women ought to have the full reproductive care they have earned from the VA. This bill, which would ban abortions, even where there are health risks to a veteran, is unacceptable to me and is unacceptable to so many in this country and so many who have served.

I urge my Republican colleagues to meet this moment by working with us and getting these toxic attacks on people's freedom out of these spending bills. Let's get a bill that we can pass together.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY).

Ms. STANSBURY. Madam Chair, I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 8580. I was just home, like many of you, honoring our military and our veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice on Memorial Day. That is why it is so unimaginable and shameful that we are here today on the House floor as House Republicans are proposing to cut the military and VA budget.

We are talking about \$6 billion in cuts to medical care for our veterans, \$718 million in cuts to military con-

struction that would impact our readiness and affect the quality of lives and safety of American servicemembers and their families, and \$30 million in cuts to climate resilience programs that would affect the military readiness of our bases and servicemembers across the world. It is shameful.

In a time when Democrats fought to pass the PACT Act and our veterans literally stood on the steps outside of this building to make sure that we got it done, it is inconceivable that they would be here today proposing to cut programs and services.

In New Mexico, we have an incredible history of service from our Navajo Code Talkers to our heroes of Bataan, and we will not sit silently by while you try to underfund and disenfranchise our veterans. It is shameful.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Madam Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This is a good bill. I hear about all these cuts, but what I see is that we have done our duty to both our veterans and our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines around the world. We have gone out of our way to fund the area where we have our biggest fear of combat, which is the Indo-Pacific.

I traveled over there, as did Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ at a different time. We both saw that we have an awful lot of projects that have to be dealt with over there. We did our part to do that, and I am sure DOD will do their part to do that, too. We have to be ready in case and until the flag goes up, if it should, with the Chinese.

□ 1230

The issues on those islands is that the wind and dampness destroy buildings, so we are going to have lots of building projects that are going to go on over that way. We have provided the appropriate amount of funding as we had it available for those projects. We also had a bunch of barracks issues around the country, and we provided to fully fund a certain number of those barracks and to give guidance funding for the rest because we intend to fund them all.

In my opinion, we are always underfunded in military construction. I think Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ will agree with me on that. We have more than we can say grace over when it comes to funding projects relative to our military.

For that reason, I think that we have done the best we can for them. I don't see the cuts that are being talked about. I am curious about that, but then I am curious about a lot of things around here.

I am blessed to have a ranking member who I can work with. She is a kind person. We get along just great except

we don't agree on any policies, but other than that, we get along just great. I guess that is a blessing, that I can plan to keep going after this.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO), who is the distinguished ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee who goes to bat for our Nation's veterans every single day on the authorizing committee.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague from Florida for yielding time.

Here we go again. Another year, another Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill full of partisan riders.

When someone takes the oath and joins the military, they are making a selfless commitment to protect our country. As Members of Congress, we must be ready to pay for all costs of war and to help every veteran, regardless of their gender, faith, race, or sexual orientation.

That is why I am disturbed that my Republican colleagues have included many of the same partisan riders in this year's bill that were in this bill last year. These radical riders aim to restrict access to abortion and attack LGBTQ+ rights, attacks that are occurring during Pride Month no less.

There is, once again, an amendment to this bill that will make it easier for the most vulnerable veterans to access guns and more difficult for VA to help them. The inclusion of this rider spreads the lie that if a veteran seeks mental health care at the VA, then their guns will be taken away. This could not be further from the truth. VA will not take your guns if you come to VA for mental health care.

We want to encourage veterans to get the mental health care they have earned and often very much need. This fear-mongering of VA overreach could lead to more veterans not seeking life-saving assistance. Veterans have a higher rate of suicide than the general population, and they are more likely to use a gun. Knowing this, how could we, in good conscience, vote for this bill with the risks it poses to our veterans?

There is another harmful amendment that would lead to greater privatization of veterans' healthcare. Specifically, it would require the VA to apply new access standards for non-VA care. As written, this amendment would cost VA billions of dollars per year to implement and result in tens of thousands of veterans being sent to private providers for lower quality, higher cost care than they would otherwise receive at VA. This is a significant policy change that has not been considered by the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Republicans are attaching it to this appropriations bill because they know it would never pass as a standalone bill. The appropriations process should not be used to legislate such a sweep-

ing change. This is deeply concerning to me and should give every Member voting in this Chamber great pause.

Poison pill riders have turned what should be a nonpartisan issue of helping our veterans into a political game. Stop the political games, and let's get serious about helping every veteran. Until then, I cannot support this bill in good faith.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to join me in voting "no" and opposing this legislation.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), who is the chairman of the full committee.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Chair, I thank my good friend from Texas, the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee, for yielding.

Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of this important piece of legislation.

There are many things that set our Nation apart from others. One of our greatest differentiators is the sustained call to service Americans have met generation after generation. Those who have worn the uniform past and present took an oath to defend our country, our ideals, and our people. Just as our veterans and troops answered the call of duty, so must this Chamber in meeting our constitutional obligations.

That is why it is deeply fitting that the first fiscal year of 2025 appropriations bill we take up covers military construction and Veterans Affairs, two of the highest priorities for our Nation.

This bill provides robust funding for military construction projects with a particular focus on the Pacific region and military family housing. These projects ensure that we can meet our national defense needs both at home and abroad. They also support housing at bases across the country and around the world, allowing members of our Armed Forces to serve their country without being separated from their loved ones.

Even more importantly, this legislation provides full funding for healthcare and benefits for our Nation's veterans. Through devotion to duty and great personal sacrifice, our veterans have served this country and served it well, defending not only our homeland but our families and our way of life. The services the VA provides have been truly earned and represent the thanks of a grateful nation to our men and women who have served in uniform.

Critically, today's bill fulfills these priorities while remaining true to the budgetary levels outlined in the Fiscal Responsibility Act, but in a reflection of the deep importance of this topic to America, this bill actually appropriates \$400 million more than the President's budget request. We can and must direct our taxpayer dollars to our most important priorities, and today's bill succeeds in that important objective.

Mr. Chair, I thank Chairman CARTER for his hard work on this measure, and

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting it on final passage.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I am prepared to close.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, it is with a heavy heart that we—unnecessarily—oppose this legislation on our side of the aisle because this bill was drafted in a way that it never should have been and doesn't have to be.

The stark reality, by any definition, is that this bill cuts military construction by \$718 million from last fiscal year to this one, and it cuts funding for our veterans by \$6 billion from last year to this one.

There is no way around that. That is actually what we are doing. That is the math.

It is also pretty unprecedented. We generally increase funding in this bill. That is why it is so bipartisan. It is why our committee goes first, because we have a bill that, as Judge Carter said, we are really able to work very closely together on the nuts and bolts of taking care of our veterans and our servicemembers.

Unfortunately, because the Republicans refused to adhere to the law—that is, the Fiscal Responsibility Act—and refused to make sure that we, in that agreement, adhere to the agreement where we increased nondefense discretionary and defense discretionary by 1 percent, as a result, the allocations given to our committee were paltry. Republicans decided to make cuts to individuals who have signed up to defend our country, whom our committee is responsible for going to bat for improving our veterans' and servicemembers' quality of life, who are promised that protection no matter who they are, no matter whom they love, and no matter what gender they are.

It is wrong to cut funding for veterans and servicemembers, and it is also wrong to load this bill up with partisan political culture war riders that deny women access to reproductive healthcare.

Let's be clear. What the Republicans have done here is they are eliminating the ability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that no matter where a woman veteran lives in this country, she is able to access an abortion in conjunction with the recommendation of her medical provider in the cases of rape or incest and in the cases of the life and health of the mother.

What the Republicans do in this bill is that a woman veteran has to be dying in order to be able to get access to abortion care. That is wrong because no one who has signed up and who has served our country, committed to laying their life on the line in defense of our country, should have politicians, judges, or the government making the

most deeply difficult personal healthcare decisions for them.

That is what Republicans do in this bill.

In addition to eliminating our ability to ensure that we can have seamless communication and support for our veterans, they are eliminating the DEI programming.

We have a very large agency. It is an agency in which we need to make sure that it can run seamlessly, but they are discriminating against LGBTQ+ people, and they are loading up this bill with unrelated, controversial, and unnecessary amendments that are going to prevent us from being able to make sure this bill can become law.

In fact, all those poison pill culture war riders are not going to survive conference, just like they didn't last year. We are wasting time here when we should be devoted to making sure we care for our servicemembers and our veterans, which is what this committee has always committed to.

I am sad I cannot support this bill. It doesn't have to be this way. I have tremendous respect for my friend, Judge Carter. He is right. We do work very well together.

Mr. Chair, I also thank our incredible staff for the work that they have done. Both of our staffs have changed over a little bit, so we have some newbies managing this. We appreciate all the effort that they have put in.

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

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, this is a good bill. We are above the President's numbers both in MILCON and in veterans, and it just a matter of how you look at things as to whether the social things that we talk about have concern or don't have concern among our various people. We are speaking about the things that concern us that are causing people not to want to join the military because of the added on governmental interference in their lives by these various things that they have set out in regulations, and we are trying to correct that.

Whatever happens, every bill we have, somebody doesn't like something about it, but the reality is we worked hard. I thank my staff. I thank all the staffs for working together on this to come up with a good bill. It deserves a positive vote on the bill, and I hope all my colleagues will seriously consider voting for the bill.

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

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. ROUZER). All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

An amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 118-35, modified by the amendment printed in part A of House Report 118-535, shall be considered as adopted and the bill, as amended, shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of further amend-

ment under the 5-minute rule and shall be considered as read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 8580

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

TITLE I

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, military installations, facilities, and real property for the Army as currently authorized by law, including personnel in the Army Corps of Engineers and other personal services necessary for the purposes of this appropriation, and for construction and operation of facilities in support of the functions of the Commander in Chief, \$2,217,757,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That, of this amount, not to exceed \$334,738,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, architect and engineer services, and host nation support, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of the Army determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor: Provided further, That of the amount made available under this heading, \$87,100,000 shall be for the projects and activities, and in the amounts, specified in the table under the heading "Military Construction, Army" in the report accompanying this Act, in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, naval installations, facilities, and real property for the Navy and Marine Corps as currently authorized by law, including personnel in the Naval Facilities Engineering Command and other personal services necessary for the purposes of this appropriation, \$4,332,414,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That, of this amount, not to exceed \$877,946,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of the Navy determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor: Provided further, That of the amount made available under this heading, \$70,480,000 shall be for the projects and activities, and in the amounts, specified in the table under the heading "Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps" in the report accompanying this Act, in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, military installations, facilities, and real property for the Air Force as currently authorized by law, \$3,268,276,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That, of this amount, not to exceed \$459,926,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of the Air Force determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor: Provided further, That of the amount made available under this heading, \$299,000,000 shall be for the projects and activities, and in the amounts, specified in the table under the heading "Military Construction, Air Force" in the report accompanying this Act, in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, DEFENSE-WIDE (INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, installations, facilities, and real property for activities and agencies of the Department of Defense (other than the military departments), as currently authorized by law, \$3,500,083,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That such amounts of this appropriation as may be determined by the Secretary of Defense may be transferred to such appropriations of the Department of Defense available for military construction or family housing as the Secretary may designate, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes, and for the same time period, as the appropriation or fund to which transferred: Provided further, That, of the amount, not to exceed \$395,131,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Defense determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor: Provided further, That of the amount made available under this heading, \$47,920,000 shall be for the projects and activities, and in the amounts, specified in the table under the heading "Military Construction, Defense-Wide" in the report accompanying this Act, in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Army National Guard, and contributions therefor, as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$367,129,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That, of the amount, not to exceed \$30,529,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Director of the Army National Guard determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR NATIONAL GUARD

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Air National Guard, and contributions therefor, as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$195,792,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That, of the amount, not to exceed \$15,792,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Director of the Air National Guard determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Army Reserve as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$265,032,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That, of the amount, not to exceed \$41,508,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Chief of the Army Reserve determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

therefor: Provided further, That of the amount made available under this heading, \$5,000,000 shall be for the projects and activities, and in the amounts, specified in the table under the heading "Military Construction, Army Reserve" in the report accompanying this Act, in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, NAVY RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the reserve components of the Navy and Marine Corps as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$67,329,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That, of the amount, not to exceed \$3,219,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of the Navy determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor: Provided further, That, of the amount made available under this heading, \$37,500,000 shall be for the projects and activities, and in the amounts, specified in the table under the heading "Military Construction, Navy Reserve" in the report accompanying this Act, in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Air Force Reserve as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$50,499,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029: Provided, That, of the amount, not to exceed \$3,798,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Chief of the Air Force Reserve determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

SECURITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

For the United States share of the cost of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program for the acquisition and construction of military facilities and installations (including international military headquarters) and for related expenses for the collective defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Area as authorized by section 2806 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, \$433,864,000, to remain available until expended.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE ACCOUNT

For deposit into the Department of Defense Base Closure Account, established by section 2906(a) of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (10 U.S.C. 2687 note), \$547,961,000, to remain available until expended.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, ARMY

For expenses of family housing for the Army for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, \$276,647,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, ARMY

For expenses of family housing for the Army for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, \$485,611,000.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For expenses of family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, \$245,742,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For expenses of family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, \$387,217,000.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE

For expenses of family housing for the Air Force for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, \$221,549,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, AIR FORCE

For expenses of family housing for the Air Force for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, \$336,250,000.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, DEFENSE-WIDE

For expenses of family housing for the activities and agencies of the Department of Defense (other than the military departments) for operation and maintenance, leasing, and minor construction, as authorized by law, \$52,156,000.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

FAMILY HOUSING IMPROVEMENT FUND

For the Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund, \$8,195,000, to remain available until expended, for family housing initiatives undertaken pursuant to section 2883 of title 10, United States Code, providing alternative means of acquiring and improving military family housing and supporting facilities.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

MILITARY UNACCOMPANIED HOUSING IMPROVEMENT FUND

For the Department of Defense Military Unaccompanied Housing Improvement Fund, \$497,000, to remain available until expended, for unaccompanied housing initiatives undertaken pursuant to section 2883 of title 10, United States Code, providing alternative means of acquiring and improving military unaccompanied housing and supporting facilities.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

SEC. 101. None of the funds made available in this title shall be expended for payments under a cost-plus-a-fixed-fee contract for construction, where cost estimates exceed \$25,000, to be performed within the United States, except Alaska, without the specific approval in writing of the Secretary of Defense setting forth the reasons therefor.

SEC. 102. Funds made available in this title for construction shall be available for hire of passenger motor vehicles.

SEC. 103. Funds made available in this title for construction may be used for advances to the Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, for the construction of access roads as authorized by section 210 of title 23, United States Code, when projects authorized therein are certified as important to the national defense by the Secretary of Defense.

SEC. 104. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to begin construction of new bases in the United States for which specific appropriations have not been made.

SEC. 105. None of the funds made available in this title shall be used for purchase of land or

land easements in excess of 100 percent of the value as determined by the Army Corps of Engineers or the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, except: (1) where there is a determination of value by a Federal court; (2) purchases negotiated by the Attorney General or the designee of the Attorney General; (3) where the estimated value is less than \$25,000; or (4) as otherwise determined by the Secretary of Defense to be in the public interest.

SEC. 106. None of the funds made available in this title shall be used to: (1) acquire land; (2) provide for site preparation; or (3) install utilities for any family housing, except housing for which funds have been made available in annual Acts making appropriations for military construction.

SEC. 107. None of the funds made available in this title for minor construction may be used to transfer or relocate any activity from one base or installation to another, without prior notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 108. None of the funds made available in this title may be used for the procurement of steel for any construction project or activity for which American steel producers, fabricators, and manufacturers have been denied the opportunity to compete for such steel procurement.

SEC. 109. None of the funds available to the Department of Defense for military construction or family housing during the current fiscal year may be used to pay real property taxes in any foreign nation.

SEC. 110. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to initiate a new installation overseas without prior notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 111. None of the funds made available in this title may be obligated for architect and engineer contracts estimated by the Government to exceed \$500,000 for projects to be accomplished in Japan, in any North Atlantic Treaty Organization member country, or in countries bordering the Arabian Gulf, unless such contracts are awarded to United States firms or United States firms in joint venture with host nation firms.

SEC. 112. None of the funds made available in this title for military construction in the United States territories and possessions in the Pacific and on Kwajalein Atoll, or in countries bordering the Arabian Gulf, may be used to award any contract estimated by the Government to exceed \$1,000,000 to a foreign contractor: Provided, That this section shall not be applicable to contract awards for which the lowest responsive and responsible bid of a United States contractor exceeds the lowest responsive and responsible bid of a foreign contractor by greater than 20 percent: Provided further, That this section shall not apply to contract awards for military construction on Kwajalein Atoll for which the lowest responsive and responsible bid is submitted by a Marshallese contractor.

SEC. 113. The Secretary of Defense shall inform the appropriate committees of both Houses of Congress, including the Committees on Appropriations, of plans and scope of any proposed military exercise involving United States personnel 30 days prior to its occurring, if amounts expended for construction, either temporary or permanent, are anticipated to exceed \$100,000.

SEC. 114. Funds appropriated to the Department of Defense for construction in prior years shall be available for construction authorized for each such military department by the authorizations enacted into law during the current session of Congress.

SEC. 115. For military construction or family housing projects that are being completed with funds otherwise expired or lapsed for obligation, expired or lapsed funds may be used to pay the cost of associated supervision, inspection, overhead, engineering and design on those projects and on subsequent claims, if any.

SEC. 116. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any funds made available to a military department or defense agency for the construction of military projects may be obligated for a military construction project or contract, or for any portion of such a project or contract, at any time before the end of the fourth fiscal year after the fiscal year for which funds for such project were made available, if the funds obligated for such project: (1) are obligated from funds available for military construction projects; and (2) do not exceed the amount appropriated for such project, plus any amount by which the cost of such project is increased pursuant to law.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 117. Subject to 30 days prior notification, or 14 days for a notification provided in an electronic medium pursuant to sections 480 and 2883 of title 10, United States Code, to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress, such additional amounts as may be determined by the Secretary of Defense may be transferred to: (1) the Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund from amounts appropriated for construction in "Family Housing" accounts, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes and for the same period of time as amounts appropriated directly to the Fund; or (2) the Department of Defense Military Unaccompanied Housing Improvement Fund from amounts appropriated for construction of military unaccompanied housing in "Military Construction" accounts, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes and for the same period of time as amounts appropriated directly to the Fund: Provided, That appropriations made available to the Funds shall be available to cover the costs, as defined in section 502(5) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, of direct loans or loan guarantees issued by the Department of Defense pursuant to the provisions of subchapter IV of chapter 169 of title 10, United States Code, pertaining to alternative means of acquiring and improving military family housing, military unaccompanied housing, and supporting facilities.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 118. In addition to any other transfer authority available to the Department of Defense, amounts may be transferred from the Department of Defense Base Closure Account to the fund established by section 1013(d) of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 3374) to pay for expenses associated with the Homeowners Assistance Program incurred under 42 U.S.C. 3374(a)(1)(A). Any amounts transferred shall be merged with and be available for the same purposes and for the same time period as the fund to which transferred.

SEC. 119. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, funds made available in this title for operation and maintenance of family housing shall be the exclusive source of funds for repair and maintenance of all family housing units, including general or flag officer quarters: Provided, That not more than \$20,000 per unit may be spent annually for the maintenance and repair of any general or flag officer quarters without 30 days prior notification, or 14 days for a notification provided in an electronic medium pursuant to sections 480 and 2883 of title 10, United States Code, to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress, except that an after-the-fact notification shall be submitted if the limitation is exceeded solely due to costs associated with environmental remediation that could not be reasonably anticipated at the time of the budget submission: Provided further, That the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) is to report annually to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress all operation and maintenance expenditures for each individual general or flag officer quarters for the prior fiscal year.

SEC. 120. Amounts contained in the Ford Island Improvement Account established by subsection (h) of section 2814 of title 10, United States Code, are appropriated and shall be available until expended for the purposes specified in subsection (i)(1) of such section or until transferred pursuant to subsection (i)(3) of such section.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 121. During the 5-year period after appropriations available in this Act to the Department of Defense for military construction and family housing operation and maintenance and construction have expired for obligation, upon a determination that such appropriations will not be necessary for the liquidation of obligations or for making authorized adjustments to such appropriations for obligations incurred during the period of availability of such appropriations, unobligated balances of such appropriations may be transferred into the appropriation "Foreign Currency Fluctuations, Construction, Defense", to be merged with and to be available for the same time period and for the same purposes as the appropriation to which transferred.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 122. Amounts appropriated or otherwise made available in an account funded under the headings in this title may be transferred among projects and activities within the account in accordance with the reprogramming guidelines for military construction and family housing construction contained in Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation 7000.14-R, Volume 3, Chapter 7, of March 2021, as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 123. None of the funds made available in this title may be obligated or expended for planning and design and construction of projects at Arlington National Cemetery.

SEC. 124. For an additional amount for the accounts and in the amounts specified, to remain available until September 30, 2029:

"Military Construction, Army", \$167,000,000;
 "Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps", \$45,000,000;
 "Military Construction, Air Force", \$68,000,000;
 "Military Construction, Army National Guard", \$44,000,000; and
 "Military Construction, Air National Guard", \$33,000,000.

Provided, That such funds may only be obligated to carry out construction and cost to complete projects identified in the respective military department's unfunded priority list for fiscal year 2025 submitted to Congress: Provided further, That such projects are subject to authorization prior to obligation and expenditure of funds to carry out construction: Provided further, That not later than 60 days after enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the military department concerned, or their designee, shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this section.

SEC. 125. All amounts appropriated to the "Department of Defense—Military Construction, Army", "Department of Defense—Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps", "Department of Defense—Military Construction, Air Force", and "Department of Defense—Military Construction, Defense-Wide" accounts pursuant to the authorization of appropriations in a National Defense Authorization Act specified for fiscal year 2025 in the funding table in section 4601 of that Act shall be immediately available and allotted to contract for the full scope of authorized projects.

SEC. 126. Notwithstanding section 116 of this Act, funds made available in this Act or any available unobligated balances from prior appropriations Acts may be obligated before October 1, 2026, for fiscal year 2018, 2019, and 2020 military construction projects for which project authorization has not lapsed or for which authorization is extended for fiscal year 2025 by a

National Defense Authorization Act: Provided, That no amounts may be obligated pursuant to this section from amounts that were designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to a concurrent resolution on the budget or the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

SEC. 127. For the purposes of this Act, the term "congressional defense committees" means the Committees on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, and the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 128. For an additional amount for the accounts and in the amounts specified for planning and design and for construction improvements to Department of Defense laboratory facilities, to remain available until September 30, 2029:

Military Construction, Army, \$15,000,000;
 "Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps", \$15,000,000; and
 "Military Construction, Air Force", \$15,000,000.

Provided, That not later than 60 days after enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the military department concerned, or their designee, shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this section: Provided further, That the Secretary of the military department concerned may not obligate or expend any funds prior to approval by the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the expenditure plan required by this section.

SEC. 129. For an additional amount for "Military Construction, Air Force", \$100,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2029, for expenses incurred as a result of natural disasters: Provided, That not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Air Force, or their designee, shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both House of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this section.

SEC. 130. For an additional amount for the accounts and in the amounts specified for planning and design, for child development centers, to remain available until September 30, 2029:

"Military Construction, Army", \$25,000,000;
 "Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps", \$25,000,000; and
 "Military Construction, Air Force", \$25,000,000.

Provided, That not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the military department concerned, or their designee, shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this section.

SEC. 131. For an additional amount for the accounts and amounts specified for planning and design, for barracks, to remain available until September 30, 2029:

"Military Construction Army", \$25,000,000;
 "Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps", \$25,000,000; and
 "Military Construction, Air Force", \$25,000,000.

Provided, That not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the military department concerned, or their designee, shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this section.

SEC. 132. For an additional amount for the accounts and in the amounts specified for unspecified minor construction for demolition, to remain available until September 30, 2029:

"Military Construction, Army", \$15,000,000;
 "Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps", \$15,000,000;
 "Military Construction, Air Force", \$15,000,000;

Provided, That not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the military department concerned, or their designee, shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this section: Provided further, That the Secretary of the military department concerned may not obligate or expend any funds prior to approval by the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the expenditure plan required by this section.

SEC. 133. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to carry out the closure or realignment of the United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

TITLE II

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

COMPENSATION AND PENSIONS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For the payment of compensation benefits to or on behalf of veterans and a pilot program for disability examinations as authorized by section 107 and chapters 11, 13, 18, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code; pension benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 15, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code; and burial benefits, the Reinstated Entitlement Program for Survivors, emergency and other officers' retirement pay, adjusted-service credits and certificates, payment of premiums due on commercial life insurance policies guaranteed under the provisions of title IV of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 541 et seq.) and for other benefits as authorized by sections 107, 1312, 1977, and 2106, and chapters 23, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code, \$9,820,699,000, which shall be in addition to funds previously appropriated under this heading that become available on October 1, 2024, to remain available until expended; and, in addition, \$204,481,753,000, which shall become available on October 1, 2025, to remain available until expended: Provided, That not to exceed \$22,816,224 of the amount made available for fiscal year 2026 under this heading shall be reimbursed to "General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration", and "Information Technology Systems" for necessary expenses in implementing the provisions of chapters 51, 53, and 55 of title 38, United States Code, the funding source for which is specifically provided as the "Compensation and Pensions" appropriation: Provided further, That such sums as may be earned on an actual qualifying patient basis, shall be reimbursed to "Medical Care Collections Fund" to augment the funding of individual medical facilities for nursing home care provided to pensioners as authorized.

READJUSTMENT BENEFITS

For the payment of readjustment and rehabilitation benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 21, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 41, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code, \$2,657,656,000, which shall be in addition to funds previously appropriated under this heading that became available on October 1, 2024, to remain available until expended; and in addition, \$17,614,235,000, which shall become available on October 1, 2025, to remain available until expended: Provided, That expenses for rehabilitation program services and assistance which the Secretary is authorized to provide under subsection (a) of section 3104 of title 38, United States Code, other than under paragraphs (1), (2), (5), and (11) of that subsection, shall be charged to this account.

VETERANS INSURANCE AND INDEMNITIES

For military and naval insurance, national service life insurance, servicemen's indemnities, service-disabled veterans insurance, and veterans mortgage life insurance as authorized by chapters 19 and 21 of title 38, United States

Code, \$131,518,000, which shall become available on October 1, 2025, to remain available until expended.

VETERANS HOUSING BENEFIT PROGRAM FUND

For the cost of direct and guaranteed loans, such sums as may be necessary to carry out the program, as authorized by subchapters I through III of chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code: Provided, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974: Provided further, That, during fiscal year 2025, within the resources available, not to exceed \$500,000 in gross obligations for direct loans are authorized for specially adapted housing loans.

In addition, for administrative expenses to carry out the direct and guaranteed loan programs, \$319,596,460.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION LOANS PROGRAM ACCOUNT

For the cost of direct loans, \$64,431, as authorized by chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code: Provided, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974: Provided further, That funds made available under this heading are available to subsidize gross obligations for the principal amount of direct loans not to exceed \$1,563,660.

In addition, for administrative expenses necessary to carry out the direct loan program, \$493,868, which may be paid to the appropriation for "General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration".

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN HOUSING LOAN PROGRAM ACCOUNT

For the principal amount of direct loans as authorized by subchapter V of chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code, \$75,000,000, to remain available until expended.

In addition for administrative expenses necessary to carry out the direct loan program, \$5,845,241.

GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

For necessary operating expenses of the Veterans Benefits Administration, not otherwise provided for, including hire of passenger motor vehicles, reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services, and reimbursement of the Department of Defense for the cost of overseas employee mail, \$4,035,000,000: Provided, That expenses for services and assistance authorized under paragraphs (1), (2), (5), and (11) of section 3104(a) of title 38, United States Code, that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines are necessary to enable entitled veterans: (1) to the maximum extent feasible, to become employable and to obtain and maintain suitable employment; or (2) to achieve maximum independence in daily living, shall be charged to this account: Provided further, That, of the funds made available under this heading, not to exceed 10 percent shall remain available until September 30, 2026.

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

MEDICAL SERVICES

For necessary expenses for furnishing, as authorized by law, inpatient and outpatient care and treatment to beneficiaries of the Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans described in section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, including care and treatment in facilities not under the jurisdiction of the Department, and including medical supplies and equipment, bio-engineering services, food services, and salaries and expenses of healthcare employees hired under title 38, United States Code, assistance and support services for caregivers as authorized by section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, loan repayments authorized by section 604 of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-163; 124 Stat. 1174; 38 U.S.C. 7681 note), monthly assist-

ance allowances authorized by section 322(d) of title 38, United States Code, grants authorized by section 521A of title 38, United States Code, and administrative expenses necessary to carry out sections 322(d) and 521A of title 38, United States Code, and hospital care and medical services authorized by section 1787 of title 38, United States Code; \$75,039,000,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2025, and shall remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided, That, of the amount made available on October 1, 2025, under this heading, \$2,000,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2027: Provided further, That, notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a priority for the provision of medical treatment for veterans who have service-connected disabilities, lower income, or have special needs: Provided further, That, notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall give priority funding for the provision of basic medical benefits to veterans in enrollment priority groups 1 through 6: Provided further, That, notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may authorize the dispensing of prescription drugs from Veterans Health Administration facilities to enrolled veterans with privately written prescriptions based on requirements established by the Secretary: Provided further, That the implementation of the program described in the previous proviso shall incur no additional cost to the Department of Veterans Affairs: Provided further, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that sufficient amounts appropriated under this heading for medical supplies and equipment are available for the acquisition of prosthetics designed specifically for female veterans: Provided further, That nothing in section 2044(e)(1) of title 38, United States Code, may be construed as limiting amounts that may be made available under this heading for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 in this or prior Acts.

MEDICAL COMMUNITY CARE

For necessary expenses for furnishing health care to individuals pursuant to chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, at non-Department facilities, \$34,000,000,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2025, and shall remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided, That, of the amount made available on October 1, 2025, under this heading, \$2,000,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2027.

MEDICAL SUPPORT AND COMPLIANCE

For necessary expenses in the administration of the medical, hospital, nursing home, domiciliary, construction, supply, and research activities, as authorized by law; administrative expenses in support of capital policy activities; and administrative and legal expenses of the Department for collecting and recovering amounts owed the Department as authorized under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, and the Federal Medical Care Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. 2651 et seq.), \$12,700,000,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2025, and shall remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided, That, of the amount made available on October 1, 2025, under this heading, \$350,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2027.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

For necessary expenses for the maintenance and operation of hospitals, nursing homes, domiciliary facilities, and other necessary facilities of the Veterans Health Administration; for administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department; for oversight, engineering, and architectural activities not charged to project costs; for repairing, altering,

improving, or providing facilities in the several hospitals and homes under the jurisdiction of the Department, not otherwise provided for, either by contract or by the hire of temporary employees and purchase of materials; for leases of facilities; and for laundry services; \$9,700,000,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2025, and shall remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided, That, of the amount made available on October 1, 2025, under this heading, \$500,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2027.

MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH

For necessary expenses in carrying out programs of medical and prosthetic research and development as authorized by chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, \$923,514,000, plus reimbursements, shall remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that sufficient amounts appropriated under this heading are available for prosthetic research specifically for female veterans, and for toxic exposure research.

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

For necessary expenses of the National Cemetery Administration for operations and maintenance, not otherwise provided for, including uniforms or allowances therefor; cemetery expenses as authorized by law; purchase of one passenger motor vehicle for use in cemetery operations; hire of passenger motor vehicles; and repair, alteration or improvement of facilities under the jurisdiction of the National Cemetery Administration, \$495,000,000, of which not to exceed 10 percent shall remain available until September 30, 2026.

DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary operating expenses of the Department of Veterans Affairs, not otherwise provided for, including administrative expenses in support of Department-wide capital planning, management and policy activities, uniforms, or allowances therefor; not to exceed \$25,000 for official reception and representation expenses; hire of passenger motor vehicles; and reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services, \$457,000,000, of which not to exceed 10 percent shall remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided, That funds provided under this heading may be transferred to "General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration".

BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS

For necessary operating expenses of the Board of Veterans Appeals, \$267,000,000 of which not to exceed 10 percent shall remain available until September 30, 2026.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary expenses for information technology systems and telecommunications support, including developmental information systems and operational information systems; for pay and associated costs; and for the capital asset acquisition of information technology systems, including management and related contractual costs of said acquisitions, including contractual costs associated with operations authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, \$6,231,680,000, plus reimbursements: Provided, That \$1,686,245,270 shall be for pay and associated costs, of which not to exceed 3 percent shall remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided further, That \$4,544,475,000 shall be for operations and maintenance, of which not to exceed 5 percent shall remain available until September 30, 2026, and of which \$118,900,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2028, for the purpose of facility activations related to projects funded by the "Construction, Major Projects", "Construction, Minor Projects",

"Medical Facilities", "National Cemetery Administration", "General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefit Administration", and "General Administration" accounts: Provided further, That \$960,000 shall be for information technology systems development, and shall remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided further, That amounts made available for salaries and expenses, operations and maintenance, and information technology systems development may be transferred among the three subaccounts after the Secretary of Veterans Affairs requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued: Provided further, That amounts made available for the "Information Technology Systems" account for development may be transferred among projects or to newly defined projects: Provided further, That no project may be increased or decreased by more than \$3,000,000 of cost prior to submitting a request to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress to make the transfer and an approval is issued, or absent a response, a period of 30 days has elapsed: Provided further, That the funds made available under this heading for information technology systems development shall be for the projects, and in the amounts, specified in the table entitled "Information Technology Development Projects" under this heading in the report accompanying this Act.

VETERANS ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

For activities related to implementation, preparation, development, interface, management, rollout, and maintenance of a Veterans Electronic Health Record system, including contractual costs associated with operations authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, and salaries and expenses of employees hired under titles 5 and 38, United States Code, \$894,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress quarterly reports detailing obligations, expenditures, and deployment implementation by facility, including any changes from the deployment plan or schedule: Provided further, That the funds provided in this account shall only be available to the Office of the Deputy Secretary, to be administered by that Office: Provided further, That 25 percent of the funds made available under this heading shall not be available until July 1, 2025, and are contingent upon the Secretary of Veterans Affairs—

(1) providing the Committees on Appropriations a report detailing the status of outstanding issues impacting the stability and usability of the new electronic health record system, including those that contributed to the October 13, 2022, deployment delay, along with a timeline and measurable metrics to resolve issues, no later than 60 days after enactment of this Act;

(2) certifying and detailing any changes to the full deployment schedule, no later than 60 days prior to July 1, 2025; and

(3) certifying in writing no later than 30 days prior to July 1, 2025, the following—

(A) the status of issues included in the report referenced in paragraph (1), including issues that have not been closed but have been suitably resolved or mitigated in a manner that will enhance provider productivity and minimize the potential for patient harm; and

(B) whether the system is stable, ready, and optimized for further deployment at VA sites.

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

For necessary expenses of the Office of Inspector General, to include information technology, in carrying out the provisions of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), \$296,000,000, of which not to exceed 10 percent shall remain available until September 30, 2026.

CONSTRUCTION, MAJOR PROJECTS

For constructing, altering, extending, and improving any of the facilities, including parking projects, under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or for any of the purposes set forth in sections 316, 2404, 2406 and chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, not otherwise provided for, including planning, architectural and engineering services, construction management services, maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project, services of claims analysts, offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs, and site acquisition, where the estimated cost of a project is more than the amount set forth in section 8104(a)(3)(A) of title 38, United States Code, or where funds for a project were made available in a previous major project appropriation, \$2,069,000,000, of which \$1,265,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2029, and of which \$803,700,000 shall remain available until expended: Provided, That except for advance planning activities, including needs assessments which may or may not lead to capital investments, and other capital asset management related activities, including portfolio development and management activities, and planning, cost estimating, and design for major medical facility projects and major medical facility leases and investment strategy studies funded through the advance planning fund and the planning and design activities funded through the design fund, staffing expenses, and funds provided for the purchase, security, and maintenance of land for the National Cemetery Administration and the Veterans Health Administration through the land acquisition line item, none of the funds made available under this heading shall be used for any project that has not been notified to Congress through the budgetary process or that has not been approved by the Congress through statute, joint resolution, or in the explanatory statement accompanying such Act and presented to the President at the time of enrollment: Provided further, That funds provided for the Veterans Health Administration through the land acquisition line item shall only be for projects included on the five year development plan notified to Congress through the budgetary process: Provided further, That such sums as may be necessary shall be available to reimburse the "General Administration" account for payment of salaries and expenses of all Office of Construction and Facilities Management employees to support the full range of capital infrastructure services provided, including minor construction and leasing services: Provided further, That funds made available under this heading for fiscal year 2025, for each approved project shall be obligated: (1) by the awarding of a construction documents contract by September 30, 2025; and (2) by the awarding of a construction contract by September 30, 2026: Provided further, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall promptly submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a written report on any approved major construction project for which obligations are not incurred within the time limitations established above.

CONSTRUCTION, MINOR PROJECTS

For constructing, altering, extending, and improving any of the facilities, including parking projects, under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including planning and assessments of needs which may lead to capital investments, architectural and engineering services, maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project, services of claims analysts, offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs, and site acquisition, or for any of the purposes set forth in sections 316, 2404, 2406 and chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, not otherwise provided for, where the estimated cost of a project is equal to

or less than the amount set forth in section 8104(a)(3)(A) of title 38, United States Code, \$380,453,000, of which \$342,408,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2029, and of which \$38,045,000 shall remain available until expended, along with unobligated balances of previous "Construction, Minor Projects" appropriations which are hereby made available for any project where the estimated cost is equal to or less than the amount set forth in such section: Provided, That funds made available under this heading shall be for: (1) repairs to any of the nonmedical facilities under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department which are necessary because of loss or damage caused by any natural disaster or catastrophe; and (2) temporary measures necessary to prevent or to minimize further loss by such causes.

GRANTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF STATE EXTENDED CARE FACILITIES

For grants to assist States to acquire or construct State nursing home and domiciliary facilities and to remodel, modify, or alter existing hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary facilities in State homes, for furnishing care to veterans as authorized by sections 8131 through 8137 of title 38, United States Code, \$156,000,000, to remain available until expended.

GRANTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF VETERANS CEMETERIES

For grants to assist States and tribal organizations in establishing, expanding, or improving veterans cemeteries as authorized by section 2408 of title 38, United States Code, \$60,000,000, to remain available until expended.

COST OF WAR TOXIC EXPOSURES FUND

For investment in the delivery of veterans' health care associated with exposure to environmental hazards, the expenses incident to the delivery of veterans' health care and benefits associated with exposure to environmental hazards, and medical and other research relating to exposure to environmental hazards, as authorized by section 324 of title 38, United States Code, and in addition to the amounts otherwise available for such purposes in the appropriations provided in this or prior Acts, \$22,800,000,000, which shall become available on October 1, 2025, and shall remain available until expended.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 201. Any appropriation for fiscal year 2025 for "Compensation and Pensions", "Readjustment Benefits", and "Veterans Insurance and Indemnities" may be transferred as necessary to any other of the mentioned appropriations: Provided, That, before a transfer may take place, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and such Committees issue an approval, or absent a response, a period of 30 days has elapsed.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 202. Amounts made available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2025, in this or any other Act, under the "Medical Services", "Medical Community Care", "Medical Support and Compliance", and "Medical Facilities" accounts may be transferred among the accounts: Provided, That any transfers among the "Medical Services", "Medical Community Care", and "Medical Support and Compliance" accounts of 1 percent or less of the total amount appropriated to the account in this or any other Act may take place subject to notification from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the amount and purpose of the transfer: Provided further, That any transfers among the "Medical Services", "Medical Community Care", and "Medical Support and Compliance" accounts in excess of 1 percent, or exceeding the cumulative 1 percent for the fiscal year, may take place only after the

Secretary requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued: Provided further, That any transfers to or from the "Medical Facilities" account may take place only after the Secretary requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued.

SEC. 203. Appropriations available in this title for salaries and expenses shall be available for services authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code; hire of passenger motor vehicles; lease of a facility or land or both; and uniforms or allowances therefore, as authorized by sections 5901 through 5902 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 204. No appropriations in this title (except the appropriations for "Construction, Major Projects", and "Construction, Minor Projects") shall be available for the purchase of any site for or toward the construction of any new hospital or home.

SEC. 205. No appropriations in this title shall be available for hospitalization or examination of any persons (except beneficiaries entitled to such hospitalization or examination under the laws providing such benefits to veterans, and persons receiving such treatment under sections 7901 through 7904 of title 5, United States Code, or the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.)), unless reimbursement of the cost of such hospitalization or examination is made to the "Medical Services" account at such rates as may be fixed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 206. Appropriations available in this title for "Compensation and Pensions", "Readjustment Benefits", and "Veterans Insurance and Indemnities" shall be available for payment of prior year accrued obligations required to be recorded by law against the corresponding prior year accounts within the last quarter of fiscal year 2024.

SEC. 207. Appropriations available in this title shall be available to pay prior year obligations of corresponding prior year appropriations accounts resulting from sections 3328(a), 3334, and 3712(a) of title 31, United States Code, except that if such obligations are from trust fund accounts they shall be payable only from "Compensation and Pensions".

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 208. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, during fiscal year 2025, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, from the National Service Life Insurance Fund under section 1920 of title 38, United States Code, the Veterans' Special Life Insurance Fund under section 1923 of title 38, United States Code, and the United States Government Life Insurance Fund under section 1955 of title 38, United States Code, reimburse the "General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration" and "Information Technology Systems" accounts for the cost of administration of the insurance programs financed through those accounts: Provided, That reimbursement shall be made only from the surplus earnings accumulated in such an insurance program during fiscal year 2025 that are available for dividends in that program after claims have been paid and actuarially determined reserves have been set aside: Provided further, That if the cost of administration of such an insurance program exceeds the amount of surplus earnings accumulated in that program, reimbursement shall be made only to the extent of such surplus earnings: Provided further, That the Secretary shall determine the cost of administration for fiscal year 2025 which is properly allocable to the provision of each such insurance program and to the provision of any total disability income insurance included in that insurance program.

SEC. 209. Amounts deducted from enhanced-use lease proceeds to reimburse an account for

expenses incurred by that account during a prior fiscal year for providing enhanced-use lease services shall be available until expended.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 210. Funds available in this title or funds for salaries and other administrative expenses shall also be available to reimburse the Office of Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion, the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication, and the Alternative Dispute Resolution function within the Office of Human Resources and Administration for all services provided at rates which will recover actual costs but not to exceed \$133,363,000 for the Office of Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion, \$9,606,581 for the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication, and \$7,686,000 for the Alternative Dispute Resolution function within the Office of Human Resources and Administration: Provided, That payments may be made in advance for services to be furnished based on estimated costs: Provided further, That amounts received shall be credited to the "General Administration" and "Information Technology Systems" accounts for use by the office that provided the service.

SEC. 211. No funds of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall be available for hospital care, nursing home care, or medical services provided to any person under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, for a non-service-connected disability described in section 1729(a)(2) of such title, unless that person has disclosed to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in such form as the Secretary may require, current, accurate third-party reimbursement information for purposes of section 1729 of such title: Provided, That the Secretary may recover, in the same manner as any other debt due the United States, the reasonable charges for such care or services from any person who does not make such disclosure as required: Provided further, That any amounts so recovered for care or services provided in a prior fiscal year may be obligated by the Secretary during the fiscal year in which amounts are received.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 212. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, proceeds or revenues derived from enhanced-use leasing activities (including disposal) may be deposited into the "Construction, Major Projects" and "Construction, Minor Projects" accounts and be used for construction (including site acquisition and disposition), alterations, and improvements of any medical facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Such sums as realized are in addition to the amount provided for in "Construction, Major Projects" and "Construction, Minor Projects".

SEC. 213. Amounts made available under "Medical Services" are available—

(1) for furnishing recreational facilities, supplies, and equipment; and

(2) for funeral expenses, burial expenses, and other expenses incidental to funerals and burials for beneficiaries receiving care in the Department.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 214. Such sums as may be deposited into the Medical Care Collections Fund pursuant to section 1729A of title 38, United States Code, may be transferred to the "Medical Services" and "Medical Community Care" accounts to remain available until expended for the purposes of these accounts.

SEC. 215. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may enter into agreements with Federally Qualified Health Centers in the State of Alaska and Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations which are party to the Alaska Native Health Compact with the Indian Health Service, to provide healthcare, including behavioral health and dental care, to veterans in rural Alaska. The Secretary shall require participating veterans and facilities to comply with all appropriate rules and regulations, as established by

the Secretary. The term “rural Alaska” shall mean those lands which are not within the boundaries of the municipality of Anchorage or the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 216. Such sums as may be deposited into the Department of Veterans Affairs Capital Asset Fund pursuant to section 8118 of title 38, United States Code, may be transferred to the “Construction, Major Projects” and “Construction, Minor Projects” accounts, to remain available until expended for the purposes of these accounts.

SEC. 217. Not later than 30 days after the end of each fiscal quarter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a report on the financial status of the Department of Veterans Affairs for the preceding quarter: Provided, That, at a minimum, the report shall include the direction contained in the paragraph entitled “Quarterly reporting”, under the heading “General Administration” in the joint explanatory statement accompanying Public Law 114–223.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 218. Amounts made available under the “Medical Services”, “Medical Community Care”, “Medical Support and Compliance”, “Medical Facilities”, “General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration”, “Board of Veterans Appeals”, “General Administration”, and “National Cemetery Administration” accounts for fiscal year 2025 may be transferred to or from the “Information Technology Systems” account: Provided, That such transfers may not result in a more than 10 percent aggregate increase in the total amount made available by this Act for the “Information Technology Systems” account: Provided further, That, before a transfer may take place, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 219. Of the amounts appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2025 for “Medical Services”, “Medical Community Care”, “Medical Support and Compliance”, “Medical Facilities”, “Construction, Minor Projects”, and “Information Technology Systems”, up to \$594,828,000, plus reimbursements, may be transferred to the Joint Department of Defense—Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund, established by section 1704 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84; 123 Stat. 2571) and may be used for operation of the facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500): Provided, That additional funds may be transferred from accounts designated in this section to the Joint Department of Defense—Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund upon written notification by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress: Provided further, That section 220 of title II of division A of Public Law 118–42 is repealed.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 220. Of the amounts appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs which become available on October 1, 2025, for “Medical Services”, “Medical Community Care”, “Medical Support and Compliance”, and “Medical Facilities”, up to \$664,625,000, plus reimbursements, may be transferred to the Joint Department of Defense—Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund, established by section 1704 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84; 123 Stat. 2571) and may be used for oper-

ation of the facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500): Provided, That additional funds may be transferred from accounts designated in this section to the Joint Department of Defense—Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund upon written notification by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 221. Such sums as may be deposited into the Medical Care Collections Fund pursuant to section 1729A of title 38, United States Code, for healthcare provided at facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500) shall also be available: (1) for transfer to the Joint Department of Defense—Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund, established by section 1704 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84; 123 Stat. 2571); and (2) for operations of the facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500): Provided, That, notwithstanding section 1704(b)(3) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84; 123 Stat. 2573), amounts transferred to the Joint Department of Defense—Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund shall remain available until expended.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 222. Of the amounts available in this title for “Medical Services”, “Medical Community Care”, “Medical Support and Compliance”, and “Medical Facilities”, a minimum of \$15,000,000 shall be transferred to the DOD–VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund, as authorized by section 8111(d) of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 223. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall notify the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of all bid savings in a major construction project that total at least \$5,000,000, or 5 percent of the programmed amount of the project, whichever is less: Provided, That such notification shall occur within 14 days of a contract identifying the programmed amount: Provided further, That the Secretary shall notify the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress 14 days prior to the obligation of such bid savings and shall describe the anticipated use of such savings.

SEC. 224. None of the funds made available for “Construction, Major Projects” may be used for a project in excess of the scope specified for that project in the original justification data provided to the Congress as part of the request for appropriations unless the Secretary of Veterans Affairs receives approval from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 225. Not later than 30 days after the end of each fiscal quarter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a quarterly report containing performance measures and data from each Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Office: Provided, That, at a minimum, the report shall include the direction contained in the section entitled “Disability claims backlog”, under the heading “General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration” in the joint explanatory statement accompanying Public Law 114–223: Provided further, That the report shall also include information on the number of appeals pending at the

Veterans Benefits Administration as well as the Board of Veterans Appeals on a quarterly basis.

SEC. 226. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide written notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress 15 days prior to organizational changes which result in the transfer of 25 or more full-time equivalents from one organizational unit of the Department of Veterans Affairs to another.

SEC. 227. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide on a quarterly basis to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress notification of any single national outreach and awareness marketing campaign in which obligations exceed \$1,000,000.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 228. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, upon determination that such action is necessary to address needs of the Veterans Health Administration, may transfer to the “Medical Services” account any discretionary appropriations made available for fiscal year 2025 in this title (except appropriations made to the “General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration” account) or any discretionary unobligated balances within the Department of Veterans Affairs, including those appropriated for fiscal year 2025, that were provided in advance by appropriations Acts: Provided, That transfers shall be made only with the approval of the Office of Management and Budget: Provided further, That the transfer authority provided in this section is in addition to any other transfer authority provided by law: Provided further, That no amounts may be transferred from amounts that were designated by Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to a concurrent resolution on the budget or the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985: Provided further, That such authority to transfer may not be used unless for higher priority items, based on emergent healthcare requirements, than those for which originally appropriated and in no case where the item for which funds are requested has been denied by Congress: Provided further, That, upon determination that all or part of the funds transferred from an appropriation are not necessary, such amounts may be transferred back to that appropriation and shall be available for the same purposes as originally appropriated: Provided further, That before a transfer may take place, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and receive approval of that request.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 229. Amounts made available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2025, under the “Board of Veterans Appeals” and the “General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration” accounts may be transferred between such accounts: Provided, That before a transfer may take place, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and receive approval of that request.

SEC. 230. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may not reprogram funds among major construction projects or programs if such instance of reprogramming will exceed \$7,000,000, unless such reprogramming is approved by the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 231. (a) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that the toll-free suicide hotline under section 1720F(h) of title 38, United States Code—

(1) provides to individuals who contact the hotline immediate assistance from a trained professional; and

(2) adheres to all requirements of the American Association of Suicidology.

(b)(1) None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enforce or otherwise

carry out any Executive action that prohibits the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from appointing an individual to occupy a vacant civil service position, or establishing a new civil service position, at the Department of Veterans Affairs with respect to such a position relating to the hotline specified in subsection (a).

(2) In this subsection—

(A) the term “civil service” has the meaning given such term in section 2101(1) of title 5, United States Code; and

(B) the term “Executive action” includes—

(i) any Executive order, Presidential memorandum, or other action by the President; and

(ii) any agency policy, order, or other directive.

(c)(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study on the effectiveness of the hotline specified in subsection (a) during the 5-year period beginning on January 1, 2016, based on an analysis of national suicide data and data collected from such hotline.

(2) At a minimum, the study required by paragraph (1) shall—

(A) determine the number of veterans who contact the hotline specified in subsection (a) and who receive follow up services from the hotline or mental health services from the Department of Veterans Affairs thereafter;

(B) determine the number of veterans who contact the hotline who are not referred to, or do not continue receiving, mental health care who commit suicide; and

(C) determine the number of veterans described in subparagraph (A) who commit or attempt suicide.

SEC. 232. Effective during the period beginning on October 1, 2018, and ending on January 1, 2026, none of the funds made available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs by this or any other Act may be obligated or expended in contravention of the “Veterans Health Administration Clinical Preventive Services Guidance Statement on the Veterans Health Administration’s Screening for Breast Cancer Guidance” published on May 10, 2017, as issued by the Veterans Health Administration National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

SEC. 233. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the amounts appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs for the “Medical Services” account may be used to provide—

(1) fertility counseling and treatment using assisted reproductive technology to a covered veteran or the spouse of a covered veteran; or

(2) adoption reimbursement to a covered veteran.

(b) In this section:

(1) The term “service-connected” has the meaning given such term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) The term “covered veteran” means a veteran, as such term is defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code, who has a service-connected disability that results in the inability of the veteran to procreate without the use of fertility treatment.

(3) The term “assisted reproductive technology” means benefits relating to reproductive assistance provided to a member of the Armed Forces who incurs a serious injury or illness on active duty pursuant to section 1074(c)(4)(A) of title 10, United States Code, as described in the memorandum on the subject of “Policy for Assisted Reproductive Services for the Benefit of Seriously or Severely Ill/Injured (Category II or III) Active Duty Service Members” issued by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs on April 3, 2012, and the guidance issued to implement such policy, including any limitations on the amount of such benefits available to such a member except that—

(A) the time periods regarding embryo cryopreservation and storage set forth in part III(G) and in part IV(H) of such memorandum shall not apply; and

(B) such term includes embryo cryopreservation and storage without limitation

on the duration of such cryopreservation and storage.

(4) The term “adoption reimbursement” means reimbursement for the adoption-related expenses for an adoption that is finalized after the date of the enactment of this Act under the same terms as apply under the adoption reimbursement program of the Department of Defense, as authorized in Department of Defense Instruction 1341.09, including the reimbursement limits and requirements set forth in such instruction.

(c) Amounts made available for the purposes specified in subsection (a) of this section are subject to the requirements for funds contained in section 508 of division H of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Public Law 115-141).

SEC. 234. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act or any other Act for the Department of Veterans Affairs may be used in a manner that is inconsistent with: (1) section 842 of the Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, the District of Columbia, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 2006 (Public Law 109-115; 119 Stat. 2506); or (2) section 8110(a)(5) of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 235. Section 842 of Public Law 109-115 shall not apply to conversion of an activity or function of the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, or National Cemetery Administration to contractor performance by a business concern that is at least 51 percent owned by one or more Indian Tribes as defined in section 5304(e) of title 25, United States Code, or one or more Native Hawaiian Organizations as defined in section 637(a)(15) of title 15, United States Code.

SEC. 236. (a) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor, shall discontinue using Social Security account numbers to authenticate individuals in all information systems of the Department of Veterans Affairs for all individuals not later than September 30, 2024:

(b) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may collect and use a Social Security account number to identify an individual, in accordance with section 552a of title 5, United States Code, in an information system of the Department of Veterans Affairs if and only if the use of such number is necessary to:

(1) obtain or provide information the Secretary requires from an information system that is not under the jurisdiction of the Secretary;

(2) comply with a law, regulation, or court order;

(3) perform anti-fraud activities; or

(4) identify a specific individual where no adequate substitute is available.

(c) The matter in subsections (a) and (b) shall supersede section 237 of division J of Public Law 117-328.

SEC. 237. For funds provided to the Department of Veterans Affairs for each of fiscal year 2025 and 2026 for “Medical Services”, section 239 of division A of Public Law 114-223 shall apply.

SEC. 238. None of the funds appropriated in this or prior appropriations Acts or otherwise made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs may be used to transfer any amounts from the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund to any other account within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 239. Of the funds provided to the Department of Veterans Affairs for each of fiscal year 2025 and fiscal year 2026 for “Medical Services”, funds may be used in each year to carry out and expand the child care program authorized by section 205 of Public Law 111-163, notwithstanding subsection (e) of such section.

SEC. 240. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this title may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into an agreement related to resolving a dispute or claim with an individual that would restrict in any way the individual from speaking to members of Congress or their staff on any

topic not otherwise prohibited from disclosure by Federal law or required by Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or the conduct of foreign affairs.

SEC. 241. For funds provided to the Department of Veterans Affairs for each of fiscal year 2025 and 2026, section 258 of division A of Public Law 114-223 shall apply.

SEC. 242. (a) None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be used to deny an Inspector General funded under this Act timely access to any records, documents, or other materials available to the department or agency over which that Inspector General has responsibilities under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), or to prevent or impede the access of the Inspector General to such records, documents, or other materials, under any provision of law, except a provision of law that expressly refers to such Inspector General and expressly limits the right of access.

(b) A department or agency covered by this section shall provide its Inspector General access to all records, documents, and other materials in a timely manner.

(c) Each Inspector General shall ensure compliance with statutory limitations on disclosure relevant to the information provided by the establishment over which that Inspector General has responsibilities under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(d) Each Inspector General covered by this section shall report to the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives within 5 calendar days of any failure by any department or agency covered by this section to comply with this requirement.

SEC. 243. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used in a manner that would increase wait times for veterans who seek care at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 244. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act to the Veterans Health Administration may be used in fiscal year 2025 to convert any program which received specific purpose funds in fiscal year 2024 to a general purpose funded program unless the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submits written notification of any such proposal to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress at least 30 days prior to any such action and an approval is issued by the Committees.

SEC. 245. For funds provided to the Department of Veterans Affairs for each of fiscal year 2025 and 2026, section 248 of division A of Public Law 114-223 shall apply.

SEC. 246. (a) None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be used to conduct research commencing on or after March 9, 2024, that uses any canine, feline, or non-human primate unless the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approves such research specifically and in writing pursuant to subsection (b).

(b)(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may approve the conduct of research commencing on or after March 9, 2024, using canines, felines, or non-human primates if the Secretary certifies that—

(A) the scientific objectives of the research can only be met by using such canines, felines, or non-human primates and cannot be met using other animal models, in vitro models, computational models, human clinical studies, or other research alternatives;

(B) such scientific objectives are necessary to advance research benefiting veterans and are directly related to an illness or injury that is combat-related as defined by 10 U.S.C. 1413(e);

(C) the research is consistent with the revised Department of Veterans Affairs canine research policy document dated December 15, 2017, including any subsequent revisions to such document; and

(D) ethical considerations regarding minimizing the harm experienced by canines, felines,

or non-human primates are included in evaluating the scientific necessity of the research.

(2) The Secretary may not delegate the authority under this subsection.

(c) If the Secretary approves any new research pursuant to subsection (b), not later than 30 days before the commencement of such research, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and House of Representatives a report describing—

(1) the nature of the research to be conducted using canines, felines, or non-human primates;

(2) the date on which the Secretary approved the research

(3) the USDA pain category on the approved use

(4) the justification for the determination of the Secretary that the scientific objectives of such research could only be met using canines, felines, or non-human primates, and methods used to make such determination;

(5) the frequency and duration of such research; and

(6) the protocols in place to ensure the necessity, safety, and efficacy of the research, and animal welfare.

(d) Not later than September 9, 2024, and bi-annually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to such Committees a report describing—

(1) any research being conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs using canines, felines, or non-human primates as of the date of the submittal of the report;

(2) the circumstances under which such research was conducted using canines, felines, or non-human primates;

(3) the justification for using canines, felines, or non-human primates to conduct such research;

(4) the protocols in place to ensure the necessity, safety, and efficacy of such research; and

(5) the development and adoption of alternatives to canines, felines, or non-human primates research.

(e) Not later than September 9, 2024, and annually thereafter, the Department of Veterans Affairs must submit to voluntary U.S. Department of Agriculture inspections of canine, feline, and non-human primate research facilities.

(f) Not later than September 9, 2024, and annually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to such Committees a report describing—

(1) any violations of the Animal Welfare Act, the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, or other Department of Veterans Affairs policies related to oversight of animal research found during that quarter in VA research facilities;

(2) immediate corrective actions taken; and

(3) specific actions taken to prevent their recurrence.

(g) The Department shall implement a plan under which the Secretary will eliminate the research conducted using canines, felines, or non-human primates by not later than March 9, 2026.

SEC. 247. (a) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may use amounts appropriated or otherwise made available in this title to ensure that the ratio of veterans to full-time employment equivalents within any program of rehabilitation conducted under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, does not exceed 125 veterans to one full-time employment equivalent.

(b) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the programs of rehabilitation conducted under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, including—

(1) an assessment of the veteran-to-staff ratio for each such program; and

(2) recommendations for such action as the Secretary considers necessary to reduce the veteran-to-staff ratio for each such program.

SEC. 248. Amounts made available for the “Veterans Health Administration, Medical Community Care” account in this or any other Act for fiscal years 2025 and 2026 may be used for

expenses that would otherwise be payable from the Veterans Choice Fund established by section 802 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act, as amended (38 U.S.C. 1701 note).

SEC. 249. Obligations and expenditures applicable to the “Medical Services” account in fiscal years 2017 through 2019 for aid to state homes (as authorized by section 1741 of title 38, United States Code) shall remain in the “Medical Community Care” account for such fiscal years.

SEC. 250. Of the amounts made available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2025, in this or any other Act, under the “Veterans Health Administration—Medical Services”, “Veterans Health Administration—Medical Community Care”, “Veterans Health Administration—Medical Support and Compliance”, and “Veterans Health Administration—Medical Facilities” accounts, \$1,323,444,000 shall be made available for gender-specific care and programmatic efforts to deliver care for women veterans.

SEC. 251. Notwithstanding any other law, unless prevented by an order issued by a federal or state court, by no later than September 30, 2025, the Secretary shall commence construction of the Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Bakersfield, California authorized in section 1(a)(3) of Public Law 111–82 and in accordance with Lease No. 36C10F20L0008 or successor lease.

SEC. 252. Not later than 30 days after the end of each fiscal quarter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a quarterly report on the status of the “Veterans Medical Care and Health Fund”, established to execute section 8002 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law 117–2): Provided, That, at a minimum, the report shall include an update on obligations by program, project or activity and a plan for expending the remaining funds.

SEC. 253. Any amounts transferred to the Secretary and administered by a corporation referred to in section 7364(b) of title 38, United States Code, between October 1, 2018 and September 30, 2019 for purposes of carrying out an order placed with the Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to section 1535 of title 31, United States Code, that are available for obligation pursuant to section 7364(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code, are to remain available for the liquidation of valid obligations incurred by such corporation during the period of performance of such order, provided that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines that such amounts need to remain available for such liquidation.

SEC. 254. Unobligated balances available under the headings “Construction, Major Projects” and “Construction, Minor Projects” may be obligated by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for a facility pursuant to section 2(e)(1) 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), as amended, to provide additional funds or to fund an escalation clause under such section of such Act: Provided, That before such unobligated balances are obligated pursuant to this section, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to obligate such unobligated balances and such Committees issue an approval, or absent a response, a period of 30 days has elapsed: Provided further, That the request to obligate such unobligated balances must provide Congress notice that the entity described in section 2(a)(2) of Public Law 114–294, as amended, has exhausted available cost containment approaches as set forth in the agreement under section 2(c) of such Public Law.

SEC. 255. (a) None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to implement, administer, or otherwise carry out the Department of Veterans Affairs interim final rule published on

September 9, 2022, or any successor to such rule, or to propose, promulgate, or implement any substantially similar rule or policy.

(b) None of the funds appropriated in this Act shall be expended for any abortion, including through a medical benefits package or health benefits program that includes coverage of abortion.

(c) The limitations established in subsection (b) shall not apply to an abortion—

(1) if the pregnancy is the result of an act of rape or incest; or

(2) in the case where a woman suffers from a physical disorder, physical injury, or physical illness, including a life-endangering physical condition caused by or arising from the pregnancy itself, that would, as certified by a physician, place the woman in danger of death unless an abortion is performed.

SEC. 256. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used for surgical procedures or hormone therapies for the purposes of gender affirming care.

SEC. 257. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to fly or display a flag over a facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs or a national cemetery other than the flag of the United States, the flag of a State, Territory, or District of Columbia, the flag of an Indian Tribal government, the flag of the Department, the flag of an Armed Force, or the POW/MIA flag.

SEC. 258. During the period beginning on October 1, 2024 and ending on September 30, 2025, none of the funds made available by this Act may be used to administer, implement, or enforce the final rule issued by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs relating to “Change in Rates VA Pays for Special Modes of Transportation” (88 Fed. Reg. 10032) and published on February 16, 2023.

SEC. 259. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to carry out VHA Directive 1193.01, “Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Program for Veterans Health Administration Health Care Personnel”.

SEC. 260. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to provide any services to any individual unlawfully present in the United States who is not eligible for health care under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 261. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under section 5502 of title 38, United States Code, in any case arising out of the administration by the Secretary of laws and benefits under such title, to report a person who is deemed mentally incapacitated, mentally incompetent, or to be experiencing an extended loss of consciousness as a person who has been adjudicated as a mental defective under subsection (d)(4) or (g)(4) of section 922 of title 18, United States Code, without the order or finding a judge, magistrate, or other judicial authority of competent jurisdiction that such person is a danger to himself or herself or others.

TITLE III

RELATED AGENCIES

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses, not otherwise provided for, of the American Battle Monuments Commission, including the acquisition of land or interest in land in foreign countries; purchases and repair of uniforms for caretakers of national cemeteries and monuments outside of the United States and its territories and possessions; rent of office and garage space in foreign countries; purchase (one-for-one replacement basis only) and hire of passenger motor vehicles; not to exceed \$15,000 for official reception and representation expenses; and insurance of official motor vehicles in foreign countries, when required by law of such countries, \$90,020,000, to remain available until expended.

FOREIGN CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS ACCOUNT

For necessary expenses, not otherwise provided for, of the American Battle Monuments Commission, such sums as may be necessary, to remain available until expended, for purposes authorized by section 2109 of title 36, United States Code.

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR
VETERANS CLAIMS
SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses for the operation of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims as authorized by sections 7251 through 7298 of title 38, United States Code, \$47,200,000: Provided, That \$3,800,000 shall be available for the purpose of providing financial assistance as described and in accordance with the process and reporting procedures set forth under this heading in Public Law 102-229.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE—CIVIL
CEMETERIAL EXPENSES, ARMY
SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses for maintenance, operation, and improvement of Arlington National Cemetery and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, including the purchase or lease of passenger motor vehicles for replacement on a one-for-one basis only, and not to exceed \$2,000 for official reception and representation expenses, \$105,514,000, of which not to exceed \$15,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2027. In addition, such sums as may be necessary for parking maintenance, repairs and replacement, to be derived from the "Lease of Department of Defense Real Property for Defense Agencies" account.

CONSTRUCTION

For necessary expenses for planning and design and construction at Arlington National Cemetery and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, \$42,000,000, to remain available until expended for planning and design and construction associated with the Southern Expansion project at Arlington National Cemetery.

ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT HOME
TRUST FUND

For expenses necessary for the Armed Forces Retirement Home to operate and maintain the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Washington, District of Columbia, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Gulfport, Mississippi, to be paid from funds available in the Armed Forces Retirement Home Trust Fund, \$69,520,000, to remain available until September 30, 2026, of which \$1,000,000 shall remain available until expended for construction and renovation of the physical plants at the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Washington, District of Columbia, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Gulfport, Mississippi: Provided, That of the amounts made available under this heading from funds available in the Armed Forces Retirement Home Trust Fund, \$25,000,000 shall be paid from the general fund of the Treasury to the Trust Fund.

MAJOR CONSTRUCTION

For expenses necessary to support efforts to complete the renovation of the Sheridan Building at the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Washington, District of Columbia, \$31,000,000, to remain available until expended, shall be paid from the general fund of the Treasury to the Armed Forces Retirement Home Trust Fund.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION

SEC. 301. Amounts deposited into the special account established under 10 U.S.C. 7727 are appropriated and shall be available until expended to support activities at the Army National Military Cemeteries.

TITLE IV

GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 401. No part of any appropriation contained in this Act shall remain available for obligation beyond the current fiscal year unless expressly so provided herein.

SEC. 402. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used for any program, project, or activity, when it is made known to the Federal entity or official to which the funds are made available that the program, project, or activity is not in compliance with any Federal law relating to risk assessment, the protection of private property rights, or unfunded mandates.

SEC. 403. All departments and agencies funded under this Act are encouraged, within the limits of the existing statutory authorities and funding, to expand their use of "E-Commerce" technologies and procedures in the conduct of their business practices and public service activities.

SEC. 404. Unless stated otherwise, all reports and notifications required by this Act shall be submitted to the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

SEC. 405. None of the funds made available in this Act may be transferred to any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government except pursuant to a transfer made by, or transfer authority provided in, this or any other appropriations Act.

SEC. 406. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used for a project or program named for an individual serving as a Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner of the United States House of Representatives.

SEC. 407. (a) Any agency receiving funds made available in this Act, shall, subject to subsections (b) and (c), post on the public Web site of that agency any report required to be submitted by the Congress in this or any other Act, upon the determination by the head of the agency that it shall serve the national interest.

(b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to a report if—

- (1) the public posting of the report compromises national security; or
- (2) the report contains confidential or proprietary information.

(c) The head of the agency posting such report shall do so only after such report has been made available to the requesting Committee or Committees of Congress for no less than 30 days.

SEC. 408. (a) None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to maintain or establish a computer network unless such network blocks the viewing, downloading, and exchanging of pornography.

(b) Nothing in subsection (a) shall limit the use of funds necessary for any Federal, State, tribal, or local law enforcement agency or any other entity carrying out criminal investigations, prosecution, or adjudication activities.

SEC. 409. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used by an agency of the executive branch to pay for first-class travel by an employee of the agency in contravention of sections 301–10.122 through 301–10.124 of title 41, Code of Federal Regulations.

SEC. 410. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to execute a contract for goods or services, including construction services, where the contractor has not complied with Executive Order No. 12989.

SEC. 411. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used in contravention of section 101(e)(8) of title 10, United States Code.

SEC. 412. (a) IN GENERAL.—None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Defense in this Act may be used to construct, renovate, or expand any facility in the United States, its territories, or possessions to house any individual detained at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, for the purposes of detention or imprisonment in the custody or under the control of the Department of Defense.

(b) The prohibition in subsection (a) shall not apply to any modification of facilities at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

(c) An individual described in this subsection is any individual who, as of June 24, 2009, is located at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and who—

(1) is not a citizen of the United States or a member of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

(2) is—

(A) in the custody or under the effective control of the Department of Defense; or

(B) otherwise under detention at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

SEC. 413. None of the funds appropriated by this Act may be used in any way, directly or indirectly, to influence congressional action on any legislation or appropriation matter pending before Congress, other than to communicate to Members of Congress as described in 18 U.S.C. 1913.

SEC. 414. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be made available to implement, administer, apply, enforce, or carry out Executive Order 13985 of January 20, 2021 (86 Fed. Reg. 7009), Executive Order 14035 of June 25, 2021 (86 Fed. Reg. 34593), or Executive Order 14091 of February 16, 2023 (88 Fed. Reg. 10825).

SEC. 415. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to carry out any program, project, or activity that promotes or advances Critical Race Theory or any concept associated with Critical Race Theory.

SEC. 416. (a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 7 of title 1, United States Code, section 1738C of title 28, United States Code, or any other provision of law, none of the funds provided by this Act, or previous appropriations Acts, shall be used in whole or in part to take any discriminatory action against a person, wholly or partially, on the basis that such person speaks, or acts, in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief, or moral conviction, that marriage is, or should be recognized as, a union of one man and one woman.

(b) Discriminatory action defined.—As used in subsection (a), a discriminatory action means any action taken by the Federal Government to—

(1) alter in any way the Federal tax treatment of, or cause any tax, penalty, or payment to be assessed against, or deny, delay, or revoke an exemption from taxation under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 of, any person referred to in subsection (a);

(2) disallow a deduction for Federal tax purposes of any charitable contribution made to or by such person;

(3) withhold, reduce the amount or funding for, exclude, terminate, or otherwise make unavailable or deny, any Federal grant, contract, subcontract, cooperative agreement, guarantee, loan, scholarship, license, certification, accreditation, employment, or other similar position or status from or to such person;

(4) withhold, reduce, exclude, terminate, or otherwise make unavailable or deny, any entitlement or benefit under a Federal benefit program, including admission to, equal treatment in, or eligibility for a degree from an educational program, from or to such person; or

(5) withhold, reduce, exclude, terminate, or otherwise make unavailable or deny access or an entitlement to Federal property, facilities, educational institutions, speech fora (including traditional, limited, and nonpublic fora), or charitable fundraising campaigns from or to such person.

(c) Accreditation; Licensure; Certification.—The Federal Government shall consider accredited, licensed, or certified for purposes of Federal law any person that would be accredited, licensed, or certified, respectively, for such purposes but for a determination against such person wholly or partially on the basis that the person speaks, or acts, in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction described in subsection (a).

SEC. 417. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used for any office, programs,

or activity for the purposes of diversity, equity, and inclusion training or implementation.

SEC. 418. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enforce COVID-19 mask mandates.

SEC. 419. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to administer, implement, or enforce Executive Order No. 14057 of December 8, 2021.

SEC. 420. None of the funds appropriated by this Act may be used to implement any of the following executive orders:

(1) Executive Order No. 13990, relating to Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science To Tackle the Climate Crisis.

(2) Executive Order No. 14008, relating to Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad.

(3) Section 6 of Executive Order No. 14013, relating to Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs To Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration.

(4) Executive Order No. 14030, relating to Climate-Related Financial Risk.

(5) Executive Order No. 14057, relating to Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability.

(6) Executive Order No. 14082, relating to Implementation of the Energy and Infrastructure Provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

(7) Executive Order No. 14096, relating to Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All.

SEC. 421. (a) IN GENERAL.—None of the funds appropriated by this Act or otherwise made available for Fiscal Year 2025 for the Department of Veterans Affairs may be obligated or expended to procure or purchase computers, printers, software, or hardware needed for an office environment in which the manufacturer, bidder, or offeror, or any subsidiary or parent company of an entity—

(1) in which the People's Republic of China has any ownership stake; or

(2) that contributes to the defense industry of the Chinese Communist Party.

(b) APPLICABILITY TO THIRD PARTIES.—The prohibition in subsection (a) also applies in cases in which the Secretary has contracted with a third party for the procurement, purchase, or expenditure of funds on any of the equipment and software described in such subsection.

SPENDING REDUCTION ACCOUNT

SEC. 422. 80.

This Act may be cited as the "Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2025".

The Acting CHAIR. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived.

No further amendment to the bill, as amended, shall be in order except those printed in part B of House Report 118–535, amendments en bloc described in section 3 of House Resolution 1269, and pro forma amendments described in section 4 of that resolution.

Each further amendment printed in part B of the report shall be considered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment except as provided by section 4 of House Resolution 1269, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question. It shall be in order at any time for the chair of the Committee on Appropriations or his

designee to offer amendments en bloc consisting of amendments printed in part B of the report not earlier disposed of. Amendments en bloc shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their designees, shall not be subject to amendment, except as provided by section 4 of House Resolution 1269, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

During consideration of the bill for amendment, the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees may offer up to 10 pro forma amendments each at any point for the purpose of debate.

□ 1245

AMENDMENTS EN BLOC OFFERED BY MR. CARTER OF TEXAS

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, pursuant to House Resolution 1269, I offer amendments en bloc.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendments en bloc.

Amendments en bloc consisting of amendment Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, and 47 printed in part B of House Report 118–535, offered by Mr. CARTER of Texas:

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MS. BOEBERT OF COLORADO

Page 34, line 19, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$2,000,000)".

Page 35, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$2,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MS. BOEBERT OF COLORADO

Page 35, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$3,000,000)".

Page 40, line 2, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$2,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MS. BOEBERT OF COLORADO

Page 35, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$2,000,000)".

Page 44, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$2,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MS. BOEBERT OF COLORADO

Page 35, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$3,500,000)".

Page 43, line 24, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$2,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MS. BOEBERT OF COLORADO

Page 35, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$3,500,000)".

Page 36, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$2,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 11 OFFERED BY MS. PEREZ OF WASHINGTON

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 12 OFFERED BY MS. PEREZ OF WASHINGTON

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$10,000,000) (increased by \$10,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 13 OFFERED BY MR. VICENTE GONZALEZ OF TEXAS

Page 36, line 18, after the dollar amount, insert "(decreased by \$2,000,000)".

Page 36, line 19, after the dollar amount, insert "(decreased by \$2,000,000)".

Page 44, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$2,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 14 OFFERED BY MR. VICENTE GONZALEZ OF TEXAS

Page 44, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 15 OFFERED BY MR. GOTTHEIMER OF NEW JERSEY

Page 30, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 23 OFFERED BY MR. LALOTA OF NEW YORK

Page 43, line 24, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$15,000,000) (increased by \$15,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 24 OFFERED BY MR. LALOTA OF NEW YORK

Page 9, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$10,000,000) (increased by \$10,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 25 OFFERED BY MR. LALOTA OF NEW YORK

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$5,000,000) (increased by \$5,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 26 OFFERED BY MR. LALOTA OF NEW YORK

Page 34, line 19, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$5,000,000) (increased by \$5,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 27 OFFERED BY MR. LALOTA OF NEW YORK

Page 34, line 9, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$10,000,000) (increased by \$10,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 30 OFFERED BY MS. NORTON OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Page 30, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

AMENDMENT NO. 47 OFFERED BY MRS. WAGNER OF MISSOURI

Page 4, line 8, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$200,000,000) (reduced by \$200,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) each will control 10 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I rise to support this amendment. It contains a number of non-controversial amendments from both sides of the aisle. I encourage its adoption, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I support this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendments en bloc offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER).

The en bloc amendments were agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. BERGMAN

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 1 printed in part B of House Report 118–535.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 34, line 19, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$20,000,000) (increased by \$20,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Chairman, last year, the gentleman from California (Mr. CORREA), my close friend and colleague, and I offered an amendment urging the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a large-scale study into psychedelic-assisted therapies to treat PTSD. I am happy to say that amendment was approved unanimously.

It was 6 months after this show of congressional support that the Veterans Administration announced that it would be funding significant research into psychedelic therapies for the first time in more than four decades.

While it is extremely promising that these treatments are coming, with FDA final approval expected sometime in August, one of the largest barriers to the initial implementation and future success is the availability of qualified and well-trained mental health professionals within VA.

Psychedelic-assisted therapies generally involve multiple therapists at a time and several multi-hour sessions to complete.

My amendment is simple. It expresses support for the recently announced VA-led research and encourages VA to prioritize the proactive training of therapists to successfully administer these new therapies.

As we saw last year, demonstrating clear congressional approval for these innovative efforts can motivate real action within the Federal bureaucracy. We owe it to our veterans to do everything we can in support of these breakthrough therapies.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, the amendment has no budgetary effect, but highlights an important issue for our veterans. I support the efforts for the new treatment of PTSD so long as they are safe and approved for use by the FDA. I am willing to accept the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to

the gentleman from California (Mr. CORREA).

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this amendment, and I thank my fellow co-chair of the Psychedelics Advancing Therapies Caucus, Mr. BERGMAN, for his good work on this measure.

We have seen our Nation's veterans continue to needlessly suffer suicides, mental health, and opioid overdoses. It is crucial that the VA do everything in its power to ensure that they have safe and scientifically sound and potentially lifesaving therapies as soon as they are available and approved in the United States.

Today, Mr. Chairman, these veterans go to other countries to receive these therapies. They are cured, and then they come back. Why in God's name do we not provide these therapies here in the United States? It doesn't make sense.

These amendments will give the Department of Veterans Affairs the opportunity to continue research they have been conducting and the potential to be able to offer MDMA-assisted therapies to our veterans should they receive FDA approval.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment. Our veterans fought for this country and sacrificed much for this country, and it is our duty to give them the best therapies available for the healing of those invisible wounds.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Chair, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Michigan has 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Chairman, psychedelic-assisted therapies have the potential to be the first genuine advancement in the treatment of veterans' mental health in decades. It is essential that the VA continue their efforts to research these compounds and do everything they can to ensure that they have trained therapists and that those trained therapists are ready to meet the need to provide these new breakthrough treatments once they receive FDA approval.

Mr. Chair, again, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. BERGMAN

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 2 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$20,000,000) (increased by \$20,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Chair, this amendment would urge the Veterans Administration to make a decision on incorporating MDMA-assisted therapy into their formulary within 180 days of FDA approval. This is based on legislation by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. VAN ORDEN), which the Committee on Veterans' Affairs approved last month.

As we speak, the FDA's Scientific Advisory Committee is meeting to evaluate the phase 3 studies into this therapy, and full approval will likely come in early August.

I have had the opportunity to personally meet with many of the researchers involved in this study and the veterans whose lives have been forever changed by these therapies. That experience made the potential of this treatment clear to me, and many of the veterans told me that they would not be alive today if it were not for this therapy.

Any bureaucratic red tape that delays potential formulary inclusion could cost the lives of veterans currently suffering from PTSD. This amendment does not push VA to make a decision one way or another. It merely calls for them to act quickly in making a formulary decision.

Mr. Chair, I strongly urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. Chair, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. CORREA).

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Chairman, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. BERGMAN) has laid it out. We have veterans with invisible wounds that they have brought back from the battlefield.

One suicide is too many. We have MDMA therapy that is now being proven to be sometimes 90 percent effective in curing these invisible wounds. We owe it to our veterans, to our society, and to our friends and neighbors who have served to bring these therapies to them as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Chairman, I close by expressing my disappointment and frustration with the language that was included—or rather was not included in the committee's report accompanying this bill.

Despite strong support for useful and proactive language related to psychedelic therapies, including from members within the Appropriations Committee, the report only includes an indirect reference and encourages VA to monitor the results of privately funded research. It does not recognize the fact that VA is already pursuing their own research, and it takes no steps to prepare the VA for FDA approval, which may come in a couple of months.

Those who risk their lives in defense of our country deserve happy and fulfilling lives, and we have the responsibility to ensure that the VA is ready and able to assist them in this endeavor.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 8 OFFERED BY MR. BOST

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 8 printed in part B of House Report 118–535.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. _____. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be used to enforce the provision included in Chapter 1.8 of the VHA Office of Community Care, “Field Guidebook: Specialty Programs” to make wait time and drive time access standards only applicable to primary care, specialty care, and non-institutional extended care services.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of my amendment to the fiscal year 2025 MILCON-VA appropriations bill.

My amendment would rightfully prevent any VA funds from being used to enforce a provision that excludes mental health residential rehabilitation treatment programs from the wait time and drive time access standards as authorized by the MISSION Act.

The VA’s Mental Health Residential Rehab Treatment Program is a crucial program that provides lifesaving treatment to veterans with mental health and substance use disorders.

□ 1300

Right now, veterans are restricted by where they can get their treatment due to the Biden administration’s misguided view of the MISSION Act access standards.

As a result, veterans are being forced to wait months to receive this care.

We are losing 17 veterans a day to suicide.

For VA to not do everything possible to ensure veterans are getting into these treatment programs as quickly as possible is dangerous and wrong.

Madam Chair, this administration knows that there are not enough available beds in VA facilities to meet veterans’ demand for them and that is when the community providers step in, in partnership with the VA. Getting veterans the help and support they need is the VA’s top clinical priority, as well as ensuring the mental health

needs of veterans are met without any delays.

It goes without saying that a veteran in crisis who needs treatment should be eligible for community care without proof that they live far from a VA, or their local facility is overlooked.

This is what the MISSION Act was designed to help with, but under the administration they want proof.

I am proud to have introduced my amendment to prohibit VA from excluding these vitally important treatment programs from wait time and drive time access standards for VA community care programs.

There should be no closed door when it comes to lifesaving care for veterans in crisis.

Madam Chair, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR (Ms. MALLIOTAKIS). The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I will be clear that the gentleman who is offering this amendment has been committed to driving the VA toward privatization. That is what this is really all about.

Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition to this amendment because what his amendment would do is greatly expand the MISSION Act, which is designated access standards to all categories of care and would seek to greatly increase the privatization of the VA.

The MISSION Act was not envisioned to replace all care at all facilities within VA with private care. It was intended to supplement care at VA facilities, particularly, and specifically, when a veteran was too far away from a VA facility that could provide the service or when there was a prolonged period of time in which a veteran could get that service.

Let’s be clear: Where we are now in terms of the care in the community and for veterans getting access to appointments, in many cases, all across the country is that it actually takes longer for a veteran to get an appointment when they try to get one in the community than it does to get one at the VA. The overwhelming majority of veterans, when they are surveyed, make very clear that they prefer their care at the VA.

Implementing this amendment could have far-reaching ramifications and would cost hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars a year based on past CBO scores for similar legislation. It is interesting given that the majority is cutting the funding at the VA by \$6 billion in this bill, so how we would ever be able to pay for this proposal is incomprehensible to me. This amendment is a controversial authorizing issue which should be considered in the appropriate authorizing committee, which the sponsor of the amendment is chairman of that committee.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Madam Chair, I want to make sure that the people understand that this amendment is not an act to try to privatize our VA. It is an act to try to make sure that our veterans actually receive the services that they need.

As a veteran, and as the many veterans that actually serve in this body, it is vitally important that that issue is taken care of; not to protect the bureaucracy at VA, but that we protect and serve the veterans that we were sent here to serve.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, as I said, the gentleman from Illinois can put all the bows and ribbons and wrapping paper that he would like on what his amendment does, but it doesn’t change the fact that it would move VA not only further toward privatization, but flies in the face of the original goal and the law that the MISSION Act is intended to implement, which is to ensure that veterans who are not able to get quick and timely access to care when they don’t live close enough to a VA facility that can provide that care or when the length of time is unreasonable for them to get that care, that is not the case in the situation in which this amendment would apply.

Plus, this amendment would cost an extraordinary amount of money, millions and, likely, billions of dollars which has been previously scored by CBO, and this bill cuts the VA by \$6 billion.

Again, the mathing on the other side of the aisle is really not working so well.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Illinois will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 9 OFFERED BY MR. BURCHETT

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 9 printed in part B of House Report 118–535.

Mr. BURCHETT. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. _____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of

Veterans Affairs to ban or remove the photograph "V-J Day in Times Square".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. BURCHETT) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. BURCHETT. Madam Chair, in light of all these other amendments, my amendment seems a little light compared to other things going on, but I bring it in all sincerity because I have had some constituents contact me about this.

This basically just prohibits the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from banning or removing the iconic photograph "V-J Day in Times Square," otherwise known as The Kiss.

A few months ago, an Assistant Secretary at the VA sent a memo directing regional offices to remove the photo, alleging it depicts a nonconsensual act.

Secretary McDonough later reversed the decision, and I think it is probably because his boss realized it is an election year.

This illustrates a larger problem within this administration, Madam Chair.

This administration constantly removes or changes history because they don't like the view from their rose-tinted glasses.

Madam Chair, World War II cost the lives of 330,000 American soldiers, including my uncle. My father fought in that war, fought valiantly in the Pacific.

World War II tore sons from their mothers and husbands from their wives. It impacted every part of American society. The actions in this photo are not really romantic as the woman said herself, the actual woman in the photo. The actions in this photo are simply two people rejoicing at the end of a terrible war and the defeat of terrible enemies. More importantly, this photo represents the victory and peace felt around the country and the world.

Madam Chair, I urge the Members to vote in favor of the amendment to prevent the administration from removing this photo in the future, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. BURCHETT).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 10 OFFERED BY MR. CRANE

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 10 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. CRANE. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. ____ None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of

Veterans Affairs to report a determination under section 5502 of title 38, United States Code, and section 3.353 of title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations, to the Department of Justice National Instant Criminal Background Check System established pursuant to section 103 of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (34 U.S.C. 40901).

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. CRANE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona.

Mr. CRANE. Madam Chair, today, I rise in support of my amendment, which clarifies that any veteran who is reported to NICS by a VA fiduciary was done so incorrectly in violation of their constitutional rights.

It also forces the VA Secretary to instruct the Attorney General to remove these veterans from the NICS list.

Congress should not turn a blind eye to the 260,000 veterans who have been wrongfully submitted to the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

Earlier this year, Congress passed appropriations which prohibited this. In fact, last year, this exact language passed with 221 Republicans and 9 Democrats supporting it when it was considered by the House.

Since then, a majority of House Democrats have come out against this policy and are working with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to blatantly misuse VA funds, in conflict with congressional intent and the will of the people, to continue disarming veterans; create an unauthorized process for dragging veterans before judges for red flag disarmament proceedings; and using unconstitutional State-level gun confiscation laws against veterans, even outside the fiduciary program.

These lawless suggestions by my Democrat colleagues are the nightmares of veterans that I represent and veterans across America.

President Biden will have no problem plowing ahead and stripping veterans of their Second Amendment rights, and if this administration can do this to veterans, they can do it to the rest of Americans.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, not only is this amendment bad policy, but the underlying bill includes a prohibition on ensuring that people who have been prohibited by law from getting access to a gun because they have had a fiduciary appointed to take care of their finances, meaning that they have had a determination that they are not competent to manage their finances, this amendment would go even further and elimi-

nate the exception in the underlying bill that says if a court has judicially determined that a veteran is incompetent and appoints a fiduciary, even in that case, this amendment says that a veteran would be able to keep their guns.

Under Federal law, when someone is deemed mentally incompetent by a judge, which is a similar ruling that would occur in this case, the gentleman offering this amendment would allow a veteran to keep their firearms, even if a court had decided that they were not competent to handle their finances.

That is unacceptable. This provision not only prevents the VA from following the law that is intended to protect veterans and those around them, but it prioritizes firearms over the safety of veterans.

The existing program has a full due process system, and veterans have access to an appeals process.

This is an example of generating controversy where there is none.

The process of applying for disability benefits is separate from the processes by which veterans receive VA healthcare. The Veterans Health Administration does not take away veterans' firearms, but this amendment by implying that VA bureaucrats are going to take guns away from veterans, the provision not only does nothing to increase access to care, it seeks to dissuade veterans from even seeking the healthcare they have earned in the first place.

This is about whether we are going to keep veterans and those around them safe.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized that the core of the Second Amendment right is self-defense. Assigning a fiduciary to handle financial benefits does not interfere with self-defense, but rather, it is seeking to protect and avoid injuries and deaths from suicide and accidents, which are rising when a veteran who is not competent to handle much of their own personal business and a court has determined that, we know there is a greater risk when they are handling a firearm.

We know that suicide is more likely. We know that killings take place, and this amendment would make that more likely.

Madam Chair, I underscore my strong opposition to this amendment and urge Members to vote against it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1315

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. CRANE).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by

the gentleman from Arizona will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 16 OFFERED BY MS. GREENE OF GEORGIA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 16 printed in part B of House Report 118–535.

Ms. GREENE of Georgia. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 8, strike lines 15 through 25.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Georgia (Ms. GREENE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

Ms. GREENE of Georgia. Madam Chair, my amendment strikes funding for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program.

My amendment would strike over \$433 million in NATO funding from the bill. America should not be doling out hundreds of millions of dollars to international organizations to help them fight their enemies, especially when they are unwilling to fight for themselves.

As of 2023, a majority of NATO countries do not meet their pledge to spend a minimum of 2 percent of their GDP on defense. The United States has been financing and promising to defend NATO countries for decades and paying more than its fair share, all while countries like Germany fail to fulfill their NATO obligations.

European countries could and should be stepping up their financial contributions to ensure the security of NATO. Instead, they prefer the U.S. taxpayer to foot the bill and, if the time comes, for American servicemembers to die for them.

Our continued involvement in NATO only undermines the security of our Nation because it embroils the United States in other countries' military entanglements even if the United States has no direct interests.

This is exactly what has happened in Ukraine, which could become a part of NATO. Billions of American taxpayer dollars go to the corruption capital of the world, and the sanctions placed on Russia end up actually hurting Americans.

As long as we remain a member of NATO, the United States will continue to function as the military ATM of European countries at the expense of our own citizens, putting our own national security and our economy at risk.

If the United States further involves itself in NATO, it may be another 20 years of Afghanistan all over again, except the outcome may end up being much, much worse.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, this amendment would completely eliminate funding in this bill for the NATO Security Investment Program during a time when we should be investing in much-needed infrastructure projects.

I point out to my colleagues that worldwide in U.S. military infrastructure, 30 percent of our military infrastructure is in fair or poor condition. We should be investing in these much-needed infrastructure projects. Cutting funding for the NATO Security Investment Program is not only bad policy from a national security perspective, but it is also not sound long-term fiscal policy.

The deterrence that NATO provides now is a small cost to avoid future conflict. As I stated last year during debate on this issue, regardless of your stance on overall defense spending levels of various NATO countries, it is simply not true that the United States is paying more than its share of this direct contribution program.

This amendment does not recognize the cost-effective benefit the NATO Security Investment Program provides to the United States. The U.S. contributes less than 16 percent of the funding for the NATO Security Investment Program, but 44 percent of the locations for which projects are selected benefit U.S. posture locations.

If the U.S. contributed at the same cost share relative to national wealth that our allies do, our cost share would be 47 percent, rather than the under 16 percent that we actually pay.

The United States' contributions to NATO represent only a small portion of our defense spending, but the strength of the NATO alliance is an outsized and irreplaceable part of American national security. This amendment would not even reinvest the funding into other priorities. It simply cuts \$434 million.

As I stated in my opening statement, this bill is already a cut of \$718 million for military construction compared to the enacted level from last year. This amendment would take the bill further in the wrong direction and, if enacted, would leave military construction funded over a billion dollars less than in fiscal year 2024.

Madam Chair, I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. GREENE of Georgia. Madam Chair, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining?

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Georgia has 3 minutes remaining.

Ms. GREENE of Georgia. Madam Chair, the American people are very fed up with their hard-earned tax dollars being sent overseas to countries all around the world, especially when our own border is being completely invaded every single day.

We don't have an idea of how many millions of people are in this country.

We know that it is upward of 12 million, while some estimates go as high as 20 million. Our country is being invaded by people from over 160 countries around the world.

We are talking about criminals, gang members, cartels, rapists, murderers. All kinds of convicted criminals have come into our country and are committing crimes against Americans.

Just recently, there was an illegal alien monster that was arrested in the State of New York by NYPD that was released. When he was released, because the justice system of New York did not prosecute him, this monster then came to Georgia and murdered Laken Riley. These are the types of crimes that are happening all over our country.

Just recently, Madam Chair, as I heard you speak earlier today about two police officers who were killed in New York, these are the types of things that Americans care about, the crimes that are being committed against Americans. We are not interested in seeing our hard-earned dollars go to countries that don't even meet their commitments.

Over half of the NATO countries have not met their pledge to spend at least over 2 percent. We are talking about countries like France. We are talking about countries like Denmark, Germany, Italy, Canada, Türkiye, Spain, and many others that are not even paying and meeting their pledge of spending at least 2 percent in NATO.

Yet, America is beyond our pledge. We are spending, in 2023, 3.5 percent of our GDP, yet we don't do anything to defend our own country and our own borders.

This is why Americans would love to see Congress take action, action to defund NATO and stop spending hundreds of millions of their hard-earned money to defend these foreign countries while we don't defend our own country and our own people.

Madam Chair, I urge Congress to vote for this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining?

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Florida has 3 minutes remaining.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I think the sponsor of the amendment has shown pretty clear evidence that she has no idea what the NATO Security Investment Program is actually funding.

We are talking about funding that is provided to build infrastructure that takes care of our troops who are overseas so that we can make sure that we invest properly in infrastructure for a vast array of training facilities, of national security facilities, of hangars that contain our airplanes, military aircraft that costs billions of dollars.

Everything about what the amendment does actually makes our own servicemembers, who are fighting overseas to defend our national security interests and to defend our country, less safe.

I am not sure if the sponsor of the amendment has traveled to see our military infrastructure around the world. I have.

Oftentimes, when we go as MILCON-VA Subcommittee, I have traveled with Judge Carter to see some of our infrastructure. The appalling conditions in which much of this infrastructure exists make it so that our service-members are less safe.

I have been in hangars in which the doors don't close because they are rusted, and the jury-rigging that our servicemembers have to do to close the doors of some hangars to protect our very expensive equipment that protects our national security interests would straighten my hair, and that is not easy, Madam Chair.

We have a responsibility to make sure that the infrastructure that we fund is in pristine, well-kept condition. What the sponsor of the amendment would do is decimate our ability to do that. That is irresponsible. It is unpatriotic.

We should not support this amendment. Members should vote against it.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. GREENE).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Georgia will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 17 OFFERED BY MS. HAGEMAN

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 17 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____ None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Department of Veterans Affairs to decommission mileage reimbursement kiosks.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Wyoming.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Madam Chair, I rise in support of my amendment No. 17 to H.R. 8580, which would prohibit the VA from continuing to decommission mileage reimbursement kiosks in its facilities nationwide.

As the age-old saying goes, if it is not broke, don't fix it. Unfortunately, this basic premise was disregarded when the VA decided to quickly do away with

mileage reimbursement kiosks at its facilities nationwide, which had previously provided veterans with an easy-to-use system to file their beneficiary travel reimbursement claims, among other key functions.

These changes were made as part of the November 2020 rollout of the VA's new online beneficiary travel self-service system, which sought to reform the way in which these claims are submitted and processed.

Since its introduction, the VA's new system has been plagued with countless issues and has ultimately disadvantaged a large segment of America's veterans, such as those who live in rural areas, including Wyoming, where access to the internet can be limited, and our elderly veterans are not as familiar with this type of technology.

An OIG report from May 2023 highlighted that from February 2021 through July 2022, the new system fell short of all four of the VA system performance goals. Initial feedback from veterans outside the VA and veteran service organizations was never taken into account during system development. The VA did not provide proper training to veterans on how to enter claims in the new system until almost 5 months after the system's launch.

Madam Chair, these mistakes are simply not acceptable. Combined with the removal of the mileage reimbursement kiosks, these foundational flaws have resulted in missed reimbursements and increased difficulties for America's veterans.

While I certainly understand the need to streamline and improve upon existing systems and processes, modernization should never come at a negative cost to any of our veterans who have devoted their lives to serving our Nation and safeguarding the freedoms that we hold dear.

It is our responsibility, and should remain our priority, to do everything in our power to ensure our veterans can easily access the benefits and care that they have rightfully earned.

Madam Chair, I urge all of my colleagues to support my amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1330

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to this amendment. CBO has reviewed this amendment and has indicated that it would have significant budget authority and outlay effects in this year. Translate that into English. It means that it would cost a lot of money.

The bill already cuts \$6 billion from the VA over the last fiscal year. Furthermore, veterans can still receive their travel reimbursements online, which simplifies the current process

and the need for hard-copy and in-person submissions, which is cumbersome and unnecessary.

I believe we should let the VA manage this process in a way that is efficient and cost-effective. This amendment micromanages the VA on something that is really not appropriate for us to be doing in this bill, and so I would urge its opposition. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Madam Chair, I will repeat, this is for the benefit of our veterans. This is a program that was not properly rolled out, and our veterans are the ones who have suffered as a consequence. They are the ones who have given their lives and their dedication to protecting our freedoms.

It is critically important that we make sure that we make it as easy as possible, as streamlined as possible for them to be able to seek the reimbursement that they are entitled to. These kiosks have been effective in doing that. Until there is an alternative that can replace the kiosks, we should not be decommissioning them.

Madam Chair, I urge adoption of this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. LOIS FRANKEL), my neighbor slightly to the north and a member of the Appropriations Committee.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Madam Chair, I thank my colleague, DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for her fine work.

Madam Chair, I am the proud mother of a United States war veteran, so I understand the risks that our brave men and women in uniform take for our freedom.

It saddens me to say: My, my, my, here we go again. Republicans are interfering with a woman's freedom to decide whether or when to start or grow a family. This time they are going after the women who have served our country in uniform.

This bill includes provisions that not only cruelly restrict access to abortion but eliminate abortion counseling at the VA altogether, impacting nearly 1 million veterans of childbearing age.

Madam Chair, I hope we can all agree that we owe our veterans nothing less than our full support to help them maintain their health and well-being. These proposed changes in this bill are not just a rollback of medical rights; they are a profound failure to stand by our veterans and a betrayal to honor our commitment to them.

I cannot support this bill because of some of these provisions, including this one, and I urge my colleagues to vote against it.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Madam Chair, I don't think that there is anything that epitomizes more the Democrats' obsession with abortion than bringing that issue in relation to an amendment as to whether the VA should be allowed to decommission kiosks for mileage reimbursement for our veterans.

The fact that that is the only issue that they are able to address when trying to find a way to make sure that our veterans are able to be properly reimbursed for the expenses that they incur just, I think, is a reflection on the Democratic Party as a whole right now. They are not even capable of discussing anything other than abortion, even when the amendment has nothing to do with that particular topic.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, as I said, I rise in opposition to this amendment, particularly because CBO says that the cost of actually implementing this would be astronomical, and the majority is already cutting \$6 billion out of this bill, so I don't understand how they would expect VA to pay for what this proposal would require. We are micromanaging the VA when we should be allowing them to manage this process in a way that they think is most efficient and cost-effective. I oppose the amendment and yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 18 OFFERED BY MR. JAMES

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 18 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. JAMES. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 34, line 9, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$3,250,000) (reduced by \$3,250,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. JAMES) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. JAMES. Madam Chair, I rise in support of my amendment, an effort to bring a mobile medical unit and/or community-based outpatient clinic to my district, Michigan's 10th Congressional District.

There was a recent announcement from the VA that mobile medical units are coming to Arizona and Texas. I believe there is also a very high demand for them in Michigan. Many veterans, particularly those who served in Korea and Vietnam in my district have come to me directly, whether at the VFW Post 6691 in Fraser, Michigan, where I am now a member, or just recently at the Memorial Day parade in Sterling Heights about the need to have greater access to healthcare facilities for those who may be declining in their mobility as they age.

Currently, many veterans in Macomb County have to travel too far and too long to get the services they deserve. It is for this reason that we need to bring

one closer to home, directly where they are needed most.

While the Dingell VA has made some strides to improve healthcare for veterans in the metro Detroit area, there is still a great deal of work to be done. I heard from women veterans, in particular, in my district office about the need to have more choice and better quality of services but also about staff turnover rate that is affecting their quality of care. Community-based outpatient clinics and mobile medical units are a path toward allowing veterans to get more specialized, local-based care in a manner that they have very much earned.

As we commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day this week, we honor the brave American soldiers who fought our Nation's wars abroad so we may enjoy the privileges of freedom at home. As someone who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom myself, I believe that their sacrifices should be honored through our work here in Congress.

I know firsthand about the transition from military life to civilian life. It is not easy. The least we can do is make VA healthcare more available and accessible to our veterans. My amendment will further these aims through funding for facilities like mobile medical units and community-based outpatient clinics. I implore my colleagues to support my amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, this amendment is non-controversial. I do not oppose it. It supports community-based outpatient clinics and mobile medical units. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. JAMES. Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. JAMES).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 19 OFFERED BY MRS. KIGGANS OF VIRGINIA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 19 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 9, line 18, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The gentlewoman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Chair, I represent a district that over 90,000 Active-Duty military members and their families call home. As a former Navy helicopter pilot, military spouse, and now mom to children who serve, I am proud to be a voice for our military community here in Congress.

One of the aspects I am most passionate about advocating for is improving their quality of life, particularly their living conditions. To put it plainly, housing for our single, unaccompanied servicemembers is abysmal, and it is completely unacceptable.

In September 2023, the United States Government Accountability Office found a variety of living conditions were negatively affecting servicemembers' quality of life, such as sewage overflow, mold and mildew, broken windows and locks. I have seen it for myself and so has my staff.

The week I was sworn into office, I took my entire team to Virginia Beach and drove them around Naval Air Station Oceana to show them the conditions we ask our unaccompanied sailors to live in. We visited condemned barracks and other barracks that were decades old and had very little maintenance and upkeep. We saw rusted bathrooms, moldy ceilings, and dirty carpets.

To think of the conditions that we ask these often young, unaccompanied sailors to live in, I think of college dorms. I am also a mom to four children who are college aged, and we have done many college tours recently and visiting dormitories on campuses. Seeing the differences in where we are housing college-aged students and knowing what those kids do a lot of nights a week, and looking at where we are housing our unaccompanied servicemembers, knowing what we ask of those young people, it was a stark contrast and stark difference.

Our young men and women in uniform put their lives on the line for our country. It is only right to provide them with the quality of life deserving of their service and sacrifice. It is infuriating to me that we have not provided better for them.

Given the overall success of the military housing privatization initiative for military family housing and our current budgetary constraints, we need to think outside the box about housing solutions for our unaccompanied servicemembers.

That is why I am offering this amendment to encourage the approval and development of privatized housing for unaccompanied servicemembers, like the ones we have right now in Hampton Roads and San Diego. We cannot allow bureaucratic delays and fragmented approaches by the different services to hamper our efforts to fix problems plaguing our barracks on bases across the country.

We can and must work together to create better living conditions and housing options for those who serve. I want my children and their peers to be

proud of their Navy just like I was when I served.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the gentlewoman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, the gentlewoman's amendment is bewildering to me. I understand and agree with the frustration toward the deficiencies in housing for our servicemembers, including unaccompanied housing, but a GAO report last year highlighted the horrible conditions of some military unaccompanied housing and inadequate oversight from the military services.

While the services are taking some steps to address these deficiencies, our subcommittee has remained focused on a bipartisan basis of addressing this issue. Privatization of unaccompanied housing is not a universal answer to these problems, and it should not be a first option. While the services are exploring pilot projects for unaccompanied barracks, the feedback that our subcommittee has heard in hearings this year is that the services do not view privatization as an answer to this problem in all or even most cases.

We don't have to look far to see how privatization can go horribly wrong. Privatized family housing has resulted in persistent, unacceptable conditions for many military families, including houses with mold, improperly addressed lead paint, untimely maintenance, and companies which have not been responsive to their concerns.

Why? Because even the fines that are levied once these private companies are held accountable are just a rounding error for these multinational corporations who really don't have to worry about whether they can afford the accountability that is meted out from their neglect.

Oversight of privatized family housing remains a major issue to this day. Even when privatization may result in better housing conditions now, it is not a solution if companies don't properly maintain these facilities for the full life cycle like they have neglected to do for family housing.

Sure, if you have a private company build a private barracks now, it is pristine and new, and has nothing wrong with it, but with the neglect that is the track record of these private companies, down the road we are going to end up potentially in the same boat.

□ 1345

We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past. There may be specific instances where privatized unaccompanied housing can be part of a holistic plan by the services to address the deficiencies of unaccompanied housing, but it is not

and should not be the whole solution. That is where this amendment takes us.

We should not repeat the privatized housing horror stories of the past or waste untold millions more in critical taxpayer dollars on privatized housing schemes.

I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Chair, I disagree with my colleague. Privatization is one solution, and privatization of family housing has come a long way.

Is it perfect, no, but it is a step in the right direction, and it is certainly a lot better than what we used to have, which was simply the defense budget and the government running all of family housing.

Family housing has come a long way since we have privatized it. There is a lot of oversight needed, and Congress needs to continue to provide the oversight so that we have the best family housing available for our military families who serve right along with our Active-Duty servicemen and -women.

Privatization is one way that we can think outside the box. The defense budget is always inadequate. We just don't have the amount of money that it takes to refurbish and redo all of the unaccompanied housing, all of the barracks that we have seen and that were listed in that scathing GAO report that came out. It is one solution.

Right now, we just have two. We have one in Norfolk and one in San Diego. We have two models of privatization.

Having visited the one in Norfolk, it is amazing to see the quality-of-life differences. They have private bedrooms. They have a communal kitchen that has actual spaces for them to make nutritious meals.

We have things like a gym. There is a pool and even a Jacuzzi and basketball courts. There is a theater room. There is a library.

There is plenty that offers the good quality of life that we know our servicemen and -women need, especially when they come home after a long deployment or after a long working day.

Those are the things that we can provide in privatized housing. Is it a perfect solution, no, but it is a way to augment what we have right now, and it is certainly a step in the right direction.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, the difference between the gentlewoman's approach and ours is that we believe that the services should continue to be able to take a measured approach to whether or not using privatized unaccompanied housing is appropriate and whether or not, as the gentlewoman's amendment would do, encourage the services to go to privatization for unaccompanied housing.

We see the track record that is unfettered. Going forward on privatizing

housing has not gone well, and it has been expensive, costly, and it has also contributed to the problem that we are having with retention of our servicemembers.

We have heard testimony over the last few years from servicemembers who have been in neglected privatized family housing, and it has caused many of the servicemembers to throw the towel in and just say: You know what? I wanted to make a career out of being in the military, but obviously the services don't care about me and don't care about my family or exposing my children to lead paint, mold, and other really serious problems.

We are not at a point where we should be encouraging privatization of housing. We should allow the services to take a measured approach to pursue privatized unaccompanied housing when they think it is appropriate and make sure that there is appropriate accountability in place, which this amendment doesn't ensure.

I would urge Members to vote against it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Chair, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST).

Mr. MAST. Madam Chair, the argument here against privatized housing for people in the military is if you allow somebody to put their private dollars into it, then down the road it may turn into what the government has allowed the housing to turn into, which would be terrible. We shouldn't let a private entity oversee the housing because it may turn into what the government has allowed housing to be for our servicemembers.

That argument holds no water, makes absolutely no sense, and I would put my money on the private entities taking better care of their investment than how the government takes care of an investment that is paid for by the ambiguous tax dollars of people across the country any day of the week.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 20 OFFERED BY MRS. KIGGANS OF VIRGINIA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 20 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS)

and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Chair, as a daughter of a veteran, the wife of a veteran, as a veteran myself, it is particularly important to me that our country keeps its promises to those who served.

Virginia's Second District is home to one of the highest populations of veterans in the country. An estimated 90,000 veterans live not within our borders but across the ocean in U.S. territories and Freely Associated States such as Puerto Rico, Guam, and other islands across the Pacific.

We are responsible for providing care to all veterans, including those that reside within U.S. territories and Freely Associated States.

However, there is evidence that VA's estimate of the number of veterans living in these areas is far too low, and the Government Accountability Office has consistently criticized the model used by the VA to make these estimates.

This prevents the VA from allocating sufficient resources to serve those veterans, leading to gaps in care.

In addition, the VA does not have community care network providers in the Freely Associated States and limited local options for medical care, and healthcare is often only available after traveling by plane.

Most veterans who live in one of the Freely Associated States do not qualify for the VA travel benefits program, even though the closest VA clinic is sometimes thousands of miles away on another island.

VA care in these areas does not live up to its promise. I urge the VA to maintain and expand services available to these veterans, and I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I will address the tail end of the previous colleague's comments that represented a fundamental misunderstanding of the way privatized military housing works.

The privatized companies aren't taking over housing that the government built. They actually enter into a contract with the military, and they build the housing brand new themselves.

The problem is that for decades, they have neglected it. They have neglected the housing. They are terrible about follow-up on maintenance and making sure that the housing is well cared for. They are leaving people in mold, filth, vermin, and lead paint, and it is unacceptable.

Let's just be clear that the gentleman's reference to privatized companies coming and rescuing government housing that has declined is not correct.

The privatized family housing program and the barracks are new construction that the privatized companies build, and then they neglect taking care of it and neglect taking care of our servicemembers, which is why we need to be careful about our approach in the future to privatized family housing and privatized housing for unaccompanied servicemembers.

This amendment is not controversial, and I am not opposed to it. It supports medical care for veterans who reside in U.S. territories and Freely Associated States, which both Mr. CARTER and I have gone together to see and to communicate about.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Chair, just to close, again, about the privatization of housing. To look at and to compare and to enter both facilities, those that are privatized, and those that are purely funded by the Department of Defense, is it perfect, no, but it is a heck of a lot better than the current conditions that we have our unaccompanied servicemembers living in right now.

There are stark differences in those two pathways of life. I cannot speak more favorably to the privatized model. Again, is it perfect, no. Is there a lot of accountability and oversight that needs to happen, yes.

That contract process could probably be perfected and worked on. That is something that I think is in the responsibility of Congress.

We need to make sure that we have a contract with those privatized companies who also have reputations on the line so they are not just building and forgetting about those housing situations. They have reputations too, and they want to take care of our servicemembers.

In reality, what is happening in the two models we currently have in San Diego and Norfolk is a stark contrast to the DOD-funded, DOD-built, and DOD-supervised housing that we currently see on base, and I can't think of a better direction for our servicemembers.

As far as the VA carrying U.S. territories and Freely Associated States, I again encourage my colleagues to support this amendment.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. MOLINARO). The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 21 OFFERED BY MRS. KIGGANS OF VIRGINIA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 21 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Chair, I had the honor of growing up in a family with a strong history of service to our country.

My grandfather served in the Navy in World War II. My father served as a United States Army Green Beret in Vietnam and later served in the Army Reserves.

I spent some of the best years of my life in the Navy as a helicopter pilot with many members who became like family to me.

As a third-generation veteran, the wife of a veteran, and a mother of future veterans, I know how important it is to take care of our men and women in uniform after they return home from service.

Unfortunately, these issues surrounding mental health are a complex and unfortunate challenge for many of our Nation's heroes.

Since 9/11, it is estimated that over 30,000 Active-Duty servicemembers and veterans have died by suicide. Most statistics average approximately 20 a day.

This is four times more than the number of servicemembers killed in combat during the global war on terror.

We have the responsibility to provide those who have served our country with the medical care, including the mental health care and support that they deserve.

While the VA has expanded their suicide outreach and mental health initiatives, there is more work to be done. We cannot allow the men and women who have served our country to slip through the cracks. We can and we must do better.

That is why I have offered this amendment, to ensure the VA fully funds and effectively executes mental health care programs with a special emphasis on suicide prevention and outreach.

Returning home from combat and transitioning to civilian life is often extremely difficult for our servicemembers.

Access to programs and resources for suicide prevention can help those who are struggling and ultimately save lives. We must protect our veterans, just as they have protected us. I urge my colleagues to stand up for veterans and vote in favor of my amendment.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I really would invite the gentlewoman from Virginia to take a tour of some of our privatized military family housing where she would have an opportunity to see that it is not better.

We have established some layer of oversight at the military service level, but we have really decrepit conditions that still exist.

There are some beginning improvements, but there are millions of dollars in fines that privatized military family housing companies have had to pay because of their neglect.

Like I said, encouraging more privatized housing for our unaccompanied servicemembers should be done in a selectful, choiceful way, not just encouraging it to occur across all of our services.

This amendment is noncontroversial, and I am not opposed to it. It supports mental health care programs with an emphasis on suicide prevention.

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

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, just to clarify, there is a stark difference between family privatized housing and unaccompanied privatized housing for our single servicemembers.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. EDWARDS). The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS).

The amendment was agreed to.

□ 1400

AMENDMENT NO. 22 OFFERED BY MRS. KIGGANS OF VIRGINIA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 22 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 24, line 22, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Chair, I represent a military-heavy district with five bases, and all of those installations have buildings that are in disrepair or condemned. I am shocked at some of the conditions I see on the

military bases in my district. I drive around, and it is disheartening to see the buildings that are in disrepair, that are falling apart, and that are eyesores.

I have driven in family housing where right across the street will be an empty, old BOQ building that will have the doors swinging open and the curtains blowing in the breeze from windows that are broken and refrigerators sitting with their doors ajar out in the hallways. These are buildings that are awaiting demolition that sit literally for years and are eyesores. We haven't prioritized demolition projects on these bases.

When I think about recruitment and retention for our all-volunteer force, I worry about those impressions that we are leaving with other families, with our military families and Active-Duty servicemen and -women that are driving through bases.

Not prioritizing military demolition projects has created safety issues directly affecting the quality of life and quality of service of our military personnel, their families, and surrounding communities. Poor conditions on military bases can hamper operational efficiency and readiness. Condemned buildings may restrict space for training, maintenance, and equipment storage. Lack of suitable facilities can delay operations, hinder training exercises, and impact the overall effectiveness of military units stationed on the base.

My amendment would ensure the Department of Defense allocates additional funding specifically for the demolition of condemned buildings on military installations. If we recognize the importance of maintaining and improving our installation infrastructure, we can ensure that we don't deter potential recruits and impact retention rates.

Servicemembers and their families may be reluctant to stay in such environments, affecting the overall strength and morale of the military community. My amendment would ensure the necessary resources are available to carry out the demolition projects efficiently and safely by reducing bureaucratic red tape and expediting the review and approval of demolition plans. It is crucial to address and improve these poor conditions to ensure the well-being of military personnel.

I can't overstate that when we are so focused on recruitment, retention, and quality of life, when I get in my minivan and I drive around bases and see buildings that are falling apart, that are dilapidated, that have broken glass, broken doors, those are eyesores. I think of what kind of impression that leaves on a person who is a new recruit right out of boot camp who shows up on a base and drives through a series of these buildings that are due to be demolished, but we can't get that done. When we call, when we pick up the phone and ask base leadership, they say it is going to be several years from

now. I have to look at that building or other members of the service and their families have to look at those buildings on their drive to and from work, on their drives to and from commissaries or to and from their jobs. We have to do better for our servicemen and -women.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to help make our military installations more appealing and safer for members of our armed services and to vote in favor of my amendment. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, although I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, this amendment is noncontroversial, and I am not opposed to it. It encourages the Navy and Marine Corps to effectively use its demolition funding. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS).

The amendment was agreed to.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I rise as the designee of the gentlewoman from Connecticut, and I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I rise to oppose the various harmful policy riders included in this bill.

Specifically, there are two sets of riders that I believe are the most poisonous. First, section 255 would prohibit the VA from implementing a rule on abortions, essentially making it the law that a woman veteran has to be dying in order to have access to an abortion. Never mind if an abortion is in the best medical interest of the veteran, this rider ignores that harsh but brutal reality that some veterans will face. It further limits women's access to reproductive care by prohibiting the VA from offering abortion counseling and making it more difficult for women veterans to access abortion services.

Many of our Republican colleagues are obsessed with adopting a national abortion ban, and their fanatic compulsion to control women's bodies will apparently spare no one, even if it means stealing away reproductive freedoms of the brave veterans who served to protect every last one of our freedoms.

This radical agenda is so out of sync with Americans' political mainstream, most self-described Republicans across

the country don't support it. It certainly should not be poisoning this historically bipartisan bill that our veterans and servicemembers desperately count on.

Further, sections 256, 257, and 416 are discriminatory riders against our LGBTQI+ community. The riders block gender-affirming care, limit the ability to fly the Pride flag at VA facilities, and create a license to discriminate against the LGBTQI+ community under the guise of religious freedom.

I was proud to sponsor amendments, joined by some of my Democratic colleagues, that would have stricken these provisions, but the majority blocked those amendments from receiving a vote.

Like the assaults on women's bodies, these extremist attacks undermine the basic tenets of equality and inclusivity at the very heart of our democratic values.

The VA should be welcoming and inclusive for everyone who volunteers to sacrifice and serve our Nation, not just some of them.

I single out these two particularly odious sets of riders, because unlike many of the genuine policy differences that we will have today, these are both especially cruel, discriminatory, and destined to shrivel under the unforgiving light of time and history.

We should all be uniting to ensure that veterans can find jobs, feed their families, keep roofs over their heads, and get the care they deserve, not dividing and politicizing their personal and medical decisions.

For these reasons, at the appropriate time, I will offer a motion to recommit this bill back to committee. If the House rules permitted, I would have offered the motion with an important amendment to this bill. My amendment would strike the harmful provisions I just described for you.

Mr. Chair, I include in the RECORD the text of my amendment.

Ms. Wasserman Schultz moves to recommit the bill H.R. 8580 to the Committee on Appropriations with the following amendment:

Strike sections 255, 256, 257, and 416.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for the motion to recommit, and I yield back the balance of my time.

AMENDMENT NO. 28 OFFERED BY MR. MAST

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 28 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. 419. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs in this Act may be used to enforce Veterans Health Directive 1315 as it relates to—

(1) the policy stating that “VHA providers are prohibited from completing forms or registering Veterans for participation in a State-approved marijuana program”;

(2) the directive for the “Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management” to ensure that “medical facility Directors are aware that it is VHA policy for providers to assess Veteran use of marijuana but providers are prohibited from recommending, making referrals to or completing paperwork for Veteran participation in State marijuana programs”; and

(3) the directive for the “VA Medical Facility Director” to ensure that “VA facility staff are aware of the following” “[t]he prohibition on recommending, making referrals to or completing forms and registering Veterans for participation in State-approved marijuana programs”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Chair, I rise today to discuss this bipartisan amendment to ensure that veterans have access to every tool possible when it comes to healing from both the visible and the invisible wounds of war and service. That could be trouble sleeping. It could be physical pain. It could be some disease that you get from something you were exposed to in war, a cancer that you contracted. It could be an addiction. It could just be finding peace in your life. That tool that we are specifically speaking about today is cannabis.

My proposed amendment, I believe, is common sense. It allows doctors in the VA, those who deal with veterans, to give advice to their veteran patients. That seems simple enough, but under the status quo, VA doctors are limited in essential treatment options that they can offer to their patients, treatments that patients who are not veterans can readily access in many States.

This amendment would allow doctors to discuss cannabis as a treatment option with their patients. It would allow doctors to help those patients fill out paperwork that authorizes medical use of cannabis. It would allow those doctors to help weigh cannabis when choosing whether other medical options may be the best fit for that individual veteran.

When I woke up in Walter Reed Army Medical Center after being injured in Afghanistan, I was on a laundry list of medications. It was a shock to me. I was on sleep sedatives, antidepressants, anti-inflammatories, and probably half a dozen different, very serious narcotic painkillers. When I woke up and became aware of all of this, I quit those things cold turkey. I was lucky that I was able to do that. Most veterans that I have encountered were not able to do that. Many, unfortunately, suffered addiction afterwards.

A few years ago, I met a former member of Navy SEAL Team 6. He was in a helicopter crash that resulted in catastrophic injuries. After countless sur-

geries, he found himself addicted to opioids that he was prescribed for sleep and pain management. He was never given an alternative to those drugs, and, ultimately, it was cannabis for him that allowed him to break free of that addiction and manage his pain without opioids. However, he has never been able to discuss cannabis with his doctor at the VA for fear of repercussions. He couldn't talk to his doctor about it.

His story isn't unique. There are tens of thousands of veterans for whom cannabis may be a better alternative if they could discuss it.

According to a survey in the American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, 50 percent of veterans who use cannabis said that they used it in place of prescription medication, but they are forced to hide their use and self-medicate because VA physicians are hamstrung from discussing it as a viable option.

Beyond the veteran population, the Nation is turning the page on how we think about cannabis. It has become a key part of the medical system in more than 30 States. It offers law-abiding Americans a low-cost and safe option.

I say we should not keep those who fought for our country from accessing what is proven to be a critical tool for pain management. It is time for change. Veterans deserve to have access to every possible tool and the best medical options available and the best possible medical advice by their doctors.

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chair, I seek the time in opposition to the amendment, although I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Oregon is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chair, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to join my friends Representatives MAST, LEE, and JOYCE in supporting this amendment.

Mr. MAST talked about the necessity of providing our veterans with the best possible treatment. I have heard from veterans across the country how medical cannabis fills a critical need. There is less long-term harm and more opportunities to be able to meet, as he said, the wounds of war, seen and unseen.

This is ironic. The rest of the Federal Government is moving toward the recognition of the long overdue need to reschedule cannabis. The Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice are soon going to reschedule cannabis to schedule III, recognizing that it has medicinal value and recognizing the opportunities for more research activities. At the same time, the Department of Veterans Affairs is stuck in the past. As my friend mentioned, this poses problems for veterans who cannot seek help from their

own physicians to get guidance and counseling for things where medical cannabis would make a difference for them.

The rest of America has recognized the value of medical cannabis. Thirty-eight States have approved it. As I said, where the rest of the Federal Government is moving toward rescheduling, it is unfortunate that the Department of Veterans Affairs is trapped in time, not giving veterans the full benefit of medical cannabis. It is ironic because for a time they were handing out opioids like Tic Tacs and have erred on the side of overcaution dealing with medical cannabis.

Mr. Chair, I urge strongly the approval of this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Chair, I will add a little bit to what he just said.

He is absolutely correct, my colleague, in saying that there was a time when veterans were handed opioids in bags. They were given recurring prescriptions. There was a time that I had drawers full of OxyContin just because the prescription kept getting refilled. I literally never used one, but they kept giving me more and more. At the same time, you are not allowed to discuss cannabis with your doctor, not do the paperwork with your doctor, not be able to find out if it is the best option or the worst option but really not be able to be benefited by your doctor and the advice they could offer on this. As we both said, it is definitely time to turn the page on this issue. I thank my colleague for his work on this issue, as well.

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

□ 1415

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chair, I deeply appreciate the leadership of my friend from Florida, and his personal experience adds particular impact to his leadership on this.

Another tireless champion for rational cannabis reform is Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, with whom I have been pleased to partner for years now with the Congressional Cannabis Caucus in moving on a series of reform proposals. She is a tireless champion. She will be missed in Congress in the future, but luckily, we have her here now.

Mr. Chair, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) to share her insights and her wisdom.

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Chair, I thank the gentleman from Oregon for his gracious comments and for his friendship, his support, and his tremendous leadership. I look forward to working with the gentleman also in the next chapter of our lives to make sure that all of our efforts around cannabis are passed and signed into law.

I thank Mr. MAST, Mr. JOYCE, and all who have allowed us to work, again, in a bipartisan way to make it easier for veterans to access medical cannabis in States where it is legal.

Mr. Chair, this amendment would authorize VA physicians to provide recommendations and opinions regarding the use of medical cannabis to veterans who live in States with existing medical programs.

Millions of American veterans suffer from, for example, mental health conditions stemming from their service. Moreover, of the nearly 1 million veterans who receive opioids to treat painful conditions, more than one-half continue to consume beyond 90 days, contributing massively to the disproportionate overdose and suicide rates impacting veterans.

As we continue experiencing the throes of the opioid crisis ravaging communities across the country, from urban centers to rural areas, the hands of VA physicians should not be tied when it comes to advising around medical treatments that are scientifically proven to be less harmful and less addictive, like State-legal medical marijuana.

I am the daughter of a veteran of two wars. He would have been helped tremendously with many of his health issues had he been able to explore medical cannabis options with his VA physicians. I saw him go through wanting to explore all of these options, but he could not.

In his memory, Garvin A. Tutt, who was part of the 92nd Battalion in Italy supporting the Normandy invasion, I am proud to co-lead this amendment.

I thank all the co-chairs of the Congressional Cannabis Caucus. I thank Ranking Member DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and, of course, Mr. JOYCE for their leadership and partnership on this.

Mr. Chair, I urge our colleagues to support this bipartisan amendment that would benefit our armed services members.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 29 OFFERED BY MR. MOLINARO

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 29 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert “(increased by \$10,000,000) (reduced by \$10,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman

from New York (Mr. MOLINARO) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Chairman, without question, this Nation owes enormous gratitude to the men and women who served and returned home. So many of them carry with them both physical and mental health injuries as they return home. We are compelled to do more to provide for mental health treatment.

My amendment, amendment No. 29, highlights the importance of the Veterans Health Administration Office of Mental Health's role in assisting veterans across America, those living with intellectual and developmental disability and those living with mental health and substance use disorder challenges.

In August 2023 alone, 5.3 million veterans had a service-related disability, and that number, as we know, continues to grow. They are susceptible to debilitating illnesses, including PTSD, depression, and traumatic brain injuries. They also remain at high risk of opioid use disorder.

Veterans, without question, need our support. Their quality of life depends on access to effective and high-quality medical treatment services, and we must all come together to bolster the VHA's ability to care for our veterans' physical and mental health needs. Whether in rural centers or urban communities, it is necessary to broaden the capacity and response to those veterans living with intellectual, physical, or developmental disabilities and those addressing mental health and substance use disorders.

Mr. Chairman, I certainly thank my colleagues for bringing forth the amendment today. I ask my colleagues to support this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, this amendment is non-controversial, and I am not opposed to it. It assists veterans with disabilities and mental health and substance abuse challenges. We support it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleagues for their support, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. MOLINARO).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 31 OFFERED BY MR. OGLES

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 31 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. OGLES. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 28, line 25, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. OGLES. Mr. Chairman, our veterans deserve the very best. It is our job to make sure they get it.

That is why we are here during amendment debate to ensure that their needs continue to be met after their honorable and heroic service to the Nation.

The underlying bill appropriates \$320 million to the VA Housing Benefit Program Fund for administrative expenses to carry out the direct and guaranteed loan programs.

As many of my colleagues know, the VA loan program guarantees loans made to servicemembers, veterans, reservists, and single surviving spouses for the purchase of homes.

As veterans navigate the often cumbersome process of buying a home, they should have access to as much information as possible that will enable them to make the best financial decisions for their families. That is all this amendment does.

If the VA accepted this recommendation, this amendment would ensure that \$1 million of the total administrative expenses funds appropriated for the home loan program can be used for the development of improved information materials regarding the relative benefits of a VA home loan versus other types of housing loans for prospective buyers.

This is simply a reflection of the fact that while a VA home loan is often the right choice for veterans who are trying to buy a home, the benefits may not be as clearly presented as they go through the process. If a VA loan would be better, then the veteran should know it.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR (Ms. Foxx). Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, this amendment is non-controversial, and I am not opposed to it. It supports the VA home loan program, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her support.

Again, all we are trying to do here is make sure that our veterans who have

committed their lives and sacrificed for our country have information as they are trying to provide for their families. We have made promises, so this is promise made, promise kept.

Madam Chair, I urge adoption of my amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 32 OFFERED BY MR. OGLES

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 32 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I rise in strong support of my amendment to prioritize increased support for our veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

The numbers don't lie and bear repeating: Over 20 percent of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans have received a diagnosis of PTSD. Our older veterans are also impacted. Over 10 percent of Gulf war veterans and 15 percent of Vietnam veterans are similarly impacted by this cruel diagnosis.

Unfortunately, current treatments do not always meet the needs of our veterans suffering from PTSD. Therefore, it is vital that the Department of Veterans Affairs invests more of its resources into any treatment that can improve the daily lives of our veterans. One of those treatments, SGB therapy, has been a cause championed by my colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY).

Madam Chair, I urge adoption of his amendment, as well.

Caring for our soldiers is the top priority of this Congress, whether Democrat or Republican. This bill proudly carries the legacy of the great promise from President Lincoln that the United States would “care for him who shall have borne the battle.”

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, this amendment is non-

controversial, and I am not opposed to it. It supports funding for medical services for the treatment of PTSD, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her support.

PTSD is real. We have veterans suffering from it every single day. “Promises Made, Promises Kept,” that is our oath.

Madam Chair, I urge adoption of the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 33 OFFERED BY MR. OGLES

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 33 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 32, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, with many veterans in my family, this is something that is near and dear to my heart as I have seen members of my family having to drive long distances to receive care that otherwise could have been provided at home.

I think of my Uncle Keith, who suffered and languished in the hospital when he could have passed peacefully with his family in his own home.

VA's Medical Community Care Program allows veterans to get the care they need from community providers when the VA cannot do so. To complement the VA's efforts to provide medical services to chronically ill or disabled veterans through the community care program, this amendment ensures additional funding specifically for in-home healthcare.

If a disabled veteran would like to receive medical services from a specific VA-approved community provider, and it would better facilitate that veteran's care than other medical services, it should be a top priority for the VA.

□ 1430

This is plain and simple, common sense, providing the best healthcare for those who have sacrificed so much for this country, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to

this amendment because this is yet another attempt at trying to privatize veterans' healthcare.

Veterans have consistently made it clear that they prefer to get their healthcare at the VA. That is where they are the most comfortable. That is where they are served by people who have served in the military, as well. It is a culture and an environment that ensures that veterans are seen and treated by people who understand what they have been through.

Multiple studies, in fact, have shown that non-VA care generally is of lower quality and higher cost. In fact, since the enactment of the MISSION Act, which was designed to shift patients from the Veterans Health Administration to the private sector, costs have exploded. Between fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2024, costs for medical community care have grown by over \$21 billion, or almost 140 percent.

My colleagues across the aisle often lament that government spending is out of control. I agree that we shouldn't balance our budget on the backs of our veterans, but we can take reasonable measures to ensure that the care that we provide our veterans is not only of high quality but is cost effective.

We should not be kicking into overdrive to privatize the healthcare that our veterans receive. They wish and prefer to have their healthcare provided for them at the VA.

This amendment would lead to an expansion of privatization. For that reason, I oppose the amendment.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, when I think about my home State of Tennessee, and particularly Maury County, where I reside, we have Maury Regional Hospital, which is a community-owned nonprofit hospital. The VA is over an hour away if veterans live where I live. If they live further south, then the VA would be 1½ hours to 2 hours away. You have a locally owned, community-owned hospital that is a nonprofit that could provide these same services for our veterans, in our community, at their homes, where they are not having to travel 1 hour or 1½ hours to get services.

This isn't about privatization. This is about prioritizing our veterans as they seek medical care for the service that they gave to their country.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, what the gentleman's amendment does is it encourages the privatization of in-home healthcare that we provide to our veterans.

The difference between providing care to our veterans from the VA and providing privatized home healthcare is one can ensure that, within the VA system, the veteran is cared for, oftentimes by another veteran or by someone who is accustomed to treating veterans and understands the unique and specific needs that they have.

Moving toward more and more privatization makes it so that veterans are less likely to be treated soon, more likely to be treated with care that is more expensive, and more likely to be treated by someone who really doesn't have experience in caring for a veteran.

Madam Chair, none of those things are positive, so I urge opposition to that amendment for that reason, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I appreciate my colleague's comments, but I would disagree. This is simply about prioritizing our veterans.

Again, I speak of my community. From where I live, the VA is over 1 hour away. Veterans can be served by their regional hospital, their community hospital. In rural Tennessee, most of the hospitals are community owned.

This is about allowing veterans, who otherwise would be 1 hour to 3 hours away from care, to be served and serviced in their community. They are our veterans. They served the country. They have sacrificed, and they deserve the best.

Madam Chair, I urge adoption of the amendment. Promises made, promises kept.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 34 OFFERED BY MR. OGLES

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 34 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 36, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, the underlying legislation provides similar funding to the Board of Veterans' Appeals as the fiscal year 2024 levels, approximately \$267 million. This amendment recommends that the Board of Veterans' Appeals invest a very small portion of its appropriated funds to expedite and eliminate the casework backlog many of our veteran constituents have raised with a variety of Members of Congress.

Again, this is simply to get rid of the backlog, to expedite those cases, as has been discussed here previously, so that our veterans can get care in a quick, expeditious manner.

The committee report highlights sustained Member concerns regarding the ongoing delays veterans and their families face. Claims can currently take years to resolve.

I am grateful to see that the committee, under Chairman CARTER's leadership, has prioritized hiring needed staff to expedite processing. This amendment stands in support of the committee's work.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES), had a better idea on this one. It is noncontroversial, and I do not oppose it because it supports the reduction in the backlog of veteran casework, which we are all committed to doing.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her kind words.

This is a report ordered by this legislation that directs the VA Secretary to produce a plan within 90 days that would eliminate the veteran case backlog within 3 years. It is a simple, commonsense approach of promises made, promises kept. Let's do that.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 35 OFFERED BY MR. OGLES

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 35 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 43, line 24, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, coming from a family who has had family members serve in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the current war on terror, I have a near and dear place for all of our veterans in my heart.

Specifically, I think about our World War II veterans and the veterans of the Korea and Vietnam conflicts. We owe it to those who risked life and limb to fight our Nation's battles, not only to have our deepest gratitude and sympathy, but to have their service recognized. They should know that we will stand with them through disability, illness, and old age.

Again, to our veterans of World War II—there are not many of them left—Korea, and Vietnam, we need to make sure that they have access to excellent extended care. State extended-care facilities play a critical role in living up to that promise.

State governments can place these facilities where they can best serve veteran communities. They allow our veterans to find high-quality nursing home care in their home States and near their communities so they can enjoy the camaraderie of being surrounded by other residents who know what it is to have served our country.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, this amendment is non-controversial. I am not opposed to it because it supports the construction of State extended-care facilities, particularly for those who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. We need to take care of those valiant soldiers.

Madam Chair, for that reason, I do not oppose the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her comments.

Again, this encourages the VA to redouble its efforts in supporting States in constructing and maintaining excellent facilities to serve all veterans, especially the veterans of our foreign wars.

Promises made, Madam Chair, promises kept. That is what we must do.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 36 OFFERED BY MR. PERRY

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 36 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. PERRY. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 31, line 17, after the dollar amount, insert “(increased by \$1,000,000) (reduced by \$1,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. Madam Chairman, I thank the chairman for his hard work on the bill. None of this is easy.

This amendment addresses a potential solution for our Nation's veterans

and servicemembers suffering with PTSD and PTSI. Estimates from the VA paint a harsh picture that 7 percent of veterans will have PTSD, with about 29 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans having PTSD at some point in their lives.

Unfortunately, far too few of these brave men and women find relief from currently available treatment in the VA, and failure here can mean suicide. The average number of veteran suicides per day was 17.5 in 2021. I shudder to think that, every single day, 17 to 20 of our fellow brothers and sisters in arms take their lives.

These numbers, quite honestly, are unacceptable. They are unacceptable to this side of the aisle. I think they are unacceptable to the other side of the aisle, and they are unacceptable to America.

That is why I am offering this amendment, which would increase and decrease Veterans Health Administration funding by \$1 million for the purpose of furnishing stellate ganglion blocker, or SGB, treatment therapy to veterans suffering from PTSD.

Already approved by the VA as a safe and effective alternative, the stellate ganglion block procedure injects an anesthetic agent into or onto a collection of nerves in the neck, and it is proven to alleviate common PTSD symptoms.

In PTSD and some other anxiety conditions, the fight-or-flight nervous system gets stuck in the on position. By precisely placing anesthetic around the stellate ganglion, the unproductive and chronic fight-or-flight response is turned off. This allows neurotransmitters in the brain to reset back to a nonanxiety state and results in long-term relief of the anxiety itself and the PTSD symptoms.

This procedure has already improved many lives while showing up to 85 percent efficacy at a fraction of the cost of other treatments that are far less effective. Madam Chair, that is 85 percent.

Having this life-changing option for our veterans would give them a chance to live more free from the effects of PTSD and its symptoms. Our Nation's veterans should be the top priority, and they deserve to have this treatment and this therapy when they need it.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, it is not the place of Congress to be pushing for increased use of specific experimental treatments. The VA is currently in the midst of a multiyear clinical trial to collect data on this treatment for potential use in treating post-traumatic stress disorder, but they do not yet

have sufficient data one way or the other regarding this treatment.

If this treatment is safe, effective, and appropriate for expanded use, then the healthcare experts at the VA should be the ones to expand the treatment for wider use. There is a deliberative process for expanding the use of emerging healthcare treatments, and we should let that process play out.

This specific treatment actually involves insertion into the neck of an individual and could be potentially dangerous. We should make sure that we are waiting out the results of the studies that are being done before trying to impose a decision from the House floor.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PERRY. Madam Chair, the treatment is not dangerous at all. As a matter of fact, it is offered in at least 11 VA facilities, but only that many, and not all of the VA facilities. It has been around since the 1920s. It is not dangerous at all.

As a matter of fact, there are no known side-effects. There aren't any known side-effects. The people that get the treatment walk away 85 percent of the time without suffering the effects of PTSD.

As I sat there and watched the treatment being given, Madam Chair, the patients have told me that they feel like a weight is lifted off of them while the treatment is occurring. Those are specious claims.

The bureaucracy at the VA wants to conduct another study. Meanwhile, it is allowed in some of their facilities, but not all of their facilities. Meanwhile, while they are conducting another study, 17 to 22 of our veterans take their lives every day while they are conducting another study. While offering this at some places but not other places, servicemembers in Alabama are scraping up their last dollars to get on a van with some of their other buddies to drive up here to get the treatment because they can't get it down at the VA in Alabama.

□ 1445

It is absurd. It is ridiculous. While they are conducting studies, our servicemembers are taking their lives needlessly.

What I am asking is, instead of the current protocol, which says that members of the military services who have earned this treatment, who have earned the care, don't have to fail every single other thing that the VA gives them before they can get this and, in the meantime, take their lives because that is what happens, Madam Chair.

The VA requires, except in those other facilities, that the veteran do all these other things, take all these other treatments that don't work and have to fail every single one of them before they can say, oh, please, VA, can you give me something that works, the stellate ganglion block, the SGB,

which is done in the private sector, which is done at the VA.

I am just saying, instead of making veterans suffer and take their lives before they can get the treatment, let them have the treatment like the veterans in those 11 facilities that do offer it.

Why can't we do that? You can keep studying it. If you find some side effect, well, God bless you, but right now, there aren't any and right now, veterans are killing themselves.

The Acting CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Chair, the leadership of this committee has been committed consistently to making sure that safe and effective treatments are able to be provided to the VA, to our veterans who get their care from the VA. It is just important to make sure that the care that they are receiving is efficacious and that it is safe.

It would be helpful if the sponsor of the amendment understood the sites that are offering this treatment are part of the study that is being done. There is not a new study being proposed. We are not adding time to this, but there is a process for expanding the use of emergency healthcare treatments, and that is the responsibility of the VA to manage.

Let's let them complete that process and then you could go fully forward assuming that it proves to be efficacious and safe. I realize that we have a horrific problem with PTSD, and we certainly are dedicating vast resources to make sure that we can address suicide prevention. Unfortunately, the Republican bill cuts the VA by \$6 billion, so that commitment is not quite the same. Making sure that we are providing safe, efficacious treatments for our veterans and that we do not impose those decisions from the House floor is important.

That is why I oppose the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. CRAWFORD). The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 37 OFFERED BY MR. PETERS

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 37 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from California (Mr. PETERS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Chair, all veterans deserve a roof over their heads. Far too many vets in San Diego remain homeless. We have to do more to ensure our veterans and their families have access to quality, affordable housing. The Housing and Urban Development-Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing, known as HUD-VASH program, is a critical tool to address this issue.

Earlier this year, local news in San Diego reported that nearly 35 percent of HUD-VASH vouchers, which San Diego received, went unused. That is not acceptable. We have to do everything we can to ensure veterans are receiving this assistance.

This bipartisan amendment simply encourages local VA systems and public housing authorities to work together to streamline the voucher application process for HUD-VASH vouchers to reduce barriers for veterans seeking housing assistance.

VA San Diego is now taking the initiative by partnering with local housing authorities to better align voucher applications across public housing authority jurisdiction. This partnership provides a critical pathway to connect veterans to housing.

The HUD-VASH program is critical for addressing veteran homelessness in San Diego and throughout the country, and I urge all of my colleagues to vote "yes" on this commonsense amendment.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. PETERS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 38 OFFERED BY MR. PETERS

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 38 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 31, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from California (Mr. PETERS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Chair, VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families program and Shallow Subsidy service provides low-income veterans direct assistance to prevent the imminent loss of a veteran's home or to identify a new, more suitable housing situation for them and their families.

Funding for this program goes to every community across the country, and in fiscal year 2024 alone, San Diego organizations received over \$17 million to provide these services.

My bipartisan amendment recognizes the important role this program plays

in preventing housing insecure veterans from falling into homelessness. It is essential that we preserve this program and we show strong support for this program for those who put on the uniform in defense of our country. Keeping these veterans in their homes not only preserves their safety and security, it also preserves their dignity.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bipartisan amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. PETERS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 39 OFFERED BY MR. PFLUGER

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 39 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 34, line 19, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PFLUGER) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Chair, I rise today to present an amendment that seeks to improve our understanding of the link between military service and cancer risks, specifically among our aviators.

The amendment I am proposing to the fiscal year 2025 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill underscores our commitment to protecting and supporting our men and women in uniform during their service and long after that, as well.

Specifically, my amendment calls for the Secretary of the VA to allocate funds for collaboration with the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study the prevalence and mortality of cancer among individuals who served as Active-Duty aircrew in the Armed Forces.

Tragically, military aviators and crewmembers are being diagnosed with various forms of cancer at alarming rates. A 2021 study conducted by the Air Force Research Laboratory's 711th Human Performance Wing found that pilots and aircrew have higher risks of developing prostate cancer and melanoma with possible links to Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and testicular cancer.

Additionally, a study from the DOD found elevated rates of cancer among military aviators and aviation ground personnel.

The existing evidence demonstrates a link between cancer and military aviation service. However, we must gather more comprehensive data to understand this correlation better and to properly care for our servicemembers.

After putting their lives on the line for their country, our airmen and -women deserve assurances that they will be cared for and not exposed to unknown dangers. The U.S. military must understand any potential health risks threatening our military heroes in the cockpit or those serving as crewmembers.

As a former U.S. Air Force fighter pilot myself, who has lost many colleagues to cancer, this issue is personal to me.

My amendment ensures that cancer incidence rates are adequately studied, that they are adequately understood, and that the military and the Department of Defense has the tools that it needs to properly care for our military heroes.

I think this is a commonsense amendment. It is building upon work and studies that have already been done, and I would urge all of my colleagues to support this as we support those who are serving and protecting our country.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, this amendment is noncontroversial, and I am not opposed to it, particularly as a cancer survivor myself. It supports the study of various cancers in military aviators, and it is an important amendment.

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

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Chair, just to clarify, I am not sure what the opposition is. I didn't hear what the opposition was.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, would the gentleman yield for the purpose of a colloquy?

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Chair, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida for the purpose of a colloquy.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. There wasn't opposition. Procedurally, we rise to claim time in opposition and then say we are not opposed to the amendment. It is just procedural.

Mr. PFLUGER. Very good.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. That way I have an opportunity to speak.

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

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Chair, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER).

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of this study.

My brother-in-law Kurt Brown died of the brain cancer known as the ghost cancer, and he was both an Air Force pilot and a Delta pilot. I always thought that the exposure to the high levels and the exposure to the Sun had something to do with it. I personally support this and will vote for it.

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PFLUGER).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 40 OFFERED BY MRS. RODGERS OF WASHINGTON

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 40 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 32, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000)(increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. RODGERS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington.

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of my amendment, which originated after a veteran from Spokane asked for my help.

She had recently retired from service and was days away from her first VA appointment when she had a heart attack. She was rushed to the ER where she made a full recovery, but the VA refused to pay for her care. Why? Because she hadn't seen a VA doctor in the last 24 months.

It didn't matter that she had just enrolled or that many VA facilities have 30- to 60-day delays.

They denied her the coverage she needed, and her bills were piling up.

That is why I introduced the RELIEVE Act to waive the 24-month rule for 60 days following a veteran's enrollment in the VA healthcare system.

My amendment today highlights the importance of helping veterans establish care to ensure they qualify for outside emergency coverage. It is time for Congress to eliminate the emergency coverage gap, and I urge my colleagues to join me in making sure every veteran has access to the treatment they have earned.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition, even though I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, this amendment is noncontroversial, and I am not opposed to it. It encourages the VA to address emergency care coverage for veterans. I thank the gentlewoman for introducing it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gen-

tlewoman from Washington (Mrs. RODGERS).

The amendment was agreed to.

□ 1500

AMENDMENT NO. 41 OFFERED BY MRS. RODGERS OF WASHINGTON

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 41 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 10, line 20, after dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. RODGERS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington.

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of my amendment to address the troubling state of housing for servicemembers and their families at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane.

According to the Air Force, roughly 85 percent of the 650 privatized homes at Fairchild were constructed in the 1950s. They are aging rapidly and approaching a point where they will not be fit for families living on base.

Reports of mold, cracks in the foundation, siding falling off, chipping paint, and roofs in need of repair are just a few of the many issues with the housing on base. Needless to say, this is unacceptable.

Our servicemembers and their families sacrifice so much for our country. They deserve a comfortable, dependable home that isn't falling apart around them, and it is our job to make sure they have one.

This amendment is critical for ensuring Congress has the ability to conduct the oversight of the conditions of Air Force housing as we work together to make the necessary and long-overdue renovations and repairs.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment and join me in making quality housing for servicemembers and their families a top priority.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, the amendment is noncontroversial, and I am not opposed to it.

The gentlewoman should know that Mr. CARTER and I, and our entire subcommittee, have worked for years to

help address the issues that we share your concerns on, particularly privatized military housing. The conditions under which our servicemen and -women and their families live have to be pristine. The response time for those who are responsible for taking care of it needs to be dramatically improved.

We have added funding in this bill at the DOD level to make sure that DOD doesn't have a hands-off policy and just leaves all the decisionmaking to the privatized companies. The DOD has a layer of accountability now, as well.

I thank the gentlewoman for raising the issue because this is important for us to provide good housing and safe roofs over the heads of our service-members and their families.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. RODGERS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 42 OFFERED BY MR. SELF

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 42 printed in part B of House Report 118-535.

Mr. SELF. Mr. Chair, I rise as the designee of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ROY), and I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. 423. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to modify or remove any display of the Department of Veterans Affairs that bears the mission statement "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise 'to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan' by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans.'"

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SELF) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. SELF. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of this amendment by Mr. ROY.

This amendment prohibits any of the funding appropriated from being used to modify or remove any VA display of the original mission statement.

As you may know, the original mission statement came from President Lincoln's promise: "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise 'to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan,' by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans." They want to change it to a gender-neutral version: "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our Nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors."

We believe that that is a bridge too far, that we have changed the original mission statement too much. The original mission statement is posted in roughly 50 percent of all VA facilities,

and now the VA has been replacing them over the last couple of months. It is unclear which displays have been changed and which have been replaced.

The Trump administration resisted calls to change the motto and put an additional 140 plaques in national cemeteries bearing Lincoln's quote.

Legislation changing the motto passed by voice in committee and on the House floor in the 116th Congress.

We should not use tax dollars to allow the administration to unilaterally change the VA's historic motto and to erase the words of President Lincoln in order to appease the radical left. This is part of our mission to claw back Article I authority from the executive branch.

The VA's mission statement, established in 1959, used approximately the same words. This speech was part of the VA's creation of their mission, and the Department wants to use hard-earned tax dollars now to erase the 16th President's words said during the midst of the most traumatic time in our Nation's history, the Civil War.

In one attempt, they want to erase Lincoln's words and earn woke brownie points.

I am thankful for the millions of men and women who have served valiantly in our Armed Forces, but changing the VA's motto is just virtue signaling. We should be focused on providing the quality care and benefits veterans have earned in a timely manner.

We just had a hearing with the Secretary of the VA this morning in the Veterans' Affairs Committee. We are trying to keep them focused on quality healthcare as opposed to other issues. There are still far too many veterans who fail to get quality care at the VA, or if they do not get an appointment, it takes months to schedule through community care.

Mr. Chair, we had a long discussion this morning about the failure of the VA to get a handle on veteran suicide. That is where our focus ought to be, as opposed to changing plaques on the wall to some sort of woke motto.

We have the power of the purse to hold the administration accountable, to stop the implementation of the VA's decision, and to save the few remaining displays of Lincoln's work. This is a worthy and noble goal, and I urge support for this amendment.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, the gentleman's debate on this amendment was spoken like a man who is refusing to acknowledge that the fastest growing group of veterans served by the VA is women.

In March of last year, the VA announced it was updating its 1959 mission statement to read: "To fulfill

President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our Nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors."

That was a way to make the VA a more inclusive and inviting place and to acknowledge that it is not only men who have served in our military, nor is it only men who are served at the VA.

The VA's previous mission statement read: "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise 'to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan,' by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans.'"

The VA is a place where all veterans should feel welcome, included, and cared for. The previous mission statement did not adequately reflect the modern-day veteran population by only honoring men's service.

As I said, today, women are the fastest growing group of veterans. It is about time that they are reflected in the VA's mission statement, and I am pleased that the VA made this important and meaningful change.

What we are doing here now is, again, wasting time debating a poison pill, culture war amendment that was put to bed and excluded in the FY24 conference report. This was language that was removed last year. We are going to have it removed again.

Essentially, what we are doing here is distracting from the fact that the Republican majority has proposed a bill that cuts \$6 billion from the VA.

Forgive me if I really think it is disingenuous for the gentleman to suggest that they care more about caring for our veterans when they are cutting \$6 billion out of our bill and, instead, focusing on the adaptation of the VA's motto to be more inclusive of the fastest growing group of veterans that are treated at the VA, which is women.

We should be focusing on that funding, actually meeting the Fiscal Responsibility Act targets, and increasing nondefense discretionary and defense discretionary by 1 percent, which the Republican majority reneges on in this bill, not debating petty partisan riders.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SELF. Mr. Chair, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas has 1 minute remaining.

Mr. SELF. Mr. Chair, I agree with the gentlewoman about one thing: This is the modern-day erasing of America's traditional history, which is one of three things that they are trying to erase along with our nuclear families and our Judeo-Christian faith.

It is only one of three things that they are trying to erase. That is what they are trying to erase. That is why we need to stand by this amendment because our families, our faith, and our history reflect what has made America strong.

It does not leave anyone out. We are going to care for every veteran. In fact,

she is right, the Veterans' Affairs Committee is focused on our lady veterans in many ways. So this is a distraction from this bill. Let's keep our history where it is. Let's keep our nuclear families and our Judeo-Christian faith.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, for the fastest growing group of veterans, our women, who walk into a VA facility and see the VA mission statement displayed on the wall that only refers to men who served is outrageous. That is not inclusive, and that does not reflect or recognize that we have thousands and thousands of women serving in our military.

The VA is supposed to take care of all of those veterans. So I will close, Mr. Chairman, by saying that if people show you who they are, you should believe them. That is why I am opposed to this amendment.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SELF).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas will be postponed.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SELF) having assumed the chair, Mr. CRAWFORD, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 8580) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 14 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1530

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CURTIS) at 3 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2025

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1269 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 8580.

Will the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEUBE) kindly take the chair.

□ 1530

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 8580) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025, and for other purposes, with Mr. STEUBE (Acting Chair) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Acting CHAIR. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, a request for a recorded vote on amendment No. 42 printed in part B of House Report 118-535 offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SELF) had been postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIR

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, proceedings will now resume on those amendments printed in part B of House Report 118-535 on which further proceedings were postponed, in the following order:

Amendment No. 8 by Mr. BOST of Illinois.

Amendment No. 10 by Mr. CRANE of Arizona.

Amendment No. 16 by Ms. GREENE of Georgia.

Amendment No. 28 by Mr. MAST of Florida.

Amendment No. 42 by Mr. SELF of Texas.

The Chair will reduce to 2 minutes the minimum time for any electronic vote after the first vote in this series.

AMENDMENT NO. 8 OFFERED BY MR. BOST

The Acting CHAIR. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on amendment No. 8, printed in part B of House Report 118-535, offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST), on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the ayes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIR. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 207, noes 195, not voting 34, as follows:

[Roll No. 237]

AYES—207

Aderholt	Fulcher	Miller (WV)
Alford	Gaetz	Miller-Meeks
Allen	Garbarino	Mills
Amodei	Garcia, Mike	Molinaro
Armstrong	Jimenez	Moolenaar
Arrington	Golden (ME)	Mooney
Babin	Gonzales, Tony	Moore (AL)
Bacon	Good (VA)	Moore (UT)
Baird	Gooden (TX)	Moran
Balderson	Gosar	Newhouse
Banks	Granger	Norman
Barr	Graves (MO)	Nunn (IA)
Bean (FL)	Greene (GA)	Oberholte
Bentz	Griffith	Ogles
Bergman	Grothman	Owens
Bice	Guest	Peltola
Biggs	Guthrie	Pence
Bilirakis	Hageman	Perez
Bishop (NC)	Harris	Perry
Boebert	Harshbarger	Pfleger
Bost	Hern	Posey
Brecheen	Higgins (LA)	Reschenthaler
Buchanan	Hill	Rodgers (WA)
Bucshon	Hinson	Rogers (AL)
Burchett	Houchin	Rogers (KY)
Burgess	Hudson	Rose
Calvert	Huizenga	Rosendale
Carbajal	Hunt	Rouzer
Carey	Jackson (TX)	Roy
Carl	James	Rutherford
Carter (GA)	Johnson (SD)	Salazar
Carter (TX)	Jordan	Scalise
Ciscomani	Joyce (PA)	Schweikert
Cline	Kean (NJ)	Scott, Austin
Cloud	Kelly (MS)	Self
Clyde	Kelly (PA)	Sessions
Cole	Kiggans (VA)	Simpson
Collins	Kiley	Smith (MO)
Comer	Kim (CA)	Smith (NE)
Crane	Kustoff	Smith (NJ)
Crawford	LaHood	Smucker
Crenshaw	LaLota	Spartz
Curtis	LaMalfa	Steel
D'Esposito	Lamborn	Stefanik
Davidson	Langworthy	Steil
De La Cruz	Latta	Steube
DesJarlais	LaTurner	Strong
Donalds	Lawler	Tenney
Duarte	Lee (FL)	Thompson (PA)
Duncan	Lesko	Tiffany
Dunn (FL)	Letlow	Timmons
Edwards	Loudermilk	Turner
Ellzey	Lucas	Valadao
Emmer	Luetkemeyer	Van Drew
Estes	Luna	Van Dyne
Ezell	Luttrell	Vasquez
Fallon	Mace	Wagner
Feenstra	Malliotakis	Walberg
Ferguson	Maloy	Waltz
Finstad	Mann	Weber (TX)
Fischbach	Massie	Webster (FL)
Fitzgerald	Mass	Wenstrup
Fitzpatrick	McCaul	Westerman
Fleischmann	McClain	Williams (NY)
Flood	McClintock	Williams (TX)
Fong	McHenry	Wilson (SC)
Fox	Meuser	Wittman
Franklin, Scott	Miller (IL)	Womack
Fry	Miller (OH)	Yakym

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Adams	Case	DeGette
Aguilar	Casten	DeLauro
Allred	Castor (FL)	DelBene
Amo	Castro (TX)	Deluzio
Auchincloss	Chavez-DeRemer	DeSaulnier
Balint	Cherfilus-	Dingell
Barragan	McCormick	Escobar
Beatty	Chu	Eshoo
Bera	Clark (MA)	Espallat
Beyer	Clarke (NY)	Fletcher
Bishop (GA)	Cleaver	Foster
Blumenauer	Clyburn	Foushee
Blunt Rochester	Cohen	Frankel, Lois
Bonamici	Connolly	Frost
Boyle (PA)	Correa	Gallego
Brown	Costa	Garamendi
Brownley	Courtney	Garcia (IL)
Budzinski	Craig	Garcia (TX)
Bush	Crockett	Garcia, Robert
Caraveo	Crow	Goldman (NY)
Cárdenas	Cuellar	Gomez
Carson	Davids (KS)	Gonzalez,
Carter (LA)	Davis (IL)	Vicente
Cartwright	Davis (NC)	Gottheimer
Caspar	Dean (PA)	Green, Al (TX)