

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4190, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FAIRNESS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ACT OF 2024

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2911) to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to periodically review the automatic maximum coverage under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program and the Veterans' Group Life Insurance program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2911

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Fairness for Servicemembers and their Families Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. PERIODIC REVIEW OF AUTOMATIC MAXIMUM COVERAGE UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE AND VETERANS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 1980B. Periodic review of automatic maximum coverage

"(a) IN GENERAL.—On January 1, 2025, and every five years thereafter, the Secretary shall—

"(1) complete a review of how the amount specified in section 1967(a)(3)(A)(i) compares to the amount described in subsection (b); and

"(2) submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate the results of the review.

"(b) AMOUNT DESCRIBED.—The amount described in this subsection is the amount equal to—

"(1) \$500,000; multiplied by

"(2) the average percentage by which the Consumer Price Index changed during the five fiscal years preceding the review under subsection (a).

"(c) CONSUMER PRICE INDEX DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'Consumer Price Index' means the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 19 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1980A the following new item:

"1980B. Periodic review of automatic maximum coverage."

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may

have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2911, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2911, as amended. This bill was introduced by Representative STRICKLAND and co-led by our colleagues, Representative BACON and Representative TURNER.

H.R. 2911, as amended, would require VA to regularly review and compare the maximum coverage under the VA life insurance programs with average cost-of-living changes across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for H.R. 2911, the Fairness for Servicemembers and their Families Act of 2024, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, last Congress, we passed S. 2794 into law. This bill increased the maximum coverage amount under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, or SGLI, program and the Veterans' Group Life Insurance, or VGLI, program from \$400,000 to \$500,000.

Prior to that legislation, however, those maximum coverage amounts had not increased since 2005, clearly failing to keep pace with inflation.

To ensure that we are not waiting another decade or more to improve this benefit for our servicemembers and veterans, my good friend, Representative MARILYN STRICKLAND, has introduced this bill, which requires VA to periodically review coverage amounts every 5 years and to report to Congress what the level of benefits would be if adjusted for inflation over that period.

This will allow Congress to regularly make a more informed decision about whether or not these maximum coverage amounts should be increased.

Mr. Speaker, this is commonsense legislation that allows Congress to better do our part to support servicemembers, veterans, and their families, and I encourage my colleagues to support it.

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

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. STRICKLAND), my good friend who is the author of H.R. 2911. She serves on the Armed Services Committee and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Ms. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member TAKANO for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 2911, the Fairness for Servicemembers and their Families Act of 2024.

I first thank Chairmen BOST and LUTTRELL and Ranking Members TAKANO and PAPPAS for working with me to get this bill to the floor. I also thank my partners in this effort, Congressman DON BACON and Senator JOHN CORNYN.

The Fairness for Servicemembers and their Families Act would help ensure that life insurance benefits for servicemembers and veterans account for changes in the economy. This legislation would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to periodically review and report on the maximum coverage available under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance and Veterans' Group Life Insurance. Accurate and reliable data will allow the VA to make necessary policy adjustments to ensure accurate payments.

I have the honor of representing Joint Base Lewis-McChord and tens of thousands of servicemembers and their families who call the South Sound home. Our servicemembers courageously put their lives on the line for their country, and it is our duty to reciprocate and help them. This means ensuring the well-being of their families and loved ones in the event of a tragedy.

Servicemembers' life insurance plans must keep pace with economic demands. A robust life insurance policy can provide a grieving family with the security they need to navigate the loss of their loved ones with dignity.

The brave men and women who sacrifice their lives deserve peace of mind, knowing that their families will be taken care of.

For nearly two decades, the maximum coverage of the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance and Veterans' Group Life Insurance programs have been stagnant, even as the cost of housing, goods, and services rose, as they typically do over time.

This bill would ensure that these programs are reviewed periodically to verify that their value sufficiently reflects the contemporary Consumer Price Index.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their unwavering commitment to supporting veterans and their families and for prioritizing their care.

Finally, I will take a point of privilege to thank my Army fellow who worked in my office last year, Major Felix Gumbiner, for bringing this issue to my attention and for working with the offices of Congressman BACON and Senator CORNYN to develop this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the House passing the Fairness for Servicemembers and their Families Act of 2024 and for it to become the law of the land.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 2911, the Fairness for Servicemembers and their Families Act of 2024, as amended.

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

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

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2911, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS BENEFITS CONTINUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 9468) making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 9468

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following sums are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes, namely:

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

COMPENSATION AND PENSIONS

For an additional amount for “Compensation and Pensions”, \$2,285,513,000, to remain available until expended.

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

READJUSTMENT BENEFITS

For an additional amount for “Readjustment Benefits”, \$596,969,000, to remain available until expended.

GENERAL PROVISIONS—THIS ACT

SEC. 101. Each amount appropriated or made available by this Act is in addition to amounts otherwise appropriated for the fiscal year involved.

SEC. 102. Unless otherwise provided for by this Act, the additional amounts appropriated by this Act to appropriations accounts shall be available under the authorities and conditions applicable to such appropriations accounts for fiscal year 2024.

SEC. 103. (a) BUDGET FORMULATION AND FORECASTING.—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations and the Committees on Veterans Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report detailing corrections the Department will make to improve forecasting, data quality and budget assumptions relating to budget submissions for funds provided under the headings “Compensations and Pensions” and “Readjustment Benefits”.

(b) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 60 days after the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations and the Committees on Veterans Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on status of funds made available

under the headings “Compensations and Pensions” and “Readjustment Benefits” for fiscal years 2024, 2025, and 2026 in this or any other Act: *Provided*, That such report shall be updated and submitted to such Committees every 90 days thereafter until September 30, 2026, and shall include information detailing any changes to estimates or assumptions on obligations and expenditures, including data supporting these changes.

SEC. 104. (a) The Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a review of the circumstances surrounding and the underlying causes of the announced funding shortfall for the Veterans Benefits Administration for fiscal year 2024 described in the letter to Congress from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on July 19, 2024, and the announced funding shortfall for the Veterans Health Administration in fiscal year 2025 described in the letter to Congress from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on July 31, 2024.

(b) Relating to the shortfall in the funding of the Veterans Benefits Administration in fiscal year 2024 and the expected shortfall in the funding of the Veterans Health Administration in fiscal year 2025, the review shall include, but not be limited to: a comparison of monthly obligations and expenditures in relevant accounts against the spend plan of the Department; the reasons for any significant diversions of obligations or expenditures from the spend plan; an analysis of the accuracy of projections and estimates relevant to such diversions; and any other matter determined relevant by the Inspector General.

(c) Relating to the expected shortfall in the funding of the Veterans Health Administration in fiscal year 2025, the review also shall include: any changes, abnormalities, or significant events as determined significant by the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the transfer, reallocation, or other movement of funding between or within the Central Office, a Veterans Integrated Service Network, a facility, a program or office, a special purpose fund, the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation process, or the Medical Center Allocation System.

(d) Actions the Department of Veterans Affairs can take to improve the accuracy of supporting information submitted under section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, with respect to the Department of Veterans Affairs and to prevent funding shortfalls for the Department.

(e) Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations and the Committees on Veterans Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report detailing the conduct and findings of the review.

This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Benefits Continuity and Accountability Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. MIKE GARCIA) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 9468.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I stand in support of this very important veterans supplemental bill.

My district, as you know, is home to one of the largest veteran populations in the country. From World War II to the global war on terror, we take pride in knowing that our sons and daughters have answered their Nation’s call to duty time and time again without hesitation.

They answered the call not for personal gain and not for personal glory but out of a deep love for their country and out of deep patriotism and a belief that their government, including the VA, would always stand behind them.

They didn’t ask for much, just that their government keep its end of the bargain. Right now, that belief, that trust, is being tested.

Due to the VA’s mismanagement of their budget, 7 million veterans will lose their benefits beginning on October 4 without congressional action.

They will lose their pension benefits, they will lose their GI Bill benefits, their burial benefits, life insurance payments, and survivor benefits. This is a cliff that happens on September 20 and will affect their payments as of October 1.

As a combat veteran and a former Naval aviator, I was not comfortable allowing these benefits to simply lapse.

My bill, the Veterans Benefits Continuity and Accountability Supplemental Appropriations Act, will step in to fill the VA’s \$2.88 billion shortfall as a result of their mismanagement, helping to avoid a disastrous funding cliff and stepping in where the VA failed.

My bill does more than just provide funding. It demands accountability, which is desperately needed here. It includes oversight measures like an inspector general investigation and a requirement for the VA to open its financial records to Congress.

We need to know exactly how this shortfall occurred and ensure that every dollar is spent appropriately. To that end, within 30 days, this bill requires a report from the VA on corrections made to the budget with assumptions for the President’s budget request to avoid this type of shortfall next year.

Within 60 days, this bill requires a report on how the VA spent the funds appropriated by this bill and requires this report every 90 days through FY26.

At the 180-day mark, it requires a report from the inspector general on the findings of his investigation into the causes of this shortfall.

We can’t afford to leave our vets high and dry without the medical care and GI benefits that they have earned, but we also can’t afford to just give the VA a blank check without figuring out the root cause of the issue to be solved.