

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 6225, as amended, provides members of the Armed Forces necessary protections that will enable them to make a seamless transition back to civilian life after their tour of duty is completed. These brave men and women put their lives on hold to ensure the freedom and safety of our Nation, and we owe it to them to provide relief when and where we can.

I support H.R. 6225, as amended, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. FILNER. I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6225, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

IMPROVING VETERANS' OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION AND BUSINESS ACT OF 2008

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6221) to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include in each contract the Secretary enters for the acquisition of goods and services a provision that requires the contractee to comply with the contracting goals and preferences for small business concerns owned or controlled by veterans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6221

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 "Improving Veterans' Opportunity in Education and Business Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES FOR VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS.

Section 8127 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (j) and (k) as subsections (k) and (l), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (i) the following:

"(j) **APPLICABILITY OF REQUIREMENTS TO CONTRACTS.**—(1) If the Secretary enters, on or after June 1, 2007, into a contract, memorandum of understanding, agreement, or other arrangement with any governmental entity or person to acquire goods or services, or both, the Secretary shall include in such contract, memorandum, agreement, or other

arrangement a requirement that the entity or person will comply with the provisions of this section in acquiring such goods or services, or both.

"(2) **COORDINATION.**—The Secretary shall take such action as may be necessary to ensure that the efforts to comply with this section of the Department and governmental entities and persons to which paragraph (1) applies are coordinated.

"(3) The Secretary shall modify contracts, memoranda of understanding, agreements, and other arrangements of the Department in effect on the date of enactment of the Improving Veterans' Opportunity in Education and Business Act of 2008 to comply with this subsection.

"(4) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to supersede or otherwise affect the authorities provided by and under the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 631 et seq.)."

SEC. 3. FIVE-YEAR PILOT PROGRAM FOR ON-CAMPUS WORKSTUDY POSITIONS.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT OF PILOT PROGRAM.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a five-year pilot project to test the feasibility and advisability of expanding the scope of qualifying workstudy activities for purposes of section 3485(a)(4) of title 38, United States Code, including workstudy positions available on site at educational institutions.

(b) **TYPE OF WORKSTUDY POSITIONS.**—The workstudy positions referred to in subsection (a) may include positions in academic departments (including positions as tutors or research, teaching, and lab assistants) and in student services (including positions in career centers and financial aid, campus orientation, cashiers, admissions, records, and registration offices).

(c) **REGULATIONS.**—The Secretary shall issue regulations to carry out the pilot project under this section, including regulations providing for the supervision of workstudy positions referred to in subsection (a) by appropriate personnel of the Department.

(d) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 through 2013 to carry out the pilot project under this section.

(e) **FUNDING.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, this section shall not be carried out with any funds provided for or under any authority of the Readjustment benefits program described by the list of Appropriated Entitlements and Mandatories for Fiscal Year 1997 contained in the Conference Report to accompany H.R. 2015 of the 105th Congress, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (H. Report 105-217). Instead, no funds shall be obligated for the purpose of carrying out this section except discretionary funds appropriated specifically for the purpose of carrying out this section in appropriation Acts enacted after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TRANSITION (MOST) PROGRAM.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subchapter II of chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 3687 the following new section:

"§ 3687A. Military occupational specialty transition (MOST) program

"(a) **ESTABLISHMENT; ELIGIBILITY.**—

"(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Secretary shall carry out a program of training to provide eligible veterans with skills relevant to the job market.

"(2) **ELIGIBLE VETERAN.**—For purposes of this section, the term 'eligible veteran' means any veteran if—

"(A) such veteran's military occupational specialty at the time of discharge is deter-

mined by the Secretary to have limited transferability to the civilian job market;

"(B) such veteran is not otherwise eligible for education or training services under this title;

"(C) such veteran has not acquired a marketable skill since leaving military service;

"(D) such veteran was discharged under conditions not less than general under honorable conditions; and

"(E)(i) such veteran has been unemployed for at least 90 of the 180 days preceding the date of application for the program established under this section; or

"(ii) the maximum hourly rate of pay of such veteran during such 180-day period is not more than 150 percent of the Federal minimum wage.

"(b) **MOST PROGRAM.**—The program established under this section shall provide for payments to employers who provide for eligible veterans a program of apprenticeship or on-the-job training if—

"(1) such program is approved as provided in paragraph (1) or (2) of section 3687(a) of this title;

"(2) the rate of pay for veterans participating in the program is not less than the rate of pay for nonveterans in similar jobs; and

"(3) the Secretary reasonably expects that—

"(A) the veteran will be qualified for employment in that field upon completion of training; and

"(B) the employer providing the program will hire the veteran at the completion of training.

"(c) **PAYMENTS TO EMPLOYERS.**—

"(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Secretary shall enter into contracts with employers to provide programs of apprenticeship or on-the-job training which meet the requirements of this section. Such contract shall provide for the payment of the amounts described in subsection (b) to employers whose programs meet such requirements.

"(2) **AMOUNT OF PAYMENTS.**—The amount paid under this section with respect to any eligible veteran for any period shall be 50 percent of the wages paid by the employer to such veteran for such period. Wages shall be calculated on an hourly basis.

"(3) **AMOUNT AND DURATION OF PAYMENTS.**—

"(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in subparagraph (B)—

"(i) the amount paid under this section with respect to a veteran participating in the program established under this section may not exceed \$20,000 in the aggregate and \$1,666.67 per month; and

"(ii) such payments may only be made during the first 12 months of such veteran's participation in the program.

"(B) **VETERANS PARTICIPATING ON LESS THAN FULL-TIME BASIS.**—In the case of a veteran participating in the program on a less than full-time basis, the Secretary may extend the number of months of payments under subparagraph (A) and proportionally adjust the amount of such payments, but the maximum amount paid with respect to a veteran may not exceed the maximum amount of \$20,000 and the maximum amount of such payments may not exceed 24 months.

"(4) **PAYMENTS MADE ON QUARTERLY BASIS.**—Payments under this section shall be made on a quarterly basis.

"(5) **EMPLOYER REPORT.**—Each employer providing a program of apprenticeship or on-the-job training pursuant to this section shall submit to the Secretary on a quarterly basis a report certifying the wages paid to eligible veterans under such program (which shall be certified by the veteran as being correct) and containing such other information as the Secretary may specify. Such report

shall be submitted in the form and manner required by the Secretary.

“(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated \$60,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 through 2018 to carry out this section.

“(e) REPORTING.—The Secretary shall include a detailed description of activities carried out under this section in the annual report prepared by the Veterans Benefits Administration.

“(f) SEPARATE ACCOUNTING.—The Department shall have a separate line item in budget proposals of the Department for funds to be appropriated to carry out this section.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3687 the following new item:

“3687A. Military occupational specialty transition (MOST) program.”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Subsection (a)(1) of section 3034 of such title is amended by striking “and 3687” and inserting “3687, and 3687A”.

(2) Subsections (a)(1) and (c) of section 3241 of such title are each amended by striking “section 3687” and inserting “sections 3687 and 3687A”.

(3) Subsection (d)(1) of section 3672 of such title is amended by striking “and 3687” and inserting “3687, and 3687A”.

(4) Paragraph (3) of section 4102A(b) of such title is amended by striking “section 3687” and inserting “section 3687 or 3687A”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute. I want to thank Mr. BOOZMAN, and he included parts of a bill from Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN and from Mr. WELCH from Vermont, another new Member who has been a great participant in our deliberations.

I would like to thank my distinguished colleague, Ranking Member JOHN BOOZMAN in the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, for his bipartisan efforts in crafting H.R. 6221, as amended, Improving Veterans' Opportunities in Education and Business Act.

I also want to thank Subcommittee Chairwoman STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN and Congressman PETER WELCH for introducing language included in this important legislation.

Many of our veterans today are currently transitioning into the workforce or continuing their studies in higher education.

Some of our disabled veterans own small businesses, while others are receiving training to pursue other careers. Our veterans deserve to receive the necessary resources to succeed in life after the military. We must work together to ensure that our Nation's heroes are equipped and provided the training they need for their future careers.

H.R. 6221 would clarify a provision in current law that was intended to assist veterans in the Federal procurement process. This provision has been interpreted by the VA General Counsel that it does not apply to agents acting on behalf of the VA. H.R. 6221 would clarify congressional intent and require any entity that purchases goods and services on behalf of the VA to comply with the contracting goals and preferences for small businesses owned or controlled by veterans.

Language introduced by Representative STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN of South Dakota would authorize \$10 million for VA to conduct a 5-year pilot program to expand the veterans' campus work study program.

Eligible work-study may include positions in academic departments and student services, such as jobs in tutoring, research, career services, and campus orientation.

Language was introduced by Representative PETER WELCH of Vermont to authorize \$60 million for the next 10 years to fund the Service Members' Occupational Conversion and Training Act, commonly called SMOCTA.

SMOCTA is a successful training program that was instituted in the early 1990's and targeted to servicemembers leaving military service with few or no job skills to transition to the civilian marketplace.

The program assists veterans in obtaining meaningful employment after their military service and is a timely program that would greatly assist today's returning veterans.

Mr. Speaker, we must honor our men and women who dutifully serve our Nation.

We must serve our disabled veteran small business owners and students with opportunities to succeed, and fund successful programs that develop job skills needed in today's workforce. Our servicemembers deserve the proper training and provisions that ensure a seamless transition into civilian life.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 6221, as amended.

Since this bill is authored by Mr. BOOZMAN, I will reserve the balance of my time to allow him to explain it.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I might consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 6221, as amended, the Veteran-Owned Small Business Protection and Clarification Act of 2008.

H.R. 6225, as amended, makes three important improvements for our veterans. First, it closes a loophole in title 38, United States Code, to require that contracts awarded on behalf of Department of Veterans Affairs by agents of the Department include provision to comply with the disabled veteran-owned small business provisions in public law 109-461.

Second, the bill would expand the types of VA work-study jobs on college campuses to provide more jobs for student veterans and widen interaction between veterans, the faculty, staff and, most importantly, other students.

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Finally, H.R. 6221, as amended, would take provisions from H.R. 6272 introduced by Congressman WELCH to create the Military Occupational Specialty Transition (MOST) program, a modernized version of the old Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act, or SMOCTA.

Focusing on veterans whose military specialty does not translate well into civilian life and who do not have other training opportunities available under title XXXVIII, this bill will benefit veterans whose job skills no longer match what is needed by today's economy.

For example, today's army or marine infantryman is experienced with some

types of technology related to their specialty, but most of their training is in small unit tactics and weapons. They are not like the technicians who service and operate sophisticated systems on a daily basis. While an infantryman has developed soft skills such as leadership and initiative that are valuable in many work places, many hands-on skills are usually not part of the resume.

Or take a sailor whose main job is to move aircraft around on the flight deck of a carrier. He works in a very dangerous environment but other than working the light line at an airport, his skill is not very transferable.

Or take the airman who is a load master who is responsible for the safe loading of cargo on aircraft. Outside of working for an airline in the same capacity, the load master has few directly transferable military skills.

I appreciate our colleague from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for his initiative to renew funding for the old Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act, or SMOCTA. Again, in a bipartisan manner, the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee has brought us a bill that meets Mr. WELCH's goal of providing a training program for veterans who finish military service with few or no skills that are transferable to regular life.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my gratitude to Chairman FILNER, Ranking Member BUYER, and subcommittee Chairwoman HERSETH SANDLIN for working together to bring this bill to us as a bipartisan effort to make veterans more competitive in the job market. I also want to thank our staffs for their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues to support H.R. 6221, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers also.

Again, I want to encourage my colleagues to vote for the bill, and I also want to thank Mr. WELCH for his hard work in bringing forward, I think, this reauthorization. With the changes that are being made with his help is really going to help the servicemember that comes out who is disadvantaged because he hasn't received as much training in specialized fields as the other members.

I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 6221, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, as the Chairwoman of the Veterans' Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee and sponsor of the "Pilot College Work Study Programs for Veterans Act," which has been included in the "Improving Veterans' Opportunity in Education

and Business Act," I rise today in strong support of H.R. 6221, as amended.

I would like to thank full Committee Chairman FILNER, Ranking Member BUYER, and the sponsor of the bill, Subcommittee Ranking Member BOOZMAN for their leadership and bipartisan support of this bill, which the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee passed on June 26 and the full Committee approved on July 15.

As I noted, this important measure to improve business and education opportunities for veterans includes the "Pilot College Work Study Programs for Veterans Act," which I introduced on June 10 of this year. The purpose of my bill is to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a 5-year pilot program to expand on existing work-study activities for veterans. Currently, veterans that qualify for work-study would be limited to working on VA related work. My bill would allow those veterans the option of working in academic departments and student services. This change would put them at par with students that qualify for a work-study position under programs not administered by the VA.

I also would like to thank Representative PETER WELCH for a bill, which was also included in H.R. 6221, to reauthorize the Military Occupational Specialty Transition (MOST) Program, and Subcommittee Ranking Member BOOZMAN for the introduction of the underlying bill to require VA contractees to comply with contracting goals and preferences for small businesses owned by veterans.

Again, I thank Chairman BOOZMAN for sponsoring this important bill. I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 6221, as amended.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6221, as amended, the Veteran Owned Small Business Protection and Clarification Act of 2008. This bill, as amended, would amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include in each contract the Secretary enters for the acquisition of goods and services a provision that requires compliance with the contracting goals and preferences for small businesses concerns owned or controlled by veterans, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6221, as amended, does 3 very good things for veterans.

First, it closes a loophole in the service disabled veteran-owned business provisions in Public Law 109-461 to require that any VA agreement with other entities to provide contracting services include provisions to comply with those provisions.

Second, the bill would expand the types of VA work study jobs on college campuses to provide more jobs for student veterans, and widen interaction between veterans, the faculty, staff and most importantly, other students.

Finally, H.R. 6221, as amended, would take provisions from H.R. 6272, introduced by Congressman WELCH to create the Military Occupational Specialty Transition (MOST) program, a modernized version of the old Service Members' Occupational Conversion and Training Act or SMOCTA.

Focusing on veterans whose military specialty does not translate well into civilian life and who do not have other training opportunities available under title 38, this bill will benefit veterans whose job skills no longer match what is needed by today's economy.

I appreciate our colleague from Vermont, Mr. WELCH, for his bill which would renew

funding for the old Service Members' Occupational Conversion and Training Act or SMOCTA. Again, in a bipartisan manner, the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee has brought us a bill that meets Mr. WELCH's goal of providing a training program for veterans who finish military service with few or no skills that are transferrable to civilian life.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my gratitude to Chairman FILNER, Subcommittee Chairwoman HERSETH SANDLIN and Ranking Member BOOZMAN for working together to bring this bill to us as a bipartisan effort to make veterans more competitive in the job market.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6221.

Mr. FILNER. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6221, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

EXTENDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 674) to amend title 38, United States Code, to repeal the provision of law requiring termination of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans as of December 31, 2009.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 674

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

SECTION 1. REPEAL OF SUNSET PROVISION FOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS.

Subsection (e) of section 544 of title 38, United States Code, is repealed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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

This bill comes to us from our colleague from Chicago, Congressman LUIS GUTIERREZ, and this would repeal the law that requires the termination of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans on December 31 of 2009.

We cannot let this important committee vanish.

Today, Mr. Speaker, over 14 percent of veterans are from racial or ethnic minority groups. African Americans comprise about 10 percent. The rest are Hispanic, Asian, or Native American. However, the Census Bureau projects that the number of minority Americans will shift significantly in the future and will grow to about 35 percent of the total population by 2050. Undoubtedly, that will be reflected in the percentage of people of color in the military, which is already steadily on the rise.

This trend has been true for black women who are joining the military at a greater rate than they are represented in the overall population and in a greater ratio than their male counterparts. In fact, black women comprise almost 35 percent of female servicemembers. This pattern will affect the VA's mission and scope, and it must be prepared to respond to properly deliver benefits.

Congress developed the Center for Minority Veterans and the Advisory Committee in 1994 to advise VA and Congress on providing health care and delivering benefits to minority veterans because there were disparities in such service. We had hoped to improve VA practices for future generations of minority veterans. This center has issued an annual report since 1994, and it's mandated to focus specific attention on African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islanders, which it has done by conducting town hall meetings and site visits to such places as inner city Los Angeles and Native American tribes in Alaska.

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs has explored these disparities and has been greatly assisted by the Committee on Minority Veterans. Its recommendations regarding outreach, research, education, staff diversity, translation services, and housing have been extremely enlightening and have resulted in many improvements.

At the present time, the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans is due to sunset in 2009. This bill would prevent this from occurring and would serve to bring permanent awareness to cultural, racial, and ethnic issues among veterans to Congress and VA leadership.

I urge this Congress to support the bill and allow the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans to continue its work uninterrupted and fully supported.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 674, a bill to amend title XXXVIII, United States Code, to permanently establish the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans which is set to expire on December 31, 2009. I commend my colleague from Illinois, LUIS GUTIERREZ, for introducing this bill.