

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 366 the Korean American Vietnam Allies Long Overdue for Relief (VALOR) Act.

H.R. 366 would amend title 38, United States Code, to treat certain individuals who served in Vietnam as a member of the armed forces of the Republic of Korea as a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States for purposes of the provision of health care by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Title 38 is a special pay authority used to recruit and retain employees in certain health care occupations. It allows NIH to be competitive with other health care facilities in the area.

The Korean American VALOR Act would expand the eligibility of these benefits to veterans who served in the armed forces of the Republic of Korea during the Vietnam War and have since become naturalized U.S. citizens.

This bipartisan legislation, when enacted into law, will provide veterans who served between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, and became U.S. citizens during or after such service, access to hospital and domiciliary care and medical services through the VA.

Approximately 3,000 Korean American Vietnam veterans are naturalized citizens—and the number of surviving veterans continues to dwindle.

As a result of their time in Vietnam, these veterans are falling ill from the diseases caused by exposure to Agent Orange and other toxins and are not receiving adequate care.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) fully supports the passage of the Korean American VALOR Act H.R. 366.

The Korean American VALOR Act will protect our veterans that served in Vietnam by providing them with the healthcare relief they deserve.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, we do need to remember that this is a perfect week to do this when Memorial Day is coming up, and we are honored to make sure that these veterans are recognized in the way they should be and that they do receive healthcare.

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

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

Again, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 366, the Korean American VALOR Act. Might I just add to the chairman's assertion that this is the perfect week to pass this bill. I have already mentioned the 70th anniversary of our historic alliance, but now as we in the Indo-Pacific must strengthen our alliance, I also want to add my congratulations to both the nations of Japan and the Republic of Korea for making great strides to improve their relationships and to afford us the opportunity in the trilateral alliance among the United States, Japan, and South Korea to become stronger allies.

This legislation, I believe, is part of the entire effort to become stronger allies with greater cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 366.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VET-TEC AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1669) to amend title 38, United States Code, to make permanent the high technology pilot program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1669

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 "VET-TEC Authorization Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HIGH TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM.

(a) HIGH TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 3699C. High technology program

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—(1) The Secretary shall carry out a program under which the Secretary provides covered individuals with the opportunity to enroll in high technology programs of education that the Secretary determines provide training or skills sought by employers in a relevant field or industry.

"(2) Not more than 6,000 covered individuals may participate in the program under this section in any fiscal year.

"(b) AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE.—(1) The Secretary shall provide, to each covered individual who pursues a high technology program of education under this section, educational assistance in amounts equal to the amounts provided under section 3313(c)(1) of this title, including with respect to the housing stipend described in that section and in accordance with the treatment of programs that are distance learning and programs that are less than half-time.

"(2) Under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall provide such amounts of educational assistance to a covered individual for each of the following:

"(A) A high technology program of education.

"(B) A second such program if—

"(i) the second such program begins at least 18 months after the covered individual graduates from the first such program; and

"(ii) the covered individual uses educational assistance under chapter 33 of this title to pursue the second such program.

"(c) CONTRACTS.—(1) For purposes of carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall seek to enter into contracts with any number of qualified providers of high technology programs of education for the provision of such programs to covered individuals. Each such contract shall provide for the conditions under which the Secretary may terminate the contract with the provider and the procedures for providing for the graduation of students who were enrolled in a program provided by such provider in the case of such a termination.

"(2) A contract under this subsection shall provide that the Secretary shall pay to a provider—

"(A) upon the enrollment of a covered individual in the program, 25 percent of the cost of the tuition and other fees for the program of education for the individual;

"(B) upon graduation of the individual from the program, 25 percent of such cost; and

"(C) 50 percent of such cost upon—

"(i) the successful employment of the covered individual for a period—

"(I) of 180 days in the field of study of the program; and

"(II) that begins not later than 180 days following graduation of the covered individual from the program;

"(ii) the employment of the individual by the provider for a period of one year; or

"(iii) the enrollment of the individual in a program of education to continue education in such field of study.

"(3) For purposes of this section, a provider of a high technology program of education is qualified if—

"(A) the provider employs instructors whom the Secretary determines are experts in their respective fields in accordance with paragraph (5);

"(B) the provider has successfully provided the high technology program for at least one year;

"(C) the provider does not charge tuition and fees to a covered individual who receives assistance under this section to pursue such program that are higher than the tuition and fees charged by such provider to another individual; and

"(D) the provider meets the approval criteria developed by the Secretary under paragraph (4).

"(4)(A) The Secretary shall prescribe criteria for approving providers of a high technology program of education under this section.

"(B) In developing such criteria, the Secretary may consult with State approving agencies.

"(C) Such criteria are not required to meet the requirements of section 3672 of this title.

"(D) Such criteria shall include the job placement rate, in the field of study of a program of education, of covered individuals who complete such program of education.

"(5) The Secretary shall determine whether instructors are experts under paragraph (3)(A) based on evidence furnished to the Secretary by the provider regarding the ability of the instructors to—

"(A) identify professions in need of new employees to hire, tailor the programs to meet market needs, and identify the employers likely to hire graduates;

"(B) effectively teach the skills offered to covered individuals;

"(C) provide relevant industry experience in the fields of programs offered to incoming covered individuals; and

"(D) demonstrate relevant industry experience in such fields of programs.

"(6) In entering into contracts under this subsection, the Secretary shall give preference to a provider of a high technology program of education—

"(A) from which at least 70 percent of graduates find full-time employment in the field of study of the program during the 180-day period beginning on the date the student graduates from the program; or

"(B) that offers tuition reimbursement for any student who graduates from such a program and does not find employment described in subparagraph (A).

"(d) EFFECT ON OTHER ENTITLEMENT.—(1) If a covered individual enrolled in a high technology program of education under this section has remaining entitlement to educational assistance under chapter 30, 32, 33, 34, or 35 of this title, entitlement of the individual to educational assistance under this section shall be charged at the rate of one month of such remaining entitlement for each such month of educational assistance under this section.

“(2) The Secretary may not consider enrollment in a high technology program of education under this section to be assistance under a provision of law referred to in section 3695 of this title.

“(e) REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.—(1) The Secretary shall not approve the enrollment of any covered individual, not already enrolled, in any high technology programs of education under this section for any period during which the Secretary finds that more than 85 percent of the students enrolled in the program are having all or part of their tuition, fees, or other charges paid to or for them by the educational institution or by the Department of Veterans Affairs under this title or under chapter 1606 or 1607 of title 10, except with respect to tuition, fees, or other charges that are paid under a payment plan at an educational institution that the Secretary determines has a history of offering payment plans that are completed not later than 180 days after the end of the applicable term, quarter, or semester.

“(2) The Secretary may waive a requirement of paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines, pursuant to regulations which the Secretary shall prescribe, such waiver to be in the interest of the covered individual and the Federal Government. Not later than 30 days after the Secretary waives such a requirement, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report regarding such waiver.

“(3)(A)(i) The Secretary shall establish and maintain a process by which an educational institution may request a review of a determination that the educational institution does not meet the requirements of paragraph (1).

“(ii) The Secretary may consult with a State approving agency regarding such process or such a review.

“(iii) Not later than 180 days after the Secretary establishes or revises a process under this subparagraph, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report regarding such process.

“(B) An educational institution that requests a review under subparagraph (A)—

“(i) shall request the review not later than 30 days after the start of the term, quarter, or semester for which the determination described in subparagraph (A) applies; and

“(ii) may include any information that the educational institution believes the Department should have taken into account when making the determination, including with respect to any mitigating circumstances.

“(f) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this section, and annually thereafter until the termination date specified in subsection (i), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the operation of program under this section during the year covered by the report. Each such report shall include each of the following:

“(1) The number of covered individuals enrolled in the program, disaggregated by type of educational institution, during the year covered by the report.

“(2) The number of covered individuals who completed a high technology program of education under the program during the year covered by the report.

“(3) The average employment rate of covered individuals who completed such a program of education during such year, as of 180 days after the date of completion.

“(4) The average length of time between the completion of such a program of education and employment.

“(5) The total number of covered individuals who completed a program of education under the program and who, as of the date of the submission of the report, are employed in a position related to technology.

“(6) The average salary of a covered individual who completed a program of education

under the program and who is employed in a position related to technology, in various geographic areas determined by the Secretary.

“(7) The average salary of all individuals employed in positions related to technology in the geographic areas determined under subparagraph (F), and the difference, if any, between such average salary and the average salary of a covered individual who completed a program of education under the program and who is employed in a position related to technology.

“(8) The number of covered individuals who completed a program of education under the program and who subsequently enrolled in a second program of education under the program.

“(g) COLLECTION OF INFORMATION; CONSULTATION.—(1) The Secretary shall develop practices to use to collect information about covered individuals and providers of high technology programs of education.

“(2) For the purpose of carrying out program under this section, the Secretary may consult with providers of high technology programs of education and may establish an advisory group made up of representatives of such providers, private employers in the technology field, and other relevant groups or entities, as the Secretary determines necessary.

“(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered individual’ means any of the following:

“(A) A veteran whom the Secretary determines—

“(i) served an aggregate of at least 36 months on active duty in the Armed Forces (including service on active duty in entry level and skill training) and was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable; and

“(ii) has not attained the age of 62.

“(B) A member of the Armed Forces that the Secretary determines will become a veteran described in subparagraph (A) fewer than 180 days after the date of such determination.

“(2) The term ‘high technology program of education’ means a program of education—

“(A) offered by a public or private educational institution;

“(B) if offered by an institution of higher learning, that is provided directly by such institution rather than by an entity other than such institution under a contract or other agreement;

“(C) that does not lead to a degree;

“(D) that has a term of not less than six and not more than 28 weeks; and

“(E) that provides instruction in computer programming, computer software, media application, data processing, or information sciences.

“(i) TERMINATION.—The authority to carry out a program under this section shall terminate on September 30, 2028.”

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3699B the following new item:

“3699C. High technology program.”

(b) EFFECT ON HIGH TECHNOLOGY PILOT PROGRAM.—Section 116 of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-48; 38 U.S.C. 3001 note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (g), by striking paragraph (6); and

(2) by striking subsection (h) and inserting the following new subsection (h):

“(h) TERMINATION.—The authority to carry out a pilot program under this section shall terminate on September 30, 2023.”

(c) APPROVAL OF CERTAIN HIGH TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS.—Section 3680A of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following:

“(4) Any independent study program except—

“(A) an independent study program (including such a program taken over open circuit television) that—

“(i) is accredited by an accrediting agency or association recognized by the Secretary of Education under subpart 2 of part H of title IV of

the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1099b);

“(ii) leads to—

“(I) a standard college degree;

“(II) a certificate that reflects educational attainment offered by an institution of higher learning; or

“(III) a certificate that reflects graduation from a course of study offered by—

“(aa) an area career and technical education school (as defined in subparagraphs (C) and (D) of section 3(3) of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2302(3))) that provides education at the postsecondary level; or

“(bb) a postsecondary vocational institution (as defined in section 102(c) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002(c))) that provides education at the postsecondary level; and

“(iii) in the case of a program described in clause (ii)(III)—

“(I) provides training aligned with the requirements of employers in the State or local area where the program is located, which may include in-demand industry sectors or occupations;

“(II) provides a student, upon graduation from the program, with a recognized postsecondary credential that is recognized by employers in the relevant industry, which may include a credential recognized by industry or sector partnerships in the State or local area where the industry is located; and

“(III) meets such content and instructional standards as may be required to comply with the criteria under section 3676(c)(14) and (15) of this title; or

“(B) an online high technology program of education (as defined in subsection (h)(2) of section 3699C of this title)—

“(i) the provider of which has entered into a contract with the Secretary under subsection (c) of such section;

“(ii) that has been provided to covered individuals (as defined in subsection (h)(1) of such section) under such contract for a period of at least five years;

“(iii) regarding which the Secretary has determined that the average employment rate of covered individuals who graduated from such program of education is 65 percent or higher for the year preceding such determination; and

“(iv) that satisfies the requirements of subsection (e) of such section.”; and

(2) in subsection (d), by adding at the end the following:

“(8) Paragraph (1) shall not apply to the enrollment of a veteran in an online high technology program described in subsection (a)(4)(B).”

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (c) shall take effect on October 1, 2023.

SEC. 3. BURIAL ALLOWANCE FOR CERTAIN VETERANS WHO DIE AT HOME WHILE IN RECEIPT OF HOSPICE CARE FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a)(2)(A) of section 2303 of title 38, United States Code, is further amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking “; or” and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in clause (ii)(III), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new clause:

“(iii) a home or other setting at which the deceased veteran was, at the time of death, receiving hospice care pursuant to section 1717(a) of this title if such care was directly preceded by the Secretary furnishing to the veteran hospital care or nursing home care described in subclause (I), (II), or (III) of clause (ii).”

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of

the enactment of this Act and apply with respect to deaths occurring on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. INCLUSION OF NON-DEGREE FLIGHT TRAINING IN CERTAIN REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES.

Section 3101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (7), by adding at the end the following: “A rehabilitation program may include a program that includes flight training and does not lead to a degree.”; and

(2) by redesignating the first paragraph (10) as paragraph (1).

SEC. 5. SOLE LIABILITY FOR TRANSFERRED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE BY AN INDIVIDUAL WHO FAILS TO COMPLETE A SERVICE AGREEMENT.

Subsection (i) of section 3319 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking “In the event” and inserting “Subject to paragraph (2), in the event”; and

(B) by inserting “of this title” after “section 3685”;

(2) in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2)—

(A) in the heading, by striking “IN GENERAL” and inserting “SOLE LIABILITY”; and

(B) by striking “under paragraph (1)” and inserting “for which the individual shall be solely liable to the United States for the amount of the overpayment for purposes of section 3685 of this title”; and

(3) in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (2)—

(A) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking “Subparagraph (A) shall not apply” and inserting “Neither the individual nor the dependent shall be liable to the United States for the amount of the overpayment for purposes of section 3685 of this title”; and

(B) in clause (ii), by inserting “of this title” after “section 3311(c)(4)”.

SEC. 6. INCREASE OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION IN REPUBLIC OF PHILIPPINES.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This section may be cited as the “Filipino Education Fairness Act”.

(b) **INCREASE.**—Section 3532 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking subsection (d); and

(2) by redesignating subsections (e) through (g) as subsections (d) through (f), respectively.

SEC. 7. PROVISION OF CERTIFICATES OF ELIGIBILITY AND AWARD LETTERS USING ELECTRONIC MEANS.

Chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 3698 the following new section (and conforming the table of sections at the beginning of such chapter accordingly):

“§3698A. Provision of certificates of eligibility and award letters using electronic means

“(a) **REQUIREMENT.**—Except as provided by subsection (b), the Secretary shall provide to an individual the following documents using electronic means:

“(1) A certificate of eligibility for the entitlement of the individual to covered educational assistance.

“(2) An award letter regarding the authorization of the individual to receive covered educational assistance.

“(b) **ELECTION TO OPT OUT.**—An individual may elect to receive the documents specified in subsection (a) by mail rather than through electronic means under subsection (a). An individual may revoke such an election at any time, by means prescribed by the Secretary.

“(c) **COVERED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.**—In this section, the term ‘covered educational assistance’ means educational assistance under chapter 30, 33, or 35, or section 3699C, of this title.”.

SEC. 8. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HOUSING LOAN FEES.

The loan fee table in section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “November 14, 2031” each place it appears and inserting “April 30, 2032”.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1669, 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 Representative CISCOMAN’s bill, H.R. 1669, as amended. The bill would enhance the fund, the VET-TEC pilot program at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VET-TEC pilot program was coauthored by Speaker MCCARTHY and Congressman RO KHANNA in the Forever GI Bill in 2017.

Now, this program provides post-9/11 GI Bill-style benefits to veterans so they can attend short-term training that leads to jobs in the information technology sector. The education and employment program has been a wildly successful program. It has helped thousands of veterans not only find a job, but a career and a promising future in the technology sector.

This program is an example of a government program that truly works for our veterans. VET-TEC has an 80 percent graduation rate, a 62 percent employment rate, and an average salary of \$65,000 a year. Veterans using this program are going into careers with the best tech companies in the world.

The reason this program works as well as it has, I think, is that the schools only receive the full amount of the tuition and fees when the student gets a job in the tech industry.

Now, this level of accountability is honestly something I think we should be looking at for other Federal Government programs. Thousands of veterans achieving the career of their dreams has proven to me that it is time to expand VET-TEC.

Now, Representative CISCOMAN’s bill makes important changes to the pilot program to make it even stronger so that it can continue to help even more veterans find their American Dream. Improving VET-TEC program has the full support of the VA and many veteran service organizations.

Three weeks ago, VET-TEC providers told us that the program had run out of funds and they are no longer allowed to accept new students. Over 2,500 student veterans will miss out on the chance for a better career this year if Congress

is unable to fix this problem. It goes without saying, the time is short and the need to help our veterans continue to access this training is great.

Even with record-high inflation and soaring interest rates, because of the Biden administration, veterans using this program have shown that they can still achieve high-paying jobs.

Representative CISCOMAN’s bill, as amended, also includes several other bipartisan bills, including General JACK BERGMAN’s bill, H.R. 234, which would allow survivors of veterans to receive the burial allowance benefit if their loved one passes away at home while receiving VA Hospice care, rather than in a VA facility.

Representative ARRINGTON’s bill, H.R. 1169, would also allow veterans to receive their GI Bill electronic notifications virtually.

Representative OBERNOLTE’s bill, H.R. 746, would include nondegree pilot programs into the Veterans Readiness and Employment program.

Representative VAN ORDEN’s bill, H.R. 1798, would protect the spouses of servicemembers from GI Bill debt.

Representative KIGGAN’s bill, H.R. 1635, would eliminate a nearly 70-year-old rule that limits the GI Bill payments that survivors and dependents receive in the Philippines.

With the inclusion of these bills in H.R. 1669, we would make great improvements in how our veterans can use the GI Bill benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Student Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign War, The American Legion, the VET-TEC Working Group, and Disabled American Veterans for supporting the proposed legislation today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1669, as amended.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the VET-TEC Authorization Act of 2023, as amended. In 2020, when our country experienced record unemployment, VET-TEC was a bright spot of veteran employment.

To date, nearly 5,000 veterans have found employment from the program at a salary of over \$65,000 a year.

Today, veterans are employed at record-high levels. The Biden economy has brought veteran unemployment to the lowest level ever on record. Let me say that again. The Biden economy has brought veteran unemployment to the lowest level ever on record.

The legislation before us adds 5 more years to the VET-TEC program, providing VA an additional \$337 million to get more veterans hired in the high-technology field.

This program was created by Speaker MCCARTHY in the Forever GI Bill, and I respect the fact that it is a big priority for the Speaker and my friend Chairman BOST. While I support the legislation, I wish to share my concern about moving a bill with such a large cost

when we have so many provisions awaiting action by this Congress. The \$413 million price tag of this bill dwarfs the costs of many of the bills we must pass to address veteran homelessness.

This is an expensive bill in a fiscally uncertain time. While we all appreciate veteran employment programs, veteran unemployment is the lowest ever on record. A VET-TEC extension is nice to have, but with veterans experiencing homelessness and food insecurity, there is action on those programs that we must have.

As ranking member of this committee, I have the responsibility of weighing priorities and choosing between worthy policies that help veterans. I know the chairman and his colleagues on our committee share my goal of ending veteran homelessness.

When we considered this legislation in our committee, I offered an amendment to this legislation to make permanent some basic authorities which lowered veteran homelessness by 11 percent during a public health emergency. This amendment cost only \$6 million in mandatory spending.

Last year, the chairman himself made it clear: "No veteran should be without a place to call home. I am glad that the most recent estimate showed fewer veterans living in homeless shelters last year. That is why we must continue our work to ensure that the rubber is meeting the road and every veteran has access to safe, stable housing and the help they need to thrive."

Chairman BOST is correct. The work must continue. We must continue the ongoing work, which has already helped so many veterans and can help so many more.

The reason given for not moving this bill was that it implicates the Toxic Exposure Fund, or TEF. I understand the chairman is concerned about how the Congressional Budget Office scores bills with TEF implications. I am concerned too, and I have spoken extensively on this.

However, there has yet to be a solution proposed for the TEF that does not undermine its purpose, which is to protect funding for toxic-exposed veterans and acknowledge this as a cost of war.

In light of this, I am asking that we come together and work on mutual priorities so that we can responsibly and equitably pass legislation using the limited offsets available to us.

I think the chairman believes, as do I, that providing basic needs for homeless veterans deserves to be on that priority list.

Therefore, I ask my colleague, the chairman, if he will commit to bringing Representative CHERFILUS-MCCORMICK's bill, H.R. 645, to the floor without delay.

Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of a colloquy, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST), and ask if he will commit to this.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, while I understand the concerns expressed by the

minority, I point out that the program has been a huge success in helping veterans gain meaningful employment.

We have been very successful in recent years in reducing veterans' unemployment, and now is not the time for us to take our foot off the gas. I believe a successful education program, such as this one, is one of the best ways to reduce veteran homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, I would also point out that the minority has had ample time and opportunity to express their concerns of legislation hearing on this bill.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I am reclaiming my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I am getting to my answer.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for the answer.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, they were also given a chance to submit markup at a full committee markup, and yet, the first time I have heard these concerns was late last week.

The bill, through regular order, as amended, was offered for the minority Representative, Mr. MCGARVEY, to reduce the length of time in the program. That amendment was accepted and included in the bill.

The length of the program was subject to bipartisan agreement. I recognize that the minority has valid concerns about spending and limited resources that we have worked with. The problem was made worse with the passage of the Toxic Exposure Fund, the PACT Act, that requires mandatory spending for many of the VA programs.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat my plea that my friends on the other side of the aisle join me in developing a resolution to the issue.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I reclaim my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I am committed to addressing the veterans homelessness.

□ 1700

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I am reclaiming my time.

I simply ask the gentleman whether he will work with us to bring Mrs. CHERFILUS-MCCORMICK's bill to the floor. That is the question that I will yield for an answer.

Will the gentleman work with us?

I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I will address veterans homelessness, as I have always said I would. It is very concerning to me. We are currently working on a package to address the issue, but I am not going to pit one group of veterans against another. I would like my friends in the minority to work with me to develop legislation to address veteran homelessness in a bipartisan, fiscally responsible way over the next few months.

The answer is yes, we will work with you, but we have got to actually sit down and work together to figure out the problem of the expense and knowing how it is and where it is that we

make the investment that still balances. That is the answer that I will give to the gentleman.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time.

I am grateful that I hear some kernel that they will work with us in a bipartisan way. What does worry me is the gentleman mentioned over the next few months. I can maybe tolerate the next few months in terms of can we come to an agreement by the fall when the temperatures start to fall, but even the hot summers, in some parts of the country, would require us to work much more expeditiously.

These pandemic authorities that expanded our ability to help veterans who are homeless expired on May 11. For the last 11 days, VA and its community partners have operated with fewer authorities and less funding to help homeless veterans.

VA's ability to quickly bring a veteran in off the streets and get them the services they need to put them on their way to stable, permanent housing has been greatly diminished.

Prior to the pandemic, we were maintaining the status quo. The number of veterans experiencing homelessness had remained basically stagnant year after year for quite some time. For every veteran housed, another veteran would fall into homelessness.

During the pandemic we approached the homelessness crisis head on and with the urgency it has long deserved. It is incredible to me that we were able to reduce homelessness during COVID-19 by 11 percent. During the darkest days of that pandemic, VA actually reduced homelessness by 11 percent. It permanently housed over 40,000 veterans last year alone. We know these authorities accelerated VA's progress in ending veteran homelessness, and we can't lose that momentum.

I am pleased to hear the chairman wants to work together to extend these authorities and get homeless veterans into housing.

Mr. Speaker, I just say let's prioritize H.R. 645 in the coming days, not the coming months, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I will, and we will, work on this priority. What we can do is chew gum and walk at the same time, and that means we can go ahead and not only work on homelessness but also this bill, as important as it is. I appreciate the gentleman's concern, but believe me, our side of the aisle has just as much concern about our homeless veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Iowa (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS).

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman BOST for yielding me time.

As a 24-year Army veteran, I understand the importance of improving services for veterans as they transition to civilian life. VET-TEC is a pilot program that started under President Trump and was led by Speaker MCCARTHY. Let me repeat that. VET-TEC is a

highly popular and successful program that was started under President Trump that allows eligible veterans to use GI Bill-style benefits to attend innovative job training programs to prepare them for future employment in the technology industry.

Through this program, veterans can get training in high-demand areas, including computer software, computer programming, data processing, information science, and media applications. In addition to this, employment may help prevent and treat homelessness. We have seen 62 percent employment and \$65,000 per year average salaries.

I am grateful that my colleague, Representative CISCOMANI, introduced this important piece of legislation, which will help grow our economy and get veterans back to work. As a physician, it is no small aside that the dignity of working and having a purpose in life may also help improve mental health, which may also help improve homelessness.

The VET-TEC Authorization Act proves our commitment not only to maintaining funding levels but increasing support for veterans.

Last Congress, I led legislation to extend this important program, and I am proud to support this legislation today. This program has been widely popular and successful, and this is exactly the type of taxpayer-funded program that we can all support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important legislation.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. CISCOMANI), the sponsor of the main part of this bill.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman BOST for yielding me time to talk about this important bill.

I am grateful that my bill, H.R. 1669, the VET-TEC Authorization Act, is being considered today on the House floor. This bipartisan effort would extend the invaluable program for our veterans, the Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses, or VET-TEC program.

The VET-TEC pilot program allows eligible veterans to gain experience and training in high-demand tech jobs. Since the start of the VET-TEC program in 2019, introduced by Speaker MCCARTHY, over 12,000 veterans have completed the program in areas like computer programming, software development, data processing, and other in-demand careers. This is crucial to strengthening our American workforce, while enabling our vets to have a clear shot at the American Dream, a dream they have fought to protect for so many of us.

Of the veterans that completed the program, roughly 62 percent were offered a job related to the training they received, with an average salary of around \$65,000 a year. These results show that the program works, and by extending the program, we will ensure

veterans will be able to participate in the program in the coming years. Not only has this program been beneficial for our veterans, but it is crucial for our employers, as well. We need a skilled workforce working in the tech industry, and our veterans are the perfect fit.

I am proud to have partnered with Chairman BOST and Congressman KHANNA on this legislation, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure the men and women who served our country can continue to grow in the civilian workforce, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill today.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. KHANNA), my friend and colleague from my home State who serves on the Armed Services Committee and the Oversight Committee.

Mr. KHANNA. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative TAKANO for his leadership. I am glad that veterans can still bring this House together.

Mr. Speaker, I was honored to work with Speaker MCCARTHY back in 2017 on the pilot program, which has been a resounding success to provide veterans who serve this Nation with a technology skill so they can get jobs when they are back in the United States.

There was an 84 percent graduation rate, 12,000 veterans have been helped by this program, and the average salary was \$65,000. These are the types of things that we need to do in the House, bringing the House together to actually improve veterans' lives.

I appreciate Representative CISCOMANI's leadership, and I look forward to this program being permanent and hopefully expanded so veterans who serve our Nation, who do the highest duty, have the opportunity to have secure livings when they are back at home.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for all of his support for these bills that not only make life better for the veterans but also for their families.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1669, the VET-TEC Authorization Act, which, as amended, includes the text of legislation I originally introduced as H.R. 234, Gerald's Law.

Gerald's Law was drafted and introduced on behalf of Gerald Elliott, a U.S. Army veteran and a resident of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, as well as on behalf of his family and the thousands of other veterans like him.

A lifelong Yooper, Jerry was a member of The American Legion Post 363 and was an active volunteer with U.P. Honor Flight and the Iron Mountain VA Hospital.

After a cancer diagnosis in 2019, Gerald received his care at the Iron Mountain VA. As the disease progressed and he was placed on hospice care, he decided to go home to enjoy his final days with his family.

Following his death, Jerry's family discovered that even though he received hospice care through the VA, his family did not qualify for burial benefits after his death; that is, burial benefits for Jerry himself. That is because under current law, VA hospice care provided at home does not qualify as a death under VA care and is, therefore, not covered under the nonservice-connected burial and plot benefit.

As a result of this quirk, if a veteran with a terminal illness wants the full burial benefit, they would be forced to die in a hospital or nursing home under the VA auspices instead of transferring to home hospice care. This is just, I am sure, a mistake. This injustice is unacceptable and unconscionable.

No veteran should worry about losing VA benefits for their family when choosing to spend their final days in the comfort of their own home. Gerald's Law will address this by extending VA burial allowance eligibility to veterans whose passing occurs at home while receiving VA hospice care if they were previously receiving VA hospital or nursing home care.

I am thankful for the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for their work to assist the thousands of veterans and family members being denied benefits due to this legislative oversight.

H.R. 1669, which includes Gerald's Law and other bipartisan, common-sense reforms, was approved unanimously by the committee in April.

Mr. Speaker, I urge every Member of Congress, every Member of the House, to support its passage on the House floor today.

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

I commend General Bergman for the section of the VET-TEC bill which includes addressing this issue related to burials and the cost that the veteran's family has to bear, but I find it peculiar that the majority would take pains to include this legislation, which I have no quarrel with and support, but could not deal with and chose not to deal with the expiring authorities to deal with our homeless veterans.

Americans care deeply about the homeless veterans in our country and are offended that we would have anybody who wore the uniform of the United States be homeless.

There are elements of this bill that came up in markup. They brought the bill to the floor, the VET-TEC bill, which includes many elements, but they specifically chose to leave out addressing the expiring authorities that we have used to bring down homelessness by 11 percent. I am afraid we are going to lose momentum.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, one thing that needs to be very, very clear, the Bergman bill does not have a TEF issue, a toxic exposure fund issue. That is where the concerns are.

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

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Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I realize the chairman and all of us in the veteran space have had our differences with the way the Congressional Budget Office scores the TEF. However, I would assert that we cannot use that as an excuse for why we don't address veteran homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, the expansion of VET-TEC as a program is to the tune of nearly one-half billion dollars—\$413 million—at a time when my colleagues on the other side are looking to make draconian cuts to the nondefense side of the ledger, which veterans do fall within. They are expanding a program that addresses veteran employment at a time when veteran unemployment is at its lowest.

What I want to compare is the \$6 million to the nearly one-half billion dollars that the Republicans want to expand this program by. I, too, stand behind veteran employment programs and effective ones at that. However, should we be expanding it and authorizing for 5 years this program, VET-TEC, when we are allowing a \$6 million program to care for homeless veterans, to get them off the streets, to expire?

It is a rather rich situation that my colleagues want to expand spending and spend more on a program whose urgency is really in question because the Biden economy, as I explained, has brought veteran unemployment to its lowest levels ever. They want to expand spending in that program by an enormous amount, yet they want to eliminate \$6 million in authorizations to take care of our homeless veterans. This makes no sense at all to me.

I support the chairman's bill, but I hope he will work with us to solve this problem in a matter of days and not months.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to say a couple of things that I have said on this House floor before. I am going to say them again.

The gentleman referred to our cutting veterans. Actually, we are increasing over the President's budget. We will get more into that later this week in committee.

Let me also say this, Mr. Speaker. I will repeat my plea right now that our friends on the other side of the aisle join me in developing a solution to an issue that he has decided is not anything more than a political ploy, trying to say that we are going to cut benefits by straightening this problem out.

We are not. We will not. Let me say this again on this floor: Veterans are not being cut, period.

This is a good piece of legislation. It is bipartisan.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all the people on our side of the aisle and on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YAKYM). 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. 1669, 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. BOST. 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 motion will be postponed.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2023

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 777) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2023, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 777

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 "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2023" or the "Veterans' COLA Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2023, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2023, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—Each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2023, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively,

consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 2(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2024.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 777.

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 S. 777. I appreciate Senator TESTER and Senator MORAN for their leadership on this important bill. I also thank Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Chairman LUTTRELL and Ranking Member PAPPAS for leading the House companion to S. 777.

Our bipartisan collaboration on this legislation each year is vitally important. The Veterans' COLA Act of 2023 would increase the rates of compensation for our veterans and their survivors to keep pace with inflation and the rising cost of living.

Many veterans fought for our country and came back with visible and invisible injuries. Their disability compensation benefits provide financial security for service-disabled veterans and their families.

Mr. Speaker, veterans should not have to worry whether their earned benefits can cover their basic needs. They should not have to choose between gas to get to work or groceries for their family.

However, unfortunately, because of the Biden inflation problem that has occurred because of out-of-control spending, this is a reality for thousands of veterans' families. The least we can do for them is to provide a cost-of-living adjustment this year so they can continue to pay their bills and put food on their tables.

I am proud to support this bill today, and I hope all my colleagues will join me in sending this bill to the President's desk.

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

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