

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. KEAN).

Mr. KEAN of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 7323, the Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserves Tuition Fairness Act of 2024, introduced by my friend, Congressman VAN ORDEN from Wisconsin.

This legislation includes my bill, H.R. 7613, the Veterans Flight Training Responsibility Act of 2024. This act would allow up to \$115,000 in benefits for veterans to use at public institutions of higher learning for flight school.

This number is on par with the cap for 4-year private institutions so that veterans in flight schools are not disadvantaged and it would allow veterans to go to school year-round.

Additionally, this legislation would protect American taxpayers from schools charging hundreds of thousands of dollars for a degree that should not cost that much.

Finally, by getting veterans through school faster and protecting the VA from flight school GI Bill fraud, this legislation would help the economy and America's deficit, while being a good steward of taxpayer dollars.

This bill would allow student veterans who wish to train during the summer months to do so. This allows those students to take advantage of better weather conditions for flight training.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this vital piece of legislation to help our veterans obtain degrees quicker and advance in their chosen profession.

Finally, I thank Chairman BOST for advancing this legislation and my friend, Congressman VAN ORDEN, for sponsoring the underlying bill.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 7323, the Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserves Tuition Fairness Act of 2024, as amended, and 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.

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. 7323, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to disapprove courses of education offered by a public institution of higher learning that does not charge the in-State tui-

tion rate to a veteran using certain educational assistance under title 10 of such Code, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERAN IMPROVEMENT COMMERCIAL DRIVER LICENSE ACT OF 2023

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 656) to amend title 38, United States Code, to revise the rules for approval by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of commercial driver education programs for purposes of veterans educational assistance, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 656

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 "Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION OF RULES FOR APPROVAL OF COMMERCIAL DRIVER EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR PURPOSES OF VETERANS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3680A(e) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (3) as subparagraphs (A) through (C), respectively;

(2) in the matter before subparagraph (A), as redesignated by paragraph (1), by inserting "(1)" before "The Secretary";

(3) in paragraph (1)(B), as redesignated by paragraph (1), by inserting "except as provided in paragraph (2)," before "the course"; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new paragraph (2):

"(2)(A) Subject to this paragraph, a commercial driver education program is exempt from paragraph (1)(B) for a branch of an educational institution if the commercial driver education program offered at the branch by the educational institution—

"(i) is appropriately licensed; and

"(ii) uses the same curriculum as a commercial driver education program offered by the educational institution at another location that is approved for purposes of this chapter by a State approving agency or the Secretary when acting in the role of a State approving agency.

"(B)(i) In order for a commercial driver education program of an educational institution offered at a branch described in paragraph (1)(B) to be exempt under subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, the educational institution shall submit to the Secretary each year that paragraph (1)(B) would otherwise apply a report that demonstrates that the curriculum at the new branch is the same as the curriculum at the primary location.

"(ii) Reporting under clause (i) shall be submitted in accordance with such requirements as the Secretary shall establish in consultation with the State approving agencies.

"(C)(i) The Secretary may withhold an exemption under subparagraph (A) for any educational institution or branch of an educational institution as the Secretary considers appropriate.

"(ii) In making any determination under clause (i), the Secretary may consult with

the Secretary of Transportation on the performance of a provider of a commercial driver program, including the status of the provider within the Training Provider Registry of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration when appropriate."

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT OF REQUIREMENTS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish requirements under section 3680A(e)(2)(B)(ii) of such title, as added by subsection (a).

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply to commercial driver education programs on and after the date that is 180 days after the date on which the Secretary establishes the requirements under paragraph (1) of this subsection.

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 S. 656.

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. 656 offered by my colleague, Senator FISCHER from Nebraska. This would cut through the red tape for the approval process for commercial driving schools across the country.

House Republicans' priority is to expand the employment opportunities for veterans after they leave the military.

As a former truck driver and a former manager of our family's trucking business, which I was raised in, I know how important it is to have qualified drivers.

The American Trucking Institute said they need 60,000 more drivers to keep the economy moving. This bill allows veterans to help meet that demand.

We may need to make changes to the law to address some concerns in the future. However, it is essential that we advance the bill to create more job opportunities for our veterans. I look forward to continuing to improve CDL programs, and I urge my colleagues to support S. 656.

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 S. 656, the Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act of 2023. This bill directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to create an expedited approval process for commercial driver education programs when the program is an extension of an existing educational institution.

New programs must meet the same curriculum as previously approved by

VA to ensure veterans are not negatively impacted.

While I am considering supporting this bill today, I do wish to point out that our committee has been working on this bill for months, and we had reached a House and Senate bipartisan agreement on approved language for S. 656 that would empower State approving agencies to conduct proper oversight and limit automatic approval of these programs if they are opening in States without existing CDL programs.

However, despite these negotiations, for some unknown reason, this text is the same which passed in the Senate, ignoring the hard work our staff put in to reach a final agreement.

This is unfortunate, and I hope this won't be our last work on this language. It is critically important that we include important oversight provisions in bills such as these to ensure that veterans get the best possible training and that schools who access veterans' hard-earned GI Bill benefits are held accountable for the quality of their programs.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague, Chairman BOST, for the purpose of a colloquy to ensure that we can still work to get this bill to a better state.

Mr. Chairman, I understand both our staffs have spent quite a bit of time working on bipartisan language to S. 656. Can I get your commitment that we will continue these discussions and pass an updated bill as soon as possible? I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST).

Mr. BOST. You have my word we will continue to work with your staff to do the best we can. I think this bill is in very, very good shape the way it is. As the only one that actually has a CDL, we should probably realize that the safety is here, that is all good, but I would be willing to work on it in the future to move it on out today.

Mr. TAKANO. I appreciate that. We can get to work on an updated bill as soon as possible.

Mr. BOST. Yes.

Mr. TAKANO. I appreciate that pledge.

My second question to you, Mr. Chairman. Can I count on your support for that amended bill, whenever it may be, this Congress or next?

Mr. BOST. Ask that question again. I am sorry.

Mr. TAKANO. I ask if I can count on your support for that amended bill?

Mr. BOST. Yes.

Mr. TAKANO. Whenever it may be, this Congress or next?

Mr. BOST. The updated language is in the Dole Act, if we can have the opportunity to have the Dole Act, too.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you. I appreciate that. I thank the chairman, and I will reclaim my time.

Mr. Speaker, while this bill will head to the President's desk, I hope our committee can continue to work on this issue in the meantime.

Despite my concerns and reservations, I will support this bill now, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Senators Fischer and Padilla for their leadership on the Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act.

I was happy to introduce the House version of this very important bill, H.R. 2830, and I look forward to the benefit this language will add on our veterans' quality of life once it becomes law.

Every day, brave men and women join our military to fight for the American Dream so that each of us can live in a country where we have the opportunity to succeed and are free to pursue a better way of life. However, all too often when our servicemembers are transitioning to civilian life, our government fails in their pursuit of achieving the American Dream.

A 2016 study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation found that 53 percent of all veterans were unemployed for at least 4 months after leaving the military. These are our country's strongest citizens, yet we repeatedly fail to sufficiently support them as they make the biggest transition in their life, from servicemember to civilian.

S. 656 and H.R. 2830 make a much-needed change to the veteran educational assistance programs, expanding job opportunities for the brave men and women who serve our great Nation.

The VA CDL Act will increase veteran access to timely, quality commercial driver license training, reduce veteran unemployment or underemployment, and reduce the strain on our Nation's supply chain by increasing the truck driver workforce pool.

Currently, roughly 8,400 commercial driving programs are approved for use by eligible veterans under the GI Bill, but a bureaucratic 2-year rule prevents these training facilities from accepting GI benefits at secondary locations for 2 years.

This burdensome red tape has excluded many veterans from attending closer secondary branch training and dissuaded servicemembers from joining the trucking industry. Who better knows how to drive big stuff than our veterans?

Due to this rule, veterans must decide between finding a new career path, waiting 2 years to pursue their commercial driver's license, or in some cases traveling hundreds of miles away from their home for immediate training.

S. 656 and H.R. 2830 fix that issue by exempting new branches of preapproved training facilities located in the same State from the statutory 2-year wait to accept veterans' benefits.

It is high time that we take meaningful steps toward better supporting a veteran's transition into the civilian workforce. Too many arbitrary rules are impeding a veteran's ability to

achieve the very American Dream that they are fighting for others to pursue, but the VA CDL Act helps to eliminate one of those barriers.

Ultimately, this is a commonsense reform bill that will reduce unnecessary roadblocks to veteran training and workforce opportunities, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I support S. 656, the Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act of 2023, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, as a veteran and as a person that drove big stuff, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENSTRA). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 656.

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.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2025

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 9747) making continuing appropriations and extensions for fiscal year 2025, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 9747

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 "Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025".

SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title.
- Sec. 2. Table of Contents.
- Sec. 3. References.

DIVISION A—CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2025

DIVISION B—EXTENSIONS

TITLE I—MISCELLANEOUS EXTENSIONS

TITLE II—HEALTH EXTENDERS

TITLE III—VETERANS EXTENDERS

TITLE IV—BUDGETARY EFFECTS

SEC. 3. REFERENCES.

Except as expressly provided otherwise, any reference to "this Act" contained in any division of this Act shall be treated as referring only to the provisions of that division.

DIVISION A—CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2025

The following sums are hereby appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, and out of applicable corporate or other revenues, receipts, and funds, for the several departments, agencies, corporations, and other organizational units of Government for fiscal year 2025, and for other purposes, namely: