

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

House Meets At...	Votes Predicted At...
10:00 a.m. For Legislative Business	Last Vote: 7:00 p.m.
Fifteen "One-Minutes" per side	

Any anticipated Member absences for votes this week should be reported to the Office of the Majority Whip at 226-3210.

Floor Schedule and Procedure

- **H.R.835 - Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007 (Abercrombie-Financial Services):** The House will complete consideration of H.R. 835, on which debate began Tuesday. Remaining debate time on the bill will be managed by Financial Services Chair Barney Frank, or his designee, and will proceed in the following order:
 - Ten minutes of debate on the bill.
 - Possible debate and vote on a Republican motion to recommit the bill.
 - Vote on final passage of the bill. **Democrats are urged to vote YES**
- **H. Res. 274–Rule providing for consideration of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007 (Castor-Rules):** The structured rule provides one hour and twenty minutes of general debate, with one hour equally divided and controlled by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Armed Services and twenty minutes equally divided and controlled by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The rule provides that the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment and shall be considered as read, makes in order only those amendments printed in the Rules Committee report accompanying the resolution. Finally, the rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Debate on the rule will be managed by Rep. Castor and consideration will proceed in the following order:
 - One hour of debate on the rule.
 - Possible vote on the Democratic motion to move the previous question. **Democrats are urged to vote YES.**
 - Vote on adoption of the rule. **Democrats are urged to vote YES**

- **H. Res.275 –Rule to provide for consideration of H. Con. Res.99-Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2008 (Sutton-Rules):** The structured rule provides four hours of general debate with three hours equally divided and controlled by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on the Budget and one hour on the subject of economic goals and policies equally divided and controlled by Representative Maloney of New York and Representative Saxton of New Jersey and or their designees. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the concurrent resolution, provides that the concurrent resolution shall be considered for amendment under the five minute rule. The rule makes in order only those amendments printed in the Rules Committee report accompanying the resolution, but permits the Chairman of the Budget Committee to offer amendments in the House to achieve mathematical consistency. Debate on the rule will be managed by Rep. Sutton and will proceed in the following order:

 - One hour of debate on the rule.
 - Possible vote on the Democratic motion to move the previous question. **Democrats are urged to vote YES.**
 - Vote on adoption of the rule. **Democrats are urged to vote YES**

- **H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007:** One hour of debate will be managed by Armed Services Committee Chair Ike Skelton, or his designee, and twenty minutes of debate will be managed by Veterans' Affairs Committee Chair Bob Filner, or his designee, and consideration will proceed in the following order:

 - One hour and twenty minutes of debate on the bill.
 - Debate and votes on amendments to the bill.
 - Possible debate and vote on a Republican motion to recommit the bill.
 - Vote on final passage of the bill. **Democrats are urged to vote YES on final passage.**

- **H. Con. Res. 99-Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2008:** Three hours of debate will be managed by Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt, or his designee, and one hour of debate will be managed by Rep. Carolyn Maloney, or her designee, and consideration will proceed in the following order:

 - Four hours of debate on the resolution.
 - Debate and votes on substitutes to the resolution. **Democrats are urged to VOTE NO on the Republican Budget Substitute.**
 - Vote on adoption of the resolution. **Democrats are urged to vote YES on adoption of the resolution.**

Bill Summary and Key Issues

H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007

Bipartisan – H.R. 1538 was introduced by Reps. Filner, McHugh, Hunter and Snyder on March 15, 2007 and was reported out of the Committee unanimously.

Medical Care Case Managers – H.R. 1538 would require the Pentagon to provide every wounded service member with a medical care case manager to review weekly a soldier's medical care and a service member advocate to oversee quality of life issues. The legislation also would provide soldiers with cases before medical evaluation boards with independent health care professionals to counsel them during the process.

Toll-Free Hotline – H.R. 1538 would require the establishment of a toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies in facilities supporting medical patients and family members. The measure also would require the investigation and formulation of a plan to remediate substantiated complaints within 96 hours.

VA Transition Pilot Program – H.R. 1538 would require the Defense Department to establish a pilot program to transmit records more efficiently from the department to the VA for disabled service members being separated or retired from the armed forces.

Disability Evaluation Systems – H.R. 1538 would require the Defense and VA departments to conduct a joint study on the disability evaluation systems operated by both departments for the purpose of improving the consistency of the two systems and evaluating the feasibility of, and potential for, consolidating the two systems.

Standardized Training – H.R. 1538 would require the secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs to evaluate the systems they use to rate wounded soldiers' disabilities. Beyond neglect and a cumbersome bureaucracy, some soldiers and their families have complained that the Defense Department underrates their disabilities or declares them unrelated to their service.

Support Programs, Notification, and Private Contractors - H.R. 1538 would authorize \$50 million from emergency supplemental appropriations for fiscal 2007 and 2008 for wounded soldiers' support programs; require medical facilities to notify members of Congress of the admission of a service member who has been evacuated from combat — with the soldier's consent. H.R. 1538 would place a one-year moratorium on hiring private contractors to perform Defense Department functions at department medical facilities.

Anticipated Amendments to H.R. 1538

Barrow (GA) - The amendment eliminates the deductible and changes the method of determining the mileage reimbursement rate under the beneficiary travel program administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs. The reimbursement rate will be increased to the level at which Government employees are reimbursed for the use of privately owned vehicles on official business. - **10 minutes**

Skelton (MO) - The amendment would make technical changes in section 101 to clarify the qualification of military officers who may supervise medical care case managers and in section 107 to require that the tracking system for reports to medical authorities regarding wounded warrior symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or suicidal tendencies be developed not later than 180 days after the date of enactment and that the results be included in the Congressional reporting requirement. – **10 minutes**

Kline (MN) - This amendment directs the Secretary of Defense to ensure that \$10,000,000 is directed to support programs, activities, and facilities associated with the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment program from the Medical Support Fund created by this bill. – **10 minutes**

Sestak (PA)/Kennedy, Patrick (RI) - The amendment adds a definition to Sec.2 to clarify that “medical care” includes mental health care. – **10 minutes**

Brown, Corinne (FL) - This amendment will ensure confidentiality for members of the military who call the hotline for help. – **10 minutes**

Johnson, Eddie Bernice (TX) - The amendment strengthens language that professionals' training be "improved" rather than "modified," and it also places greater emphasis on adequate training to detect mental health conditions among recovering service members. – **10 minutes**

Kennedy, Patrick (RI)/Sestak (PA) - This amendment would require the Secretary of the Department of Defense to develop and implement a plan to help prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance abuse conditions) from developing in our military service members. In addition, this amendment would establish a new Peer-Reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program's research and development function to research the prevention of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and how to best strengthen the psychological resiliency of our military service members. – **10 minutes**

Hooley (OR) - Amendment would give members of the Reserve Component the option to use Military Medical Treatment Facilities closest to home for treatment on an outpatient basis of injuries sustained in theater. – **10 minutes**

Hensarling (TX) - This amendment would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study to determine what the average length of time is between the date for which a veteran requests an appointment and the date he is able to receive care. This amendment also requires that the Secretary report back to Congress within 180 days with recommendations as to how this time could be decreased to 15 days. – **10 minutes**

Bilirakis (FL) - The amendment creates an office of the ombudsman within the Office of the Secretary of Defense which would develop policies for the military departments on providing assistance to recovering service members and their families. – **10 minutes**

Buchanan (FL) - The amendment would direct the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress a report on the feasibility of a Soldier Patient Tracking System so any patient can be located in the medical holdover (MHO) process. – **10 minutes**

Welch (VT) - The amendment requires that the Secretary concerned provide the medical care managers and service member advocates with all the resources they need to expeditiously carry out their work. The amendment would also require the Department of Defense to conduct outreach to inform all service members and their families about the existence of and services available to them by the medical care managers and service member advocates contained in the bill. – **10 minutes**

Summary of H. Con Res. 99 House Democratic Budget

Our budget continues to advance these priorities —The Democratic budget balances in 2012 while accommodating additional tax relief for millions of middle-income families. It allocates funding for national priorities like children's health care and education. It begins to reverse six years of harmful spending cuts and fiscal mismanagement. It is the critical next step to make concrete the initiatives we have developed to move the country forward, and it set us on a course to build the future we want for our children and grandchildren. The 2008 budget is the first fiscal down payment to fulfill commitments we have made to the American people. Within the context of a balanced budget, the resolution achieves key objectives in six areas:

Fiscal Responsibility

- Provides for budget surplus in 2012, in contrast to the President's budget, which is always in deficit
- Provides for greater deficit reduction than the Administration over five years
- Follows the pay-as-you-go principle

Defending Our Nation

- Provides robust defense funding levels while targeting resources on the most pressing security concerns
- Increases funding for veterans' health care and services by \$5.4 billion (14.4 percent) above current services
- Provides more homeland security funding than the Administration
- Provides funding for the 9/11 Commission recommendations

Putting Children and Families First

- Accommodates an increase of \$50 billion to expand children's health insurance to cover millions of additional uninsured children
- Provides a 2008 program level that is \$3.0 billion over current services for education, training, and social services, which includes funding for No Child Left Behind programs, special educations, and aid to help students afford college
- Accommodates relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax for millions of middle-income taxpayers, as well as extension of middle-income tax cuts
- Increases funds for Head Start and child care
- Provides new funding to assist communities and rebuild housing in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

- Rejects the President's cut to the Social Services Block Grant program
- Includes an affordable housing initiative

Growing Our Economy

- Begins to reverse six years of high deficits and mounting debt
- Funds the House Democratic innovation agenda, putting us on a path to double funding for NSF and providing significant increases in K-12 math and science education
- Accommodates policies to strengthen the farm economy
- Provides funding to reauthorize FAA programs and fully funds the highway bill
- Increases funding for programs such as Community Development Block Grants to promote economic development in local communities

Preserving Our Planet

- Accommodates comprehensive energy legislation promoting renewable energy, moving toward energy independence
- Increases conservation funding
- Rejects harmful Administration cuts in environmental programs

An Accountable and Efficient Government

- Institutes tough program integrity initiatives to crack down on wasteful or fraudulent spending in Social Security, Medicare, and Unemployment Insurance programs
- Supports IRS enforcement to collect unpaid taxes from those who are not paying what they owe, thus helping to close the tax gap
- Provides resources to reduce huge backlogs in claims processing in the Veterans Administration, Social Security Administration, and other agencies
- Directs committees to identify wasteful and lower priority spending that can be cut in order to fund more pressing needs

Anticipated Substitutes to H. Con. Res. 99

Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Budget

Scott, Robert (VA)/Kilpatrick (MI), Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute. The substitute balances the budget in FY 2012, and produces a total cumulative deficit that is \$339 billion lower than that of the President's budget. It also funds essential programs and services, especially in the areas of health care, education and Gulf Coast reconstruction. It also provides for additional services for veterans and homeland security, including port and rail security. – **40 minutes**

Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC) Budget

Woolsey (CA), Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute. The substitute has a non-defense, domestic discretionary spending number of just over \$483 billion. It balances the budget by FY 2010. It spends \$395 billion on defense while projecting complete U.S. military redeployment out of Iraq during 2007. It also projects enactment of the Common Sense Budget Act, which would save at least \$60 billion per year on largely obsolete Cold War weapons systems plus tens of billions more in waste, fraud, and abuse in DOD spending identified by the nonpartisan Government Accounting Office (GAO). It repeals the Bush tax cuts for the top 1% of taxpayers and cracks down on corporate welfare by eliminating certain tax breaks and corporate loopholes. It includes the SMART Security Alternative to Preemption Doctrine, which shifts some spending and increases

other non-military spending to enhance homeland security and fight the root causes of terrorism through 21st century diplomacy and meeting basic human needs (e.g. HIV/AIDS/TB, universal basic education for all). It provides funding for immediate, cost-effective steps to redress global warming and the rapid acceleration of renewable energy development. It fully funds NCLB and IDEA to improve Teacher Corps and job training. It also fully funds the S-CHIP program to ensure every American child eligible is covered for basic health insurance. It ensures whatever federal funding is needed to provide health care (including mental health care) for all American veterans (including but not limited to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan military operations). Finally, the substitute increases funding for Community Development Block Grants, Hurricane Katrina relief and reconstruction, community policing, and priority clean-up of leaking underground storage tanks that threaten the drinking water of nearly half of all Americans. – **40 minutes**

Republican Budget

Ryan, Paul (WI), Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute. The Republican budget cuts Medicare by \$142 billion over 5 years, cuts Medicaid by \$97 billion over 5 years, cuts student loans by \$5 billion over 5 years, “strengthens work incentives” for the EITC, food stamps and other income security programs, i.e. cuts them as well by reducing eligibility. Finally, the GOP budget puts in place hard discretionary spending caps, which will lead to further unspecified and likely draconian cuts in all non-defense discretionary domestic spending in the out years of their budget (FY09-FY12). It also applies PAYGO only to spending and not to the revenue, i.e. tax cuts, side of the ledger. It specifically exempts from all budgetary controls all spending for contingency operations in global war on terror and for unanticipated defense-related needs. The substitute retains the 2001 and 2003 tax provisions. – **40 minutes- VOTE NO**

Quote of the Day

A woman's guess is much more accurate than a man's certainty. - Rudyard Kipling

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