

maintain its VIP database and verify that applicants for inclusion in the database were veteran-owned small businesses or service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. Once firms register in the VIP database, they qualify to receive set-aside or sole-source awards.

The Economic Opportunity Subcommittee learned through hearings and meetings with VA staff and the veterans community that the database contained firms that didn't qualify because the verification process was voluntary. This voluntary process meant that while the VIP database included over 16,000 businesses, less than 1,000 had received verification of their veteran status or had voluntarily submitted information to be verified.

While I'm pleased that Veterans Affairs Secretary Shinseki has taken steps since these hearings over the past 6 months to improve the process by which businesses are verified, this bill will ensure our veterans are afforded the small business opportunities they're due.

The Veterans Small Business Verification Act would amend title XXXVIII to clarify current law and require the VA to verify that firms are veteran-owned small businesses or service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses in order to be listed in the VIP database. Furthermore, it requires that the VA notify small businesses already listed in the database of the need to verify their status.

In conclusion, H.R. 3949 takes important steps toward providing needed assistance in a number of areas to those veterans who have bravely served their country. I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 3949.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN).

Mr. BOOZMAN. I thank Mr. STEARNS for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I too rise in support of H.R. 3949, several provisions of which originated in the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. I want to especially thank Chairwoman HERSETH SANDLIN for her leadership in moving these provisions, as well as Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for bringing the bill to the floor.

I did have one major disappointment, and Mr. STEARNS alluded to it earlier, in the effort to get the "may" to "shall" provisions, business provisions, that merely would have put disabled veteran-owned small businesses on an equal footing with 8(a) firms when competing for sole-source contracts at the Department of Veterans Affairs. I guess that was removed at the request of the Small Business Committee. And I know Mr. WALZ is concerned and the rest of the committee are all concerned about that.

Hopefully, we can all work together to reach a solution to that problem. This is something that literally we have all been working on for years, the

"mays" to "shalls" and things. So, again, like I said, hopefully we can resolve that problem.

This is a very, very good bill. I think it's something that all of the committee can be very, very proud of. This is the kind of work that we want coming out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and so I very much support it. Again, special thanks to Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN, Chairman FILNER, and Ranking Member BUYER.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), who had an important piece of this bill incorporated in.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day for me because it is close to the anniversary of the death in Iraq of a very brave young man, Corey Shea, whose picture is here.

He was killed in Iraq just the day after Veterans Day of last year, and I went to the funeral, along with my colleague Senator KERRY, to the town of Mansfield, Massachusetts. Like I think most Members, I try very hard to attend the funeral of every young man and woman who is killed in the service of the country. It's the least we can do. It's not a great deal, but it's the least we can do to show a small piece of the gratitude we feel to those people and our obligation to their families.

Also, it seems to me, anybody in our position who has to vote on going to war needs to fully understand the consequences of those votes, and going to the funerals of the young people killed in those wars ought to be mandatory for any of us who vote. That doesn't mean you don't vote for the war. I voted for the war in Afghanistan. I've been to funerals of people killed there. But it is an important thing to hammer home.

In this case at the funeral I met an extraordinary woman, Denise Anderson, the mother of Corey Shea, who was, in her grief at the loss of her wonderful young son, further concerned because he would be buried alone.

His country took him when he was too young to have married or raised a family. So under the rules of eligibility for burial at a veterans cemetery, he was to be buried alone. His mother said as bad as it was for her to lose her son, the thought that he would be alone forever added greatly to her pain. So she had asked if she could be buried with him, and she was turned down.

Now, under the rules a member of the military eligible to be buried in a national cemetery who has a spouse with children can have up to three parts used. So we're not taking anything away from someone. In Corey Shea's case, this wonderful young man who lost his life has three parts available, and his mother simply asked to be allowed to use one of them. She was turned down.

At that point Senator KERRY and I decided to see what we could do. So we filed legislation to alleviate that, and I am enormously grateful to all members from both parties in the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for the speed with which they acted and the grace they showed to this brave, grieving mother. And I am very pleased that the bill which we would dare concur in, called the Corey Shea Act, is going to be included in this package.

Mr. Speaker, rather than go further myself, I'm going to read the testimony that Denise Anderson, the mother of Corey Shea, presented to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. We obviously exhausted our remedies, I should say. She applied. Only after it was clear that only legislation would work did we file a bill.

And, of course, I should point out, as a tribute to Denise Anderson, this isn't a bill just for her and her son who lost his life. It's a bill for any parent of any young member of the military who will know at least that that's available to him or to her.

So nearly a year after her son was killed in Iraq, she had the opportunity to address the committee, and here's what she said:

"I stand before you humbly asking you to pass or amend this bill number H.R. 761. This would allow me to be interred with my son, who was killed in action in Mosul, Iraq on November 12, 2008. He sacrificed his life for his country, and I sacrifice every day being without him.

"My son, Corey, had a heart as big as the world. He would be the first one to volunteer or help someone in need. But he would always hesitate to ask for help. He was a lot like me in that way, but today I show my passion for this bill by standing in front of you asking for your help. If you knew my son, you would understand what kind of person he was. He was a very respectful young man who would do anything for anybody. He was my heart and soul, and I cannot express the bond between us. If you have children, you might understand, but losing a child is against nature and he should be burying me.

"I was a single parent until Corey was about 8 years old. His biological father was not around. In fact, he was in prison. He never paid child support, and I worked over 60 hours a week just to support him and make sure he had everything he needed. Jeff took over the job of stepfather and Corey gladly accepted him. When he came home on leave, we would stay up until the sun came up. I did not want to miss a minute with him.

"My son was killed by an Iraqi soldier. These soldiers are supposed to be working with our troops over in Iraq. He was an Iraqi soldier for 4 years before turning on our soldiers. On that terrible day, he killed two soldiers, including my son, and wounded six other American soldiers.

"I was not home when the Army came to my door, but my 18-year-old

daughter was there. She is a very intelligent person and knew why they were there. She called me, not telling me what was going on, which was probably a good thing. But when I arrived home, the Mansfield police and the Army vehicle were parked in front of my home. My son had only a month left on his first tour, and he would have been home. After passing out, the police called the paramedics, who took me to the hospital.

“The whole town came together for Corey. They were so involved with his funeral, and it was very heartfelt. My son was the only and hopefully the only soldier who passed away during this war in Mansfield. He is a Mansfield hero. I belong to the VFW in Mansfield, Massachusetts, and I have spoken to many veterans that are members there, and they don't have a problem with me being interred with my son. In fact, everyone I spoke with doesn't haven't a problem.

“This amendment would not be taking up any other deserving space for other veterans. My son has three extra plots, but he was not married nor did he have any dependents. He did not have time, since, like I said, he was a child himself.

“I could speak all day regarding my son and what a wonderful and respectful young man he was. But I am here to ask you to amend the bill number H.R. 761. If you decide to pass this, it would give me some peace in my life to which I can pay more attention to my husband and daughter, whom I feel I have been neglecting. I could finally be able to move forward in my life just knowing I can spend eternity with my son.

“Please listen with your hearts and amend this bill. I appreciate your time listening to me today. This may be a minimal issue with you, but it means everything to me.

“Thank you for your attention in this matter.

“Denise Anderson, proud mother of Specialist Corey Shea, my warrior hero and wonderful son.”

I would only say the one difference I would have with Mrs. Anderson is no one here takes this as a minimal issue. We are grateful to her for giving us one more chance to show in a small way how much we honor those who have lost their lives.

I will just repeat one thing I said, Mr. Speaker, in the testimony. I cannot think of a greater disproportion than what Denise Anderson gave to us, her son, and what she has asked us to give in return. I am pleased that at least the House will be doing that today.

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Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to my colleague from North Carolina, Mr. MILLER.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in support of this bill. A portion of this bill began its legislative life as separate legislation introduced by WALTER JONES, my col-

league from North Carolina, and by me to improve the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, the SCRA. This legislation now provides real teeth and real remedy for the protections of the SCRA.

Someone who is serving in our military, who is defending our country, who is on active service, on active duty, should not have to worry about what is happening in court back home. They shouldn't have to worry if someone is getting a judgment against them or their home is being foreclosed on. Anyone who has a claim against someone who is in our military should not lose their claim, but their claim can wait, the lawsuit can wait, until the servicemember can come home, come to court and defend themselves, assert whatever right they may have, and tell their side of the story.

The law is now not entirely clear about whether a servicemember who has had that right violated, that right to get a little break while they are on military service, whether they can do something about it, and the legislation now makes very clear that they can. They can bring their own lawsuit. The Attorney General can bring a lawsuit, and the servicemember can join in that, and the servicemember can bring a lawsuit of their own.

A right that does not allow a remedy, a right that cannot be enforced is no right at all. This legislation now makes very clear that the rights under SCRA are real rights, and our servicemembers can devote their whole energy to defense of our country and not worry about what is going on in a courthouse back home.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of our time to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCINTYRE).

(Mr. MCINTYRE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Veterans' Small Business Assistance and Servicemembers Protection Act of 2009, H.R. 3949, which includes provisions of a bill that I introduced on the very first day that this Congress was sworn in this year, the 111th Congress, which was H.R. 32, the Veterans Outreach Improvement Act of 2009. I want to thank Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for their support, as well as the many cosponsors from both sides of the aisle who have joined us in this effort to honor those who have put their lives on the line for our country, whom we will soon be honoring as a Nation on Veterans Day.

This important legislation, which passed the U.S. House unanimously during the last session of Congress, the 110th Congress, by a vote of 421-0, would improve the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs outreach activities by allowing the Department to partner with State and local governments to reach out to veterans and their families regarding benefits for which they are eligible and to assist them in developing a benefits claim package.

About a quarter of our Nation's population of veterans are potentially eligible for VA benefits and services. A quarter of our total Nation's population are potentially eligible for veterans benefits and services. This legislation will help reach out to those who are eligible and ensure the accuracy and completeness of their benefit claims. And under this legislation, the Secretary of the VA would be authorized to provide grants and assistance to State veterans agencies and to our county veterans service officers, those who are on the front lines every day working in counties throughout this entire Nation, to help that veteran when he or she walks through the door.

These activities would allow veterans and their families to be able to get the assistance they need in the development and the submittal of their benefits claims. The Secretary would direct grants to States with large and growing populations of veterans in order to increase the outreach where it is most needed. Grants could be used for education and training of State and county officials to gain accreditation for continuing education. The Secretary would also be required to ensure that the coordination of outreach activities occurred within the Department of the VA.

This bill would authorize \$25 million annually, which is an average of \$1 per veteran, for fiscal years 2011 through 2013 to improve outreach to veterans. That, I believe, is not too much to ask. That is something we can certainly afford to do, and it is the least we can do to reach out to those who put their very lives on the line for our great Nation.

This legislation is supported by the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, which is officially recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for “the purpose of preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims.”

This bill has also been endorsed by the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Military Officers Association of America, the Paralyzed Veterans Association of America, and the National Organization for Veterans Advocacy.

As Veterans Day approaches in just a few days, it is important that we, as a Congress, demonstrate to our Nation's veterans our commitment to provide them with the benefits they deserve.

May God bless those who have served our country.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the actions of the House of Representatives in addressing the unique needs of our veterans and armed service members. Whether returning home from a tour of duty, or deploying for the first time, it is our responsibility to ensure these men and women are cared for when they return home. Through extensive educational outreach, additional grants, scholarships, and extending protections to today's veterans, we can provide these men and women with the tools they need to foster economic growth. As a member