



H.RES. 937 – Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the emergency communications services provided by the American Red Cross are vital resources for military service members and their families

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 937 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Michael Burgess (R-TX) on January 23, 2008. The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.Res. 937 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 937 resolves that it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the emergency communications services provided by the American Red Cross are vital for providing communication between military service members and their families during emergencies or other important events.

BACKGROUND

The American Red Cross was founded in Washington, D.C. on May 21, 1881, by Clara Barton and several acquaintances. Ms. Barton modeled the concept for the American Red Cross after the International Red Cross, which she became familiar with while visiting Europe after the Civil War. Ms. Barton headed the American Red Cross for twenty-three years, during which time the organization became involved with domestic disaster relief efforts and provided aid to the U.S. military during the Spanish-American War.

The American Red Cross was first chartered by Congress in 1900, and again in 1905. This charter remains in effect today, and establishes the purposes of the American Red Cross, which is to serve as a medium between members of the American armed forces and their families, as well as provide national and international disaster relief.

The American Red Cross operates an emergency communications service for military families twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. In the event of the death or serious illness of a family member, the birth of a service member's child or grandchild, or for other emergencies, military families are able to contact the American Red Cross to relay accurate, complete, and verified descriptions of the emergency to service members on a mission, in training, transferring between bases, or on a ship at sea.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Justin Hanson at (202) 226-2302.



H.RES. 1069 – Condemning the use of television programming by Hamas to indoctrinate hatred, violence, and anti-Semitism toward Israel in young Palestinian children

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1069 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Joseph Crowley (D-NY) on April 1, 2008. The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.Res. 1069 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 8, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1069 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Condemns Hamas for using a children's television program to incite hatred, violence, and anti-Semitism toward Israel; and
- Demands that—
 - Hamas immediately suspend all television programming that incites hatred, violence, and anti-Semitism toward Israel; and
 - Hamas recognize the State of Israel's right to exist, renounce the use of violence and terrorism as political goals, and accept all past peace agreements with the State of Israel.

BACKGROUND

Al Aqsa TV, a Hamas-run television station, was launched in January 2006 and is operated by Hamas. According to the U.S. Department of State, Hamas, also known as the Islamic Resistance Movement, engages in political and violent acts, including terrorism, "with the goal of establishing an Islamic Palestinian state in place of Israel."

The station's programming includes children's shows, which at times have strong themes of violence toward Israel and the United States. The most controversial children's show on the channel is "Tomorrow's Pioneers," which aired episodes with a Mickey Mouse look-a-like character named "Farfur" that promoted terrorist doctrines to children during 2007. In 2008, Hamas used a Bugs Bunny look-a-like character to deliver Anti-Semitic teachings on the show, and one episode included a segment with a puppet show that depicted the murder of the President of the United States.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Brianne Miller at (202) 226-2302.



H.Res. 1159 - Recognizing the historical significance of the United States sloop-of-war Constellation as a surviving witness to the horrors of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and a leading participant in America's effort to end the practice

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1159 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Elijah Cummings (D-MD). The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was not considered.

H.Res. 1159 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 8, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1159 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Recognizes the historical and educational significance of USS Constellation, a 153-year-old American warship, berthed in Baltimore, Maryland, as a reminder of both American participation in the slave trade and the efforts of the United States Government to suppress this inhumane practice;
- Applauds the preservation of this historic vessel and the efforts of the USS Constellation Museum to engage people from all over the world with this vital part of our history; and
- Supports USS Constellation as an appropriate site for the Nation to commemorate the bicentennial of the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

BACKGROUND

The USS Constellation was commissioned in 1855 and served as the flagship for the African Squadron from 1859 to 1861. The African Squadron was responsible for pursuing slave smugglers who were illegally capturing Africans and placing them for sale on the black market. The Constellation captured three slave ships during her tenure with the African Squadron. The USS Constellation has been decommissioned and is now a tourist attraction in Baltimore, Maryland's Inner Harbor.

Congress passed the Slave Trade Act on March 22, 1794, which outlawed the slave trade from the United States to foreign places and on May 10, 1800, Congress enacted legislation that outlawed all American participation in the international trafficking of slaves. On January 1, 1808, legislation that prohibited the importation of slaves into any port under U.S. jurisdiction went into effect.

On September 25, 2008, the USS Constellation Museum will hold a ceremony to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Brianne Miller 6-2302.



H.Res. 1254 - Supporting the values and goals of the 'Joint Action Plan Between the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Government of the United States of America to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality', signed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Brazilian Minister of Racial Integration Edson Santos on March 13, 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1254 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY). The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was not considered.

H.Res. 1254 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1254 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Recognizes the need to promote equality and continue to work towards eliminating racial discrimination in both the United States and Brazil;
- Commends Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Brazilian Minister of Racial Integration Edson Santos for signing the 'Joint Action Plan Between the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Government of the United States of America to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality';
- Supports the continued involvement of the Government of the United States in the bilateral partnership of the United States-Brazil Joint Action Plan Against Racial Discrimination through funding that may be designated for programs as part of this initiative;
- Encourages the participation of the Departments of State, Labor, Justice, and Education; the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Congress; Federal, State, and local court systems; and other agencies in the collaborative process of the United States-Brazil Steering Group on Equality of Opportunity; and
- Urges the involvement of the private sector, civil society, and experts on race relations and other relevant topics to be considered as part of the Steering Group Advisory Board.

BACKGROUND

In 2003, Brazil's government established the Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR), which carries out the National Policy to Promote Racial Equality. The Secretariat works with agencies in the Brazilian government to combat racial discrimination.

On March 13, 2008, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Brazilian Minister Edson Santos signed the Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Ethnic and Racial Discrimination and Promote Equality. According to the State Department, "the plan calls for Brazil and the United States to work jointly in combating racial discrimination and sharing best practices in tackling discrimination in the areas of education, law enforcement, labor, health, and many other areas."



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H.RES. 1383 – RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF BULGARIA

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1383 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC) on July 29, 2008. The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.Res. 1383 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1383 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Commends the Republic of Bulgaria for developing increasingly friendly and meaningful relations with the United States over the past 100 years;
- Recognizes the continued contributions of Bulgaria toward bringing peace, stability, and prosperity to the region of South Eastern Europe, including its contributions to regional security and democratic stability;
- Salutes the willing cooperation of Bulgaria and its increasingly vital role as a valuable ally in the war against international terrorism; and
- Encourages opportunities for greater cooperation between the United States and Bulgaria in the political, military, economic, and cultural spheres.

BACKGROUND

Bulgaria gained its independence after five centuries of control by the Ottoman Empire on September 22, 1908. The country then fought on the losing side of both World War I and World War II. Although during WWII they fought for the Nazi's, they were one of only three countries to refuse to send their Jewish population to the Nazi concentration camps.

Following World War II, Bulgaria became a People's Republic under the influence of the Soviet Union. When the Communist domination of the region ended in 1990, Bulgaria held multiparty diplomatic elections and took the first steps toward a democracy and capitalist society. According to the World Bank, "Over the past several years, Bulgaria has made impressive progress towards long-term stability and sustained growth. As a result of sound macroeconomic policies and deep structural reforms, average growth exceeded 6 percent per year in 2004-07."

In 2004, Bulgaria was admitted to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the country was admitted to the European Union in 2007.

STAFF CONTACT

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H.Con.Res. 344 – Recognizing that we are facing a global food crisis

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Con.Res. 344 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX) on May 7, 2008. The resolution was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.Con.Res. 344 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Con.Res. 344 resolves that the House of Representatives (with the Senate concurring):

- It is the sense of Congress that--
 - in emergency situations, children have different needs than those of adults, and nutritional deficiencies disproportionately affect children; and
 - in the context of the current global food crisis, the nutritional needs of children must be a humanitarian priority; and
- Congress--
 - recognizes that we are facing a global food crisis caused by, among other things, rising fuel prices, increased diversion of land to biofuel production, drought, and increases in population;
 - recognizes that lack of adequate nutrition is particularly damaging to children, as it stunts their growth, leaves them more vulnerable to numerous diseases, and hunger affects children's ability to learn; and
 - calls for a world forum to be held, on the issue of rising food prices and international response, and for the United States to play an active role in alleviating the crisis.

BACKGROUND

According to the U.S. Agency for International Development, 37 countries throughout the world are experiencing lack of access to food or shortfalls in food production. Food prices have also risen 43 percent in the past year, according to the International Monetary Fund. Haiti and Tajikistan are among the countries most severely impacted by the current food shortage and price increases.

In fiscal year 2008, the U.S. Agency for International Development has provided \$1.4 billion worth of food and related assistance worldwide. Significant causes of the food shortfall and price increases are increased fuel costs, more biofuel production on previously agricultural land, overpopulation and drought.

STAFF CONTACT

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H.Res. 1307 – Commemorating the Kingdom of Bhutan's participation in the 2008 Smithsonian Folklife Festival and commending the people and the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan for their commitment to holding elections and broadening political participation

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1307 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Brian Baird (D-WA) on June 26, 2008. The resolution was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.Res. 1307 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1307 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Commemorates Bhutan's participation in the 2008 Smithsonian Folklife Festival;
- Recognizes the important cultural, artistic, agricultural, and environmental achievements of Bhutan and the Bhutanese people;
- Commends the Bhutanese people, the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck for their commitment to conducting parliamentary elections and transitioning from an absolute monarchy to a parliamentary democracy; and
- Remains committed to working with Bhutan, should it so desire, to foster cultural exchange and to assist in promoting democratic reform

BACKGROUND

Bhutan is a small, landlocked country in Southern Asia which borders China and India. Bhutan's population is approximately 670,000. The economy of Bhutan is one of the world's smallest, but has experienced rapid growth in recent years. The Bhutanese economy is based primarily on agriculture, tourism, and hydroelectric power. The main religions in Bhutan are Buddhism and Hinduism.

After decades of monarchic rule, Bhutan held its first democratic elections in March 2008. Bhutan is now a constitutional monarchy. The Prime Minister of Bhutan is Jigme Thinley. Bhutan participated in the 2008 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. The festival is held annually on the National Mall and is an exposition of living cultural heritage from the United States and other countries.

[2008 Smithsonian Folklife Festival - Bhutan](#)

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Adam Hepburn at 6-2302.



H.R. 5683 – GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE ACT OF 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 5683 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) on April 2, 2008. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform agreed to the bill, as amended, on May 1, 2008.

H.R. 5683 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 5683 requires specified minimum percentage pay increases and lump sum back payments for certain Government Accountability Office (GAO) officers and employees. The bill supplements GAO's pay-for-performance pay system with a 'floor guarantee' for employees to ensure that, as long as they perform satisfactorily, they will receive an annual pay increase at least as great as that paid under the General Schedule (GS) system.

The bill also revises the highest basic pay rate for GAO personnel to Executive Level III (\$158,500 per year). H.R. 5683 makes funds appropriated to GAO for salaries and expenses also available for recruitment-related meals and entertainment.

The bill additionally establishes an Office of the Inspector General within the GAO, and requires the I.G. to report semiannually to the Comptroller General (CG). H.R. 5683 requires the Comptroller General's annual report to Congress to assess the overall degree of federal agency cooperation with GAO audits. The bill increases from 15 to 20 the number of experts and consultants whose services the Comptroller General may procure for renewable three-year terms. The bill also expands GAO's authority to interview federal agency employees and administer oaths to witnesses in conjunction with investigations.

H.R. 5683 also requires any executive agency that prepares an audited financial statement to reimburse GAO the cost of any GAO audit of such statement.

BACKGROUND

Under the auspices of the Government Accounting Office Human Capital Reform Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-271), the Comptroller General denied certain employees whose job performance at least 'met expectations' the annual GAO across-the-board increase in 2006 and 2007.

At the time the GAO Reform Act of 2004 was first being considered by Congress, Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform initially expressed concern about whether employees who "met or exceeded expectations" would get the annual cost of living adjustment. An agreement was reached between the Committee and GAO that the Comptroller General would commit to doing so on the record. At a July 16, 2003, hearing on GAO's human capital proposal before the House Subcommittee on Civil Service and Agency Organization, the Comptroller General guaranteed annual across-the-board purchase power protection to all employees performing at a satisfactory level or above, barring extraordinary economic circumstances or severe budgetary constraints.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of the United States Congress. The GAO was established as the General Accounting Office by the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 (P.L. 67-13). The GAO is headed by the Comptroller General of the United



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States. The Comptroller General (currently David Walker) is appointed by the President, with the consent of the Senate, for a 15-year term. GAO employs a workforce of approximately 3,100 individuals.

COST

According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), implementing H.R. 5683 “would cost about \$11 million over the 2009-2013 period,” assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts.

[Full CBO cost estimate for H.R. 5683](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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Suspensions Naming United States Federal Buildings

FLOOR SITUATION

The following bills are being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage.

These bills are expected to be considered on the floor on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 6168 designates the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 112 South 5th Street, St. Charles, Missouri, as the "Lance Corporal Drew W. Weaver Post Office Building". This legislation was introduced by Representative Todd Akin (R-MO) on June 3, 2008. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform ordered the bill to be reported by voice vote on July 16, 2008.

H.R. 6169 designates the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 15455 Manchester Road in Ballwin, Missouri, as the "Specialist Peter J. Navarro Post Office Building". This legislation was introduced by Representative Todd Akin (R-MO) on June 3, 2008. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform ordered the bill to be reported by voice vote on July 16, 2008.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Adam Hepburn at 6-2302.



H.R. 6575 – OVER-CLASSIFICATION REDUCTION ACT

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6575 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) on July 23, 2008. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform ordered the bill to be reported, as amended, by voice vote on July 23, 2008.

H.R. 6575 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

**Note: H.R. 6575 includes provisions similar to those previously passed by the House on July 30, 2008, by voice vote as H.R. 6576. The bill was received in the Senate and was referred to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, but was not considered. [Link to Legislative Digest for H.R. 6576](#)*

SUMMARY

H.R. 6575 directs Federal agencies to apply standards which will reduce the improper and over-classification of information. This bill addresses all types of information uses across the Federal government.

The bill requires the Archivist of the United States, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) and the heads of other affected agencies, to set regulations for the use of information control designations. These regulations would include certain methods to ensure that compliance with the bill does not undermine national security or privacy rights. H.R. 6575 also includes remedies for Federal employees and the public to challenge the use of such designations.

H.R. 6575 directs Federal agencies Inspectors General (IGs), in consultation with the Archivist, the DNI, and the heads of other affected agencies, to periodically audit information with the control designations to assess their uses. This bill requires disclosure of the name or other personal identifier of the individual restricting access to the information.

BACKGROUND

There are currently over 100 information control designations used by the Federal government. Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) is one common designation that refers to unclassified homeland security information, law enforcement information relating to terrorism, and other information defined in the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 that does not meet the standards of National Security Classification under Executive Order 12958. There is some concern that the excessive use of information control designations may interfere with important homeland security information sharing among Federal agencies and with State and local partners, as well as limit public access to information.

In a May 2008 memorandum to Executive Departments, President Bush adopted "controlled unclassified information" (CUI) to be the single categorical designation for sensitive but unclassified information throughout the executive branch and provided a certain framework for designating, marking, safeguarding, and disseminating CUI. This memorandum aimed to resolve the issue of multiple pseudo-classifications by creating a single designation and consistent procedures.

[President's May 7, 2008 Memorandum regarding CUI](#)



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COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) 'estimates that implementing H.R. 6575 would cost \$2 million in 2009 and \$22 million over the 2009-2013 period.'

[CBO cost estimate for H.R. 6575](#)

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Justin Hanson at 6-2302.



H.R. 6513 – Securities Act of 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6513 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Paul Kanjorski (D-PA) on July 16, 2008. The bill was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, but was not considered.

H.R. 6513 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

SEC Enforcement Program: The bill gives the SEC the authority to impose monetary penalties in cease and desist proceedings; authorizes nationwide services of subpoenas; allows the SEC to prevent regulated persons who violate the federal securities laws in one part of the industry from entering other segments of the securities industry.

Scope of Exemption from State Securities Regulation: H.R. 6513 bill enables the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), the American Stock Exchange (AMEX), and NASDAQ to develop new listing tiers that would be subject to both Federal and state blue sky regulations. It also requires that the listing standards for the new tiers be approved by the SEC and ensures that U.S. exchanges can compete on a level playing field with their foreign counterparts and help companies raise capital in the U.S.

**Note: This provision was previously passed by the House as a stand alone bill (H.R. 2868) by voice vote on October 23, 2007.*

Securities Investor Protection Act (SIPA): The bill would modernize the portfolio-margining for customers of broker-dealers. The bill amends SIPA so as to allow investors to hold all equity-related positions in a single account. As a result, investors receive the benefit of risk-sensitive margining that rewards hedging strategies.

Annual Testimony: H.R. 6513 requires the SEC, the Financial Accounting Standards Board, and the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board to provide oral testimony to the Committee on Financial Services on their efforts to reduce the complexity in financial reporting, thereby making U.S. regulators and standard-setters more accountable to the capital markets.

**Note: This provision was previously passed by the House as a stand alone bill (H.R. 755) by a vote of 412-0 on February 27, 2007.*

Technical Corrections: The bill makes technical corrections to the Securities Act of 1933, the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, the Investment Company Act of 1940, and the Investment Advisers Act of 1940.

**Note: The House passed a bill (H.R. 3505) that is identical to this provision on December 5, 2007, by a vote of 404-0.*

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is the federal agency that enforces U.S. securities law. In addition to the SEC, each state has its own securities laws, commonly referred to as blue sky laws, that regulate the sale of securities and protects the public from fraud.



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The mission of the SEC is “to protect investors, maintain fair, orderly, and efficient markets, and facilitate capital formation.” This legislation includes components of the SEC’s legislative requests submitted to Congress in 2007 and 2008.

H.R. 6513 would enact components of the SEC’s legislative requests submitted to Congress in 2007 and 2008 to enhance its corporation finance, enforcement, investment management, trading and markets, examinations programs and administrative functions.

The legislation would strengthen investor confidence, enhance the U.S. capital markets’ competitiveness, increase the effectiveness of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and bolster the SEC’s enforcement program. SEC Chairman Cox has expressed his full support for the legislation; the North American Securities Administrators Association supports the legislation. The Options Clearing Corporation, American Stock Exchange, Boston Stock Exchange, Chicago Board Options Exchange, International Securities Exchange, NYSE Arca, and Philadelphia Stock Exchange support Section 9 of the bill.

COST

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate is not available for this legislation.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Brianne Miller at 6-2302.



H.Res. 1207 – Directing the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives to provide individuals whose pay is disbursed by the Chief Administrative Officer by electronic funds transfer with the option of receiving receipts of pay and withholdings electronically

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1207 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC) on May 16, 2008. The Committee on House Administration ordered the resolution to be reported, as amended, by voice vote on July 30, 2008.

H.Res. 1207 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1207 directs the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives to take such steps as may be necessary to provide each individual whose pay is disbursed by the Chief Administrative Officer by electronic funds transfer with the option of receiving the receipt of the pay and the accompanying withholdings electronically.

Additionally, House employees will have the option of viewing electronically the individual's employee statement required under section 6051 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and the option of revising electronically the individual's number of deductions and withholdings under that statement and information relating to the deposit of the individual's funds with the financial institution to which the electronic funds transfer is made.

BACKGROUND

The House of Representatives currently pays many of its employees by electronic funds transfer (ETF). However, many of these employees still receive their pay and withholdings receipts in paper form via the U.S. Postal Service. According to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) the agency intends to offer electronic pay stubs to all staff in the near future.

The Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives responsible for most administrative functions of the House of Representatives, including human resources, information resources, payroll, finance, procurement, and other business services. The CAO is elected every two years, and the current CAO is Daniel Beard.

[U.S. House of Representatives – Chief Administrative Officer](#)

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that enacting H. Res. 1207 "would have no significant effect on federal spending and would not affect revenues." [Full CBO Cost Estimate](#)

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Adam Hepburn at 6-2302.



H.R. 6608 – House Reservists Pay Adjustment Act of 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6608 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Robert Brady (D-PA) on July 24, 2008. The Committee on House Administration ordered the bill to be reported by voice vote on July 30, 2008.

H.R. 6608 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 6608 allows employees of the House of Representatives who are on active duty for a Reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces for more than 30 days to be compensated for the difference between their monthly military compensation and the regular compensation they would receive from the House of Representatives.

BACKGROUND

In 1994, Congress enacted the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (P.L. 103-353, USERRA). USERRA provided legal protections to military reservists who held civilian jobs prior to mobilization. This legislation provides them with a general guarantee that they will be able to return to their civilian jobs, or similar jobs, after they return to the United States without unfavorable treatment.

When military reservists are mobilized to active duty, they receive the military pay rate and forego their civilian salaries and other benefits. This can lead to financial hardship for the reservist because a disparity may exist between their civilian and military pay. Many companies that employ reservists have recognized this and continue to compensate these men and women for the difference between the military and civilian pay rate.

COST

According to the Congressional Budget Office, "CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 6608 would have no significant impact on the federal budget and would not affect direct spending or revenues." ([CBO Cost Estimate](#))

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Brianne Miller at 6-2302.



H.R. 6475 – DANIEL WEBSTER CONGRESSIONAL CLERKSHIP ACT OF 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6475 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) on July 10, 2008. The Committee on House Administration approved the bill by voice vote on July 30, 2008.

H.R. 6475 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 6475 establishes the 'Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program' which directs the House of Representatives and the Senate to hire a total of twelve graduates of accredited law schools to serve as Congressional Clerks for a one-year period.

Graduates hired through the Program will be divided evenly between the House and Senate, and evenly between the majority and minority parties. The Clerks will receive compensation and benefits comparable to individuals holding judicial clerkships for the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia within three months of graduating law school.

The bill authorizes such sums as may be necessary to carry out the Program.

BACKGROUND

While programs similar to the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program are currently operated by the White House and the administrative offices of the Executive Branch, as well as the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Congress does not currently have a comparable program.

Daniel Webster served as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, representing New Hampshire from 1813 to 1817, and Massachusetts from 1823 to 1827. Additionally, Mr. Webster served for several terms as a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts between 1827 and 1841, and again between 1845 and 1850. Mr. Webster also served in the cabinet and administrations of Presidents Harrison, Tyler, and Filmore, and argued several cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office 'estimates that carrying out H.R. 6475 would cost about \$1 million a year beginning in 2010.'

[CBO cost estimate for H.R. 6475](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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H.R. 1527 – RURAL VETERANS ACCESS TO CARE ACT

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 1527 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Jerry Moran (D-VA) on March 14, 2007. The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs ordered the bill to be reported, as amended, by voice vote on July 16, 2008.

H.R. 1527 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 1527 requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a 3-year pilot project to allow highly rural veterans enrolled in VA health care to receive covered services through non-VA providers. The bill defines a highly rural veteran as one who resides 60 miles from VA primary care services, 120 miles from the nearest VA facility providing acute hospital care, or more than 240 miles from the nearest VA facility providing tertiary care (specialized consultative care).

This bill requires the Department to develop the functional capability to exchange medical information between VA and participating non-VA providers.

H.R. 1527 requires the Department to submit an annual report to Congress that includes an assessment of the program cost, volume, quality, patient satisfaction; and benefit to veterans, as well as any recommendations for continuation, extension, or for making the program permanent.

BACKGROUND

Because they often live far from VA healthcare facilities, rural veterans have experienced difficulty obtaining medical care. The VA medical system was realigned in the 1990s to concentrate specialized care facilities in urban areas. In addition, federal community health centers in rural areas often do not accept VA payments. A 2004 Veterans Affairs Department study indicated that rural veterans tend to have more serious and costly health problems than their urban counterparts.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is the medical agency of the Department of Veterans Affairs that implements the medical assistance program of the VA through the administration and operation of numerous VA outpatient clinics, hospitals, medical centers and other healthcare facilities. In 2007, there were 7.8 million veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system. The VA operates 153 medical centers across the country, and over 700 community-based outpatient clinics. The Department of Veterans Affairs employs some 263,000 personnel.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that "implementing H.R. 1527 would cost about \$1.6 billion over the 2009-2013 period, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts." [Full CBO Cost Estimate](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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S. 2617 – VETERANS’ COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

S. 2617 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) on February 8, 2008. The Senate passed the bill with an amendment by unanimous consent on July 30, 2008.

S. 2617 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

S. 2617 directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the amounts paid to veterans for disability compensation and to their survivors for dependency compensation, at the same cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment rate payable to recipients of Social Security. This increase would take effect on December 1, 2008.

Note: The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the COLA effective on December 1, 2008, will be 2.8 percent.

The funds covered by this increase are the Wartime Disability Compensation, Additional Compensation for Dependents, Clothing Allowance, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation to Surviving Spouse, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation to Children.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Veterans Affairs administers a service-connected disability program which provides monthly cash benefits to veterans with disabilities suffered during active duty in the Armed Forces. The amount of compensation is dependent on the severity of the disability and other factors. The Department estimates that it will provide disability compensation to over 3 million veterans in 2009.

Veterans with a disability rating of 30 percent or more may receive additional compensation on behalf of a spouse, children, or dependent parents. Such compensation is prorated based on the disability rating. Additionally, the Department of Veterans Affairs pays dependency and indemnity compensation to the survivors of service members and veterans who died on active duty on or after 1957. The VA estimates it will pay such benefits to approximately 343,000 survivors in 2009.

Cost-of-living allowances, or COLA, adjust benefits, entitlements, and salaries based on changes in a cost-of-living index accounting for inflation. Federal programs like Social Security, the Civil Service Retirement System, and the Federal Employees Retirement System utilize COLAs.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that S. 2617 “would have no budgetary effect ...as it is assumed in CBO’s baseline, pursuant to section 257 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, and savings from rounding it down were achieved by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-33) and extended to 2013 by the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003.” [Full CBO Cost Estimate](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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H.R. 6832 – VETERANS’ CONSTRUCTION AND EXTENSIONS ACT OF 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6832 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Bob Filner (D-CA) on September 8, 2008. The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, but was never considered.

H.R. 6832 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 6832 provides for the authorization of several medical facility projects and leases, and extends certain authorities of the Secretary of Veteran’s Affairs. Many of the provisions included in HR 6832 previously passed the House on May 31, 2008, by a vote of 416-0, as H.R. 5856.

[Link to PDF of the Legislative Digest for H.R. 5856](#)

New Provisions

Extension of Certain Authorities of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs: H.R. 6832 grants the Secretary the permanent authority to provide non-institutional extended care services; extended authority to collect copayments through September 30, 2010; and the extended authority to provide nursing home care to veterans with seventy percent service-connected disabilities, among other permanent and limited authority extensions.

Veteran Home Loans: H.R. 6832 raises the Veterans Affairs guarantee for refinancing veterans home loans, which currently stands at \$417,000, to meet the standards of Freddie Mac. Under the bill, this authority is extended through December 31, 2011.

Previously Passed Provisions

Major Medical Facility Projects: H.R. 5856 authorizes \$345.9 million for three major Department of Veterans’ Affairs (VA) medical facility projects in Palo Alto, California, San Antonio, Texas, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Modifications to Previous Authorization Levels: In addition, the bill provides \$1.7 billion for modifications to projects that were authorized in the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-461).

Leases: The bill authorizes \$60.1 million for the Secretary of the VA to carry out leases for twelve major medical facilities. It also provides \$54.5 million for the construction of a new VA medical facility in Okaloosa County, Florida.

Reports: H.R. 5856 requires the Secretary provide Congress with an annual report on community-based outpatient clinics.

BACKGROUND

The construction provisions in this legislation are identical to those contained in H.R. 5856, the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Authorization and Lease Act of 2008, which passed the House on May 21, 2008, by a vote of 416-0. Recently, on August 1, 2008, the House passed the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act of 2009 by a vote of 409-4. This new legislation extends certain Department of Veterans Affairs authorities detailed above, and also raises the VA guarantee for refinancing loans to equal the Freddie Mac standard conforming limit.



The Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) operates medical facilities to deliver health care benefits to our nation's veterans. Their health care system is made up of more than 153 medical centers, 732 community-based outpatient clinics, 135 nursing homes, 47 residential rehabilitation treatment programs, 232 Veterans Centers, and 121 comprehensive home-care programs. According to the most recent data released by the VA, approximately 5.5 million people received care in a VA health care facility during 2006. This represents a 29 percent increase in the number of patients treated since 2001. The Department of Veterans Affairs employs some 263,000 personnel.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office did not have a cost estimate available for H.R. XXX as of September 8, 2008. The CBO did have a cost estimate available for H.R. 5856, whose construction provisions are identical to those found in H.R. xxx. In the cost estimate for H.R. 5856, the CBO estimates "that implementing H.R. 5856 would cost \$146 million in 2009 and about \$2.2 billion over the 2009-2013 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized and estimated amounts. CBO estimates that enacting the bill would have no effect on direct spending or revenues."

[CBO Cost Estimate for H.R. 5856](#)

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H.R. 6630 – TO PROHIBIT THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION FROM GRANTING AUTHORITY TO A MOTOR CARRIER DOMICILED IN MEXICO TO OPERATE BEYOND UNITED STATES MUNICIPALITIES AND COMMERCIAL ZONES ON THE UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER UNLESS EXPRESSLY AUTHORIZED BY CONGRESS

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 6630 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR) on July 29, 2008. The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure ordered the bill to be reported by voice vote on July 31, 2008.

H.R. 6630 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 9, 2008.

SUMMARY

This legislation requires the Secretary of Transportation to terminate a one-year pilot program which allows certain motor carriers based in Mexico to operate throughout the United States. The program was initiated on September 6, 2007. Additionally, Congressional approval would be required for any future authorities allowing such carriers to operate in the U.S.

H.R. 6630 also requires the Department of Transportation to submit three reports to Congress regarding the pilot program.

BACKGROUND

On September 6, 2007, the Department of Transportation began a pilot program to allow certain Mexican trucks to operate in the United States, as well as some American trucks to operate in Mexico. Previously, Mexican trucks were prohibited from operating beyond a 20-mile commercial zone near border crossings. The pilot program was an effort to comply with the original North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Under NAFTA, Mexican commercial trucks were to have been given full access to four U.S. border states in 1995 and full access throughout the United States in 2000. Citing safety concerns, the United States refused implementation of NAFTA's trucking provisions until 2007.

Ten American truck carriers with 55 trucks and 27 Mexican carriers with 107 trucks have participated in the program. On August 4, 2008, the Administration extended the pilot program for an additional two years. The pilot has become controversial due to claims that Mexican trucks do not meet U.S. safety standards, however, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration insists that more than 1,300 deliveries have been made in the U.S. during the pilot program without an accident.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that implementing H.R. 6630 "would have no significant impact on spending subject to appropriation." [Full CBO Cost Estimate](#)

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H.R. 4081 – TO PREVENT TOBACCO SMUGGLING, TO ENSURE THE COLLECTION OF ALL TOBACCO TAXES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 4081 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Anthony Wiener (D-NY) on November 5, 2007. The bill was referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary and was reported, as amended, by voice vote on July 16, 2008.

H.R. 4081 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 8, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 4081 places new requirements on companies that sell and ship tobacco products (specifically, cigarettes and smokeless tobacco) through the mail to consumers.

Shipping and Labeling

Under the bill, companies that ship tobacco products must not sell or ship for single delivery any tobacco product weighing more than ten pounds. Also, every package containing tobacco products must be clearly labeled with the statement: "CIGARETTES/SMOKELESS TOBACCO: FEDERAL LAW REQUIRES THE PAYMENT OF ALL APPLICABLE EXCISE TAXES, AND COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LICENSING AND TAX-STAMPING OBLIGATIONS." Tobacco products that do not have this labeling are non-deliverable.

H.R. 4081 prohibits the United States Postal Service (USPS) from shipping cigarettes or smokeless tobacco (but not cigars), except for shipments within or into any State (including the District of Columbia) that is not contiguous to at least one other State. However, H.R. 4081 does allow cigarettes to be mailed by manufacturers for valid business purposes and for customers to return damaged packs of cigarettes to manufacturers.

Age Verification and Records of Sale

Additionally, the bill requires that all companies who mail tobacco products obtain the name, birthday, and address of anyone placing a mail order for tobacco. This information is to be kept in a database by the seller for four years and is to be available to all Federal, State, and Tribal authorities for compliance verification.

The bill also requires these companies to use delivery methods that verify all persons accepting the delivery of tobacco products are of the minimum age required for the legal purchase of tobacco by providing government identification and signature.

List of Unregistered or Non-compliant Delivery Tobacco Sellers

H.R. 4081 requires all tobacco delivery companies to register with the U.S. Attorney General within ninety days of this bill's enactment, and requires the Attorney General to compile a list of those companies that have not registered or are not in compliance with the provisions of this bill. These companies are to be notified of their inclusion on the non-compliance list.

Taxes

H.R. 4081 requires tobacco delivery companies to charge applicable Federal, State, or local taxes on tobacco products (except cigars) prior to shipping.



Penalties

Tobacco delivery companies found to be in violation of any of the provision of H.R. 4081 will not be subject to civil penalties. Penalties are to be the greater of: 1) two percent of the gross cigarette or smokeless tobacco receipts for the year prior to the date of violation; or 2) \$5,000 for a first violation or \$10,000 for any other. Common carriers or independent delivery services that are found to enforce effective policies in compliance with this bill will be subject to penalties.

BACKGROUND

According to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the Jenkins Act of 1946 (P.L. 81-363) regulates the shipment of tobacco products to consumers through mail carriers such as the United States Postal Service and private carriers. The Jenkins Act requires that tobacco delivery companies file monthly reports on all taxes collected with the tax collection agencies in each state that it delivers tobacco products.

Consumers who order tobacco products on the internet from outside the United States are not exempt from paying Federal excise taxes or customs duties. Also, consumers who purchase tobacco products over the internet from another State may have to pay their State's tobacco sales and excise taxes. All tobacco products made in the U.S. and shipped outside the U.S. can not be brought back in to the U.S. through purchase by an individual consumer over the internet.

Several major private shipping companies, such as UPS, DSL, and FedEx, do not ship tobacco products. Currently, most orders for tobacco made over the internet in the U.S. are shipped using the USPS.

According to the Republican Staff of the House Committee on Homeland Security, illegal tobacco trade is one of the most lucrative smuggling operations in the world. Estimates show that five percent of the cigarette market in North America, or 414 billion cigarettes, are illicit. The report indicates that money made through this type of trafficking is linked to funding terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and al Qaeda.

[Link to report on cigarette and smokeless tobacco smuggling prepared by the Republican Staff of the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security](#)

[U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau](#)

COST

According to the Congressional Budget Office, implementing H.R. 4081 would cost about \$120 million over the 2009-2013 period.

[Link to CBO cost estimate for H.R. 4081](#)

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