

like to commend my colleague from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) for his work on this bill, and thank Mr. HOLT of New Jersey for introducing this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 125, a resolution supporting the goals of Hire a Veteran Week, and I thank Mr. HOLT of New Jersey for sponsoring this great legislation.

Every day, the men and women of our Armed Forces sacrifice to protect and preserve our way of life whether by putting themselves in harm's way or by enduring time away from their loved ones at home.

Each year, 200,000 servicemembers separate from military service and hope to enjoy the privileges and opportunities they sacrificed to preserve, but many veterans face difficulties in entering the civilian workforce when they come home. This resolution expresses our support for our country's newest veterans, and it urges the President to call on all levels of government and the private sector to back up our support with action.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and to support its spirit, to do everything we can to help our veterans transition into civilian life and to ensure that they are given all the benefits they sacrificed to secure.

Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT).

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I would also like to thank the chairman and ranking members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. BUYER and Mr. FILNER, for bringing this bipartisan bill to the floor. I would also particularly like to thank Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, my partner in this bill, for all of his help in moving the bill through Congress.

Madam Speaker, our Nation was built by citizen soldiers, whom all too often we fail to repay for their service. We should be giving them employment opportunities, the opportunities they deserve. By virtue of their discipline, their work ethic, their clear thinking, veterans make outstanding employees; and we should be doing all we can to help them find jobs, and yet we know veterans return from the field and have trouble breaking into the workforce.

This bill is an affirmation of the commitment of Congress to encourage all employers, government at all levels, nonprofits, trade associations, and the private sector, to think of veterans when making hiring decisions. The bill itself calls upon the President to proclaim an annual Hire a Veteran Week and to use the occasion to remind all employers of the value of hiring veterans.

Let there be no doubt, the need for a renewed national focus on veterans employment is real. If you look at the Bu-

reau of Labor statistics, for example, and take the age cohort of 18 to 24 years old, you will find among veterans recently returned from the front, unemployment is at 18.7 percent compared with 9.9 in the general population in that age cohort. The data about women actually are worse. And these aren't simply numbers. These are men and women who put on our country's uniform to protect each and every one of us. We can and we must do what we can to help them find good-paying jobs, to use their skills to contribute to our society.

This is especially true now with our country at war in multiple theaters of operation, as we are minting new veterans every day. For them to make a successful transition from military to civilian life, their employment, their job training, their readjustment needs must be a top priority for our country. I would ask my colleagues, how could we tolerate a high unemployment rate among veterans, higher than among the general population that has not served in uniform?

As the original GI bill showed us, when we invest in our veterans, our society reaps the rewards many times over. The same philosophy should guide us as we seek to help veterans obtain and sustain meaningful good-paying jobs in their civilian lives.

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This bill is a step in that direction.

Again, I thank the ranking member and the chairman of the committee and Mr. BROWN for their help.

Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the chairman and ranking member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Mr. BUYER and Mr. FILNER, for bringing this bipartisan bill to the floor. I also want to thank my colleague and partner on this bill, Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, for all of his help in moving this bill through the Congress.

Our Nation was built by citizen-soldiers, but too often, we fail to repay their service properly by giving them the employment, education, and other opportunities they deserve. By virtue of their discipline, work ethic, and clear thinking, veterans make outstanding employees, and we should be doing all we can to help them find good jobs that benefit them and their families.

This bill is an affirmation of Congress's commitment to encourage all employers—government at all levels, nonprofits, trade associations, and the private sector—to think of veterans first when making hiring decisions.

The bill itself calls upon the President to proclaim an annual "Hire a Veteran" week and to use that occasion to remind all employers of the value of hiring veterans. I hope the President acts on this legislation swiftly, because the need for a renewed national focus on veterans' employment is real and urgent.

According to the most recent U.S. Labor Department data, in August 2005, 20- to 24-year-old veterans had an unemployment rate of 18.7 percent compared with their non-veteran counterparts. For all of 2005, the annual rate was 15.6 percent for 20- to 24-year-old veterans compared with 8.7 percent for nonveterans in that age group.

These aren't simply numbers; these are men and women who put on our country's uniform to protect each and every one of us. We can and must do more to help them find good-paying jobs that allow them to build a career and a life in the Nation they served and protected.

This is especially true now, with our country at war in multiple theaters of operation and with tens of thousands of new veterans being created every year. For them to make a successful transition from military to civilian life, veterans' employment, job training, and readjustment need to be a top national priority.

As the original GI bill showed us, when we invest in our veterans, our society reaps the rewards many times over. The same philosophy should guide us as we seek to help veterans obtain and sustain meaningful, good-paying jobs in their civilian lives. This bill is a first step in that direction, but we need to do more. We need to ensure that within both the DoD and VA budgets, we devote the necessary resources to transition assistance, job retraining—where necessary—and related activities that help veterans in their search for civilian careers.

Again, I thank my friends, the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. BUYER, and California, Mr. FILNER, for their help and support in securing passage of this bill today.

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I would like to, once again, commend Mr. HOLT for his tireless effort on veterans issues. I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I am proud to be the Republican sponsor of H. Con. Res. 125 along with my good friend from New Jersey, Congressman RUSH HOLT.

H. Con. Res. 125 is a very important piece of legislation that calls for the designation of "Hire-A-Veteran Week" and issuance of a presidential proclamation calling upon employers, labor organizations, and federal, state, and local governmental agencies to hire our veterans—old and new.

According to the most current data, 10.8 percent of all male veterans and 13.3 percent of female veterans between the ages of 20 and 24 are unemployed. The situation is even more troubling for minority veterans. For black male veterans and female veterans between 20–24 years of age, the unemployment rate is 17 percent and 23.9 percent respectively and for Hispanic male and female veterans in that age bracket, the rate is 8.7 percent and 21.6 percent respectively.

It is shameful that so many of our veterans who have risked their own lives to defend our freedom can't find jobs and must endure homelessness and lives of poverty after they return home. On any given day as many as 250,000 veterans are living on the streets or in homeless shelters and perhaps twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year.

The designation of "Hire-A-Veteran Week" would provide an effective and more focused way to do more to help all of our veterans find good, secure jobs and ensure better living standards for themselves and their families.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 125.

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 125,