

**AMENDMENT TO H.R. 5136, AS REPORTED
OFFERED BY MR. BURTON OF INDIANA**

Page 452, after line 10, insert the following:

1 **SEC. 1065. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING PRESI-**
2 **DENTIAL LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE TO THE**
3 **FAMILIES OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED**
4 **FORCES WHO HAVE DIED BY SUICIDE.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

6 (1) suicide is a growing problem in the Armed
7 Forces that cannot be ignored;

8 (2) a record number of military suicides was re-
9 ported in 2008, with 128 active-duty Army and 48
10 Marine deaths reported;

11 (3) the number of military suicides during 2009
12 is expected to equal or exceed the 2008 total;

13 (4) long-standing policy prevents President
14 Obama from sending a condolence letter to the fam-
15 ily of a member of the Armed Forces who has died
16 by suicide;

17 (5) members of the Armed Forces sacrifice
18 their physical, mental, and emotional well-being for
19 the freedoms Americans hold dear;

1 (6) the military family also bears the cost of de-
2 fending the United States, with military spouses and
3 children sacrificing much and standing ready to pro-
4 vide unending support to their spouse or parent who
5 is a member of the Armed Forces;

6 (7) the loss of a member of the Armed Forces
7 to suicide directly and tragically affects military
8 spouses and children, as well as the United States;

9 (8) much more needs to be done to protect and
10 address the mental health needs of members of the
11 Armed Forces, just as they serve to protect and de-
12 fend the freedoms of the United States;

13 (9) a presidential letter of condolence is not
14 only about the deceased because it also serves as a
15 sign of respect for the grieving family and an ac-
16 knowledgment of the family for their personal loss;
17 and

18 (10) a lack of acknowledgment and condolence
19 from the President only leaves these families with an
20 emotional vacuum and a feeling that somehow their
21 sacrifices have been less than the sacrifices of oth-
22 ers.

23 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
24 gress that—

1 (1) the current policy that prohibits sending a
2 presidential letter of condolence to the family of a
3 member of the Armed Forces who has died by sui-
4 cide only serves to perpetuate the stigma of mental
5 illness that pervades the Armed Forces; and

6 (2) the President, as Commander-in-Chief,
7 should overturn the policy and treat all military fam-
8 ilies equally.

