Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Sisisky
Skaggs
Skeen
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (OR)
Smith (TX)
Smith, Adam
Smith, Linda
Snowbarger
Snyder
Solomon
Souder
Spence
Spratt
Stabenow
Stark
Stearns
Stenholm
Stokes
Strickland
Stump
Stupak
Sununu
Talent
Tanner
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (NC)
Thomas
Thompson
Thornberry
Thune
Thurman
Tiahrt
Tierney
Towns
Traficant
Turner
Upton
Velázquez
Vento
Visclosky
Walsh
Wamp
Waters
Watkins
Watt (NC)
Watts (OK)
Waxman
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Weygand
White
Whitfield
Wicker
Wise
Wolf
Wynn
Yates
Young (FL)

NAYS—1

Taylor (MS)

NOT VOTING—7

Brown (FL)
Eshoo
Reyes
Schiff
Torres
Woolsey
Young (AK)

□ 1801

So (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS). Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he will reduce to a minimum of 5 minutes the period of time within which a vote by electronic device may be taken on the approval of the Journal.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I, the pending business is the question de novo of the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. BURR. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded this is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 373, noes 50, not voting 11, as follows:

[Roll No. 269]

AYES—373

Ackerman
Aderholt
Allen
Andrews
Archer
Armey
Bachus
Baesler
Baker
Baldacci
Ballenger
Barcia
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Barrett (WI)
Bartlett
Barton
Bass
Bateman
Bentsen
Bereuter
Berman
Berry
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop
Blagojevich
Bliley
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonior
Bono
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brady
Brown (OH)
Bryant
Bunning
Burr
Burton
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Canady
Cannon
Capps
Cardin
Carson
Castle
Chabot
Chambliss
Christensen
Clayton
Clement
Coble
Coburn
Collins
Combest
Condit
Conyers
Cook
Cooksey
Cox
Coyne
Cramer
Crane
Crapo
Cubin
Cummings
Danner
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (VA)
Deal
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
DeLay
Dellums
Deutsch
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Dooley
Doolittle
Doyle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Edwards
Ehlers
Ehrlich
Emerson
Engel
Etheridge
Evans
Ewing
Farr
Fattah
Fawell
Flake
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fowler
Fox
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Frost
Furse
Gallegly
Ganske
Gejdenson
Gekas
Gephardt
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gilman
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Goodling
Gordon
Goss
Graham
Granger
Green
Greenwood
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hamilton
Hansen
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayworth
Hefner
Herger
Hill
Hilleary
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Hooley
Horn
Hostettler
Houghton
Hoyer
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Inglis
Istook
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (WI)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kasich
Kelly
Kennedy (MA)
Kennelly
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kim
Kind (WI)
King (NY)
Kleczka
Klink
Klug
Knollenberg
Kolbe
LaFalce
LaHood
Lampson
Lantos
Largent
Latham
LaTourette
Lazio
Leach
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
Livingston
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas
Luther
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Manton
Manzullo
Martinez
Mascara
Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McCrery
McDade
McGovern
McHale
McHugh
McInnis
McIntosh
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinney
McNulty
Meehan
Menendez
Metcalf
Mica
Millender-McDonald
Miller (CA)
Miller (FL)
Minge
Mink
Moakley
Molinari
Mollohan
Moran (VA)
Morella
Murtha
Myrick
Nadler
Neal
Nethercutt
Neumann
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Owens
Oxley
Packard
Pappas
Parker
Pastor
Paul
Paxon
Payne
Pease
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Pomeroy
Porter
Portman
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Quinn
Radanovich
Rahall
Rangel
Regula
Riggs
Riley
Rivers
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rogan
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Rothman
Roukema
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ryun
Salmon
Sanchez
Sanders
Sandlin
Sanford
Sawyer
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaefer, Dan
Schaffer, Bob
Schumer
Scott
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Sisisky
Skaggs
Skeen
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (OR)
Smith (TX)
Smith, Adam
Smith, Linda
Snowbarger
Snyder
Solomon
Souder
Spence
Spratt
Stabenow
Stark
Stearns
Stokes
Strickland
Stump
Talent
Tanner
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (NC)
Thomas
Thornberry
Thune
Thurman
Tierney
Torres
Towns
Traficant
Turner
Upton
Velázquez
Vento
Walsh
Wamp
Watkins
Watt (NC)
Weldon (PA)
Wexler
Weygand
White
Whitfield
Wise
Wolf
Wynn
Yates
Young (FL)

NOES—50

Abercrombie
Becerra
Borski
Brown (CA)
Chenoweth
Clay
Clyburn
Costello
Cunningham
DeFazio
English
Ensign
Everett
Fazio
Filner
Foglietta
Gutierrez
Gutknecht
Hastings (FL)
Hefley
Hilliard
Hulshof
Kingston
Kucinich
Lewis (GA)
LoBiondo
McDermott
Meek
Moran (KS)
Pallone
Pascrell
Pickett
Pombo
Poshard
Ramstad
Redmond
Rush
Sabo
Sessions
Stenholm
Stupak
Sununu
Taylor (MS)
Thompson
Tiahrt
Visclosky
Waters
Watts (OK)
Weller
Wicker

NOT VOTING—11

Brown (FL)
Eshoo
Franks (NJ)
Kennedy (RI)
Markey
Reyes
Schiff
Waxman
Weldon (FL)
Woolsey
Young (AK)

□ 1810

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2158, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 184 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 184

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 1(b) of rule XXIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2158) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. Points of order against consideration of the bill for failure to comply with clause 2(l)(6) of rule XI, clause 7 of rule XXI, or section 306 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 or 6 of rule XXI are waived except as follows: on page 25, line 17, through page 27, line 4; beginning with ''*Provided*'' on page 28, line 20, through ''loans'' on page

29, line 11; beginning with ": *Provided*" on page 48, line 3, through "program" on line 7; and on page 76, line 7 through line 12. Where points of order are waived against part of a paragraph, points of order against a provision in another part of such paragraph may be made only against such provision and not against the entire paragraph. The amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution may be offered only by a Member designated in the report and only at the appropriate point in the reading of the bill, shall be considered as read, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against the amendments printed in the report are waived. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 6 of rule XXIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be fifteen minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

□ 1815

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS). The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LINDER] is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MOAKLEY], pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 184 is an open rule providing for consideration of H.R. 2158, the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill for fiscal year 1998. The rule waives points of order against consideration of the bill for failure to comply with clause 2(1)(6) of rule XI related to the 3-day availability of the report, clause 7 of rule XXI related to the 3-day availability of printed hearings on appropriations bills, or section 306 of the Budget Act related to the prohibition on including matters within the jurisdiction of the Committee on the Budget in a measure not reported by it. I assure the House that this is a technical violation and not a substantive budget violation.

House Resolution 184 provides for one hour of general debate divided equally between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations.

The rule waives points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 and clause 6 of rule XXI, except as specified in the rule. The rule also waives all points of order against the amendments printed in the Committee on Rules report which may, one, only be offered by a Member designated in the report and only at the appropriate point in the reading of the bill; two, shall be considered as read; and, three, shall not be subject to further amendment or to a demand for a division in the House.

This rule also continues to implement two approaches that have been used effectively in recent Congresses by according priority in recognition to Members who have preprinted their amendments in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and allowing the chairman to postpone recorded votes and reduce to 5 minutes the voting time on any postponed question, provided that voting time on the first in any series of questions is not less than 15 minutes. These provisions will facilitate consideration of amendments and guarantee the timely completion of the appropriations bills.

House Resolution 184 also provides for one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

I mentioned earlier that there are a few exceptions to the waiver of clause 2 of rule XXI specified in the rule. I want to briefly describe those exceptions at this time.

First, the Committee on Rules has left exposed two provisions objected to by the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, one related to a program under the Community Development Block Grant Program for supportive services, and the other relating to an expansion of the secondary market for nonconforming home mortgage loans under the HOME program.

In addition, the Committee on Science objected to a provision relating to $35 million in funds being transferred from the EPA to the NIH, and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure objected to a provision related to the implementation of comprehensive conservation and management plans. Each of these provisions has been exposed to a point of order under House Resolution 184.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 184 is an open rule providing Members with every opportunity to amend this appropriations bill. As I stated earlier, the Committee on Rules has also made in order two amendments to be offered by the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER], and the chairman of the Committee on Rules, the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON]. I will leave it to those Members to fully explain the substance of their amendments.

H.R. 2158 appropriates a total of $70.1 billion for fiscal year 1998, and I want to mention a number of important provisions in this bill.

First, regarding appropriations for our veterans, this country has a commitment to our men and women in uniform, and we as Americans owe those dedicated men and women a debt of gratitude. This bill will meet our obligation to our veterans by providing $40.4 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, $21.7 billion for the Veterans Benefits Administration compensation and pensions, $17.5 billion for the Veterans Health Administration medical care, and $267 million for veterans medical and prosthetic research. It is important to note that these are increases above the fiscal year 1997 appropriations.

I also believe our space program has been sufficiently funded this bill. We have all been captivated in the past few weeks by the images broadcast back to us from the planet Mars by the Pathfinder mission via NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. I am pleased that H.R. 258 provides $13.6 billion for NASA, which is $148 million more than the President requested.

The Committee on Appropriations has once again had to balance a wide array of interests, and as we work to get our fiscal house in order, we must ensure that all funding is spent efficiently and where it is needed most. This bill achieves this goal. I want to commend the chairman, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the ranking member, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] for the bipartisan manner in which they constructed this appropriations bill.

H.R. 2158 was favorably reported out of the Committee on Appropriations, as was the open rule by the Committee on Rules. I urge my colleagues to support the rule so that we may proceed with general debate and consideration of the merits of this very important bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I thank my colleague from Georgia [Mr. LINDER] for yielding me the customary half hour.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating my colleagues on the appropriations subcommittee, the ranking member, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], and the chairman, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], for their outstanding efforts on this bill. The gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] and the members of their committee worked extremely hard and came up with a relatively bipartisan bill that many of us can support.

They recognize the need to fund American housing and veterans programs fully, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Program and NASA. I know that the Space Rover on Mars is a lot more exciting to some Members than housing rehabilitation in south Boston, but as a former resident of public housing I can tell my colleagues it is very important. Lucky

for us, Mr. Speaker, that the members of the subcommittee have decided that we could have our Rover and our houses, too.

This bill will allow Housing Secretary Cuomo to continue his outstanding work in securing affordable housing for the less fortunate Americans and providing grants to spur economic development.

The bill also funds all renewals of section 8 contracts so nobody will have to move and nobody will lose their housing assistance.

It will also allow the Secretary to reform the project-based section 8 program through which HUD has been paying incredibly high rents.

It also increases HOME grants to cities and States for building affordable housing. Mr. Speaker, one of my cities in my district, the city of Brockton, just received a HOME grant. I can tell Members it is going to do a tremendous amount of good. Thanks to last year's grant, Brockton has been able to help 200 people buy homes. This year they will be able to even help more people. It is a very good program and very well worth funding.

Mr. Speaker, the bill will also provide funding for the Veterans Administration and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. It funds the Environmental Protection Agency, which keeps our air and our water clean. And most of the funding levels are at or above President Clinton's requests.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to see how well Members from both sides of the aisle have worked on getting this bill together. I urge my colleagues to support the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS], a colleague on the committee.

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

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the distinguished gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LINDER] for yielding me this time. I rise in strong support of this fair and open rule. It is the right process, as each Member can have the opportunity to address the issues that we have in this appropriations bill, the committee's product.

I would like to focus my limited time on an area of great concern to my constituents and perhaps constituents of other Members; that is, veterans, the veterans' health care aspects of this. I am very pleased that we are going to provide $549 million more for veterans' medical care this year. That is going to mean a lot to our veterans. I think it is a very responsible increase when you measure it against the resources available.

For the first time we are going to try something different. Not all the money for veterans' care is going to come from the appropriators. A portion of it is going to come from allowing the VA to retain third party insurance collections and user fees, something like $600 million, we expect. This is in response to an administration request and a provision in the bipartisan budget agreement.

I think it is a good idea, but I understand that the veterans' community is a little concerned that we have not planned realistically enough, given recent trends of collecting these kinds of fees. I share that concern, and I am going to be supporting an amendment that is going to be offered by the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON], chairman of the Committee on Rules, to place a fail-safe provision in the bill in case the funds are not sufficient. So either way the veterans can be assured they are going to have the moneys they need for veterans' care. There is nothing wrong with experimenting with new ways to fund the VA as long as we are certain that the money gets to the veterans, and that it is done fairly and equitably and put where the veterans are.

That gives me the biggest pause with this bill we have got before us. The report accompanying the bill contains controversial language that would reinstate the funding inequities of previous years that we saw in the VA medical care system, and it could deprive many veterans in my district and elsewhere of needed health care. That language seeks to reverse a funding formula put in place by the VA and approved in last year's VA-HUD bill, in fact, overwhelmingly approved, to ensure that the dollars flow to the veterans where the veterans are. The numbers paint a very clear picture.

Since 1980, Florida and Arizona and other similar places have registered a large growth rate, in fact in Florida and Arizona nearly 25 percent in their veterans' populations. While in other States, New York comes to mind, that is dropped by nearly 20 percent. Obviously we have to adjust the funding. There is no reason why veterans in southwest Florida with service-connected disabilities should be turned away in order to serve lower priority, routine needs of nondisabled counterparts in other areas of the country. That is unfair. It is bad policy. I hope that the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTON] will not pursue that language in the conference.

I urge a ''yes'' vote, nevertheless, on this wide-open rule and for the bill that it makes in order. I believe that the Committee on Rules has done an excellent job on this. I thank the distinguished gentleman from Georgia for yielding me this time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER].

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for yielding me the time. I rise in support of the rule but with concerns about the NASA budget.

First of all, I would like to congratulate NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory out in California for pulling off one of the most spectacular scientific accomplishments and achievements that we have seen in decades in this country. The Mars Pathfinder and the Sojourner have returned us marvelous scientific data, exceeding all expectations. What they have done for $267 million has restored some of the public's confidence in our ability not only to get into space in faster, cheaper, better methods but they have also, I think, opened up a new thing to the American people, that it does not particularly have to always be men and women in space, although I support men and women in space. It does not always have to be something like a space station to captivate the public. This unmanned vehicle on Mars has excited the entire Nation and the world for what it is bringing back home to America.

The space station, which has been capped at $2.1 billion per year, and I believe this bill, if the Rohrabacher-Roemer amendment is not agreed to, will exceed that cap, the space station flies in the face of what the Mars Pathfinder, Galileo, Hubbell, Clementine and a host of other projects have been able to accomplish, which is a great deal for the taxpayer, phenomenal science, and maintaining a budget.

As we are trying to make difficult decisions here in this Congress to fairly balance the budget, do it structurally and do it with the right values, do it fairly to education, fairly to the environment and fairly to science, then the Mars Pathfinder, the Hubbell, these are the kinds of projects, Mr. Speaker, that really will captivate the public's attention and support, that return NASA to the glory days of the 1960's and 1970's, that for every $1 we invest in NASA, we return $7 in new technology, in new experimentation and knowledge, in new things that really would help not only support NASA in the future but would bring us the knowledge and the science for us to leverage those kinds of discoveries into new things here on earth.

□ 1830

So I would continue to applaud NASA for its wonderful achievement on Mars with the Pathfinder, but to further push them to do things like the Pathfinder, and Galileo and Hubbell, and reusable launch vehicles, and to not only sustain the cap on the space station but I would advocate eliminate the space station and find even more things that we can do in manned and unmanned ways to return NASA to the public confidence and excitement that we have seen NASA achieve in the past.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KUCINICH].

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise with great concern about the United States' efforts in the

space station program, not agreeing with my colleague from Indiana who so eloquently stated the achievements of the space program, but specifically stating that the United States has made a very strong commitment in elevating the vision of this Nation and the potential of this Nation in building a space station, in paving the way for international cooperation, which would have been undreamed of in those fiercest days of the cold war; and that the space station presents not just a bridge to outer space but a bridge across the oceans for cooperation and for peace in our time and for the future.

The very thought of people being up in outer space working together shows certainly what the manifest possibilities here are on earth. And any efforts to try to change that program, any effort to try to lessen the resources that program needs to be successful inadvertently attacks the underpinnings of this great effort that has been made to try to achieve peace. It is the cooperation of the United States and Russia in space which has shown the world that great powers can work together.

How can we put a dollar value on that? We must in the program and we have. And I submit that the benefits of the space station have not only been certainly for the private sector programs, which are looking for that public-private partnership that enables the growth of many industries, but even more importantly than that, the benefit of that station has been to enable this country to achieve peace that we would not have been able to dream of.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. MANTON].

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

Mr. MANTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend and colleague, the ranking member of the Committee on Rules, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MOAKLEY], for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the rule before the House today is a reasonable and fair measure which will allow for a free and open debate of the fiscal year 1998 VA HUD appropriations bill. While I support and will vote for the rule, I am concerned about a number of provisions and omissions in the underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, I must concur in the additional views submitted by the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY], the ranking member of the full Committee on Appropriations, which accompanied the report on H.R. 2158 and question the judgment of numerous outlays contained in the bill. The bill falls short in one area of environmental protection which I simply cannot allow to go unchallenged, and that is the failure of the subcommittee to include the President's requested increase in funding to double the pace of Superfund cleanups.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply disappointed in the failure to include an additional $650 million for the Superfund Program. This increase in the Superfund response, or cleanup account, was requested by the President and concurred in by the bipartisan leadership of both the House and the Senate budget agreement.

This money is vitally important if we are to expedite the cleanup of hundreds of toxic waste sites located in virtually every State of the Union. The failure to include the requested funding in this bill will ensure that at least 250 additional Superfund invites will not be cleaned up over the next 3 years.

Mr. Speaker, as the ranking minority member of the Subcommittee on Finance and Hazardous Materials, I am uniquely aware of the importance of the Superfund Program and the President's initiative to double the pace of cleanups.

If there is one clear and overriding call I have heard regarding the Superfund Program, it is that the pace of cleanups is too slow. Time and time again over the past several years of hearings, concerns have been expressed that the program has not cleaned up hazardous waste sites quickly enough, that the program is mired in bureaucracy, resulting in unnecessary and costly delays in cleanups.

Mr. Speaker, I have several letters that I received which emphasize the importance of approving the President's initiative to speed cleanups and stress the administration's understanding that the initiative was indeed a significant part of the budget agreement and was not, let me repeat, was not contingent upon the enactment of Superfund reauthorization. I submit these letters from Vice President GORE, Administrator Browner and OMB Director Raines to be included in the RECORD.

The letters referred to are included as follows:

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT,
Washington, DC, June 25, 1997.

Hon. THOMAS J. MANTON,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE MANTON: I am writing to you because you have a strong supporter of our efforts to protect communities from toxic waste and to address the problem of brownfields. Our shared commitment to these issues reflects an important bipartisan consensus concerning the importance of toxic waste cleanup to restoring both the environment and the economy in communities burdened with toxic waste sites.

As part of their landmark agreement with the President on a balanced budget, the House and Senate leadership committed to support the President's brownfields tax incentive. This proposal is a targeted tax incentive that should generate cleanup and redevelopment at approximately 14,000 sites in distressed communities by the year 2000.

Unfortunately, the tax bill recently reported by the Ways and Means Committee does not include the brownfields tax incentive. I hope you will join me in urging the House leadership to meet its commitment by addressing this issue before final passage of the bill.

I also hope that the Administration can rely on your support for other aspects of the budget agreement that protect communities from toxics, including the funding needed to achieve cleanup at two-thirds of the national priority list sites by the year 2000, and significantly expand funding of brownfields cleanup and redevelopment efforts by the Environmental Protection Agency. This acceleration of toxic waste cleanup highlights the importance of reinstating the taxes that support the Superfund program. Superfund taxes fund emergency removals of hazardous substances, support long-term cleanups at more than a thousand toxic waste sites, and provide assistance to brownfields and other cleanup efforts by state and local governments.

Several Members of Congress are suggesting that all of these proposals must await the outcome of protracted negotiations on a Superfund reauthorization bill. While this Administration is participating actively in those negotiations and hopes to achieve a bipartisan reform bill with broad support, we must draw the line of attempts to hold communities and their cleanup funds hostage pending the outcome of that process. The accelerated cleanup funding and brownfields tax incentive are needed now.

I know that, given your leadership on brownfields issues, you understand how important these initiatives are to empowering our communities. Therefore, I hope you will join me in pressing the Congressional leadership to honor the commitments in the budget agreement regarding brownfields. Additionally, I hope you will support expedited action to fully fund our initiative to accelerate toxic waste cleanup and to reinstate the taxes that support the Superfund program. I would be most grateful for your support.

Sincerely,

AL GORE.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. THOMAS J. MANTON,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE MANTON: The House Appropriations Committee marked up the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies FY 1998 Appropriations Bill on July 8, 1997. While I appreciate the overall funding provided to EPA by the House, the Committee failed to include funding to restore the environment and the economy in communities burdened with toxic waste sites. The President's initiative to clean up an additional 500 Superfund sites by the end of the year 2000 was designed to protect the public from the risks these sites pose to health and the environment. The importance of this initiative was recognized by Congress and the President's request for Superfund was accommodated in the Bipartisan Budget Agreement.

As Vice President Gore and the Office of Management and Budget Director Raines have recently indicated, the Administration remains committed to working with Congress to enact a consensus-based Superfund reform bill. However, it is not agreed that additional Superfund cleanup funding provided in the Budget Agreement is contingent on any prior legislation, much less a comprehensive reform bill. Agreement still needs to be reached on ways in which the supplemental cleanup funds would be spent, but not on the level of funding.

In the Budget Agreement, Congress and the Administration increased funding for the Superfund program to accelerate the cleanups affecting the quality of life for millions of Americans. Failing the increase, up to 120 fewer sites would begin cleanup. This would mean hundreds of communities nationwide waiting even longer before the hazardous waste sites in their neighborhoods are cleaned up. Not only will this put their

health and the environment at risk, it will prevent economic redevelopment in those areas.

EPA, through our administrative reforms, has done much to improve the overall pace, cost, and fairness of the program. These administrative reforms represent permanent changes in the way EPA does business and reflect the Administration's vision for the future of Superfund—a future that builds upon our progress over the past four years. These reforms are building a faster, fairer, more efficient Superfund program which: (1) achieves our goal of 20% reduction in total cleanup process time, with 439 completed cleanups (as of 7/7/97) and more than 480 site cleanup constructions underway; (2) includes 75% of Superfund long-term cleanups performed by responsible parties; and (3) reduces cleanup costs towards our goal of 20% cost reduction.

Based on the Agency's administrative reforms, EPA is ready to accelerate the cleanup program. Much of the pre-cleanup work has been completed and actual cleanup work is ready to begin at many toxic waste sites. The necessary contracts to implement an accelerated cleanup program are in place. We have worked with state offices in identifying sites ready for cleanup and will continue to coordinate with them on cleanup activities.

I urge you to support the funding level for the Superfund program as outlined in the Budget Agreement while we continue our discussions on Superfund reauthorization.

Sincerely,

CAROL M. BROWNER.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET,
Washington, DC. June 25, 1997.

Hon. JOHN D. DINGELL,
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE DINGELL: I am writing to clarify the Administration's views regarding the Superfund funding that was included in the recent Bipartisan Budget Agreement.

On June 5th, Congressmen Kasich and Oxley conducted a colloquy on this subject on the floor of the House of Representatives. As they discussed, the Budget Agreement establishes a reserve fund to provide $200 million per year for Superfund orphan shares. As this would be mandatory spending, the reserve fund requires authorizing legislation to be reported by the Committees on Commerce and Transportation and Infrastructure, although the reserve fund could be authorized in a reconciliation bill, a Superfund reform bill, or other legislative vehicle. The Administration does not agree that these funds should become available only after the Congress passes a Superfund reform bill.

Regarding the $700 million of additional requested funding, the Administration adheres to the language of the Budget Agreement, which provides that Superfund appropriations will be at the President's level ''if policies can be worked out.'' We have always understood this to mean that the Administration needs to reach agreement with the appropriate Committees regarding the way in which the supplemental cleanup funds would be spent. We do not agree that the additional Superfund cleanup funding agreed to in the budget Agreement is contingent on any prior legislation, much less a comprehensive reform bill.

The Administration remains committed to working with Congress to enact a bipartisan consensus-based Superfund reform bill. However, we believe that the increased Superfund appropriations should not be held up until this occurs, since these funds are urgently needed to eliminate the backlog of Superfund cleanups and improve the quality of life for more than 27 million Americans, including over four million children, who live within four miles of a Superfund site.

Please do not hesitate to contract me if I can be of further assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

FRANKLIN D. RAINES,
Director.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill (H.R. 2158) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, and that I be permitted to include tables, charts and other extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 184 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for consideration of the bill, H.R. 2158.

□ 1830

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2158) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, with Mr. COMBEST in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] will each control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS].

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure today to outline the work of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies as well as the full Committee on Appropriations in developing the fiscal year 1998 VA–HUD and Independent Agencies appropriations bill.

First, I want to thank my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], and his staff for their helping in crafting this bill. Our working relationship, I believe, is a model of how appropriations subcommittees can and should work together on a bipartisan basis. We have effectively controlled the rate of growth of Federal spending through our bill while making sure that the needs of our constituents are met in communities across the country.

Mr. Chairman, beginning with the fiscal year 1995 rescission bill, this subcommittee has led the way in our battle with the budget by reducing spending and fully paying for the emergency supplemental. While the administration and Congress have finally agreed in principle to balancing that budget by 2002, this subcommittee has been moving in that direction for well over 2 years now, and so far we have produced some $20 billion in spending cuts to show for our efforts.

Because of the bipartisan budget agreement with the President, this year the subcommittee had the chance to catch its breath. The subcommittee's 602(b) allocation for fiscal year 1998 will provide us with the funding levels necessary to continue our commitment to serving veterans, protecting the environment, providing housing for the poorest of the poor, and ensuring America's future leadership in space.

With regard to space programs, I hope that each of my colleagues have had an opportunity to focus upon the remarkable NASA Pathfinder mission to Mars. If this mission does not provide the catalyst for our next generation of scientists, then I certainly do not know what will.

We are able to achieve all of these important results while still holding a line on spending of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars. Our allocation should allow us to go through the process quickly and eventually gain a signature by the President.

Since our counterparts in the Senate received an allocation well below ours in the House, we are in for some very tough decisions nonetheless as we go down this road. Not everything in this bill will find its way in the final conference report. While the President may not wholeheartedly endorse every decision reflected in this bill, it is my hope that when we conference in September, we can come to a mutual agreement on a final bill that will be signed.

Let me quickly move to some of the specifics of this bill beginning with our 602(b) allocation.