Sawyer	Spence	Walsh
Saxton	Spratt	Wamp
Schaefer, Dan	Stabenow	Watkins
Schumer	Stark	Watt (NC)
Scott	Stokes	Watts (OK)
Serrano	Strickland	Waxman
Sessions	Stupak	Weldon (FL)
Sherman	Sununu	Weldon (PA)
Shimkus	Talent	Weller
Shuster	Tauscher	Wexler
Sisisky	Tauzin	Weygand
Skaggs	Taylor (NC)	White
Skeen	Thomas	Whitfield
Skelton	Thompson	Wicker
Slaughter	Thornberry	Wilson
Smith (MI)	Thune	Wise
Smith (NJ)	Thurman	Wolf
Smith (OR)	Tiahrt	Woolsey
Smith (TX)	Torres	Wynn
Smith, Adam	Towns	Yates
Snowbarger	Traficant	Young (AK)
Snyder	Turner	Young (FL)
Solomon	Upton	
Souder	Visclosky	

NAYS—65

Barr	Herger	Petri
Barrett (WI)	Hilleary	Roemer
Blunt	Hostettler	Rothman
Boyd	Hulshof	Royce
Chenoweth	Inglis	Salmon
Christensen	Kind (WI)	Sanford
Condit	Klink	Scarborough
Conyers	Lee	Schaffer, Bob
Cox	Lewis (GA)	Sensenbrenner
Crane	Lofgren	Shadegg
Crapo	Luther	Shays
Deutsch	McGovern	Smith, Linda
Doggett	McKinney	Stearns
Ensign	Meehan	Stenholm
Filner	Miller (CA)	Stump
Frank (MA)	Minge	Tanner
Gejdenson	Moran (KS)	Taylor (MS)
Goode	Neumann	Tierney
Goodlatte	Nussle	Velazquez
Green	Olver	Vento
Hall (TX)	Paul	Waters
Hefley	Payne	

NOT VOTING—13

Brady (TX)	Goss	Rangel
Burton	Kennelly	Ros-Lehtinen
Cardin	Linder	Shaw
Diaz-Balart	Poshard	
Ehrlich	Pryce (OH)	

□ 1225

Messrs. ROTHMAN, HALL of Texas, INGLIS of South Carolina, HERGER, and HEFLEY changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Ms. PELOSI changed her vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I was absent on rollcall 453, the LaHood motion to table H. Res. 545, impeaching Kenneth Starr; rollcall 454, H. Res. 144, expressing support for the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition; rollcall 455, H. Res. 505, expressing the sense of the House with respect to Diplomatic Relations with Pacific Island Nations; rollcall 456, H. Con. Res. 315, Condemning Atrocities by Serbian Police against Albanians; and rollcall 457, the Conference Report to accompany H.R. 4112, the Legislative Branch Appropriations for FY 99, due to official business. Had I been present, I would have voted ''Aye'' on all of these votes.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and wish to be recorded as an ''aye'' vote on H.R. 4112, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Conference Report (Roll Call 457).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 550, and include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3616, STROM THURMOND NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1999

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 549 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 549

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 3616) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1999 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 1999, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The gentleman from New York (Mr. SOLOMON) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SOLOMON. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I would like at this point, before we begin debate, to acknowledge the presence on the floor of our colleague, the dean of the Texas delegation (HENRY GONZALEZ) who has been ill for the last year but who has returned to be with us during these closing days of the session.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, from this side of the aisle, we would like to say hello to the dean of the Texas delegation and welcome him back. He is one of the most respected Members of this body.

□ 1230

Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield half our time to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), 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, this resolution makes in order the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 3616, the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999. The rule waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration, and it provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

Mr. Speaker, the rule will enable the House to proceed with the expeditious consideration of the conference report for the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999, the most important bill that Congress is called upon to enact each and every year.

I do note right here at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that the conferees have dedicated this legislation to Senator STROM THURMOND. And that, I believe, is something unprecedented, to name a bill after a Member who is still in office.

The preamble to this conference report cites Senator THURMOND's various services to the Nation, and he is certainly deserving of this singular honor. Here is a man who went into Normandy with the 82nd Airborne Division on D-Day, back during World War II, and still, today, 54 years later, he continues to serve our country as chairman of the very important Senate Committee on Armed Services, a committee on which he has been a member for 40 years. Forty years. STROM THURMOND has truly had a unique and influential career in service to the country, and we salute him here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to pay tribute to our colleague from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), the chairman of the Committee on National Security, and equally commend the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member of the committee. They are truly two of the most respected, outstanding Members of this body. They do, year in and year out, yeoman work on this extremely, extremely important measure. These gentlemen have served our country with distinction. Not for as long as STROM THURMOND has, but nobody else has, but they are certainly no less able and certainly no less dedicated. We appreciate the outstanding work that they and the conferees have done on this report.

And their staffs are to be commended as well. A lot of people do not know how much staff work goes into something as important as this, and on both sides of the aisle they are truly outstanding. They have made the very most of what they were given to work with, the budget ceilings being what they are, which we all object to.

This conference report is the product of a genuine bipartisan effort. It has, I am informed, been signed by every conferee, and that is highly unusual in itself.

Mr. Speaker, I, for one, want to pay particular tribute to what the conferees have done in addressing the readiness problem. I know there are people who question how a $270 billion budget, when we are spending that much money, how it could still leave

us with a hollow military. And hollow it is, and getting worse by the day. Consider this: In a span of 31 years, from 1960 to 1991, the United States military conducted only 10 so-called operational events, deployments that took place outside our normal alliance and training-related obligations. Only 10 in that 31-year period. But in only the last 7 years—and this is what is so, so cogent—since 1991, our military has conducted 26 operational events. The Marine Corps alone has conducted 62 contingency operations in the decade of the 1990s, compared to only 15 such operations in the decade of the 1980s.

The ever-accelerating number of demands placed on our Armed Forces has occurred at a time when the military has been experiencing its most significant reductions since the end of World War II. Ten years ago we had over 2.2 million American men and women in uniform, over 2 million. By the end of 1999, that number will be less than 1.4 million. In the last 10 years, the number of Army divisions and Air Force fighter wings has been reduced by nearly half. The Navy has been reduced in size by more than one-third.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that the strategic environment is significantly different today than it was a decade ago. But let us never, never be lulled into complacency or a false sense of security. We must never, ever allow our military to hollow out, as what happened in the 1970s. Many of my colleagues will recall, if they were here then, that we had American hostages being held in a place called Iran, and we attempted to rescue those hostages. To do that, the military equipment being in such bad condition, we had to cannibalize about 10 helicopter gunships to get five that would work. Four of those failed, and so did the mission, and the rescue attempt went down the drain. That is the condition we were in in the 1970s.

This is the third year in a row that the defense bill conferees have had to find additional funds for the important readiness accounts. On top of that, they have had to face enormous pressures in balancing the need between short-term readiness and the critical modernization and procurement requirements for which the administration has consistently requested funding that is well below its own forecast of what is necessary to keep our forces prepared and to give our young men and women the best possible strategic weaponry they can have if, God forbid, they ever have to be put in harm's way again. And we all know that that is inevitable. It always happens.

And, finally, Mr. Speaker, let us never forget that we rely today on an all-voluntary military force. That is not going to change. Morale and quality of life are matters of vital importance to the young men and women in uniform today. Quality of life.

I recall in the Marine Corps, when I served 40 years ago, 90 percent of us were single. We did not have families. Today, that is absolutely reversed. Most of the men and women today in the military are married, and we have to provide decent living quarters and decent standards of living for these young men and women.

And, frankly, my colleagues, the combination of shrinking force structures, declining defense budgets, and the increased pace of operations is taking its toll. If Members will just go to any of the recruiting offices in any of their congressional districts, they will see that today we are having a problem recruiting a real cross-section of America to serve. And the reason is because they cannot depend on the military as a career. When we reduce our overall numbers from over 2 million down to 1.4 million, where is the career for these young men and women? Where are we going to get this real cross-section of America to serve in our military? It is not easy. Go and check with the recruiters.

The conferees are to be congratulated for addressing head-on the issues of health care, of retirement and compensation benefits, and living facilities that are of such concern to the all-voluntary force. Again, with what they were given to work with, with these budget limitations, they have done just an outstanding job. Our forces must be able to keep pace with their counterparts in civilian life if we are ever going to be able to maintain the kind of military that we want.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would urge strong support for the rule and for the conference report. Once again, the conferees are to be thanked for a job well, well done.

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule and this vital conference report. Providing for our common defense is one of the primary constitutional duties of the Congress, and this conference agreement seeks to fulfill that obligation within the constraints imposed by the balanced budget agreement. But as the ranking member of the Committee on National Security said last night when the Committee on Rules met to grant this rule, the task of trying to address the many issues affecting our Armed Forces was much more difficult this year than it has been in years past.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) makes a very good and very important point. Mr. Speaker, last week the Joint Chiefs and the unified combat commanders told the President that their increasing duties at home and abroad have placed enormous strains on each of the branches of the Armed Services and that the readiness and operational capabilities of the Services are suffering.

As it was reported in The New York Times yesterday, the commanders told the President that funding shortfalls have eroded their readiness to fight and win the next war, have led to shortages of spare parts for war planes, cuts in training, and difficulties in recruiting and keeping qualified troops. Mr. Speaker, this bill attempts to address those shortfalls, but it is abundantly clear that defense spending must increase in future years.

I am especially pleased to learn that the administration has taken the warnings of the Joint Chiefs to heart and that the President intends to propose adding $1 billion to the emergency supplemental to address some of the shortfalls outlined to him, and that the President has also indicated his support for a significant increase in military spending in the coming fiscal year.

I would certainly endorse those increases in military spending to ensure that our military might and superiority does not suffer needlessly. I want to congratulate Secretary Cohen and General Shelton for their ongoing commitment to the men and women in uniform who serve our Nation and their commitment to a strong and vital military.

Mr. Speaker, the conference report does a good job within the constraints of the Balanced Budget Act, which has capped spending for the Department of Defense. The conference report addresses pressing needs in improvement in pay and allowances, family and troop housing, improved medical care and education for military dependents. These improvements are key if we are to keep family men and women in our Armed Forces.

This conference report increases funding for several categories of operations and maintenance as well as readiness and recruiting. These funding increases are critical to maintaining our military superiority in all corners of the globe.

This conference report also provides $279.9 million in funding for post-production support of the B–2 bomber fleet, $2.2 billion for research and development, and advance procurement for the F–22 Raptor fighter. The Raptor is the 21st century attack fighter that will ensure the air superiority and maintain the air dominance of the Air Force.

The conference agreement also authorizes $742.8 million for the acquisition of 8 V–22s, which will replace the aging Marine Corps helicopter fleet to ensure our combat troops can be ferried quickly and efficiently to combat situations.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill that deserves the support of the House. The men and women who serve their country deserve the best this Congress can give them. While these funding limits may not be able to give the Department of Defense everything it needs, this conference agreement does a great deal to ensure our most critical priorities are addressed. I urge adoption of this rule and the conference report.

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

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from San Diego, California (Mr. DUKE CUNNINGHAM).

He is a true patriot. He was a naval aviator fighter pilot in Vietnam, and the movie Top Gun was based on his heroic deeds. I do not mind leaving this Congress at the end of this year because we are going to have people like him here. He is a great American.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding me this time, my Marine Corps friend, but let me state one thing in correction. The movie Top Gun was not based on my life. There were several of the scenes based on real-life events. We never overstate in this business our qualifications. But I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about a few things, and I think 99 9/10 percent is positive. There are some things in here on a bipartisan basis. I left the Committee on National Security, the authorization committee. It is show-me-the-dollars to the Committee on Appropriations, for defense. But the two committees work hand-in-hand. And one of the biggest reasons I hated leaving the Committee on National Security was my friend, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. IKE SKELTON), and the work we did there.

But let me tell my colleagues a couple of things that we did, and I think things we need to do in the future as well. The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. J.C. WATTS), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MAC THORNBERRY), the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. JIM MORAN), the gentlemen I just spoke of, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. IKE SKELTON), and myself fought to get FEHBP for our veterans. A worker in the Pentagon that is nonmilitary, after they retire, during Medicare they qualify for FEHBP. Someone we ask to fight our battles does not qualify, and that is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and we need to change that. But the folks I mentioned before fought for that.

And I would also like to give thanks to a gentleman that we lost this year, and that is General Jim Pennington, who passed away, and this was one of his dreams, to bring FEHBP to veterans. He lived long enough to see this come to fruition in a pilot program, and we need to carry on with that as well.

□ 1245

After the Committee on National Security heard the classified briefings on Long Beach Naval Shipyard and the Communist Chinese Shipping Company, COSCO, there was a vote, I believe it was 45–4, to keep the Communist Chinese from taking over Long Beach. Now, I have never been against them staying as a tenant just like they are in other ports, but to give them absolute control when the reason we went into Afghanistan and some of our other sites, it was COSCO that shipped those chemical and biological and in some cases nuclear parts to those things from China, to give them access to Long Beach Naval Shipyard was just wrong, not access but complete control. That is in this bill.

Something we worked on very diligently from a very bipartisan group called the Sportsmen's Caucus was the disabled sportsman. What we found is that a lot of our military bases are now opening up to disabled sportsmen. You can imagine being in a wheelchair and wanting to go fishing and you go out on a dock that does not have a handrail. This was also in the bill, in the disabled sportsman portion of it.

Let me speak and say something to my colleagues. Very bipartisan committees, both the authorization and appropriation. Where we get outside of that is where I would like to speak to my friends that do not believe that we need more defense spending. We could survive under the balanced budget agreement with defense spending. But we cannot survive with that limited budget and then take 300 percent, the overseas deployments, and take those funds out of that already limited bill. The reason that we only have 24 percent of our military, of our enlisted staying in is family separation, and pilots are leaving in droves, the economy is good and they can get jobs on the outside. That experience is going. We are going to lose great numbers of airplanes over the next five years, even if we invest now. Because when you have your experience going out of your enlisted, your pilots are gone, you are having to take cannibalization. Oceana has four up jets, they normally have 45, because they are cannibalizing parts. So your training back here in the United States for your brand new pilots is very limited. All of these are factors in this readiness.

I am happy that the President is going to put a billion dollars into the emergency supplemental. But the Joint Chiefs told him he needs $15 billion over a period of time, and Shalikashvili said that we need to increase procurement spending by up to $60 billion. A billion dollars just will not do it over the long haul. I am thankful that the President and some of my colleagues realize that the Cold War is not totally over. I would like to thank both sides of the aisle for the bipartisan work on this bill.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding time. First let me compliment the chairman of the Committee on Rules. This is the last time that the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and I will be before the committee with the gentleman from New York as the presiding chairman. We wish him well and we thank him for his many, many efforts on behalf of the young men and women in uniform. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the gentleman from New York.

Regarding the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM), I thank him for his kind words. We know and hope that his work on the Committee on Appropriations will reflect the work that we on the authorization committee will do as it precedes the work on the appropriation efforts.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) mentioned the fact that the President has recognized that we need additional funding for our military. I am in receipt yesterday of a letter from the President wherein he stated that there will be the $1 billion in emergency recommendations. He also added that in the long run, there will be additional necessary funds for readiness.

Let me share with this body that I am not a newcomer to this issue. I was concerned about readiness shortfall, concerned about spare part problems and concerned about some research and development and procurement several years ago. I embarked on a major effort to put together a military bill, a defense bill, from scratch. On March 22, 1996, I appeared before the Committee on the Budget recommending additional funds for fiscal years 1997, 1998 and 1999. But of course those figures were not adopted. I am sending that budget to the President, to the Secretary and to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, because it might reflect what well is needed now, because there were shortfalls in those years and we find ourselves in a position of young people leaving, and spare parts and readiness is down. We need to do something about it. Now is the time for us to fulfill the pledge. We must take care of the troops. We must let them know we appreciate them, that we back what they are doing in their efforts, we will back their families, and we will allow there to be sufficient funds for training so they can be ready for any contingency that comes along. That is our job. We should not have to wait for the President to make the recommendation. It is good that one is coming forth. I have suggested to him a figure which I hope he will look to.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado Springs, CO (Mr. HEFLEY) another outstanding member of the Committee on National Security who has served on that committee for more than 10 years now.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, no Member in this House has been more supportive of a strong national defense than the chairman of the Committee on Rules has been since he has been here. We are going to miss him in that role. I am including even those of us who serve on the Committee on National Security. He has been such a stalwart. We appreciate that greatly. I think we should make the gentleman an honorary member of the Committee on National Security, if nothing else.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3616, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999, and for

this good rule. The legislation is critically important to the defense of the Nation. It contains a needed military pay raise of 3.6 percent, an issue on which I am proud to say the Committee on National Security has been a leader. This legislation supports the readiness of the armed forces by providing an additional $900 million above the President's request to bolster underfunded training and readiness requirements. This bill would also strengthen export controls on extremely sensitive satellite and missile technology. This is a good bill. It is a good rule.

I want to focus some attention on the part of the bill that I have worked the most on, and, that is, the military construction authorizations for the coming year. There is no question that the poor condition of military infrastructure continues to affect readiness and quality of life for military personnel and their families. This bill would authorize $8.4 billion for the military construction and family military housing programs of the Defense Department and the military services. This amount is $666 million more than the President's request and over 52 percent of that funding is dedicated to improving troop housing, military family housing, child development centers, physical fitness and other facilities that significantly affect the quality of life of military personnel and their families. The remainder supports either critical enhancements for training and readiness or to improve basic working conditions. This bill fully supports the MILCON appropriations agreement which passed the House 417–1 and was signed by the President over the weekend.

For too long, military infrastructure has been ignored. It has been far too easy to put off needed investment in infrastructure on the assumption that one more year will not make a difference, that we can get by. The result of years of this neglect is a crumbling infrastructure which undermines readiness and housing that no one in this House would want their son or daughter living in. Over the past four years, Congress has struggled to find ways to fix the problem but from year to year we have been met by administration budget requests that continue to decline. The problem cannot be fixed by wishing it away.

Earlier this week the President indicated a willingness to join those of us in Congress who have argued that defense spending must increase to meet critical shortfalls such as these. I hope we have finally turned the corner on shortfalls in the defense budget.

I urge all Members to support this bipartisan legislation and to vote for a strong defense bill and to support this rule.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from San Diego, CA (Mr. HUNTER) another outstanding Member and an 18-year member of the Committee on National Security.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. SOLOMON) for turning the Committee on Rules into an Armed Services Committee and then a National Security Committee. It has always been, I think, reassuring to Members on both sides of the aisle when we have had our bill moving through the process to know that the Committee on Rules was going to take up our bill under the leadership of a Member of Congress who finds that the constitutional duty to protect this country is of primacy. Whether he is in a Republican Conference, in an in-house conference or speaking to the full House or making sure that some important mission of the Committee on National Security works and is successful, the gentleman from New York has been a real fighter for a strong national defense.

Along those lines, I think we are in some danger in this country. We have been telling the President as we boosted his defense budget every year on the Committee on National Security and then in the full body, we have increased President Clinton's budget, we have been telling him every year that we do not have enough, that we are losing people, that we have got pilot shortages, that we have got technical shortages. We now have sailor shortages in the Navy. We are losing people. We are building a navy at a rate which if you consider new construction will give us a 200-ship navy when we had a 600-ship navy just a few years ago. We are seeing the North Koreans now achieving ballistic missile capability that the CIA said they would not have for years, achieving that right now, and we have no defense against it. We have an army that has been cut from 18 to 10 divisions. We see a desperate need for stealthy, tactical aircraft and we do not have them. Yet we are trying to move that program along. I think we have cut defense perilously. Yet the President has rejected our overtures for the last four years.

This year, I notice, if you read the papers now, President Clinton is now writing letters saying defense has been cut too much, that we have to do something about it. Mr. Speaker, we have done something about it in this bill with the very limited dollars that we have. Our great leader the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) on the Committee on National Security has assigned us all our various areas. I have worked on modernization. We have tried to increase the tactical fighter program. We have tried to put money in the Joint Strike Fighter, the F–22. We have added extra shipbuilding money. We desperately need more. We have moved out on missile defense. We have tried to take steps, although they have been small steps, in a number of areas that are absolutely national priority with respect to national defense. The best thing we can do right now is pass this conference report and then regroup and put an additional 10 or 20 or $30 billion a year in our national defense, do what we have to do to remain the supreme military power in the world and also have the ability to meet the new threat of terrorism.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time. I come to the floor with a sense of both relief and concern, relief that this bill, this rule, the bill underlying this rule no longer requires sex segregation in the armed forces; concern that it does express a sense of the House that sex segregation return to the armed forces of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that says ''if you don't know something, you better ask somebody.'' I hope we will listen to those who do know something about this complicated issue. A report is due in March from military experts. Meanwhile, the armed services have told us that sex-integrated training is safest and best for our country. Perhaps that is to be turned around. We certainly should not move in advance of that. Training, it seems to me, is precisely where women and men should first meet. Delay puts both at risk if for the first time you meet the opposite sex after you have been trained when you may be in a theater of war or elsewhere in danger.

□ 1300

Mr. Speaker, I hope that our country has learned after all these years that there ought to be a profound presumption against segregation based on race or sex. The Armed Services deserves credit for the great success they have made of gender-integrated training. The top enlisted men of all four Armed Services opposed gender-segregated training, and I want to quote the Chief Master Sergeant of the Armed Forces who says, we have done the job and we have done it with men and women serving together. I am confounded as to what the problem is.

I am, too, Mr. Speaker, and I hope we will stick with what we have.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, just briefly let me say that the previous speaker is held in the highest esteem by me. But she and I certainly differ, as my colleagues know, on this issue.

As my colleagues know, our military is there to fight a war, and our military does not come under the laws of the land. They come under the Military Code of Justice, and there is a reason for that.

There are exceptions when men and women can train together. There are those of us that believe that women should never be put in combat under any circumstances, and some of us will never change our mind on that.

But the truth of the matter is we cannot take young men and women, 18 years old, first time away from home and integrate them into training. It just does not work, and I think the bill

speaks to that, although not as much as I would like to see.

And, having said that, I am going to yield to the next speaker, who is someone I deeply admire and respect.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the gentleman from Monticello, Indiana (Mr. BUYER), who is young, a relatively new Member of our Congress. He is a subcommittee chairman on the Subcommittee on Military Personnel and has done such an outstanding job in working with the private sector commissions that have been looking into this matter, and he is also a Major in the Army Reserve, and I salute him.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding this time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I just would like to share with everyone there is a reason, as chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, as we have looked into this issue on the separation of gender, whether it is the small unit level or in training, the gentlewoman who just spoke before me used the word ''segregation.'' She used the word ''segregation'' for a reason, to taint the argument and to go back to the issues on segregation, on race.

The issue here is separation of gender at the small unit level. We sought to return the Air Force back to the way they had been doing it for over 20 years. Just this past July when, in fact, those of whom argued for integration of the sexes have held out the Air Force as the model, we sought to take them back to the model, and for some reason now they are overembellishing in their argument on saying we have somehow taken steps back, that this will be a segregation of the sexes just as though it has been segregation of the races. That is ba-looie. I do not even have the word to properly describe that.

We sought the Kassebaum-Baker. This was a bipartisan panel. Individuals of great diversity in their ideology looked at this and said unanimously that we need to separate at the small unit level, which means flights in the Air Force, platoons in the Army, divisions in the Navy, and we sought to follow the Kassebaum panel, and I applaud this is the sense of this House, to follow the Kassebaum panel.

Now there is in law with regard to the separation by a permanent wall of the gender. As my colleagues know, for some reason, it has lost America's attention here all of a sudden. Great Lakes, where they do naval training, just had a conviction, and it was very ugly, no different than what had happened at Aberdeen, where we had a drill sergeant that was preying upon young women. This has to cease in America's Armed Forces.

And I will tell my colleagues I will not, and I am very careful because I know that there are some who are using that as saying, well, that is the reason we need women out of the military, and I will tell my colleagues what. That is false. So long as I chair the Subcommittee on Military Personnel we cannot deploy without women in the ranks. The issue goes to at what level and under what requirements can they serve, whether it is the ground combat function.

Now let me address the issues that are of concern to me. Right now, I applaud the President stepping forward and giving a recommendation about the plus-up of $1 billion, but I would disagree with my good friend, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), who just said on the House floor that we should not have to wait for the President to recommend. Excuse me. This is the President responding to Congress who is taking the lead, who is alerting America about the depletions of our military readiness and our capabilities to respond to the national military strategy of two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts. Let us be up front with our allies throughout the world right now.

I just returned from San Diego a couple of weeks ago. My colleagues, we have ships that are being deployed at what is called C–2 readiness levels. It used to be ships would go out as C–1, fully manned. They are C–2 plus one sailor, which means when somebody gets hurt in the workplace they are really under C–3 status.

So what we are doing here is we say we have a problem with regard to recruiting in the Navy. No kidding. We have a problem with recruiting in the Navy. It happens when we are asking our sailors to do more with less, when we have 10 people that may have worked in a particular room, now there are five, and they are working longer hours, and there is a spiral here. Some are saying, well, I am out of here; I am out of the Navy.

Well, I tell my colleagues what. When people are leaving the Navy, those are the best recruiters that we have, and when we lose those quality of individuals, they are returning to their communities, and we want them to tell the good sailor story, not the bad sailor story.

So part of that billion dollars, I say to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), and I know he will be a strong advocate, will stop this downward spiral to improve recruiting and retention in the Navy.

But now let me share with my colleagues here 3 o'clock this afternoon the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) and I have to hold a Subcommittee on Military Personnel hearing. Why? The ink is not even dry on this conference report, and the Surgeon Generals have alerted me that there is a $600 million shortfall in the medical readiness budget. We are about to vote on this, and people are going to claim, well, this is an adequate budget. Now, and I can hardly believe this, my colleagues, now I am being alerted that there is a $600 million shortfall in the medical budget.

Now the DOD, the administration's position is, well, it is not that bad, it is around 200 million, depends on what modeling of budgeting being used. Two hundred million, 600 million, one cannot run a business this way. So I am very distressed.

So when the President says, here is a billion dollars, a billion just is not going to cut it. This readiness shortfall on the hollowing out of the force is much greater, and let us not kid anyone.

So I want to work with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), and I will work with the chairman with regard to the medical readiness shortfall. I will get to the bottom of this this afternoon, and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) and I both will report to our colleagues on our findings from this hearing.

But there is a good story to tell, and I agree with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON). I love to hear him talk about his warmth and his compassion and his sympathy for those who are burning the night oil, who stand on watch so that we can enjoy our peace and freedoms, and God bless him so long as he is in this position because he tells a great soldier story along with the chairman.

There is something else I have to share with my colleagues. I have had the true pleasure of having a dear friend on the Armed Services Committee, now the Committee on National Security, in the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MCHALE). He has been my dear friend since I first walked into this institution, perhaps because we are both comrades from the Gulf War experience. He now is a lieutenant colonel as a Marine reservist.

As my colleagues know, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MCHALE) has been under attack by the administration. That has been unfortunate. But the gentleman from Pennsylvania, when Sonny Montgomery left, he and I stepped forward into the breach and formed a Reserve Components Caucus, and we were able to make great strides in working with the administration over some disagreements between whether it is the National Guard and the Reservists. There should be a seamless military under these concepts, and we have worked very, very hard, whether it is with regard to the budgeting, whether it is in regard to benefits.

And I just want to share with the body, working with the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MCHALE) is a distinct honor and it was a distinct privilege because he was always focused in the right direction on what are the requirements of the Marine in the field, the sailor on the ship, whether it is airmen in the air or the soldier on the ground, and I salute him for that. And, hopefully, as he leaves this body, I want him to know that he has served this institution with great distinction, and he has brought honor not only upon himself and his family but this institution by how he served and the manner he conducted himself.

So Godspeed to my colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MCHALE).

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, we have no additional speakers, I urge adoption of the rule, and I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Claremont, California (Mr. DREIER), the distinguished vice chairman of the committee who will be closing for our side.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding this time to me, and I would like to extend the congratulations that the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) did to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MCHALE) also to Mr. BUYER, because I believe that carrying that message of Reservists is a very, very important one, and he has done it very well. So congratulations to both Messrs. BUYER and MCHALE, although I know Mr. BUYER will be returning here next year, unlike the unfortunate decision that Mr. MCHALE made.

Mr. Speaker, a week ago today we marked the 211th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, Constitution Day, and I had the thrill of going, one of my constituents had this nationwide program, and I left the Committee on Rules, as the gentleman from New York (Mr. SOLOMON) knows, to recite the preamble of the Constitution on a nationwide hookup. And from my perspective those key words right in the middle of the preamble are so important, and they cannot be forgotten: Provide for the common defense.

To me, as we look at the many things that the Federal Government involves itself in, there really is only one that can only be done by the Federal Government, and that is providing for the common defense. And that is why this measure is so important.

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) has done a spectacular job in his position, and I will never, never forget the speech that he gave to our Republican conference several months ago about the importance of our national security.

Now I hope and pray that this $1 billion request that the President has made and his recognition that we need to enhance our defense capability will not, in fact, be too little too late. But the world now knows that the threat that exists is much different than it was during the Cold War, but it is, in many ways, more dangerous because of the disparate uncertainty that exists. If we look at, as my friend from California (Mr. HUNTER) said, the North Korean situation, if we look at the Middle East, if we look at Kosovo, it is very serious.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this rule and strongly support the conference report, and, if the chairman wants me to, I will move the previous question.

Mr. SOLOMON. 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.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 549, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 3616) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1999 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 549, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of September 22, 1998 at page H8097.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) each will be recognized for 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE).

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

□ 1315

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1999 started the year out on a bipartisan note. It was reported out of the Committee on National Security back in early May on a vote of 50 to 1 and it passed the House on a vote of 357 to 60.

I am glad to inform all of my colleagues that the conference report today also enjoys strong bipartisan support. Even after several weeks of often difficult compromise, all 33 Committee on National Security conferees signed the conference report, something which has not occurred in 17 years, not since 1981. Likewise, all Senate conferees have signed the conference report.

Mr. Speaker, the funding authorized in this conference report is consistent with the spending level set in the Balanced Budget Act, but, unfortunately, represents the 14th consecutive year of real decline in the defense budget.

While the fall of the Berlin Wall brought with it an opportunity to reduce our Cold War defense structure, almost 10 years later I believe that the threats and challenges America confronts and the pressures these threats have placed on a still shrinking United States military have been dramatically underestimated. The mismatch between the Nation's military strategy and the resources required to implement it is growing. As a result, serious quality of life, readiness and modernization shortfalls have developed that, if left unaddressed, threaten the return to the hollow military of the 1970's. Mr. Speaker, it is a very serious problem.

During each of the last three years, Congress has increased the spending over the President's defense budget in order to address a number of these shortfalls. This year, faced with the constraints of the Balanced Budget Act, we have not been able to increase the defense budget, and, instead, we are left with a much more difficult challenge of trying to reprioritize the President's budget request. However, through such careful re-prioritization, we have provided the military services at least some of the tools needed to better recruit and retain quality personnel, better trained personnel, and better equip them with the advanced technology. This conference report is a marked improvement over the President's budget request, as indicated by the unanimous and bipartisan support it has among the House and Senate conferees.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report is before the House today only as a result of the incredible efforts of all of our conferees, as well as the staff. In particular I want to recognize the critical roles played by the Committee on National Security subcommittee and panel chairmen and ranking members. Their efforts made my job easier and their dedication has made today possible.

I would also like to thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the committee's ranking member, for his cooperation and support. I have enjoyed working with the gentleman for many years. He has served as a dedicated member of the committee, and I am honored to be working with him now in his capacity as the committees ranking member.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me to pause at this time and thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. SOLOMON), the chairman of the Committee on Rules, for his invaluable service and support of our committee over these years he has been chairman of the Committee on Rules, and many other valuable ways in which he supported his own efforts in support of our military people throughout this world.

I would also like to pay tribute to my good friend, Senator STROM THURMOND, for whom this conference report has been named. There is no one in this or any other Congress who has done more than Senator THURMOND for our Nation's defense, so presenting this conference report to the House in his name is a special honor for me.

Senator THURMOND will step down as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee at the end of this Congress, but I have no doubt that he will continue to work tirelessly and effectively on behalf of the men and women who serve in our military. It is his way. He knows no other. So I look forward to many more productive years of working with my good friend from South Carolina to ensure our military remains second to none.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the efforts of the Committee on National Security staff. This is a very large, complex and often controversial bill, yet the staff is instrumental in making it work year after year. In a too often thankless job, the staff remains one of consummate professionals.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support the conference report.

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

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my support on the conference report on H.R. 3616, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1999. There were numerous issues which the conference addressed. Many were easy to resolve; others provided more difficulty. Among the latter were funding for Bosnia, gender-integrated training, tritium production, restrictions on base closure, and export controls concerning commercial communication satellites and related items.

With hard work and goodwill, the conferees worked up a report that reflected compromise on these issues between the two bodies. At the same time we took consideration of a number of concerns that Secretary of Defense Cohen expressed to Senators THURMOND and LEVIN and the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) and to me concerning both bills when we met with him during the conference that we had with him in mid-July. As a result, I believe we have a good conference report, a good conference agreement, with which all of us, the House and the Senate and the administration, can be satisfied.

This year we operated under the restrictions of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, thus a task of trying to address the many issues affecting the Armed Forces was more difficult to manage than in years past. However, we provided a pay raise, 3.6 percent, which is a half a percent more than the budget request, supported the department's request for a real increase in the procurement budget for modernization for the first time in 13 years, and authorized more than $250 million above the budget request for family housing and troop housing and child development centers.

Members and the staff from both sides worked in a cooperative manner to shape a conference report that enjoys strong bipartisan support. All the conferees, Mr. Speaker, all of the conferees from the Committee on National Security in the House and the Armed Services Committee in the Senate signed the conference report.

As one who believes that we need to provide for a sustained period of real growth in defense spending, I am encouraged by the reports that the Pentagon and the administration will seek to redress these shortfalls in fiscal year 2000 and hopefully in the future years.

Mr. Speaker, I might point out, as I briefly mentioned a moment ago in debate on the rule, that back in March of 1996 I put forward a three-year defense budget before the Committee on the Budget. It added at that time additional funding for each of those three years.

As a result of the limitations that the Committee on the Budget came forth with, we have been working under a constrained figure each of those three years. However, I am encouraged that as a result of our efforts, which really started right here, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), bless your heart, helped put together a letter, with most of the top row in our committee, urging the President to consider and also urging other House and Senate leaders to consider increasing the overall defense budget, which is sorely needed.

Although the bill that is before us fails to address all of the readiness and quality of life and modernization shortfalls which exist, it is the best we could do, given the budget constraints, to train the quality of force that is the most important component of the military strength. I hope our colleagues will support this conference report, and I hope that in the days ahead we will find additional funding, and that it starts right here in the Congress.

Let me add, Mr. Speaker, a special congratulations to my friend, the distinguished gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) for his absolute commitment to having the work of the committee carried on in a bipartisan fashion. I personally appreciate it, and those of us on our side appreciate it as well. This bill is a reflection of that bipartisan spirit. It is with this in mind that I can fully support and urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote in favor of this.

Members of the committee on both sides have worked hard since February to get us here today, many hearings, many briefings, many conferences. This is especially true with the subcommittee panel chairmen and the ranking members. And allow me to thank the staff. My goodness, we could not get along without them. I thank them for so ably assisting us. Their dedication, their expertise, is outstanding, and we appreciate their hard work.

Let me conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I note we will also be on this bill having the gentlewoman from California (Ms. HARMAN) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MCHALE) voting for the last time. They have been truly dedicated members of this committee, the Committee on National Security. I want to thank them for their fine efforts over the years. They are wonderful Americans, outstanding and excellent representatives of the people who elected them. We wish them well in the days and years ahead. Their contributions to the work on this committee will long be remembered and their presence will be missed.

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

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield two minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BATEMAN), the chairman of our Subcommittee on Military Readiness.

Mr. BATEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the conference report on the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1999. This conference report is essential to the readiness of our military forces.

Through several hearings, here and in the field, and after extensive study by the committee, we of the Subcommittee on Military Readiness have recognized that the military forces are doing much more with less at a time of significant downsizing of our combat and support forces. The best thing that can be said about this report is that it is the best we can do within the budget constraints that have been imposed upon us.

Realistically, it must also be said that the best we can do in this context is not nearly good enough. It address shortfalls in many of the essential readiness accounts. The committee increased readiness funding for training operations and flying hours, maintenance and repair of combat equipment, and facilities renovation and repairs, but we are not catching up with the need. All of these increases are necessary and will improve the quality of life of our service members and their families.

Also included in the conference report is a provision that gets at the problem of timely and accurate reporting on the readiness conditions of the forces. I believe this and several other provisions found in the conference report on H.R. 3616 will provide better information that will help to quickly identify the continued decline in military readiness and place us in a position to act before the system is further degraded.

I would like to thank the ranking member of the readiness subcommittee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) for outstanding cooperation, knowledge and leadership throughout the process. The Subcommittee on Military Readiness has had to deal with several difficult issues that have transcended political lines, which would have been more difficult if it were not for his expertise, his assistance and his bipartisanship.

Only the constraints of time would prevent me from mentioning by name the members of the Subcommittee on Military Readiness who have contributed so much to the work product of the committee, and they I am indeed grateful to.

□ 1330

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY), the ranking Democrat on the chairman's subcommittee and a very, very valuable member of our committee.

Mr. SISISKY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentleman from Missouri, for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, in the House's perspective, this conference agreement on H.R. 3616 does not contain everything we wanted. Nevertheless, the final product deserves our support.

This conference agreement authorizes $49.5 billion for procurement in fiscal year 1999. This represents an increase of $800 million above the President's request, and more importantly, $4 billion, or 8 percent, above last year's level. Even more importantly, it marks the end of a too long procurement holiday. Clearly this is good progress, but more is needed.

Procurement budgets have drifted to artificially low levels in recent years, and went from the Reagan buildup in the eighties and the end of the Cold War in the nineties, but equipment developed and produced in the seventies and eighties is rapidly reaching the end of its useful life. It must be replaced if we are to maintain required equipment levels and technological superiority for our forces. I believe H.R. 3616 represents a good-faith effort to respond to that concern.

Mr. Speaker, during the last year I have been on the Subcommittee on Military Readiness with my colleague, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BATEMAN), and I have taken it upon myself to travel to military bases; not glamorous bases. I have visited the 7th Fleet in the farthest, remote stretches of Japan. I have been in the field at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, with the 101st Airborne. I have been to Bosnia. I have been in the Persian Gulf. Three weeks ago, four weeks ago, I visited the 82nd Airborne Division or the 18th Armored Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

How lucky we are in this country, how lucky we are in this Congress, to have young men and women serving like these young men and women do. Members have heard today from many speakers about the shortfalls in health care, quality of life issues, equipment, retirement, all of these different things. Through this all, God blessed this Republic with young men and women who are serving today on a very, very short leash, ready to do something.

I would tell my colleagues in this body that what they have heard about a $1 billion shortfall, and we are going put it into readiness, is nothing. I told the Members about an increase in procurement, but guess what, we need more than $60 billion a year. When all these new weapons systems come due in a couple of years we are going to need a lot more than that. If not, we are heading for disaster, I am afraid, in our military.

I think it has to be told, and our colleagues have to understand, this Nation, this Nation needs these young people. We have to take care of these young people, because let me tell the Members this, the worst thing in our lives from a political standpoint is one day we may have to vote for selective service again, if we do not recruit people. That is one of the problems that we are having today, recruiting people, and particularly as it relates to pilots.

Having said that, without reservation, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this conference agreement.

Mr. Speaker, this conference agreement on H.R. 3616 does not contain everything that we would have wanted for procurement from the House perspective. Nevertheless, it is a final product that is deserving of our support. Let me explain.

This conference agreement authorizes $49.5 billion for military procurement for fiscal year 1999. This represents an increase of $800 million above the President's request and, more importantly, $4 billion or 8 percent above last year's level. More importantly, it signals the end of an overly protracted "procurement holiday." Clearly, good progress—but more is needed.

Procurement budgets have drifted to artificially low levels in recent years because we've benefited from a "procurement holiday" made possible by the Reagan build-up in the eighties, and the end of the Cold War in the nineties. But, cold war equipment developed and produced in the 1970's and 1980's, is rapidly reaching the end of its useful life and must be replaced if we are to maintain the requirement equipment levels and technological superiority for our forces. Recent procurement budgets are proving inadequate for the task—equipment modernization is not keeping up with equipment retirements and threat development. This is particularly worrisome with respect to our naval forces.

Clearly, the time for increased procurement budgets has come. And H.R. 3616 represents a good faith effort to respond to that concern. By signaling the end of an increasingly corrosive "procurement holiday," this conference agreement deserves our unqualified support. Therefore, and without reservation, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this conference agreement.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Procurement.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me. I have already made a statement during the rule debate, but let me just say again that this bill need to be passed. It is a bare minimum. It is a starting point.

Today, after years of our committee telling the President that we are underfunded in defense, he has announced that he believes we are underfunded in defense. With respect to fixed-wing aircraft, rotary aircraft, our shipbuilding program, our missile defense program, and lots of what I would call ham and eggs items, those are the generators and the small trucks and the heavy trucks, and all the things that make our military move, we are shortfunded.

We are building today, once again, to a fleet of 200 ships in the U.S. Navy. I think the stability of the world depends on a strong America and our ability to project military power. We have lost a great deal of that ability over the last 4 years. It is time to rebuild, and the first thing we can do, and every Member can do to contributing to that rebuilding of defense, is to pass this conference report. Everyone should vote for this report.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me comment on the words of the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY). I especially appreciate his positive comments about the young men and young women that we have in uniform today. They are the finest in the world. It is our job to take care of them, and hopefully in the days and years ahead we can do a better job, because as Harry Truman said, the buck stops with us, in the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ).

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend for yielding time to me. I rise in strong support of H.R. 3616, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999.

Mr. Speaker, I want to specifically address the provisions in the act relating to military readiness. First, I would like to express my personal appreciation to the Subcommittee on Military Readiness leadership and to my colleagues on both sides of the aisles of the subcommittee and the full committee for the manner in which they conducted the business of the subcommittee this session. I want to express my appreciation to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BATEMAN) for his personal involvement, and the extra steps that he took in getting us to where we are today.

We had the opportunity to see readiness through a different set of eyes, the eyes of the brave soldiers, sailors, and airmen who are entrusted with the awesome responsibility of carrying out our national military strategy. We heard them talk about the shortages of repair parts, the extra hours spent trying to maintain old equipment, and the shortage of critical personnel.

While we in this body may differ on some policy and program objectives, we on the subcommittee were able to get a better appreciation of the challenges that these brave souls face in trying to do more with less. For their effort, we can all be proud. I personally remain concerned about how long they will be able to keep up with the pace.

The readiness provisions in the bill reflect some of the steps I believe are necessary, with the dollars available, to make their task easier. It does not provide all that is needed under this bill. While I would be more pleased if the migration of O&M funds to other accounts did not take place, I am optimistic that the recent correspondence I have seen from the President indicates an interest in providing additional funds for the readiness accounts.

Mr. Speaker, we have many, many problems. Retention has become a serious problem. As I talk to the men and

women who serve, the first question they ask me is this: You know, when my father went in the military, he would get 60 percent of his pension. It has gone down to 50, and now to 40 percent.

We have to do more to help our young men and women. The Air Force, they are 700 pilots short. I could go on and on and on. But with what we have to work with, I think that this is a good bill. I ask my colleagues to support it.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), who is the chairman of our Subcommittee on Military Research and Development.

(Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished friend and chairman for yielding time to me. I want to say what a great honor it is to serve with both the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. FLOYD SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. IKE SKELTON), two outstanding Americans, and what a great, refreshing breeze is flowing through this Chamber as Democrats and Republicans stand together in support of our military.

I want to applaud my distinguished ranking member, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. PICKETT) on the Subcommittee on Military Research and Development, who is a true American who has done a fantastic job, as have all of our colleagues, in an impossible situation.

What Members need to understand, Mr. Speaker, is that we are facing what my good friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY) referred to as a major train wreck, because some very divergent things are happening.

We are into our 15th consecutive year of real cuts in defense spending. We are facing a situation now where we have an all volunteer force. Unlike 20 years ago, where we could draft people and pay them next to nothing, today a much larger portion of our defense budget goes for quality of life issues: housing, education, health care costs.

Unlike 20 years ago, in the past 6 years we have deployed our troops 26 times. That is 26 times in 6 years versus 10 times in the previous 40 years, and none of these 26 deployments by our Commander in Chief were budgeted for. None of them were paid for. So the $15 billion in contingency costs to pay for those 26 deployments had to be eaten out of an already decreasing defense budget.

What is the fastest growing part of our defense budget? It is environmental mitigation. We did not even have that category 20 years ago. This year we will spend $11 billion on environmental mitigation. When we add all of those factors together, Mr. Speaker, we are facing an impossible situation.

We have not replaced our equipment that needs to be replaced. We have not done the readiness that needs to be taken care of. We have not provided the R&D funding that is necessary. By the year 2000, as the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY) pointed out, we face a major, colossal train wreck. All these new programs that have not been paid for come on line at one time.

This Congress needs to understand that while this bill is important and while we all should vote yes in favor of it, the real tough challenge lies ahead. Hopefully together we can increase the top line number for defense spending.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to our colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK).

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding time to me and for accommodating me, as I have some other scheduled things.

I want to thank him and the other members of the conference committee particularly on the part of the House for insisting successfully on inclusion in this bill of the amendment we adopted overwhelmingly to put a cap on American contributions for the expansion of NATO. I do not understand why the administration fought us, but we did them a great favor by overcoming their opposition. I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY), the gentleman from Missouri, and others for putting it in.

I understand that we have a problem with not enough money for defense. If we take as a given all of the missions we have undertaken and assigned to our defense establishment, then we have a problem in paying for them.

But there are two solutions to that: One is to pay a lot more money, to cut into the surplus, to take money away from other possible uses in the budget by ramping up defense spending. The other is to ramp down what we have undertaken to do.

Yes, we must not ever compromise with our national security. Yes, there are other parts of the world where we want to go and offer assistance. But 50 years after the end of World War II, we continue to overdo it vis-a-vis our allies. We have today around this world wealthy allies capable of doing more.

Part of the problem we have is this unilateral assumption by America of responsibilities beyond which are reasonable. That is why I am delighted to have the committee today bring us a bill which for the first time puts a congressionally mandated binding limit on what we can spend for NATO.

We have to explain this to our Western European allies, and we continue, even with this, to be spending tens of billions of dollars for the defense of Western Europe, unnecessarily. The Russian enemy which called this into question has crumbled as a conventional military power. The Europeans themselves, unlike the end of World War II, are numerous and prosperous. They could do more. I hope this is an example we will follow in the future.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH), the chairman of our MWR panel.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me. Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise in strong support of this conference report for national defense, particularly as it relates to the provisions authorizing the morale, welfare, and recreation activities of the department.

Before I do that, I want to add my words of thanks and praise to both the chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), for their cooperative effort and bipartisanship, and as we have heard time and time again, for the great job they do. They serve as an example to all of us.

Also I want to thank the members of the MWR panel and its ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) for his constructive and bipartisan support.

Our biggest challenge was the protection and enhancement of the resale system, the commissaries and exchanges that provide low-cost groceries and other essential items for servicemembers, their families and retirees wherever they serve around the world.

□ 1345

These programs have been under scrutiny recently by those who question the value of that system. In order to find out how important the system is to the military life, the MWR panel held a lengthy and I think we can say balanced hearing on the benefit. And from the standpoint of the military, from the top ranks to the lowest, the view was unanimous and clear. Commissaries and exchanges are a great and invaluable benefit to the men and women in uniform.

For that reason, the House has included several provisions that strengthen the resale system and the quality of life for our soldiers and their families. For example, we were concerned that the pressures on service budgets would lead to the degradation of commissary funding and this bill takes strong action to protect those funds. Given the President's recent admission that the military is indeed underfunded in the fiscal year 1999 and beyond, these measures are even of greater importance, and I am pleased that they were included in this report.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight one other provision. Other Members, indeed all Americans, appreciate the dedication of the members of the Reserve and National Guard. They are often called to duty on short notice, whether they be deployed to Bosnia or to help to clean up after some national disaster.

I believe, and my colleagues on the conference committee have agreed, that it is time to increase those privileges. We have done that in this bill. It is a great bill and a great step and I

thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) for allowing me this time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), who is such a strong supporter of national security, and who is also the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) for their wise counsel and their ready availability to all the Members, including this Member, with respect to any aspect of our Committee on National Security reports and this conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank as well to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. HEFLEY), my subcommittee chairman and my friend. Unfortunately, he is not on the floor at the moment, but I hope that my good wishes and good feelings towards him will be conveyed. I thank him for his leadership and for the fair process by which he has handled the military construction portion of the Defense authorization bill. His collegial and bipartisan approach encourages and in fact has yielded an outcome which shuns parochialism and constantly strives for the good-government solutions that this bill represents to difficult funding issues. It is made even more difficult by the constrained fiscal environment which has been mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, I will not take up the Members' time in repeating the details of the report, only to point out however that the budget adopted by the conferees represents a considerable effort in bettering the quality of life for our military personnel.

A good portion of the $666 million that was added to the President's request for military construction is to be spent on the most intractable problem we face, military housing; $101 million towards improving existing family housing units and $153 million towards new barracks and dormitories. Quality of life of our military personnel will be improved as a result.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my colleagues we are far from our goal of adequate housing. More spending is needed. As this bill goes forward, the condition of the military installation continues to deteriorate. We will be working on it.

Though I support the bill, I want to express my continued concern that we are unable to assure a level playing field for small businesses. I have worked with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) on the CLASS proposal in the House passed authorization, because it improves the quality of life again for our service members and maintains a level playing field for small businesses to compete in the forwarding of household goods. Unfortunately, in the end, we were not able to get agreement on this. I can assure my colleagues we will work to resolve this issue in the best interests of our men and women in the Armed Forces.

Regrettably, also the Charter and Build provision was not included. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BATEMAN) in particular for his steadfast resolution in this regard. The provision is good for America because it provides a means for the Navy to acquire the ships it needs to meet our strategic requirements and sustain the industrial base needed to produce them. The issue, I assure my colleagues, will be revisited until it is won.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for their leadership on this issue. I tell my colleagues that they can rest assured that I will continue to work with them on behalf of the strategic interests of the United States of America.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER).

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this conference report, and I want to give a special thanks also to the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), ranking member. They have worked innumerable hours to bring this conference report to the floor today.

This year again, our committee faced difficult budget challenges. At the same time we heard witness after witness testify that readiness is suffering and that critical modernization needs are not being met.

Under these circumstances, this bill is an excellent product. The conferees struggled mightily to increase authorization levels for depot and real property maintenance, for training, construction, and key modernization accounts. We also provided a 3.6 percent troop pay raise and took other steps to address the Services' acute retention problems.

However, Mr. Speaker, I must tell my colleagues that this bill does not meet all of our national security needs. This is the fourteenth consecutive year that real defense spending will decline. Meanwhile, we have diverted $10 billion from key investments to Bosnia, even as North Korea tests multistage ballistic missiles over Japan.

We must increase our spending on defense if we hope to assure that our national security priorities are met. I urge support for this conference report.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Guam (Mr. UNDERWOOD), who is the ranking member on the Merchant Marine panel.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for yielding me this time, my ranking member, and I want to extend my congratulations to him and to the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) of the Committee on National Security for this excellent conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I too stand in strong support of H.R. 3616. Coming from the Island of Guam, which has had great experience with war and is in the middle of any potential contingency in Asia, we full well know that the stability of the world, the stability of our region depends upon a strong America and that a strong America depends upon a strong military. In fact, a strong military depends upon taking care of our young people in the military, and that is why we have so many concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I want to echo some of those concerns about the OPTEMPO and the concerns about readiness and some of the issues which have been brought to the surface under the leadership of the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BATEMAN), amongst others. I also want to draw a little bit of attention to benefits and quality of life issues for both Reserve and Active Service personnel.

I am happy that we were able to include in this conference report, in the legislation, a provision that would allow National Guardsmen to have commissary privileges when they are called up for duty in a federally declared disaster area, which is experience that the Guam National Guard had an unfortunate experience in with the recent typhoon Paco.

I am also happy to note that we have doubled the number of commissary visits from 12 to 24 under the leadership of MWR Chairman MCHUGH. I am also happy to report that by working very closely with the chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) and ranking member, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) we have authorized a car rental reimbursement program for service people who do not get their cars shipped overseas and get them delivered on time. This quality of life provision, with which especially those of us overseas are greatly familiar, will help reduce the burden that our men and women in uniform face when relocating to a permanent station overseas.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to draw attention to the fact that this legislation has many provisions for the missile defense of our Nation, which sometimes in the course of discussing missile defense, sometimes Alaska and Hawaii were left out and almost all the time Guam was left out.

The Nation must continue to develop robust theater missile defense, such as the Navy Theater Wide, which is especially well-suited to protect an insular area like Guam. And given the current level of missile development in North Korea, this is a matter of grave concern to my people, as it should be to the entire country.

I also want to thank the chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. HEFLEY) for accepting an amendment that will require the Department of Defense to report to

Congress their proposed plan for privatization of military electric and water utilities.

Mr. Speaker, I thank again both the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) and my good friend, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY), a very valuable member of our committee.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report and in admiration of the work of our chairman and the ranking member. This bill is not perfect, but it certainly deserves our support.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight two areas. One deals with nuclear weapons. The administration has not asked for enough money, and Congress has not provided enough money, to make sure that our nuclear weapons laboratories and production facilities can do the job that we are asking them to do. This bill does, however, put some extra money into those places and begins to make up some of that deficit. But it is very important that we keep a strong nuclear deterrent. That will be a tough job in the future.

The bill also supports our continuing efforts to dismantle Russian delivery systems and to put tighter security around Russian nuclear weapons and Russian nuclear materials, both of which are very important. With all the terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and instability around the world, we cannot afford to neglect either of these areas at all.

Secondly, this bill helps take some steps toward preparing for the future. Part of that is getting and keeping the best people we can. It has got a pay raise, and thanks to the work of the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATTS), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA), the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) and others, it has a demonstration project for military retiree health care that takes us a step closer to keeping our commitments to military retirees.

There is a study on the organization of the Pentagon to try to make sure that we are the best organized possible to deal with the challenges of the future. And there is a clear expression of the importance of joint experimentation to try to make sure that whatever money we spend on future procurement items is spent on the right things that will help us to meet the challenges of the future.

Mr. Speaker, we are going into a period where the challenges are more difficult than they have ever been in the past. We have a long way to go, but this bill helps take us in the right direction and deserves the support of all our colleagues.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. HARMAN), a strong member of our committee. A few moments ago, I expressed our appreciation for all the work that the gentlewoman has done in the area of national security and we are going to miss her.

(Ms. HARMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank our ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for his generous words. He knows that this is my last defense authorization bill.

I have served on the committee for three terms, 6 years, first under the distinguished chairmanship of Ron Dellums and now under the leadership of the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), THE ranking member.

I also want to acknowledge that our former chairman, the late Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, was a mentor of mine, and he is on my mind today, too.

Mr. Speaker, during the past three Congresses, the committee has strengthened our Nation's defense capabilities, but naturally I always hoped we could do more.

I have always believed we need to modernize our military by focusing on tomorrow's battles, not yesterday's. As such, I strongly believe Congress can do more to embrace the revolution in military affairs.

Similarly, we need to modernize our forces and continue development of advanced precision strike capabilities, like the B–2 Stealth bomber, and heavy lift capability, like the Air Force's C–17. In fact, I have always called the C–17 my fifth child.

The committee has started to address the imbalance in the tooth-to-tail ratio, and I commend it for that. In our defense downsizing, we have cut too much of our combat ability, the tooth, and left a disproportionate amount of our support structure, the tail.

As a representative of the district I call the aerospace center of the universe, I know what those cuts mean in human terms and in national security terms.

□ 1400

Mr. Speaker, we also must move to assure safety and opportunity to women without whom we could not field an all-volunteer force. I am pleased that this bill does not resegregate basic training by gender, a move backwards, in my view.

Mr. Speaker, though I will not be in Congress, I plan to continue to help shape our Nation's defense policies. My service to the women and men who build our defense assets and put their lives on the line for our country will not end with Congress's adjournment.

To my friends on the committee, to my friends who have been on the committee, it has been an honor to work with them.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. GRANGER), former mayor of Fort Worth, Texas, a very valuable member of our committee.

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the 1999 National Defense Authorization Act conference report. While this legislation does not contain everything many of us would like to have funded, I do want to take a moment to thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for their very, very hard work to produce a bill that meets the needs of our Armed Services.

A great American general once said, wars are fought with weapons, but they are won with soldiers. I believe our national defense policy should be based on this sound premise. Great weapons and great troops are what make America's military the best. However, I share the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE's) and the defense community's concerns that these funding levels are still inadequate to meet the increasing number of threats to our national security.

We cannot continue to do more with less. We cannot continue to expect to get ahead by just getting by. So while I support this legislation, I urge my colleagues to recommit themselves to the cause of national security. That is why it is so important the committee included funding for the F–16, V–22, F–22 and continued R&D for the multi-service, multi-role joint strike fighter. These weapons make a statement about our commitment to national security, and they will make a difference in preserving our national safety.

I am looking forward to working with the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) in his commitment to continuing to make national security our number one national priority.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. PICKETT), ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Research and Development.

Mr. PICKETT. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for their constructive work in reaching this conference agreement which I strongly support. I also want to commend all committee members, including our chairman and ranking member, for what they have done to make it possible for us to be here today with an agreement I think meets most of our defense needs.

Given the considerable budget limitations we have had to deal with this year, I am very encouraged with the conference agreement before us. While keeping spending limits within those set by the balanced budget agreement, the conference agreement continues to make progress in resolving several concerns about the Defense Department's proposed future years defense plan. I am pleased to report that the naval aviation and missile defense programs remain on schedule, that Army modernization plans remain intact and

that Air Force priorities have been maintained.

I am also encouraged that the conference agreement includes an honest effort to address each of the above issues. Several provisions provide additional authorization for promising programs, and others invest in what may prove to be leap-ahead technologies. As a result, it is my hope that this agreement will represent the beginning of an increased commitment to research and development.

As a long-standing member of the Committee on National Security, I have repeatedly recognized the virtue of maintaining adequate investment in our Nation's science and technology defense programs. To be sure, without such healthy investment in the 1960s and 1970s, our Nation would not have been able to prevail so decisively during the 1991 Gulf War, nor would our Nation's more recent deployments have proven successful.

As in the Gulf War example, today's force has benefited from planning and commitment. Innovative forethought and steadfast execution 20 and 30 years ago produced a superior and unmatched military in 1990, one founded on advances in stealth, precision targeting, communications, imagery and mobility, just to name a few.

But our challenge remains and continues today. And while it is a challenge, it is also a necessity that we indefinitely sustain the impressive force that we have. This conference agreement authorizes a number of programs designed to meet this challenge. On behalf of our Nation's soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, I ask all Members of this body to vote yes on final passage of the fiscal year 1999 defense authorization bill.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. COX), for the purpose of a colloquy.

Mr. COX of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me the time.

I rise to applaud the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the conferees for bringing to this House a measure that is vital to our national security. I am especially pleased that the conference report incorporates a number of the bills that made up our policy for freedom in China. These bills passed the House last fall with overwhelming bipartisan support.

One of the ''Policy for Freedom in China'' bills included in the conference report is the legislation written by the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), providing for design of a theater missile defense system for Taiwan. This significant provision was drafted in response to the Taiwan Straits crisis of 1996 in which the PRC fired nuclear-capable missiles surrounding Taiwan's major ports.

However, since the recent North Korean missile launch over Japan, it has become clear that other friends and allies in the region, not just Taiwan, are vulnerable to the threat of missile attacks.

I would like to inquire of the distinguished chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina, whether the conference report will, in fact, require the administration to address the missile defense needs of Taiwan and also our other East Asian allies.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. COX of California. I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman that he is correct. In light of the emerging evidence of North Korea's missile threat to the United States and our forces in the region, the conferees expanded the provision to include not just Taiwan but all of our allies in the Asian Pacific region. This is an important provision of the conference report, and I appreciate the gentleman's interest and leadership in this area.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. COX of California. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the chairman of the full committee also for working the missile defense issue, especially in light of the fact that the North Koreans are now very close to having an ICBM, that is intercontinental ballistic missile, capability. This provision is absolutely imperative.

Mr. COX of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the committee for his clarification of this matter. I commend the conferees for taking the critical steps to secure peace and stability in East Asia.

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

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, in the authorization conference report there is a large increase of $120 million for the Navy Theater Wide Ballistic Missile Defense system that we just spoke of. I believe $50 million of the increase was set aside specifically for improvements.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SAXTON. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, that is correct.

Most of the Navy Theater Wide funding to date has gone to support the new interceptor required to destroy incoming ballistic missiles. Additional funding for radar development is needed to assure that the system is capable of detecting and tracking ballistic missiles in flight.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I also note that the report discusses the availability of a prototype radar by the year 2001 to support testing of the new interceptor.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, that is true. In essence, this date is direction to the Navy to get started now on a radar development program in a way that best supports the Navy Theater Wide.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, the Navy has two options to upgrade its radar capabilities. One is an upgrade of the SPY–1 radar. I believe that this option would meet all the Navy Theater Wide system requirements while also meeting the projected cruise missile threat.

The other option is a single-purpose radar system that would be mounted in the superstructure of an Aegis cruiser. The Navy has not taken a formal position on which option they believe is preferable. I believe and I strongly believe this SPY–1 upgrade is the right alternative, and I believe we need to get started on a radar development now to support the NTW mission and the new interceptor.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman because our conference report, and that is supported by the chairman and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), supports the gentleman's goal of vigorously pursuing the radar improvements that the gentleman has accurately noted are needed. The $50 million increase to the Navy Theater Wide program is specifically dedicated to accelerating these radar improvements and to ensure that the radar can support the full range of Navy requirements, including cruise and ballistic missile threats. And, once again, this is a very imperative program.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT), a very active and knowledgeable member of our committee.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, these are very difficult remarks for me, but I cannot keep faith with hundreds of thousands of Americans without rising to express major concern about a portion of this bill. The Family Research Council, the Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America and Focus on the Family are all calling for a no vote on this bill. They are doing that because they love this country. They are doing that because they really support a strong military.

Their concern is that this report failed to include language on requiring separate gender training in PT, in small units recommended by the Kassebaum-Baker panel, included in our House bill and endorsed by a letter to the conferees signed by all of senior leadership and by all but one of our full committee chairs.

Not a single woman plays professional football. Not a single woman plays professional baseball. Men and women are different, and they need to be trained separately in PT.

No matter how long we worship at the altar of political correctness, it will not change this fact. We need to send this bill back to conference so we can report out a good bill that we can

pass that is really going to support our military. If we continue with the present policy, it assures continued embarrassing sexual misconduct scandals.

The chaplain at Fort Leonard Wood said what we are trying to do runs contrary to the powers of nature. Secondly, it is contrary to good order and discipline. It puts readiness at risk. It puts the lives of our young military people at risk.

Please send this back to committee. Support these hundreds of thousands of Americans that want a strong military and appropriate training for our young people.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN), who has been so active in helping establish the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program demonstration project.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 3 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to the ranking member not only for yielding me this time but particularly for his leadership and the leadership of the chairman of our Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE).

There are so many reasons to rise in support of this bill, but, more than any, the underlying theme of this bill is that our Armed Forces are not just about weapons or strategies or technology, but the heart of our Armed Forces are the people who have to operate the weapons, who have to represent us in this country and abroad.

This bill is primarily designed to ensure that we can recruit, that we can train, that we can sustain our enlisted personnel, the very best that this country has to offer, and we can also treat military retirees with the gratitude and the respect that they deserve.

There is one provision in this bill that I want to underscore, because it does address a situation that has occurred over the years, really since 1956, when the military started to back off what was considered to be a commitment. When people enlisted in the military right up until last year they were told in recruitment literature that they would be entitled to free, quality, lifetime health care.

This bill addresses that. It does so initially in a demonstration project. One of those demonstration projects is designed to extend the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan, as the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and other speakers have said, to military retirees. It is the right thing to do.

□ 1415

Two people have died over the past year who spent a great deal of effort, who provided wonderful leadership, particularly for military retirees but also when they were in the military, and specifically over the last few years on this issue: General Pennington, who led the Retired Officers' Association, and Colonel Vince Smith, in my own district. Vince Smith and his wife Edie have worked for 6 years on this provision. These two heroes passed away knowing that this Congress responded to what they knew was a legitimate, and very important, request.

With this legislation, we honor their memory and the memory of millions of people, men and women, who have served this country. They deserve the greatest respect we can afford them. They deserve the commitment that this bill entails. They deserve the kind of treatment that we will be able to eventually provide, which does not end when somebody leaves the service, but continues throughout their retirement years.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill we should all support.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAPPAS).

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I simply want to stand here and rise in support of this conference report. There may not be everything that is contained within it that every single Member agrees to, but overall, I think, Mr. Speaker, that it moves the defense and the national interests of our country forward, provides some very necessary funds for programs and our personnel, and I thank the chairman and the ranking member and all the members of the committee for working together in a bipartisan fashion to bring this forth.

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report to the FY 99 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 3616). While we continue to underfund our national security strategy, this being the fourteenth consecutive year of a declining defense budget, this conference report meets our defense priorities within this constrained budget environment. Last week, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense presented the President with the stark realities of the state of military readiness and weapon systems modernization shortfalls that our military is now experiencing. The President indicated his willingness to address these funding shortfalls in next year's budget request, which is a long time coming.

With regard to a specific land conveyance provision in the bill (section 2833), I am pleased that we were able to make these technical, but necessary changes to the conveyance terms of real property from the Army's Redstone Arsenal to the Alabama Space Science Exhibit Commission. This section ensures that the future development of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center previously conveyed by the Army to the appropriate agency of the State of Alabama will remain consistent with the long-term master plan for the use of that property as agreed upon by the Center, Redstone Arsenal and the Marshall Space Flight Center, Present financing arrangements and mortgages relating to new and existing facilities at the Space and Rocket Center are preserved, and appropriate coordination of further financing initiatives, mortgages and other debt society arrangements in accordance with the agreed-upon master plan is assured.

I urge my colleagues to support this conference report.

Mr. COX of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to applaud Chairman SPENCE and the Conferees for legislation vital to our country's national security.

I am especially pleased to note that the bill includes a number of key elements of the ''Policy for Freedom in China'' that passed the House last fall with overwhelming bipartisan majorities.

They include: H.R. 2647, Representative TILLIE FOWLER's bill enhancing the President's authority over enterprises in this country controlled by China's People's Liberation Army under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (Section 1237).

H.R. 2195, Representative CHRIS SMITH's bill strengthening Customs Service interdiction of products made by China's infamous Laogai slave-labor camps (Sections 3701–3703).

H.R. 2232, Representative ED ROYCE's Radio Free Asia Act, increasing the free flow of information in the major dialects of China and Tibet (Sections 3901–3903).

H.R. 2386, Representative DUNCAN HUNTER's bill providing for design of a theatre missile defense system for Taiwan (Section 1533).

This key provision, which passed the House 301–116, was designed initially to respond to the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996, in which Beijing conducted missile firings into the international waters adjacent to Taiwan's key ports.

In light of the emerging evidence of North Korea's missile threat to U.S. allies and forces in the region, the Senate and the conference have improved this provision by broadening it to include not just Taiwan but all our other key regional allies in the Asian-Pacific region.

As a result, this important provision will serve to enhance security not just for Taiwan but for other key allies like Japan and the Republic of Korea.

I strongly support this enhancement of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, with approval of this conference report both the House and Senate will have enacted our Policy for Freedom in China, thereby abandoning the Clinton Administration's empty approach and making important progress in ensuring peace and security in East Asia.

I appreciate the consideration the Conference has given to these issues and appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of passage of the report.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker. I rise in strong support of the conference report on H.R. 3616, the Defense Authorization for FY 1999.

I am very pleased that the Conferees agreed to strike language included in the Senate-passed bill that would have allowed the Department of Defense (DoD) an unprecedented exemption to existing law to import a very dangerous class of chemicals called Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs). Congress banned the manufacture and importation of PCBs in 1976 as part of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). PCBs when released into the environment collect in the body and cause a broad range of adverse health effects including cancer, reproductive damage, and birth defects. When incinerated, PCBs release

dioxin—one of the most toxic chemicals known. PCBs accumulate in the environment and move toward the top of the food chain, contaminating fish, birds, and ultimately humans.

The language originally included in Section 321 of the Senate bill, S. 2060, would have nullified over twenty years of sound environmental law and jeopardized the health and safety of Americans by allowing the DoD to import foreign-produced PCBs into the United States. This proposed change was never reviewed by the Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over TSCA. It is also important to note that current law already provided an exemption that allows the DoD to return PCB waste to the United States if the PCBs were manufactured in the United States, shipped to a foreign military base, have been continuously under U.S. control, and now need to be returned for disposal. This exemption ensures that any PCBs exported from the United States to one of our foreign military installations can be returned.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Chairman and Ranking Member for striking the Senate language and instead directing the DoD to submit a detailed report to Congress on the true size and scope of the PCB problem at our overseas military bases. I look forward to working with the National Security, Commerce, and Transportation & Infrastructure Committees to address this problem and I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

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

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

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

[Roll No. 458]

YEAS—373

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Archer
Armey
Bachus
Baesler
Baker
Baldacci
Ballenger
Barcia
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Barton
Bass
Bateman
Becerra
Bentsen
Bereuter
Berman
Berry
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop
Blagojevich
Bliley
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bono
Borski
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (PA)
Brown (CA)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Bryant
Bunning
Burr
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Canady
Cannon
Capps
Cardin
Carson
Castle
Chabot
Chambliss
Chenoweth
Christensen
Clay
Clayton
Clement
Clyburn
Coble
Coburn
Collins
Combest
Condit
Cook
Cooksey
Costello
Cox
Coyne
Cramer
Crane
Crapo
Cubin
Cummings
Cunningham
Danner
Davis (FL)
Davis (VA)
Deal
DeGette
DeLauro
DeLay
Deutsch
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Dooley
Doolittle
Doyle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Edwards
Ehlers
Emerson
Engel
English
Ensign
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Ewing
Farr
Fattah
Fawell
Fazio
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fossella
Fowler
Fox
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Frost
Gallegly
Ganske
Gejdenson
Gekas
Gephardt
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gilman
Gonzalez
Goodlatte
Goodling
Gordon
Graham
Granger
Green
Greenwood
Gutknecht
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hamilton
Hansen
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayworth
Hefley
Hefner
Herger
Hill
Hilleary
Hilliard
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hobson
Holden
Horn
Hostettler
Houghton
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Inglis
Istook
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (WI)
Johnson, E.B.
Jones
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kasich
Kelly
Kennedy (MA)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kim
King (NY)
Kingston
Kleczka
Klink
Knollenberg
Kolbe
LaFalce
LaHood
Lampson
Lantos
Largent
Latham
LaTourette
Lazio
Leach
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
Livingston
LoBiondo
Lucas
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Manton
Manzullo
Markey
Martinez
Mascara
Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McCrery
McDade
McGovern
McHale
McHugh
McInnis
McIntosh
McIntyre
McKeon
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Menendez
Metcalf
Mica
Millender-McDonald
Miller (FL)
Mink
Moakley
Mollohan
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murtha
Myrick
Neal
Nethercutt
Neumann
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nussle
Olver
Ortiz
Oxley
Packard
Pallone
Pappas
Parker
Pascrell
Pastor
Paxon
Pease
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pickering
Pickett
Pitts
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Portman
Price (NC)
Quinn
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Redmond
Regula
Reyes
Riggs
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rogan
Rogers
Ros-Lehtinen
Rothman
Roukema
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ryun
Sabo
Salmon
Sanchez
Sandlin
Sanford
Sawyer
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaefer, Dan
Schaffer, Bob
Schumer
Scott
Serrano
Sessions
Shadegg
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
Stearns
Stenholm
Stokes
Strickland
Stump
Stupak
Sununu
Talent
Tanner
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Thomas
Thompson
Thornberry
Thune
Thurman
Tiahrt
Tierney
Torres
Towns
Traficant
Turner
Upton
Visclosky
Walsh
Wamp
Waters
Watkins
Watt (NC)
Watts (OK)
Waxman
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Weygand
White
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson
Wise
Wolf
Wynn
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NAYS—50

Barrett (WI)
Bartlett
Blumenauer
Bonior
Campbell
Conyers
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
Delahunt
Filner
Franks (NJ)
Furse
Goode
Gutierrez
Hoekstra
Hooley
Jackson (IL)
Kind (WI)
Klug
Kucinich
Lee
Lofgren
Lowey
Luther
McDermott
McKinney
Meeks (NY)
Miller (CA)
Minge
Morella
Nadler
Oberstar
Obey
Owens
Paul
Payne
Pelosi
Petri
Rangel
Rivers
Rohrabacher
Rush
Sanders
Sensenbrenner
Shays
Stark
Velazquez
Vento
Woolsey
Yates

NOT VOTING—11

Aderholt
Brady (TX)
Burton
Ehrlich
Goss
Johnson, Sam
Kennelly
Poshard
Pryce (OH)
Riley
Shaw

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Mrs. LOWEY and Mr. JACKSON of Illinois changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts changed his vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. RILEY. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and was not present for rollcall No. 458. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 458, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted ''yea.''

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained on rollcall No. 458. I ask that the RECORD reflect, that had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report just agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Carolina?

There was no objection.

WORKFORCE IMPROVEMENT AND PROTECTION ACT OF 1998

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 513 and ask for its immediate consideration.