Conference agreement compared with:	
New budget (obligational) authority, fiscal year 1999 ...	(254,539,000)
Budget estimates of new (obligations) authority, fiscal year 2000	35,360,000
House bill, fiscal year 2000	(23,900,000)
Senate bill, fiscal year 2000	18,360,000
District of Columbia funds:	
New Budget (obligational) authority, fiscal year 1999	*6,790,168,737*
Budget estimates of new (obligational) authority, fiscal year 2000	*6,745,278,500*
House bill, fiscal year 2000	*6,785,832,500*
Senate bill, fiscal year 2000	*6,749,882,500*
Conference agreement, fiscal year 2000	*6,778,432,500*
Conference agreement compared with:	
New budget (obligational) authority, fiscal year 1999	*(11,736,237)*
Budget estimates of new (obligations) authority, fiscal year 2000	*33,154,000*
House bill, fiscal year 2000	*(7,400,000)*
Senate bill, fiscal year 2000	*28,550,000*

ERNEST J. ISTOOK, Jr.,
RANDY ''DUKE'' CUNNINGHAM,
TODD TIAHRT,
ROBERT B. ADERHOLT,
JO ANN EMERSON,
JOHN E. SUNUNU,
BILL YOUNG,
Managers on the Part of the House.

KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON,
JON KYL,
TED STEVENS,
Managers on the Part of the Senate.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was inadvertently not recorded on rollcall vote 379, the conference report on H.R. 2488, the Financial Freedom Act. Had I been recorded, I would have been recorded as a no vote on final passage of H.R. 2488.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 167. Concurrent resolution authorizing the Architect of the Capitol to permit temporary construction and other work on the Capitol Grounds that may be necessary for construction of a building on Constitution Avenue Northwest, between 2nd Street Northwest and Louisiana Avenue Northwest.

The message also announced that the Senate agrees to the report of the committee on conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2488) ''An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to sections 105 and 211 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2000.''

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill and a concurrent resolution of the following titles in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1543. An act to amend the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 to release and protect the release of tobacco production and marketing information.

S. Con. Res. 51. Concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment or recess of the Senate and a conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives.

PERMISSION FOR COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE TO HAVE UNTIL MIDNIGHT, SEPTEMBER 7, 1999, TO FILE REPORTS ON H.R. 1714, H.R. 1858, H.R. 486, H.R. 2130, AND H.R. 2506

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce be permitted to file its reports on the following bills no later than midnight September 7, 1999:

H.R. 1714;
H.R. 1858;
H.R. 486;
H.R. 2130; and
H.R. 2506.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

MAKING IN ORDER AT ANY TIME ON LEGISLATIVE DAY OF AUGUST 5, 1999, CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1905, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order at any time on the legislative day of August 5, 1999, to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 1905) making appropriations for the legislative branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes; the conference report be considered as read and all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration be waived, and; the previous question be ordered to final adoption without intervening motion except 20 minutes of debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their designees and one motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2684, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 275 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 275

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2684) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived except as follows: beginning with ''Provided'' on page 70, line 15, through ''Act:'' on line 22; and page 93, lines 1 through 6. Where points of order are waived against part of a paragraph, points of order against a provision in another part of such paragraph may be made only against such provision and not against the entire paragraph. Before consideration of any other amendment it shall be in order to consider the amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, which may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, may amend portions of the bill not yet read for amendment, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. Points of order against the amendment printed in the report for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived. During consideration of the bill for further amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my good

friend, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. 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. 275.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 275 is an open rule that governs the consideration of H.R. 2684, the fiscal year 2000 appropriations bill for the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and independent agencies.

The rule provides for 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the ranking member and the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. All points of order against consideration of the bill with respect to unauthorized or legislative provisions as well as the transfer of funds in the general appropriations bill are waived, except as specified by the rule.

After general debate, it shall first be in order to consider the amendment printed in the Committee on Rules report. This amendment would restore funding for the Selective Service, which the bill itself eliminates. The Committee on Rules understands that Members on both sides of the aisle have strong feelings about the value of the selective service.

Therefore, we felt it was appropriate and fair to provide waivers for this amendment and let the House work its will. The amendment is bipartisan, and will be offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM), a member of the Committee on Appropriations, along with the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), who chairs the Committee on Armed Services. Other cosponsors include the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN), the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), all of whom serve either on the Committee on Appropriations or Committee on Armed Services.

Points of order against the amendment for failure to comply with clause 2 of Rule XXI are waived. The amendment shall be debatable for 20 minutes, equally divided and controlled by a proponent and an opponent, and it is not subject to amendment or division of the question.

To ensure orderly consideration of the bill, the rule provides priority recognition to Members who have preprinted their amendments in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Further, the rule allows the Chair to postpone votes and reduce voting time on postponed questions to 5 minutes, as long as the first vote in a series is a 15-minute vote.

Finally, the rule provides for the customary motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, the VA-HUD appropriations bill combines fiscal responsibility with social responsibility. Under the Republican majority, Congress has fought tooth and nail for a balanced budget through lower government spending. We have combed the budget for waste, duplication, and inefficiency; and we have made the tough decisions necessary to ensure that the Federal Government lives within its means. Today we are seeing the fruits of our labor in a balanced budget and projected surpluses as far as the eye can see.

But this is no time to rest on our laurels. We must be ever vigilant in our responsibility to the taxpayers to spend their hard-earned dollars wisely, while fulfilling the many obligations of government.

One of our most important obligations is to the veterans of this country, who have been willing to trade their lives for the freedom and democracy that we enjoy. It may be impossible to compensate these individuals for their contributions and sacrifices, but this legislation makes a good faith effort by increasing funding for veterans' medical care by $1.7 billion. While the President recommended a freeze in spending on VA health in his budget, this legislation provides the largest increase in veterans' healthcare that we have seen in decades.

This increase brings spending for veterans' medical care to a total of $19 billion. We did not pull this figure out of thin air. The Committee on Veterans Affairs heard testimony from the veterans service organizations and the VA healthcare officials from across the country before agreeing that a $1.7 billion boost in spending would meet our veterans' needs.

We all want to give our veterans the best healthcare possible, and we probably all agree that the VA health system is inadequate in many respects, but money alone will not solve all of these problems. But an additional $1.7 billion is significant. This money will provide the needed injection into VA healthcare while the system as a whole is examined with an eye toward reforms that can have a much more profound impact on veterans' health.

The Federal Government also has a responsibility to the poorest, most vulnerable of our citizens. We all have debated the importance of Medicare and Social Security as we watch our elderly population grow and life expectancies increase. This bill maintains our commitment to America's senior citizens by providing $660 million for seniors' housing assistance.

The bill also recognizes the challenges faced by people with disabilities, who will receive $194 million in housing aid through this legislation.

To ensure the continued availability of affordable housing for low income families, this legislation increases funding for the Housing Certificate Fund by $1 billion. This fund is used for the renewal and administration of Section 8 contracts. In other words, the bill provides 100 percent full funding for expiring Section 8 housing contracts.

In addition to the government's responsibilities to our veterans and the poor, Americans have a shared responsibility to protect our environment for future generations. This VA-HUD bill provides $7.3 billion for the Environmental Protection Agency, which is $106 million more than the President requested. Not only is this commitment to the environment more generous than the President's, but it targets the money to local programs designed to protect our resources, rather than bolstering the salaries and expenses of bureaucrats in government agencies in Washington.

For example, the State and Tribal Assistance Grants, which include the State revolving funds for clean and safe drinking water, will receive almost $2.3 billion under this bill. That is $362 million more than the President requested.

Through the VA-HUD bill, we also fulfill our responsibility to so many of our communities that have experienced the devastation of natural disaster. In times of true emergencies and catastrophic loss, our Federal Government has a responsibility to reach out and help people put their lives back together.

This legislation provides more than $3 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which represents an increase of almost $500 million over last year. In fact, disaster relief programs, emergency management planning and assistance, the Emergency Food and Shelter Program and the flood mitigation fund will all be funded above last year's level.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hard work of the gentleman from New York (Chairman WALSH) to fulfill these many responsibilities and still pare back spending to stay within the limits set in the budget agreement between Congress and the President. It is the fiscal restraint that the gentleman from New York (Chairman WALSH) and the Committee on Appropriations have demonstrated through this bill that is required if our budget surplus is to materialize and be maintained into the future.

This VA-HUD bill funds our priorities, from supporting our Nation's veterans and housing our Nation's poor, to protecting our environment and rebuilding communities devastated by natural disasters. At the same time, this legislation will lower government spending by $1.2 billion.

Some may not agree with the allocation of dollars among the many important programs in this bill. Fortunately, under this wide open rule they are free to offer amendments to rearrange the spending in this bill, so long as their amendments comply with the rules of the House.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is one more challenge we must be willing to meet as we work to change the culture in Washington. We cannot continue to accept the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars merely because it is dedicated to a program with a popular name or one with good intentions. We must be diligent in our protection of taxpayer interests, both as wage earners and as members of a free society, where government fulfills its legitimate functions and gets out of the way.

We recognize that veterans' programs, environmental protection, and emergency assistance are all key government functions, but we also understand that the government can be more efficient in achieving its desired purpose. There are always places where we can trim spending without undermining our objectives. It is our challenge to reconcile these realities to achieve multiple goods.

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Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in voting yes on this open rule, and in support of the principles of fiscal and social responsibility which the VA-HUD bill protects.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, congressional spending is all about making choices, and the VA-HUD appropriation bill shows us very loud and clear the choices made by my Republican colleagues.

In short, Mr. Speaker, with this bill they have chosen tax breaks for the very rich over health care for veterans and housing for low-income families. They are determined to give the richest Americans a whopping tax break at the expense of just about everybody else, and they have even resorted to shortchanging veterans on their health care.

When this bill is properly funded, it makes sure we keep our promises to our veterans. It helps keep roofs over the heads of low-income disabled and elderly Americans. It protects the environment. It helps make repairs after natural disasters, and it turns scientific research on the heavens into real answers for today's problems on the Earth.

But these cuts mean those worthy programs will begin to decline. The agency that takes the biggest cut, Mr. Speaker, despite the great service they perform, is NASA. Mr. Speaker, NASA expands our frontiers into space. They perform research on issues like El Nino and droughts, issues that have real meaning to the people of the United States.

But Mr. Speaker, this bill cuts their funding. It cuts the funding they received last year by $1 billion. It will hurt American competitiveness, and could mean over 30 space missions either get canceled or deferred.

The other agency that gets big cuts is the housing department. Even though 5 million very low-income families get no housing assistance at all, even though there is an average wait of about 2 years for Section 8 housing, this bill cuts housing programs, not only by what they need to keep up with inflation but also below the actual dollar amount that was spent last year.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who grew up in public housing, these people save lives, these people give people hope, they give people dignity, they give people a chance, especially when so many Americans do not earn a living wage, despite working full time jobs. Jobs may be more plentiful these days, Mr. Speaker, but affordable housing is not. But this bill cuts public housing by hundreds of millions of dollars.

Finally and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, this bill does not provide enough for veterans' health care. It lowers the standard of medical care for the men and women who risk their lives in military service. Over 60 veterans' groups say this bill falls $1.3 billion short of the amount needed to provide adequate health care for veterans. That, Mr. Speaker, is inexcusable.

Last night in the Committee on Rules we tried to do something about that. My Democratic colleagues and I tried to include the amendment of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) to delay the capital gains tax break and use $730 million of that savings for veterans' health care. But we were opposed by every single Republican on the committee.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to this bill because this bill sells our veterans short. It risks leaving low-income families out in the cold, and it will drop the United States out of first place in space exploration.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote no on the previous question. If the previous question is defeated, I will offer an amendment to the rule to make in order the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) restoring $730 million to veterans' health care. The additional funding will come from delaying the capital gains tax for about 1 year.

Mr. Speaker, there was also a matter on which we agreed and for that I want to thank my chairman, Chairman DREIER, for his leadership. He worked out a compromise for a Democratic colleague, Mr. EDWARDS. Then he graciously reconvened the Rules Committee so that the authorizing committee could withdraw their objection to Mr. EDWARDS' veterans hospital.

Mr. Speaker, I include the text of the amendment of the gentleman from Texas and extraneous materials in the RECORD.

The material referred to is as follows:

At the end of the resolution add the following new section:

''SECTION . Notwithstanding any other provision of this resolution, it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider the following amendment if offered by Representative Edwards of Texas or his designee. The amendment shall be considered as read and shall be debatable for 60 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent. The amendment is not subject to amendment or to a division of the question. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the amendment.''

In the paragraph in title I for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Medical Care, account—

(1) after the second dollar amount, insert ''(increased by $730,000,000)''; and

(2) strike the period at the end and insert a colon and the following:

Provided further, That any reduction in the rate of tax on net capital gain of individuals or corporations under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 enacted during 1999 shall not apply to a taxable year beginning before January 1, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote no on the question so we can give our veterans more of the health care they deserve.

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

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the chairman of the subcommittee who has worked so hard on this bill.

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

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) for the courtesy of yielding me time, and to the Committee on Rules, both the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY), for the way they received this bill in committee. I thought we had a good hearing, and we got a good rule.

Mr. Chairman, it is with some sadness that I bring this rule before the House today. I have worked with my partner on this bill from the beginning, a gentleman who I really did not know that well when I began as chair of the subcommittee. As I said, sadly, he is not with us tonight to bring this rule before the House.

That is my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), who suffered a tragic loss this week when his father, Robert, who served with such distinction and honor in this House for 18 years as a member of the Committee on Armed Services, passed away. The gentleman from West Virginia asked that we delay the full debate on this bill. It was obviously a heartfelt request. We honored that request, but we do bring the rule before the House, and we will withhold the consideration of the bill until we return in the fall.

So I miss him and I wish him well, and I offer my condolences and those of my family and those of my colleagues to the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) and his family.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have done the best we can with a very difficult allocation in a very difficult environment, given the constraints and the budget caps we voted for in 1997. We have brought before the House a bill that hold discretionary spending at

$68.5 billion. That is $3.4 billion below the President's request. It is $1.2 billion below the 1999 funding level.

Much has been said already tonight about veterans' medical care. Mr. Speaker, I know that Members know there is no higher priority in this Congress than our commitment to our veterans, and to meeting and keeping the promises that we made. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we raised the President's request for veterans by $1.7 billion.

My colleague stated earlier that we have left the veterans short. If we had left the veterans short, what did the President do, Mr. Speaker? This is the request of the authorizing committee, fully funded, at $1.7 billion. This is the budget resolution level of funding.

I have with me today a packet, a letter and some attachments that I have provided here on the Republican leadership desk that is available to all Members. I hope they would take advantage of it.

If I could just briefly read a couple of lines from it, in addition to the $1.7 billion increase for medical care, H.R. 2684 provides an increase for the medical and prosthetic research account, provides additional claims analysis in the Veterans' Benefits Administration, and doubles the request for the State extended care facilities grants program.

H.R. 2684 also fully funds the budget for the National Cemetery Administration, the State Cemetery Construction Program, and the Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims. This is a dramatic increase, Mr. Speaker. There has never been, never been an increase as large as the increase that is incorporated in this bill for veterans' medical care.

For those who would suggest that we have not supported our veterans, I would remind them that in the 1990 budget of this House of Representatives, VA medical care was at a level of $11.3 billion. If this bill is enacted, Mr. Speaker, that amount will increase to $19 billion. That is a 70 percent increase over this past decade. No other Federal department, to my knowledge, has had those kinds of increases, nor that level of commitment from the Members of this body.

Mr. Speaker, I would also offer for consideration and include in the RECORD letters from the National Commander of the American Legion and the national legislative director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who urge all Members to support this bill, to support this level of funding. It is their consideration that this is the proper level of funding.

I would ask all Members to consider those important veterans' service organizations when they vote.

Mr. Speaker, veterans health care and the Veterans Administration is not the only aspect of this bill. It is a very broad-reaching complex bill. It includes HUD. And in the area of HUD funding, we have fully funded the Section 8 housing voucher program, which is a good program, a successful program. We have fully funded senior and disabled housing in this bill.

Have there been cuts? There have been cuts, Mr. Speaker, but we had to find places within the budget to reduce spending in order to meet our spending allocations. None of the cuts are draconian cuts.

Mr. Speaker, the most difficult and severest of cuts were in the NASA budget. However, the committee went back in and put $400 million back into the NASA budget. We are still below the level that we need to make these commitments, but I would remind my colleagues in all of these, in FEMA, EPA, the National Science Foundation, we are in the third inning of a 9-inning ballgame. We have a long way to go.

I would ask my colleagues to work with us on this as we go towards conference to try to provide, if possible, additional resources to meet those commitments.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations.

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

Mr. Speaker, today this House passed a tax bill that is not real. It is a campaign document more than it is legislation. This bill is not real, either. It is another political document that is not legislation.

We all want to be able to cut taxes, but the majority party apparently wants to push its political plans so hard that they are willing to say no new dollars for social security, no new dollars for Medicare. Now they are willing, in this bill, to crush our ability to conduct science, except for the station and the shuttle. They are willing to trash one of the President's top priorities, AmeriCorps. They are willing to take a half a billion dollar cut in public housing. They are willing to take $3 billion out of the Labor-Health-Education appropriation bill to pay for this bill.

The majority party is telling the country that to pay for their tax scheme and to pay for this bill, they are willing to cut education, cut health care, cut the National Institutes of Health by one-third. Members know that is a phony promise. That is a false promise. It is a phony budget.

Mr. Speaker, we asked the Committee on Rules for one amendment, to delay for one year the capital gains gift to the high rollers of this society, and use that money to pay for additional veterans' health care, because the President's request was inadequate and so is this bill on the item of health care. But the majority party says no, we cannot do that, because we will bend jurisdictional rules.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to my friends on the majority side of the aisle, they have obliterated budget rules. One day they use CBO spending estimates. The next day they use OMB spending estimates. The next day they make the most laughable claims that routine activities like the Census are emergencies in order to cover spending.

If they can do all of that, it seems to me that they can bend their rules a little to help veterans who did not bother about budget rules when they answered their country's call.

In the words of the old song, ''Whose side are you on?'' Are we on the side of the high rollers, or are we on the side of the schoolkids, on the side of sick people, and on the side of veterans?

What Members do on this vote will speak more loudly than all of the summer speeches we give when we go home tonight after this session is over. I urge Members to support the Paralyzed Veterans of America, support the Disabled American Veterans, support the Vietnam Veterans of America. Vote no on the previous question on this rule. Get a new rule. Put veterans ahead on the train, rather than having them ride in the caboose.

I urge Members to vote no on the previous question on the rule.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Paul).

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for this rule. It is a fair rule. There is plenty of room for debate and room for amendment.

I would like to congratulate the Committee on Appropriations for doing something very important in this bill by deleting all the funding for the Selective Service System. I think that is very important.

As was described by the gentlewoman earlier, there will be an attempt early on. The first amendment that will come to the floor will be to put that money back in.

I would like my colleagues to consider very seriously not to do that, because there is no need for the Selective Service System. There is only one purpose for the Selective Service System. That is to draft young 18-year-olds. That is unfair.

There is no such thing as a fair draft system. It is always unfair to those who are less sophisticated, who either avoid the draft or are able to get into the National Guard, or as it was in the Civil War, pay to get their way out.

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The draft is a 20th century phenomenon, and I am delighted to see and very pleased that the Committee on Appropriations saw fit to delete this money because this, to me, is reestablishing one of the American traditions, that we do not believe in conscription. Conscription and drafting is a totalitarian idea.

I would like to remind many of my conservative colleagues that, if we brought a bill to this floor where we would say that we would register all of our guns in the United States, there would be a hue and cry about how horrible it would be. Yet, we casually accept this program of registering 18-

year-old kids to force them to go and fight the political wars that they are not interested in. This is a very, very serious idea and principle of liberty.

So when the time comes in September to vote for this, I beg that my fellow colleagues will think seriously about this, the needlessness to spend $25 million to continue to register young people to go off to fight needless wars. They are not even permitted to drink beer; and, yet, we expect them to be registered and to use them to fight the wars that the older generation starts for political and narrow-minded reasons.

So when the time comes in September, please consider that there are ways that one can provide for an army without conscription. We have had the reinstitution of registration of the draft for 20 years. It has been wasted money. We can save the $25 million. We should do it. We should not put this money back in. We do not need the Selective Service System.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), the chairman of the Democratic Caucus.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, this rule should be defeated. Members of the Republican Party have shamelessly turned their backs on the veterans of this Nation, and they have done so in this rule and this bill.

My Republican colleagues have shown, by failing to make in order the Edwards amendment, that they are perfectly willing to sacrifice the health care for the veterans of this Nation. For what, Mr. Speaker? For a capital gains tax cut that will provide the lion's share of its benefits, some 76 percent to those Americans making over $200,000.

Our veterans who depend upon the Veterans Administration for their health care have sacrificed much for their country and are now being asked to sacrifice yet again to the very wealthiest in this Nation. In my book, Mr. Speaker, that simply does not add up.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) asked the Committee on Rules for the right to offer an amendment to the VA–HUD appropriations bill that would increase veterans health care by $730 million and delay the capital gains tax cut for 1 year. While the Committee on Appropriations is to be commended for adding more funds to veterans health care, the money available simply will not cover the need. Yet, the Republican majority is willing to ignore this critical need all in the name of preserving a tax cut that will provide most of its benefits for the very richest among us.

For that reason, I must oppose this rule. I cannot in good conscience go home to my constituents next week and tell them I am supporting cutting veterans health care so that those who have all they need and want, who can afford the very best health care available, might enjoy a benefit of a tax cut.

This is a shameless situation, Mr. Speaker, and one I know my constituents will not soon forget.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I really feel compelled to comment. This bill is real. This bill involves many difficult decisions and very hard choices, and it is prioritizing. This bill does not have anything to do with a tax cut. It is not a revenue bill. This is a spending bill.

I would suggest, what is real? What is real about the offset that is being proposed by the minority to fund the veterans medical care? They are suggesting that we use revenues from a tax cut that they have urged and that, indeed, the President has pledged to veto. Is that real? No. Is it disingenuous? Absolutely.

Now, if there is a real effort to provide veterans with additional funds, then make the hard decisions. That is what we did. We made hard, tough decisions. These were not fun.

I do not particularly like the reductions that we had to make in NASA. I like to look forward, and the subcommittee is the same way. We believe in the research and the science that is occurring there. But those were hard decisions. We did not just pull a figure out of a hat like a proposed tax cut.

Now, if there was some support on the other side for the tax cut, maybe it would be more real. It still is fiction. But the fact is, if there is going to be an offset, let us offer a real offset. What we have done is put $1.7 billion on top of the frozen budget that the President has offered for the veterans for the last 3 years. This is a true commitment.

The Congress has been a friend to the veteran. It is obvious in this bill that this was a priority of the subcommittee. I would say once again this is very real. Is it completed? No. This is a work in progress. But these are real decisions. I would ask that, if there are changes to be made, then real offsets, real suggestions, real decisions need to be made here.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the former ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, a Congress that can pass a risky trillion dollar tax cut today surely should be able to adequately fund veterans health care tonight.

I want to genuinely thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the chairman, and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) for their work to end a hard freeze on veterans health care, given a budget devastated by massive irresponsible tax cuts.

Honestly, they did as well as anyone could. However, I rise tonight in opposition to this rule because it prohibits this House from adequately funding veterans health care.

A Congress that can find a trillion dollar tax cut just 9 hours ago to cut taxes mainly for the wealthy surely, surely can find one-tenth of 1 percent of that amount to keep our Nation's commitment to veterans, to middle- and low-income veterans, veterans who are waiting months for basic health services if, indeed, they have not been cut off from those services already.

The question before us, Mr. Speaker, is very straightforward. Whose side are we on? Are we on the side of veterans tonight who have fought, sacrificed, and suffered to defend our Nation, or are we going to be on the side of the wealthiest Americans who do not really need a tax cut to affect their life style?

Is this Congress going to fight for veterans who have fought for us on the battlefield, or are we going to fight for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans?

Some say this is an open rule. But the truth is this rule shut the door on the Edwards-Stabenow-Evans amendment that would provide 730 million real dollars more for veterans health care.

Our amendment is supported by organizations such as the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the American Legion because they know this money, and they have said this money, is necessary to adequately fund veterans health care.

The Edwards-Stabenow-Evans amendment is paid for by simply delaying until January 1 of 2001 the just-passed capital gains tax cut. It is a fiscally responsible straightforward amendment. It says that we think that providing more adequate health care for veterans is worth delaying one-tenth of 1 percent of the Republican tax cut, especially when we note that 76 percent of the just-passed capital gains tax cut goes to individuals making over $200,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, by voting no on the previous question, we can allow this House to vote its will on whether to put $730 million more into the veterans health care system. Have we not already asked our veterans to sacrifice enough on the battlefield? Must we ask them to sacrifice needed health care services to help pay for a tax cut for our wealthiest Americans?

Let me finish, not with my words, but the words of the national commander of the Disabled American Veterans: ''It is shameful that veterans cannot receive a $3 billion increase in veterans health care at a time we have a $1.1 trillion surplus expected and a $792 billion tax cut proposal.''

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

I am having a hard time following the logic here. We are increasing funding for veterans medical care by $1.7 billion. That is $1.7 billion more than the President asked for, and it is the amount that was authorized by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The gentleman is acting as if we are cutting spending when we are increasing it by 10 percent. If there is some cause and effect between the tax bill and this increase, one would think the veterans would push for tax relief legislation every year.

Mr. Speaker, there is no logic here.

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

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW).

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

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening asking my colleagues to oppose the rule for VA-HUD, because it does not allow a vote on the Edwards-Stabenow-Evans amendment.

The VA estimates that the adoption of our amendment would have allowed an additional 140,000 veterans to receive the health care that they need. Instead, this budget continues to underfund these critical services for our veterans.

Today, there are 20,000 fewer VA medical staff than there were 5 years ago. The dollars that we are talking about tonight are just attempting to get us back to where we were, and it does not even do that.

Due to staffing shortages, for example, a veteran in Tennessee with multiple sclerosis was forced to wait 4 months to be seen by a doctor. We have veterans across this country that travel over 300 miles just to get an X-ray.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO).

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

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this rule and to the bill that is to follow it. Frankly, it does not reflect the values or priorities that this Congress should be setting. We started with a make-believe budget, and now we are passing make-believe spending bills.

But the cuts in here that are being proposed I think speak to the values of where we are going. We have an obligation in this society to help those that are in need. This budget cuts housing $1 billion below what it was last year.

Furthermore, it goes on in the supplemental spending measures that we have had. We have repeatedly used the housing budget as a honey pot to fund other programs, continually taking money out of them and denying the funds that are needed to house people in this country.

It is $2 billion below what the President asked in the housing programs. Of course it eliminates the AmeriCorps. It cuts into the regular and general science programs. This is a budget that has repeatedly denied the opportunity to respond to the needs of the neediest in our society, those that need housing.

I hope we can reject this rule and reject the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule which will put in place a convoluted process to consider a seriously flawed bill when we return in September. This bill gives short shrift to housing and community development programs, to proven programs like AmeriCorps, and others of import to the science and environmental communities.

This rule will allow the consideration of a bill that will continue the theme of the past few years: making housing the honey pot for budget spending increases elsewhere and tax cuts for special interests and the wealthy. The VA, HUD and Independent Agencies bill has been irreparably harmed by the flawed process set up by the initial budget blue print drawn by the Majority who thumbs their noses at the realities of funding needs in social programs, ensuring confrontation this fall with Democrats and the Clinton Administration.

Unfortunately, the VA–HUD Appropriations bill cuts well over a billion dollars in funds from HUD's budget last year and is some $2 billion below the Administration's request. It is a sort of water torture of cuts—a drip here, a drip there—but in the end, the programs are suffering from the budget drought.

Since last week, the overall VA–HUD bill has lost some of the emergency spending gimmicks that other bills retained, such as calling the Decennial Census an ''emergency.'' So, the GOP Majority appropriators chose instead to gouge yet deeper into the Labor-HHS-Education 302(b) allocation of funds in order to spare the popular Veterans and NASA programs. Predictably, the powerless in our society, the housing and community programs have been left with cuts to key programs, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the McKinney Homeless Assistance programs, HOPWA, and public housing. This bill would provide no new housing assistance despite the commitments to authorize 100,000 new vouchers made in the 1999 budget authorization and the Administration's request to fund such units. This is at a time when millions of people are on waiting lists for housing are on the streets, and according to a Department of Housing study, 5.3 million families have worst case housing needs.

The real emergency, the real needs of the VA–HUD bill should be preserving our federally-assisted housing from the ''opt-out'' or prepayment phenomenon by matching state programs to keep buildings affordable, or marking up market rents so landlords stay with our successful programs. The real housing needs of this country will not be met under the VA–HUD Appropriations bill that this Rule would bring before the House.

This spending measure makes no effort to reconcile the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars of rescinded Section 8 monies that have been usurped for emergency spending this year and the last. This year, for example, we lost $350 million in Section 8 that is made up, if at all, on the backs of other critical housing program like the CDBG block grant which serves low- and moderate-income folks in cities across the country.

While the House has now passed the Conference Agreement providing for a trillion dollar tax cut pie for those who are well off, we are left in housing accounts with nothing but a bad taste in our mouths because the commitments to bring affordable housing opportunities to more people have been broken. We cannot stay even in funding for housing programs with the spending levels in this bill, and this future spending policy path provides no light at the end of the tunnel for the housing crisis.

While the Committee may claim inadequate appropriation authority under the budget, the fact is that there are 215 earmarks spending money on special interest projects. The conclusion of this bill is to deny funding for housing and other needs but to buy off votes to pass it with projects and earmarked funds!

I urge a ''no'' vote on the rule.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The Chair would inform both managers that the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) has 10½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY) has 15 minutes remaining.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Benefits of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the veterans of San Diego, California, I rise in opposition to this rule.

Mr. Speaker, this bill simply does not address the emergency our veterans are facing. Keeping the promises that we made to our veterans is an emergency; providing veterans health care is an emergency.

It is vital to improve the Montgomery G.I. Education bill, reducing incredible backlog in claims, provide care to those facing illness of unknown causes from the Persian Gulf War.

Not only has this bill failed to address these critical needs, it has compounded this emergency situation by approving hundreds of dollars of individual congressional projects, most of which pale in importance to the health care of our veterans.

So our veterans can wait months for a doctor's appointment, die from hepatitis C because care is being rationed, live on the streets because there are no services to help them get back into productive lives.

But this bill answers these needs by putting $1 million into a machine to grow plants in space and a half million dollars into improving paints for ship bottoms. Well, improve my ship bottom. Defeat this rule.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIQUEZ).

□ 2230

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the rule. I support the efforts of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), and during the committee process, I want to just share with my colleagues, that we had a substitute motion to try to put $3.1 billion that was needed in this particular piece of legislation and that particular motion was not even allowed, despite the fact that it was a proper motion.

I want to also indicate that there is a tremendous need out there. These resources are not sufficient. We are going

to be seeing some closure of some hospitals and some services that are drastically needed, and I would appeal to my colleagues to please consider the proposal that is here before us. We have an opportunity to be able to do that. We need to make sure that we go out there and provide the services that are needed to some of our veterans that are hurting.

The fact is there are extended services in terms of health care, in terms of hepatitis C, and emergency care in certain areas that are right now in drastic need of additional resources. We have an opportunity to address that when this vote comes up today. There is no need for us to be going out and verbalizing we are in favor of the veterans while at the same time we are not showing the action that is needed. I ask we vote ''no'' on the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the rule on H.R. 2684. I support the efforts of CHET EDWARDS, DEBBIE STABENOW, DAVID OBEY and LANE EVANS to add $730 million for veterans' medical care in fiscal year 2000. However, the effort to amend the VA-HUD Appropriations bill with this increase was denied by the House Rules Committee. If the amendment were to be in order, I would support this rule, and urge the House leadership to reconsider this decision to deny needed increase in VA spending.

This amendment and the denial of even considering it is nothing new. Members have attempted to offer increased funding ever since the budget recommendations were offered in the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. That effort was based upon the Independent Veterans budget offered the major veterans service organizations such as the Disabled Veterans of America, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS and Paralyzed Veterans of America. Many of these groups and the American Legion sent letters to the Rules Committee in support of the Edwards amendment as well, and have been instrumental in raising this issue in VSO halls, rallies, and meeting across the country.

Throughout this budget cycle, I have joined my colleagues in meeting with the Administration. Our goal was to remind the Administration that it must put veterans first. We then secured a revised budget request from Vice-President Gore to add a billion dollars to next year's VA appropriation.

The VA is in a position to make real progress in comprehensive health care: Expanded mental health care, long-term and nursing home health care, Hepatitis C, emergency care and other initiatives that had never been fully funded. But how can we promise these expanded goals without an adequate budget to keep our promises.

Now is the time to keep our commitment to those who served our nation when she called.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule. I am privileged to represent a caring and proud community that cherishes freedom and deeply respects the men and women who have fought and died to protect those freedoms.

As I think about the tremendous service veterans have provided our country, I am outraged that this rule does not make in order an important amendment to improve health care for veterans. This amendment would increase funding for veterans' health care by $730 million, which would help 140,000 veterans. I can think of few things more important than making certain that our veterans receive the medical care they deserve and medical care that they were promised.

This bill and this rule do not meet this challenge, and I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, this rule represents a cold-hearted approach to the needs of the homeless, including 6,500 veterans who will be left in the lurch.

Public housing is cut down from the President's request, community development block grant programs, which help to rebuild low- and moderate-income communities and enhance the quality of life, are all cut.

This is a weak response to the needs of the most vulnerable and is a disservice to the men and women who have made great sacrifices to serve their country.

It is a bad rule, it is a bad bill. I urge that we vote ''no.''

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. WEYGAND).

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

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Boston for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, this week The Washington Post wrote about the great accomplishment that we have made in welfare to work; how we have been able to transition people from welfare into work programs, but how we also provided them with the very tools to make that transition.

This bill and this rule takes away some of the most essential parts of that transition. It strips out all kinds of incremental vouchers that allows people to go from welfare into work and still pay for some housing and get some assistance. What will their choice be with this rule and this bill? Either go back into welfare or go into underqualified, unsubsidized, and poor quality housing.

Housing is one of the most basic and fundamental essential parts of life, yet we are stripping that opportunity out and away from these people. We are not giving them hope but despair. We are not providing them with self-respect but with pity. We are not providing them with opportunity but a dead end.

Oppose this rule because it does nothing to provide that continuation of welfare to work.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the chairman of the committee.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I wish to address this issue of housing, because as an urban Republican, and having been a city council president in Syracuse, it is something I feel very, very strongly about. That is why, while we did have to make reductions in the budget, we made no draconian cuts in any of the programs.

I would just submit that when the President presented his budget that has been talked about thus far, the President used a budget gimmick. It is called advanced appropriations or forward funding. He put a figure of $4.2 billion in advanced appropriations in this bill as an offset to cover the cost.

But what that says, Mr. Speaker, is that HUD cannot spend that money until the first day of the next year. In other words, the first day of October of the year 2001. So, in effect, that money is not available to the poor people and to the people who are going from welfare to work in this country in the next budget year, which is what we are talking about.

It is an advanced funding gimmick that we rejected. And if we take that out, we are $2 billion above the President's request for Section 8 housing.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS).

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule. The cuts that the Republicans have made in the VA–HUD appropriations bill really define who they are and what they care about.

Let me just list a few of the cuts for my colleagues. A $515 million cut in public housing programs, a $250 million cut in Community Development Block Grants, a $10 million cut in housing opportunities for People With AIDS Program; a $3.5 million cut in grants to historically black colleges and universities, a $195 million cut in economic development initiatives.

As a result of these cuts, my own home State of California will receive $151 million less than the amount requested by HUD. Specifically, my own district that I represent will receive $4.6 million less than the amount requested by HUD.

Why are the Republicans doing this? I will tell my colleagues why. These cuts are calculated to provide a $792 billion tax giveaway that favors the wealthiest 1 percent, who would get an average tax cut of $46,000 a year. This is at the expense of 60 percent of taxpayers in the middle income bracket and below who would receive less than 8 percent of the total tax cuts.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, would the Chair be kind enough to provide my colleague and I the time remaining to us?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The Chair would inform both sides that the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) each have 9½ minutes remaining.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we cannot have a surplus if we have not paid our bills. Let me repeat that. We cannot have a surplus if we have not paid our bills, and we have not paid our bills.

It is simply outrageous that the Republicans today have passed a trillion dollar tax cut when the veterans budget is billions, that is billions of dollars short in funding.

As the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, I have seen how this shortfall is hurting our veterans. A nursing home in my district had to delay its opening. Hospitals are understaffed and underfunded. Waiting periods for treatments are still weeks too long, and cemetery space is disappearing.

While the Republicans celebrate a tax cut bill, they have cut the veterans out of this budget. I urge my colleagues to cut them out. Defeat this rule. This is simply unjust to American heroes.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN).

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the rule and to congratulate the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and our committee for the work it has done to support veterans throughout the United States.

I heard a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, reference made to staffing shortages in VA hospitals. In many ways that has a lot to do with a lack of presidential leadership and it has a lot to do with the leadership of the Veterans Administration, which has been absent in many ways in supporting and properly advocating on behalf of veterans. And that was clearly evidenced through hearings that the VA–HUD committee had and that the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) led. We had inadequate testimony from Secretary West.

And as has been pointed out, over the last 4 years, the President has flatlined the veterans' medical care portion of the budget, and it is only through the leadership of this committee that these dollars have been restored each and every year way over what the President has presented, $1.7 billion towards medical care. That would not have happened without the bipartisan leadership of our committee.

One of the other issues, of course, if there are staffing shortages, little wonder, considering the fact that the VA is using a managed care model, a managed care model that is being managed by nonveterans, basically forcing veterans from our hospitals into the communities.

The bottom line is that our committee is providing essential medical care money, more than the President, $1.7 billion. The committee knows the value of veterans, the value of medical care, and we have the endorsements from both the American Legion's national commander and the VFW commander supporting our efforts.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this rule because it is the first step in ripping off the roof over people's heads. That is what we are doing when we cut $2 billion from the HUD budget.

Now, some people will argue that cutting the budget is good government. But this is not just some government program, it is a roof over people's heads. When we cut this program, we are taking away some seniors' rent money, we are throwing families out of their homes, and we are denying people on fixed and low incomes the safety and security of an affordable home.

The residents of over 500,000 affordable apartments are at risk of losing their homes over the next 5 years if HUD does not renew the contracts with the private landlords who own them. The money to do that was cut.

Last March, we cut $350 million from the Section 8 program, with solid promises it would be back in the budget; but it is not. Well, we can put the $350 million back if we do not give $800 billion to wealthy special interests in the form of an irresponsible tax cut. And we should put in the $1 billion that the President requested because 500,000 households are depending on us.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, that last statement was bordering on the outrageous. No one, no one, will be turned out of their homes. And to say that is irresponsible.

Not one individual, not one family that is now in public housing will lose their home. Not one individual, not one family that is in Section 8 housing will lose their home. In fact, as I stated earlier, if we take the President's budget gimmick of $4 billion out of this bill, we are $2 billion above the President's request for Section 8 housing.

Now, who is kidding whom? This class warfare sort of approach is not going to work. There are people on this side of the aisle who care deeply about all American citizens, regardless of their income. And it is sort of an old song that has worked in the past; but, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to stand for it.

There is a commitment to public housing. If we are short in some areas of this bill, it is because we had hard choices to make. And if we can put additional resources in, we will.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule. All of us claim to support human rights in faraway lands. This Republican appropriations bill demonstrates a disrespect for basic human rights for the least of these in our own country.

And I say this because it does cut $5 million for homeless assistance, it cuts $50 million for renovation of severely distressed public housing, it cuts $250 million for Community Development Block Grants, and it cuts $1 billion from the President's request for assistance to landlords in exchange for affordable housing.

Of course this is not a tax bill, but as we make these cuts, we must remember that, unfortunately, the Republicans did pass a major tax bill earlier that gives $731 million in capital gains tax cuts and $169 million in special interest tax breaks.

It is mind-boggling that those who talk about family values resort to gutting our families' basic foundation. This is a human rights violation of the highest order. I ask for a ''no'' vote on the rule.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished ranking member for yielding me this time.

I believe maybe we should reconsider the name of this rule, Mr. Speaker, and really call it ''I have got mine, you get yours rule'' for the night.

I cannot imagine why the veterans' amendment to restore $730 million for the veterans' health care was not allowed, particularly with the sacrifice that our veterans make on behalf of this country, and especially in light of the fact that when I visit my veterans' facilities and go to veterans' meetings, we talk about the denial of health care that many of them face. That amendment should have been made in order.

Then we need particularly to look at those who are struggling every day to make ends meet and need Section 8 certificates. Why would we cut and provide less than what we need? Why would we cut $5 million from homeless programs?

□ 2245

Why would we indicate in a market where there is not enough affordable housing that they do not need section 8? It is because I have got mine, you have got yours. And then NASA. We are cutting NASA $1 billion. We are losing jobs. We are denying research on HIV, on diabetes and heart disease.

This is a bill for those who got theirs and they tell the rest of us to get ours. Vote down this rule. This is a bad rule and a bad bill.

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

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

I rise to oppose the rule and the appropriations bill. As if the damage to

housing and to veterans were not enough, the bill before us contains deep cuts to research and development. Research and development is the engine which is driving our robust economy.

The $25 million cut to the National Science Foundation below the current level, among other critical research, includes a cut even to critical science education programs. And the incredible $1 billion slash in the NASA budget below the current level will be felt by scientists who will be forced to end long-standing research in astronomy and space science.

As a scientist, I know that today's research will produce further major scientific advancement that can improve the quality of life of the American people.

In this time of economic prosperity where we discuss budget surpluses and tax cuts, it is unwise to cut at the heart of that prosperity.

Let us send this appropriations bill back to the drawing board and oppose cuts to the National Science Foundation and NASA.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The Chair would inform the managers that the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) has 6½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY) has 4½ minutes remaining.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield the remaining 4½ minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the former chairman of the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, let me make a very clear statement of fact that no one can refute in this House.

If the Republican House leadership was not committed to a trillion dollar tax cut, billions of dollars more would be available for veterans health care.

Let me repeat that statement of fact. If the House Republican leadership was not committed to a trillion dollar tax cut, billions of dollars more would be available for veterans health care.

That is the question that we are raising tonight. Do you want to have a tax cut for the wealthiest Americans who are doing quite well, thank you, or do we want to adequately fund veterans health care?

Let me respond to some of the statements made by my friend and colleague from New Jersey who suggested a few minutes ago that the veterans were supporting basically his position. While the veterans may be glad that we are getting some increase and a hard freeze on veterans care funding, let me be exactly clear, perfectly clear.

The veterans' organizations he referred to are supporting my amendment and asking Republicans and Democrats tonight to oppose this rule and allow my amendment to come up.

Gordon Mansfield, executive director, Paralyzed Veterans of America: "Making this amendment in order would be a giant step forward in providing the resources and the health care our Nation's sick and disabled veterans have earned and deserve."

The American Legion, Steve Robertson, director of their National Legislative Commission: "The VA has an extremely long list of veterans seeking various types of long-term care. The VA's budgetary constraints limit its ability to effectively and efficiently meet these needs. Currently waiting times for appointments in the VA system are staggering. We are not talking days or weeks but months. If the veteran needs to see a specialist, the wait is even longer."

He goes on to say, and I quote: "The American Legion supports this amendment and any waiver that may be in order for this amendment to proceed on the floor."

Let me go on to clarify this point with a quote from Andrew Kisler, the national commander of the 2.3 million Disabled American Veterans' Organization: "On behalf of the more than 2.3 million disabled veterans, including the more than 1 million members of the DAV, I strongly urge you to consider a rule to allow this amendment," referring to the Edwards-Stabenow-Evans amendment.

He goes on to express my views I think very well and the views of many Democrats in this House. "While we greatly appreciate the $1.7 billion increase over the Administration's budget request contained in the VA appropriations bill, it does not go far enough to provide for the health care needs of a sicker, older veterans' population."

Let me clarify another point. Several of my colleagues have said the President's health care proposal in his budget is inadequate. I agree. We all agree. Nobody is disagreeing. But let the American people know and let us be honest with them in saying that Presidents do not write budgets. That is our responsibility.

Let me tell my colleagues what we in Congress have done over the last several years. It was not the President who flat-lined VA health care spending for 5 years. It was this Congress on a bipartisan basis but under the leadership of the Republican Speaker that flat-lined VA health care spending for 5 years.

Why do we not just admit tonight we have made a mistake? I think admitting we made a mistake 2 years ago is a lot more responsible than trying to maintain our commitment to that terrible mistake and the inadequate funding for veterans health care. Congress passes budgets and has that responsibility, not the President.

This Congress has made assumptions in the past several years of budgets that have said we are going to have 20 percent more veterans needing care, but we are going to bring in 10 percent extra VA health care income from outside sources. But surprise, this Congress did not pass the Medicare subvention law that was the basis to that assumption.

This Congress, not the President, assumed that the VA would provide veterans care 30 percent cheaper per veteran. Which Member of this House has been willing to make that promise to his or her constituents?

We appreciate the efforts of the gentleman from New York (Mr. Walsh) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. Stump) and others' efforts. But let us say no to this rule. Let us adequately fund VA health care, and let us do it tonight.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I submit for the RECORD an explanation of the previous question, a procedural, not a substantive vote.

THE PREVIOUS QUESTION VOTE

The previous question is a motion made in order under House Rule XIX, and accorded precedence under clause 4 of Rule XVI, and is the only parliamentary device in the House used for both closing debate and preventing amendment. The effect of adopting the previous question is to bring the pending proposition or question to an immediate, final vote. The motion is most often made at the conclusion of debate on a special rule, motion or legislation considered in the House prior to a vote on final passage. A Member might think about ordering the previous question in terms of answering the question "is the House ready to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the pending question?"

Furthermore, in order to amend a special rule (other than by the managers offering an amendment to it or by the manager yielding for the purpose of amendment), the House must vote against ordering the previous question. If the motion for the previous question is defeated, the House is, in effect, turning control of the Floor over to the Member who led the opposition (usually a Member of the minority party). The Speaker then recognizes the Member who led the opposition (usually a minority member of the Rules Committee) to control an additional hour of debate during which a germane amendment may be offered to the rule. This minority Member then controls the House Floor for the hour.

The vote on the previous question is simply a procedural vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution that sets the ground rules for debate and amendment on the legislation it would make in order. Therefore, the vote on the previous question has no substantive legislative or policy implications.

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

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to remind my colleagues that this is an open rule. Any Member may offer any amendment to this legislation so long as it complies with House rules.

The VA-HUD bill reduces spending by $1.2 billion while adequately funding our top priorities, not the least of which is veterans and medical care. In fact, this bill increases VA health care by $1.7 billion. This is a 10 percent increase, far more than Congress has provided for VA medical care in any one year.

Mr. Speaker, again I will take this opportunity to commend the gentleman from New York (Chairman WALSH) for his hard work to craft a bill that strikes a delicate balance between fiscal and social responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) for the courtesy that she has extended and for the remarkably solid debate that we have had.

I would like to use my time just to make a couple of points. One, to correct the gentleman that just spoke prior to the gentleman from Texas. The President has requested no increase in the budget for the last 5 years, but the Congress has put in an increase every single time. This being the largest increase in veterans health care history, this bill is before us today.

As I said, in 10 years veterans medical care has gone up over 70 percent because the Congress, both parties, has stuck with our veterans, unlike the President.

This bill is a good bill. It is full of hard decisions, but it is a good bill and it is a fair bill.

Most of the debate has been around the issue of veterans' medical.

I would like to insert for the RECORD the following letter from the Veterans of Foreign Wars:

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, August 3, 1999.

Hon. JAMES T. WALSH,
Chairman, Committee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the 1.9 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), I want to express our sincere appreciation to you and the other members of the House Appropriations Committee for the $1.7 billion increase for VA Health Care you have prescribed in the VA–HUD–IA appropriation for FY 2000.

This action by you and the committee will prove instrumental toward ensuring veterans receive quality health care delivered in a timely manner at VA medical facilities throughout the nation. Furthermore, this increase will avert unnecessary layoffs of critical medical personnel as well as prevent the curtailment of essential veterans programs and services.

It is also our view that the elevated baseline established by these necessary dollars will contribute toward addressing the long-term health care needs of our rapidly aging veteran population within the context of congressional deliberations for VA funding in FY 2001 and out-years.

Once again, the VFW salutes your vision, compassion, and political courage in providing an additional $1.7 billion for VA health care. We of the VFW look forward to working with you and other members of Congress on behalf of all veterans in need. You have shown yourself to be a true champion in their service.

Sincerely,

DENNIS M. CULLINAN,
Director, National Legislative Service.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a letter from the American Legion:

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, August 3, 1999.

Hon. JAMES T. WALSH,
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your hard work and that of your colleagues in putting together a difficult appropriations bill. The American Legion understands and deeply appreciates the Subcommittee's efforts to adequately fund the Department of Veterans Affairs in FY 2000.

Clearly, you and your colleagues recognized the inadequacy of the President's budget request. You heard the deafening cries of the entire veterans' community to increase funding for medical care. No other group of Americans deserves the thanks of a grateful Nation that those service-connected veterans. For many of them, VA is their life-support system. To ''nickel and dime'' this national resource would be criminal; the ultimate victims are those who have paid the greatest price for freedom.

The American Legion applauds full Committee's decision to increase in VA Medical Care of $1.7 billion above current funding. This will prevent the adverse impact under funding would have on the quality, timeliness, and availability of health care for service-connected veterans across the country.

But before the ink is dry, we need to begin planning for FY 2001. It is extremely important that as the FY 2001 budget cycle approaches that the new, adjusted VA medical care baseline be established at $19 billion. To regress to the spending caps contained in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 would revert back to unrealistic spending recommendations. VA, just like the rest of the health care industry, has fixed costs associated with pharmaceuticals, cost-of-living adjustments, inflation, disaster assistance, and other internal and external economic factors that must be considered annually.

There are two still key funding areas where the mark up falls short. As the House begins debate on this bill, The American Legion urges consideration to bringing medical construction (both major and minor) and State Home Care Grants Program construction funding to acceptable levels.

The ever-increasing demand for VA long-term care is not being met. The State Home Care Grants Program allows the States to help assist in meeting this demand for such care in local communities.

Thank you again for your continued leadership on behalf of America's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

HAROLD L. ''BUTCH'' MILLER,
National Commander.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter the following letter also for the RECORD. This is a letter that I received on July 22, just 2 weeks ago, from the Democratic members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, July 22, 1999.

Hon. BILL YOUNG,
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN YOUNG: For many months, Members, various veterans' service organizations and others have been sounding the alarm about funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. With the House Appropriations Committee poised to take action on VA fiscal year 2000 discretionary spending, we urge you to consider the mounting evidence of need for a significant increase in VA appropriations to avert catastrophe in veterans' health care in fiscal year 2000. We believe the budget resolution's $1.7 billion increase in VA discretionary spending for fiscal year 2000 is the minimum increase needed.

Just as the Committee on Ways and Means recently adopted a tax measure consistent with the budget resolution conference agreement, we strongly believe the $1.7 billion increase in VA discretionary spending that is part of that same agreement should be enacted. The increase in fiscal year 2000 VA discretionary spending should not come at the expense of reasonable funding for other discretionary spending accounts in the appropriations reported by the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Subcommittee or the full Committee.

On July 15th, the Health Subcommittee of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs conducted a public hearing to examine VA's experience with veterans' enrollment for VA health care benefits. VA health care network directors representing diverse regions around the country acknowledged the serious problems VA will have in delivering comprehensive health care to meet veterans' demand without adequate funding.[1] The General Accounting Office (GAO) and VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health (USH) agreed that the budget request for FY 2000 could require VA to disenroll veterans and deny them access to VA health care. They estimated the decision could affect, not only ''higher income'' discretionary veterans, but also veterans exposed to Agent Orange, Ionizing Radiation, environmental hazards, those who served in the Persian Gulf War, and medically indigent veterans for whom VA health care has been a safety net.

The officials testifying on July 15th echoed the views shared at a February Health Subcommittee hearing on the VA health care budget proposed for fiscal 2000.[2] All foretell of: massive layoffs (at least 8,500[3] employees); denials of care; hospital closures; closing or delaying the opening of popular community-based outpatient clinics; and limitations on or termination of many types of benefits, including inpatient psychiatric care, substance abuse, and pharmaceutical drugs.

VA officials already acknowledge problems with excessive waiting times for VA clinical services. The Acting Under Secretary admitted in testimony that ''we are especially cognizant of the need to reduce waiting times in areas that are experiencing particularly long waits'' and that almost 40% of veterans do not receive primary care appointments within the 30-day goal established by VA.

Clinicians in VA are also acknowledging serious problems with care delivery. Access to effective treatment in VA's networks for Hepatitis C, an emerging epidemic in the veterans' community, is spotty at best; a physician in Louisville, Kentucky reportedly stated he was able to provide treatment for only 35 of the 500 veterans with Hepatitis C under his care. One facility director in Florida advised a Member of Congress that VA does not have any funds to provide Hepatitis C treatment. Others acknowledge problems in staffing. A former nurse on a Spinal Cord Unit in Texas says, ''One of my reasons for leaving...was the lack of staffing which in turn creates unsafe conditions.'' RIFs and future Buy-Outs will exacerbate these reports. These compromises in the quality of our veterans' health care are absolutely unacceptable.

We implore you, Mr. Chairman, that Congress provide nothing less than the $1.7 billion increase in discretionary spending for VA included in the fiscal year 2000 budget resolution conference agreement. Our veterans' health care system and the essential care it provides are at stake.

Sincerely,

Lane Evans; Luis Gutierrez; Corrine Brown; Mike Doyle; Silvestre Reyes; Ciro Rodriguez; Ronnie Shows; Julia Carson; Baron Hill; John Dingell; Jan Schakowsky; John Tierney; Carolos Romero-Barcelo; Collin Peterson; Shelly Berkley; Tom Udall; Dave

Footnotes at end of letter.

Bonior; Bill Pascrell; Dennis Moore; Elijah Cummings.

FOOTNOTES

[1] VISN Directors from Central Plains (VISN 14), Florida and Puerto Rico (VISN 8), New York and New Jersey (VISN 3), South Central (VISN 16), and the Northwest (VISN 20) amended.

[2] VISN directors from Ohio (VISN 10), the Northwest (VISN 22), and New York/New Jersey (VISN 3) accompanied the Under Secretary for Health. A recently retired director from the Southwest (VISN 18) also provided testimony.

[3] As proposed in the FY 2000 Budget Submission. A retired VISN director estimates that layoffs could impact up to 20,000 FTE; the former USH asserts that the need to cut will become greater over time.

''Just as the Committee on Ways and Means recently adopted a tax measure consistent with the budget resolution conference agreement, we strongly believe the $1.7 billion increase in VA discretionary spending that is part of the same agreement should be enacted.''

Now, if it was good enough for them 2 weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, I submit it should be good enough for them today.

So with that I will close my comments and thank the courtesy of the Chair, thank my distinguished colleague, who unfortunately was not able to be here with us this evening, and look forward to passing the rule and completing work on this in September.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this fair and open rule and to vote ''yes'' on the previous question.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the rule on H.R. 2684. Last night, I joined CHET EDWARDS, DEBBIE STABENOW, and DAVID OBEY in asking our Rules Committee to support a waiver to allow Mr. EDWARDS' amendment to add $730 million for veterans' medical care in fiscal year 2000 to be considered by this House. Had the amendment been made in order, we could have been assured it would be debated and voted on by the full House.

To offset the cost of providing the additional funds for veterans' health care, the Edwards amendment would have delayed implementation of a proposed cut in the capital gains tax, a part of the nearly $800 billion tax cut passed by the House. The Edwards amendment was considered earlier by the House Appropriations Committee and was defeated by a one-vote margin on a 26–25 straight party-line vote.

Earlier this year, the Committee on Veterans Affairs had a contentious debate on next year's funding for VA health care. At that time, I was denied the opportunity to offer an amendment providing more funding than proposed by our Chairman. The Edwards Amendment would have provided approximately the same increase in discretionary funding for VA next fiscal year, $2.4 billion, as I had earlier sought to provide.

Mr. Speaker, veterans' service organizations have steadfastly supported efforts to add funds to the VA health care budget. The American Legion, Disabled Veterans of America, and Paralyzed Veterans of America sent letters to the Rules Committee in support of the Edwards amendment being made in order. A coalition of veterans' groups had earlier supported the increased funding level I planned to propose to the VA Committee.

The last few years in VA health care system have been pivotal. VA has reformed its delivery system, bringing its acute care system into line with modern health care practices. But clinicians and patients alike have begun to cite waiting times and other problems with access to care that have been affected by this sea change. Recognizing the urgent need for funding, I, and other Democratic Members, have met repeatedly with members of the Administration. Our meetings ultimately succeeded in securing a revised budget request offered by Vice-President GORE to add a billion dollars to next year's appropriation for VA health care and construction. Our efforts with the Republicans in this body, however, have not been as successful.

This latest vote against making the Edwards amendment in order is ''déjà vu all over again''. We only asked the Republican majority to give us a chance for an honest debate on where veterans fit into our Nation's priorities. The priority of Congressional Republicans is obviously cutting capital gains taxes and not providing added funding for veterans programs. I can understand why Republicans want to avoid an open debate on funding for veterans programs vs. capital gains tax breaks.

Unfortunately there will be real consequences for this partisanship. VA needs this money, and I am convinced that given the opportunity the House would pass the Edwards amendment. Members are aware that VA's progress in implementing some positive and necessary changes has come at a price. Shifting health care practice styles are eroding some of the VA's best programs—its long-term care programs, its rehabilitative and extended care for seriously disabled veterans, and its mental health care treatment for veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or substance abuse issues.

We are now at a point where we must restore certain programs to their past distinction. Congress must take the initiative to fund VA and allow it to re-build its most excellent programs—those that serve the veterans who were injured physically or psychically on the battleground—those that have borne the battle. The Edwards amendment would have allowed VA to do this. I regret the Republican majority has, once again, seen fit to thwart an honest debate on National priorities.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, when the House of Representatives returns next month, it will consider the VA–HUD appropriations bill. It is critical that we include adequate funding to meet the housing and community development needs of the country. On any given night, there are 600,000 homeless persons—including children and veterans—living on our streets. There are another 5.3 million families who pay over half of their income on housing. Millions of them live in substandard housing. This is a crisis.

Tragically, the VA–HUD appropriations bill falls far short. In fact, in most areas, it represents a step backwards. I hope my colleagues will consider the following letter, signed by fifty organizations. Those organizations include the U.S. Conference of Mayors, NAACP, AFSCME, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, National Council of Senior Citizens, National Council of Jewish Women and many other community, faith-based, and civic groups. They are calling on us to respond to this enormous need and to meet our responsibilities by providing more funding for housing and community development.

FULLY FUND HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION,
Washington, DC, August 3, 1999.

Hon. JANICE SCHAKOWSKY,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE SCHAKOWSKY, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Housing Act of 1949, in which Congress declared the national goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family. We believe, as do most Americans, that this nation is capable of achieving this worthy goal.

However, we have a long way to go. Even while most Americans are thriving in our remarkably healthy economy, many families still struggle with excessive housing costs and insufficient income to meet basic needs. Over 9,000,000 very low income households pay more than half of their income for housing. The 1999 report by the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard, *The State of the Nation's Housing,* clearly documents the paradox of record accomplishments in housing production and home ownership while rents are increasing faster than wages. Nowhere in the country can a household with one full time minimum wage earner afford basic housing costs. Families who apply for housing assistance wait longer than they ever have before, and in many communities, waiting lists are closed indefinitely.

We believe that a time when we are celebrating bountiful budget surpluses is also the time to address our severe national shortage of affordable housing. This can best be done by strengthening the proven federal housing and community development programs that lift up low-income Americans. There is ample evidence that housing assistance helps low income families gain the housing stability that is necessary for family members to succeed at work and in school.

Unfortunately, the action of the House Appropriations Committee last week weakens our housing and community development programs. Rather than building on the success of our economy by extending its rewards to more and more people, the Committee moved us backwards by failing to fully fund the President's FY2000 HUD budget request. The bill cuts CDBG, HOME, HOPWA, Public Housing Operating Fund, and Homeless Assistance, among others, and does not fund a single new housing voucher.

We find it inconceivable that in this period of extraordinary economic prosperity that Congress continues to purport that we are unable to fund modest expansions of programs that improve the housing and economic opportunities of low wage earners and people on fixed incomes. The substantial tax cuts that are under consideration in the House will not improve the housing circumstances of low income people, but more housing assistance will.

We urge you to vote against the HUG–VA–IA Appropriations bill when it comes to the full House. We are capable of doing much better.

Sincerely,

ACORN, AFSCME, AIDS Policy Center for Children, Youth and Families, Alliance for Children and Families, Campaign for America's Future, Center for Community Change, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, Children's Foundation, Coalition on Human Needs, Development Training Institute, Employment Support Center, Feminist Majority, Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quaker), International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Jesuit Conference, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Leadership Conference on Civil

Rights, Lutheran Services in America, McAuley Institute, Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Washington Office, NAACP, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Association of Child Advocates, National Association of Housing Cooperataives, National Association of School Psychologists, National Center on Poverty Law Inc., National Coalition for the Homeless, National Council of Churches, National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of Senior Citizens, National Housing Law Project, National Housing Trust, National League of Cities, National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Ministries, American Baptist Churches, USA, National Neighborhood Coalition, National Network for Youth, National Puerto Rican Coalition, National Rural Housing Coalition, National Urban League, Neighbor to Neighbor, Network, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Preamble Center, Public Housing Authorities Directors Association, Surface transportation Policy Project, Unitarian Universalist Affordable Housing Corporation, United Church of Christ, Office of Church in Society, U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the Volunteers of America.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with grave concern for our nation's veterans. For the past few years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has struggled to maintain health care services for veterans under essentially flat-lined budgets. According to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America, we need to increase the budget for VA medical care by $3 billion in order to simply maintain current levels of medical care for veterans.

The FY2000 VA–HUD Appropriations bill improves upon the President's budget for veterans' health care with an increase of $1.7 billion—the largest increase since the 1980's. It also provides a $10 million increase for Veterans Medical and Prosthetic Research and an additional $30 million for the Veterans Benefits Administration to expedite claims processing. This bill also doubles the President's request for Veterans State Extended Care Facilities from $40 million to $80 million.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud these efforts, but we need to do more—much more. I am very disappointed that the amendment offered by Mr. EDWARDS of Texas—which would have made an additional $730 million available to the Department of Veterans Affairs for better health care services for our veterans—was not made in order.

In a related issue, I want to call to the House's attention a recent Washington Post article which linked a high incidence of the fatal neurological disease, ALS, to service in the Persian Gulf War. The VA and Department of Defense have identified 28 cases of ALS—also known as Lou Gehrig's disease—among veterans of Desert Storm. Although it is still unclear whether or not there is a direct link between service in the Persian Gulf and cases of ALS, there is an unusually high number of victims in this relatively small group of veterans.

As the author of the ALS Treatment and Assistance Act, I am very concerned that we make every effort to help veterans who suffer from this tragic disease. I am pleased to have introduced the ALS Treatment and Assistance Act. This bipartisan bill would help those tragically afflicted with ALS by making Medicare coverage more accessible to them and by covering drugs to treat ALS symptoms.

Mr. Speaker, veterans have served this nation honorably and made countless sacrifices on our behalf. They deserve the very best support services we can provide them. As veterans make the often difficult re-adjustment to civilian life, they sometimes need a helping hand to figure out what benefits they are eligible for and where to turn for assistance. Despite the wide array of services offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, many veterans assistance programs are unknown to the constituency they are intended to support.

Today I introduced the Veterans Emergency Telephone Service Act. The VETS Act sets up a national veterans' hotline service which would operate 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week and provide immediate access to counseling and crisis intervention. This toll free service would also have a staff knowledgeable in VA benefits and programs who could provide immediate information on medical treatment, substance abuse rehabilitation, emergency food and shelter services, employment training and opportunities, and counseling services.

This combination ''411–911'' number for veterans provides a one-stop, toll free number veterans can call at any time of day or night and receive encouragement and assistance. Current toll free information lines for veterans typically dump them into a frustrating automated system which requires repeated transfers and long waiting periods.

I called the VA toll free information line myself two days ago and, after being put on hold for 26 minutes, I was told that the VA did not have a crisis hotline.

Mr. Speaker, this simply isn't good enough. We can and should do better than this for our veterans. That's why I'm pleased to introduce this bipartisan bill with two distinguished veterans, LANE EVANS and STEVE KUYKENDALL.

This bill was inspired by Shad Meeshad, a Vietnam veteran and a close friend of my late husband Walter. Through the National Veterans Foundation in Los Angeles, California, Shad has worked tirelessly to provide support for veterans in California and around the country. Shad runs a hotline for veterans called the ''Lifeline For American Veterans,'' which provides veterans with counseling and referral services. This important program has assisted thousands of veterans around the country and has literally saved lives. I want to expand on Shad's work and make this valuable resource available to vets at any hour of the day and in every part of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we can improve the VA–HUD Appropriations bill and ensure that this legislation is truly worthy of the veterans who have put their lives on the line for our nation and our way of life.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the rule on the VA/HUD Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2000, because our majority colleagues have prohibited the gentleman from Texas, Mr. EDWARDS from offering an amendment to increase funding for our veterans' medical care.

Mr. Speaker, as a strong supporter of the men and women who answered our country's call to serve, I was elated when Vice President GORE announced, last month, that the Administration was going to seek an additional $1 billion to ensure that our veterans will have timely access to quality health care. Likewise I was equally thrilled when the VA/HUD Appropriations subcommittee included this additional funding when it reported its FY 2000 bill.

But while this additional funding is welcomed, there is still more that needs to be done. That is why I was so disappointed that the Edwards-Evans-Stabenow amendment, which would have provided an additional $730 million for the VA to help ensure that an additional 140,000 veterans would get the health care that they need, was not made in order.

While our friends in the majority rushed to spend almost $800 billion on a politically motivated tax bill—virtually all of the projected on-Social Security surpluses over the next ten years—they could not find a mere $730 million to help disabled and paralyzed veterans.

In my own district, Virgin Islands veterans have to struggle every day to find the $200 to $300 to fly to the San Juan VA Medical Center for treatment because the VA does not have the funding to either pay for them to receive service on their home island or to reimburse them for their hefty travel expenses.

My colleagues we must defeat the previous question on the VA/HUD rule so that the bill can be sent back to the rules committee to have the Edwards-Evans-Stabenow amendment made in order.

It is time that we keep our promise of free medical care to our veterans!!

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, when our soldiers enlist to defend our nation, we make them a promise. We promise to stand behind them 100 percent. Not just when we need them, but when they need us. Later in life. When they are sick. When they are old or infirm, and need our care.

These brave men and women have risked their lives for us, and for our ideals. They have paid their dues. They have kept their promise to America.

That is why it saddens me. It angers me that this Congress is breaking our promise to America's veterans.

For the past four years, this Congress has not added one single dime to cover rising health care costs for veterans. Not one thin dime!

In this time of record surplus, in this economic boom of historic proportions, in this era of tax cuts for the rich, our veterans are being forgotten.

They are being forgotten again, just like they were after Vietnam.

The majority in this Congress passed a trillion dollar tax cut today. But they won't let us add anything for veterans' health care.

It is too much to ask to delay a tax break benefitting the richest Americans, so we can help veterans get the medical care they need?

Every one of us has gotten letter after letter from veterans seeking help.

Veterans with heart conditions, waiting months on end, just to see a specialist at a VA hospital.

Veterans waiting for a year, limping and in pain, before they can get into the hospital for a hip replacement.

Veterans who can't even get a physical exam without a six-month wait. Or get dentures within a year.

Our VA hospitals are overcrowded and overwhelmed. They are struggling to serve their patients. But they just don't have the resources.

This is no way to treat the men and women who risked their lives for us. We asked these

men and women to defend our liberty. Now they are asking us to defend their health care, and we cannot in good conscience turn our backs on them.

That is why I urge you to oppose the previous question. Let us do right by our veterans and honor the promise we made.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

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

Mr. MOAKLEY. 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.

Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the Chair will reduce to a minimum of 5 minutes the period of time within which a vote by electronic device, if ordered, will be taken on the question of agreeing to the resolution.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 217, nays 208, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 388]

YEAS—217

Aderholt
Archer
Armey
Bachus
Baker
Ballenger
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Bartlett
Barton
Bass
Bateman
Bereuter
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bliley
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bono
Brady (TX)
Bryant
Burr
Burton
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Canady
Cannon
Castle
Chabot
Chambliss
Chenoweth
Coble
Coburn
Collins
Combest
Cook
Cooksey
Cox
Crane
Cubin
Cunningham
Davis (VA)
Deal
DeLay
DeMint
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Doolittle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Ehlers
Ehrlich
Emerson
English
Everett
Ewing
Fletcher
Foley
Fossella
Fowler
Franks (NJ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Ganske
Gekas
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gilman
Goodlatte
Goodling
Goss
Graham
Granger
Green (WI)
Greenwood
Gutknecht
Hansen
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Herger
Hill (MT)
Hilleary
Hobson
Hoekstra
Horn
Hostettler
Houghton
Hulshof
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Isakson
Istook
Jenkins
Johnson (CT)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Kasich
Kelly
King (NY)
Kingston
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kuykendall
LaHood
Largent
Latham
LaTourette
Lazio
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
LoBiondo
Lucas (OK)
Manzullo
McCollum
McCrery
McHugh
McInnis
McIntosh
McKeon
Metcalf
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Morella
Myrick
Nethercutt
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nussle
Ose
Oxley
Packard
Paul
Pease
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Pombo
Porter
Portman
Pryce (OH)
Quinn
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Reynolds
Riley
Rogan
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roukema
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Salmon
Sanford
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaffer
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Skeen
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Spence
Stearns
Stump
Sununu
Sweeney
Talent
Tancredo
Tauzin
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thornberry
Thune
Tiahrt
Toomey
Upton
Vitter
Walden
Walsh
Wamp
Watkins
Watts (OK)
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NAYS—208

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Baird
Baldacci
Baldwin
Barcia
Barrett (WI)
Becerra
Bentsen
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop
Blagojevich
Blumenauer
Bonior
Borski
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (PA)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Carson
Clayton
Clement
Clyburn
Condit
Conyers
Costello
Coyne
Cramer
Crowley
Cummings
Danner
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Deutsch
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Dooley
Doyle
Edwards
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Forbes
Ford
Frank (MA)
Frost
Gejdenson
Gephardt
Gonzalez
Goode
Gordon
Green (TX)
Gutierrez
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hastings (FL)
Hill (IN)
Hilliard
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hoeffel
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
John
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind (WI)
Kleczka
Klink
Kucinich
LaFalce
Lampson
Larson
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Luther
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Martinez
Mascara
Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McCarthy (NY)
McGovern
McIntyre
McKinney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Menendez
Millender-McDonald
Miller, George
Minge
Mink
Moakley
Moore
Moran (VA)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Phelps
Pickett
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rivers
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Rush
Sabo
Sanchez
Sanders
Sandlin
Sawyer
Schakowsky
Scott
Serrano
Sherman
Shows
Sisisky
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Spratt
Stabenow
Stark
Stenholm
Strickland
Stupak
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor (MS)
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thurman
Tierney
Towns
Traficant
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Velazquez
Vento
Visclosky
Waters
Watt (NC)
Waxman
Weiner
Wexler
Weygand
Wise
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn

NOT VOTING—8

Bilbray
Clay
Lantos
Leach
Linder
McDermott
Mollohan
Peterson (PA)

□ 2318

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. BLUMENAUER and Ms. PELOSI changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Mr. EVERETT and Mr. THOMAS changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

□ 2320

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The question is on the resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE REGARDING MOTION TO INSTRUCT ON H.R. 1905, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that with the filing of the conference report on the bill (H.R. 1905) making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, proceedings will not resume on the motion to instruct conferees considered last evening on which further proceedings had been postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report to accompany H.R. 1905, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

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

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1905, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the previous order of the House, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 1905) making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see prior proceedings of the House of today.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. TAYLOR) and the gentleman from Arizona