

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4818,
CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 20, 2004

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant support of the conference report on H.R. 4818, the FY 2005 Omnibus Appropriations bill. Though there are many important and laudable provisions contained in this spending bill, I am troubled by other specific provisions and by the process that this bill has followed.

I am pleased that the bill provides an increase in funding for national security and counterintelligence operations at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Unfortunately, this Congress has failed in its effort to pass comprehensive intelligence reform legislation, which would ensure that this money is being spent appropriately and that the efforts of our agencies are coordinated.

I am pleased to see that this conference report provides \$1.3 billion for Education Impact Aid, \$24 million more than last year. This program provides funding for military impacted schools such as those in the towns of Eatontown and Tinton Falls. I am also pleased that the bill includes \$250 million for the community college initiative, which will fund workforce development partnerships between community colleges and employers.

Despite these provisions, we have more work to do to fully fund what should be a top priority for this Congress—education. One day after we passed the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, we underfunded aid to schools by \$1.7 billion. Considering the rising cost of higher education, I am disappointed that the bill does not increase the maximum Pell Grant Award. We cannot keep the maximum Pell grant award at \$4,050 and expect families to be able to afford college.

I am deeply troubled that this bill includes such a restrictive limitation on funding for a woman's constitutionally protected right of choice. Specifically, this bill prohibits use of funds to pay for health benefits coverage that includes coverage of abortion. It also protects health care providers who refuse to provide this needed service. Such measures are designed to limit women's rights, and have no business in this bill.

I am disappointed that the Community Oriented Policing Service, COPS, program has been cut by \$142 million. Many of the towns in my district have received funding for police officers through this program, which has made our communities safer. It simply makes no sense to be taking cops off the street at a time when they are more needed than ever.

I am also troubled that this spending bill cuts the budget for the National Science Foundation, NSF, by \$62 million from last year's inadequate appropriation. The work of the NSF provides the basic scientific underpinnings for the most advanced technological research and development in the world. We cannot hope to remain the world's most scientifically advanced nation if we continue to shortchange our researchers.

I am disturbed by the economic situation in which we find ourselves. Congress was forced

to increase its debt limit by \$800 billion—and that is on top of debt increases of \$450 billion in 2002 and another \$984 billion in 2003. The increase in the debt ceiling in just the past 3 years is almost 2.5 times the entire Federal debt accumulated between 1776 and 1980.

We are in this situation because of the choices of the President and the Republican majority. They chose to prioritize tax cuts for the wealthy, rather than adequately maintaining balanced budgets and protecting the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. They chose to engage in a costly, dangerous, and unnecessary war in Iraq, which has sapped our ability to combat al Qaeda and fund important domestic priorities. They chose to bundle funds for 13 Government departments rather than engaging in a robust debate justifying the policies and priorities that we are asking the American people to pay for.

Perhaps most disturbing about this appropriations bill is the process that it has followed. The infamous provision allowing unprecedented authority for Members of Congress and staff to access the private tax returns of individuals and businesses demonstrates that our budget process is broken. This provision was slipped into a 3,000 page bill which Members had no time to read before voting. The process has become corrupted by the Republican majority, which has evidently decided that enacting pet projects and controversial items that cannot pass on their own merit, are more important than debate, compromise, and good governance.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill because it will allow the important work of the Federal Government to continue. However, I hope that next year's appropriations process reflects a greater commitment to funding important priorities and following a fair and thorough legislative process.

CONGRATULATING DOBBS FERRY
HIGH SCHOOL

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dobbs Ferry High School for winning the 2004 New York State Class C Football Championship.

Through hard work, commitment and by always keeping their eye on the ball, this team completed a perfect 13–0 season en route to the title.

This championship continues the rich tradition that Dobbs Ferry High School has established on and off the football field. By winning this title, Dobbs Ferry has now won the state title two of the last three years. Dobbs Ferry is only the fifth school ever to win a state title in multiple football classes.

By applying the principles of fair play, good sportsmanship and constructive competition to sports and all other walks of life, the school has become a shining example for others to follow.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Dobbs Ferry High School on their accomplishment, and I wish them the best of luck in defending their title next season.

A TRIBUTE TO PHYLLIS SHERARD

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Phyllis Sherard for her dedication to educating our youth and strengthening our community.

One of the best kept secrets about Phyllis is that she was actually born in Norfolk, Virginia, arriving in New York via North Carolina at the age of four. In spite of this, she boastfully claims to be an authentic product of Brooklyn, having resided in this wonderful borough of New York all of her life.

As the eldest of six siblings, her parents instilled values and traits in her that have become her trademarks. Many people describe her as a born leader who is capable, responsible, compassionate, dependable, and motivational. No matter how high or wide the obstacles, Phyllis' attitude is always, "We can handle it!"

In 1985, Phyllis joined the NYC Board of Education. She always wanted to teach but was encouraged to pursue commercial studies while in high school. However, through her experiences, she realized how important it is to get involved in the education of our children. Following the path that she now says was her destiny, she joined the staff of Project 17—the Drug Prevention Education Program in Community School District 17. Initially, she had second thoughts about the position because she had to take a cut in pay. That was 20 years ago and needless to say, it has been the most fulfilling work of her life. The position opened doors for Phyllis to work with thousands of children, directing, intervening, and changing paths for so many children and their parents. Because of her ability and commitment, she was selected to serve as the Special Assistant to the Superintendent for Parent Involvement.

Phyllis is most proud of implementing The First Clergy Conference, a series of Saturday African American Studies for parents, The Cultural Awareness Summer Program for children, the Christmas Toy Drive, Family Literacy Program, Computer Literacy for Parents, youth conferences, and a general equivalency program for young mothers, as well as working with parents to coordinate the first math, science, & technology parent conference. She currently directs drug prevention education programs for Region Six, which is comprised of 109 schools. This has been the most challenging experience for her. She has also implemented an evening counseling program for at-risk students and their families.

Phyllis is a graduate of Long Island University, where she earned a B.A. in Political Science and a Masters degree in Supervision and Administration. She is the proud mother of Darryn and Jade-Lynn and the proud grandmother of grandson, Darryn Scott.

Mr. Speaker, Phyllis Sherard has been instrumental in strengthening the educational experience for children in our community. As such, she is more than worthy of receiving our recognition today, and I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring this truly remarkable person.