of rules on this government that, basically, our Federal regulators would not let us borrow any more money.

The point of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a spending problem here in Washington. We cannot raise this debt ceiling unless we do three things: unless we cut, we cap, and we balance our budget.

THE TRUTH: AMERICA'S DEBT CEILING MUST BE RAISED

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, my good friend did what many of us did, my neighbor in Louisiana. I went home to Texas, and interacted with so many constituents, many of them asking the question: Why? I believe it's important to ask the question: Why not?

Let me tell you, my friends, that we don't need to politicize the debt ceiling, which has been raised many, many times, but we do need to tell the truth: for if the debt ceiling is not raised, trillions of dollars will be lost, not of those of us who sit on this floor, but from the portfolios and packages for seniors and 401(k)s.

If you want to talk about $1 trillion, talk about what will be lost to our seniors and hardworking Americans in collapsing their 401(k)s. There is no option. There is not an option for the short term. That's a joke. That's politics to start us back again in April or March. Let's go forward with the proposed Reid plan. Let's get a deficit reduction; raise the debt ceiling; cut what we can and go into regular order. That is the responsible, adult way to go.

America is watching. America is looking. I am not going to stand by while trillions of dollars are lost. I ask my Republican friends to join us in a reasoned response to America's concerns.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2584, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2012

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 363 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 363

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. 2584) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The amendment printed in section 2 of this resolution shall be considered as adopted in the House and in the Committee of the Whole. Points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived. During consideration of the bill for further amendment, the chair 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. When the committee rises and reports the bill, as amended, back to the House with a recommendation that the bill do pass, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. The amendment considered as adopted in the House and in the Committee of the Whole is as follows: Strike section 427.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Utah is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), 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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days during which they may revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, this resolution provides an open rule for the consideration of H.R. 2584. It allows any Member of the House to offer amendments which are germane and comply to the House rules. The rule allows priority recognition for the amendments that have been preprinted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I am pleased to support this resolution, which continues the record of our Rules Committee in this Congress of providing for as open and fair and orderly a process as possible.

□ 1220

I commend our chairman, Mr. DREIER, for continuing the record of fairness and openness in the formulation of this rule, which is in contrast to some rules that we have had in past years.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2584 provides $27.5 billion overall for programs within the Department of Interior and the Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, the Indian Health Service, and other agencies. But it is a bill that strikes a fiscally responsible balance between providing funds for ongoing Federal programs while also saving the taxpayers 7 percent over last year's enacted levels. It puts us back roughly to the 2009 levels.

There are some who will claim that there are certain programs that have been hurt heavily. It is true, for example, that the Environmental Protection Agency has an 18 percent reduction in funding in this bill. Please remember, though, that this was made possible simply because of unprecedentedly high record appropriations for EPA in 2009, of which $3 billion remains unobligated.

In an era when 42 to 44 cents of every dollar that we spend goes for interest, it makes no sense in continuously overappropriating line items where money is not needed, not used, and sits there vacant.

This is a bill that oftentimes for those of us who live in the West has been full of riders year after year after year. It probably makes no difference here, but I realize that some are going to be very sensitive to this issue. I know the gentlelady from New York is very concerned about these potential issues that may be on this bill. And why should she not be? If you include the military, 0.8 percent of New York is owned by the Federal Government. I will contrast that with my State, which has 64 percent owned by the Federal Government. And we're not the highest.

This is an issue and a bill that is very important to those of us. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill; it is an extremely fair rule. It can't get any fairer than this one. I urge its adoption.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I thank the gentleman from Utah, my colleague, for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in these tough times we must make choices that reflect our values and our belief that we solve our toughest problems through shared sacrifice and working together. Unfortunately, today we consider yet another bill that is devoid of these values.

Once again, today's legislation places the burden on the American people while rewarding the special interests and the lobbyists who walk these halls.

One of the many riders inserted into the bill will effectively open up a million acres of national forest and other public land around the Grand Canyon National Park because people want to mine uranium there.

Democrats have great concerns about maintaining the integrity of the Grand Canyon and the effect of uranium mining on water quality, not to mention the spectacle that shows us auctioning off a national treasure with the proceeds going to mostly foreign-owned entities.

Who is it that wants to drill for uranium and mine for uranium? Russia, their state atomic energy corporation, and South Korea's state-owned utility.

In other words, we will give up the Grand Canyon and potable water, likely, to benefit the Russians and South Koreans. And any mining that is included in this bill comes under a bill that was signed by Ulysses S. Grant in 1872. We have not raised royalties on anything that anybody takes from us, including foreign entities as they come here to mine our resources.

At the same time, the majority proposes crippling cuts to the EPA that will cut programs that protect our air and water. There are few more important responsibilities in making sure when we go to the kitchen sink that the water coming out is safe. We know a human being may live as long as he or she may without food—four days without water. If our Nation can't protect these most basic of our life necessities, we have indeed fallen far.

Today's bill would also prohibit the use of government moneys to add animals to the Endangered Species List but allows the use of government money to take species off the same list. This policy change threatens the Endangered Species Act and the environmental protections that come with it.

The misguided priorities in this bill will directly impact my district, and my colleague is right about that, and the citizens I am elected to represent. But not just them.

Twenty percent of the freshwater on this planet resides in the Great Lakes. Most of us who live around the Great Lakes believe it is our responsibility to take care of them and to pass it on to future generations. But in recent years, the Great Lakes have been damaged by pollution and invasive species carried on to our water by foreign vessels. We have allowed that.

New York, of course, being closest to the Atlantic Ocean and the St. Lawrence Seaway, has enacted stronger laws against dumping ballast, and this bill punishes us for doing that.

The invasive species are not damaging just an ecosystem but a way of life for the Great Lakes communities that line the shore, as well as endangering our freshwater. The EPA has come to the aid of these communities by dedicating funding to restore the Great Lakes. But today's bill would bar New York State from receiving any restoration funding from the EPA and leave the Great Lakes to be overrun by private polluters and the invasive species they have delivered from overseas.

Any bill that stands up for foreign shipping magnates but won't provide a cent to help Americans should never see the light of day and will never receive my vote.

Today's legislation also harms the arts. If today's bill takes effect, the National Endowment for the Arts will have lost 20 percent of its funding in 2 years. Now, these cuts target a program that works. In fiscal year 2010, we invested $167.5 million into the NEA—remember that number, $167.5—for the purpose of providing funding to nonprofit arts organizations.

The funding created $166.2 billion in total economic activity, supported 5.7 million jobs, and, for the $167 million, generated back $12.6 billion in tax revenue to the United States Treasury. And that does not count what happens to help improvements to States' treasuries and local treasuries.

Today's legislation targets a program proven to create jobs and contribute to the economic and the cultural well-being of our Nation. You would think that people who are elected to the Congress of the United States would really want a program like that not only to survive but to grow. But, no, here they are cutting the budget once again.

Our country is blessed with stunning natural beauty and a wealth of natural resources that are unparalleled anywhere in the world. But in one final swipe at our national interest, today's bill cuts the budget for the Land and Water Conservation Fund by a whopping 78 percent. The Land and Water Conservation Fund ensures that our national treasures will be here for our children and our grandchildren, a mission that apparently deserves 78 percent less money than it did the year before. A cut like that says all you need to know about the priorities of the majority and the special interests that are being served.

If getting our fiscal house in order is truly about shared sacrifices, this bill does not reflect it. We could have started by asking oil and gas companies to pay their fair share after profiting so richly from resources found on American soil. Instead, the majority rejected an amendment that would have asked oil and gas companies to pay a little more so the Nation can fund programs to clean up the most polluted lands in our country. The majority will not even allow this amendment to receive a vote on the floor.

Today's bill asks nothing of the companies that are making record profits. Instead, cuts to programs and services and the agencies that serve the American people and protect our environment for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, a bill like this does not reflect our values. It is not up to the standards the American people have come to expect and deserve. It puts special interests over our general welfare, and it fails totally to invest in our future. We can and we must do better.

I am pleased to now yield 3 minutes to my colleague from New York, the ranking Democrat on the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, Mr. BISHOP.

□ 1230

Mr. BISHOP of New York. I thank my friend from New York for yielding.

I rise in opposition to this rule and to the underlying bill. As every member of the Rules Committee knows, the Interior and Environment appropriations bill that we will debate today simply violates the rules of the House. Unfortunately, the Rules Committee has waived all points of order against the bill, preventing Members from striking provisions that are clearly in violation of House rules.

In particular, title V of the bill includes the Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2011, H.R. 872, a bill that amends the Clean Water Act, which is solely within the jurisdiction of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, of which I am the ranking member.

Furthermore, the provision amends the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, better known as FIFRA, that is under the jurisdiction of the House Agriculture Committee.

As we all know, advancing authorizing legislation within an appropriations vehicle is not within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Appropriations, and it stands in stark contrast to clause 2(b) of rule XXI of the House rules, which states, in part, ''A provision changing existing law may not be reported in a general appropriation bill''; and yet that is precisely what title V is: a change in existing law.

Not only is the inclusion of title V in the underlying bill a violation of House rules, but it is also legislatively redundant. The House has already passed H.R. 872 earlier this year under suspension of the rules. The bill is now being considered in the Senate, where it has been reported out of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

In my opinion, including H.R. 872 in the Interior appropriations bill will hamper negotiations between Senators and between the House and the Senate to get a final bill that everyone can be disappointed with—frankly, that's what's at stake here—but that can pass both Chambers and be enacted into law before the court-ordered deadline of October 31, 2011. Let me say that again: There is a court-ordered deadline of October 31, 2011, to resolve this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I will be offering an amendment to strike title V when it comes up during debate this week. However, I am deeply disappointed that the Rules Committee has blatantly ignored the rules of the House by eliminating the ability of Members to raise a point of order against provisions of an appropriations bill that changes existing law.

There are approximately 39 policy riders included in the Interior appropriations bill. And let's be clear: These are policy earmarks, and these earmarks undermine the jurisdiction of authorizing committees and undermine the ability of the House and the Senate to work its will. It is unfortunate that the Rules Committee is protecting these new earmarks from the rules of the House.

I urge a ''no'' vote on the rule and a ''no'' vote on the underlying bill.

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

We find that this particular bill is a great illustration of one of the problems that we have here in the House of

Representatives and, indeed, with government. Our land policy in the United States is one historically that had no purpose or organization to it. It simply happened. But what happened happened disproportionately throughout this country, which is why 1 out of every 3 acres in America is now owned by the Federal Government.

I defy anyone on that side to find for any a constitutional provision that would allow that ownership; but, nonetheless, it is.

The unfortunate thing is it is disproportionate. One out of every 2 acres in the West is owned by the Federal Government. That means 52 percent of the area west of Denver is owned by the Federal Government. Four percent of the area east of Denver is owned by the Federal Government, much of that in military installations.

As I said, the State of New York has 0.3 percent of its land owned by the Federal Government, 0.8 percent if you include military. The State of Virginia has 8 percent owned by the Federal Government, almost all military. The gentleman from Massachusetts, who will be here as well, 1.1 percent of his State is owned by the Federal Government.

And so it means different issues for my State, which is 65 percent owned by the Federal Government; Alaska; Nevada, which is almost 90 percent owned by the Federal Government; Idaho, which is over 60 percent owned by the Federal Government. Things take place differently.

That's why, for example, things like the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a nice fund if it were used to preserve what we already have. Unfortunately, that fund is used to buy more territory, with an administration decision and mindset that no land should ever be given back or given up; more should be accumulated. That's why it's the ability of this appropriations bill to try to put that money—not simply to cut it, but to move it into preservation as opposed to access to buying more land, which makes sense to us in the West because we recognize this heavy-handed tyranny that takes place.

Let me just give you one simple example that was brought up here that deals with uranium mining in Arizona, one of the so-called ''riders'' in this particular appropriations bill. It takes place in what is called the Arizona Strip, which has led some people to mistakenly think that we were going to be strip mining around the Grand Canyon.

The Arizona Strip is the size of the State of New Jersey. That is the area between Utah and the Colorado River. In that area in 1984, Morris Udall, who was at the time the chairman of the Resources Committee here in the House, created a wilderness compromise in which a wilderness area was to be created in the State of Arizona. In that, 56 percent of the State of Arizona was put off limits to any kind of mining endeavors whatsoever. In exchange, certain areas were put specifically for those types of mining areas, including areas in the Arizona Strip, this New Jersey-sized piece of the State of Arizona. The unfortunate thing is it was always intended to be used there for mining purposes because there is a great deal of uranium ore there.

Unlike other kinds of mining, this ore is found in little pipes, strips within the ground that go up and down. And what you need to do is simply bore into the pipe, find the ore in the middle, take it out, and then replace all the stuff back in. So once you are done with that mine, no one ever sees that it was there in the first place. The ore that is taken out is not left in Arizona. It's actually going to be shipped for processing somewhere else. So there will be no tailings. There will be no wind pollution. There will be no dust issues whatsoever.

Certain special interest groups said, well, it could change the water quality that goes through Colorado and then would eventually flow to Las Vegas and do something strange in Las Vegas, as if that were ever possible. Unfortunately, as stated by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, their mines and mining groups, there have been certain interest groups that have inferred, with no substantive supporting data, that groundwater in this particular area of the Colorado River may be contaminated by uranium mining. That simply won't happen, and it won't happen because of where the ore is. The ore is found 100 feet below the surface. There is only 12 inches of rain a year there. There is no particular kind of any runoff that will take place. It is also found 1,000 feet above the aquifer with clay underneath, so there is no way there can be any kind of leaching that goes into the aquifer.

The bottom line is there will never, never be any kind of contamination on this water, which was the excuse used to justify a political reason for taking this land that had been part of the '84 agreement off the table, and it could not be used again.

Unfortunately, the EPA gets involved in this one again because they have determined that if the uranium—or whatever they call the uranium—gets into the water and it's more than 30 parts per billion, that's unsafe. Unfortunately, there are uranium pipes within the Grand Canyon itself which already erode into the water, and it creates a situation where, naturally occurring, there are 4 parts per billion. So they did some testing at existing mines up in the Kanab Creek area to find out what would happen if actually some of this uranium were to leach into the water, and it would increase that 4 number to 6 parts per billion.

In essence, what they are saying is: You could take all of the tailings that could come from these potential mines and dump them into the Colorado River, and you still would not reach the level set by the EPA for drinking water. In fact, the uranium that naturally occurs in the Colorado River, even if you had a catastrophe, is still lower than uranium levels found in freshwater lakes in the desert area.

Now, why isn't all that considered? Because the decision to withdraw that area from mining was not based on science. If it were based on science, then the Department of Environmental Quality of Arizona would not have testified that there was no scientific basis for it. The State of Arizona would not have passed a piece of legislation decrying the withdrawal of that particular area. The guy who was actually part of the National Parks Conservation Association as well as the Audubon Society and the Save the Redwoods League, who was actually the one that did the scientific study in '84 when the original design by Mo Udall was made, simply said there was no legitimate evidence to say there could be any contamination of that air, which basically means the withdrawal of this land was done for political purposes, not scientific purposes.

So to put a provision back into this bill saying that if you're going to do this kind of stuff, it had darn well better be on a scientific basis and not a political basis makes sense. It's one of the right things to do in here.

□ 1240

I realize we have some other speakers here; so I'm not going to take all the time yet, but I would desperately like to talk about the clean water provisions, the navigable water provisions and what EPA does with those because it has a different impact on those of us in the West, where almost all of our land is controlled by them, versus those in the East, where almost no land is controlled by them and they have a great deal of freedom to develop the resources on their own.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond for a minute before I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

I have, from the Las Vegas Sun of July 22, an article saying that the previous allowing of uranium mining has caused great damage. This watershed gives water to 26 million people and provides 90 percent of the water used in southern Nevada.

Let me quote from the paper:

''As it is, the Colorado River is already endangered by the uranium mines''—which the gentleman talked about has not hurt anybody at all—''that sit in the watershed, some perilously close to the water. The moratorium also doesn't prevent existing mining claims from being developed. The Interior Department says there are about 3,500 claims in the area. Adding the potential for more uranium to enter the water doesn't make sense. Republicans in Congress should quit

trying to repeal the moratorium and should instead work to protect the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River. It makes no sense to put millions of people's drinking water at risk.''

I will put that in the RECORD, if I may, and a New York Times editorial of June 28, ''Mining and the Canyon.'' Absolute harm is being done.

[From the Las Vegas Sun, June 22, 2011]

REPUBLICANS SHOULD QUIT TRYING TO ROLL BACK URANIUM MINING MORATORIUM

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in June issued a six-month moratorium on new uranium mining claims on 1 million acres near the Grand Canyon. The ban provides time for the government to complete a study of the effects of uranium mining in the area.

A final report is due this fall, and Salazar said the department is considering banning new mining claims in the area for the next 20 years.

The issue is important. Uranium mining threatens not only the beauty and ecosystem of the Grand Canyon, but it also poses a threat to the Colorado River, which is a key source of water for about 26 million people in Arizona, Nevada and California. The Colorado River, which forms Lake Mead, provides 90 percent of the water used in Southern Nevada.

Salazar cited a concern for water quality in announcing the moratorium extension because the 1 million acres are in the Colorado River watershed. Water officials worry that more uranium mines could result in radioactive material streaming into the river.

The Grand Canyon and the Colorado River need to be protected. The moratorium on new claims was put in place because of an incredible spike in mining interest in the area under the George W. Bush administration. The Grand Canyon doesn't need to see any more mining around it.

Environmental groups and Colorado River water users cheered Salazar's decision, but in Congress, Salazar's announcement was targeted by some Republicans who claimed it was a bad policy.

In a news release issued this month, Rep. Jeff Flake, R–Ariz., boasted about inserting a provision to block the administration from enforcing the moratorium in the spending bill that covers the Interior Department. The bill passed the House Appropriations Committee this month. Flake claimed that mining ''can create jobs and stimulate the economy in Northern Arizona.''

But Flake's argument is shameless. He is using the nation's poor economy as an excuse to force a dangerous policy on the country.

Flake's argument is part of the larger Republican attempt to roll back any sort of regulation. In passing the interior spending bill from his committee, Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers complained about what he called the administration's ''widespread regulatory overreach'' and pledged to cut it.

But when it comes to clean water, Congress shouldn't be cutting back. People need to be confident their water supply is protected, and if the Republican plan moves forward, there will be serious doubt.

As it is, the Colorado River is already endangered by uranium mines and tailing piles that sit in the watershed, some perilously close to the water. The moratorium also doesn't prevent existing mining claims from being developed. The Interior Department says there are about 3,500 hard-rock mining claims in the area. Adding the potential for more uranium to enter the water doesn't make sense.

Republicans in Congress should quit trying to repeal the moratorium and should instead work to protect the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River. It makes no sense to put millions of people's drinking water at risk.

[From the New York Times, June 28, 2011]

MINING AND THE CANYON

The Obama administration has extended for six months a 2009 moratorium on new uranium mining claims on one million acres around the Grand Canyon. This is good news; even better is the promise from Ken Salazar, the interior secretary, that he will soon recommend a 20-year ban on new claims in the region. That is the maximum allowed under the 1872 mining law.

With uranium prices rising, the number of mining claims have jumped sharply over the last few years. There have been about 3,500 claims in the Grand Canyon-area alone. If developed, they would generate toxic wastes that would threaten the Colorado River—the source of drinking water for roughly 27 million people—the aquifer and the Grand Canyon ecosystem in general.

Mr. Salazar said he could not cancel valid existing claims, but there is likely to be little actual mining. The decision to ''withdraw'' the land from future claims creates new regulatory hurdles for existing claimants, who must demonstrate, among other things, that they had discovered actual mineral deposits before the 2009 moratorium. Only a handful have been able to do so.

There have been the usual complaints from mining lobbyists and their Congressional allies. Representative Jeff Flake, a Republican from Arizona, has threatened to use the interior appropriations bill to block Mr. Salazar's plan. The moratorium will have little effect on the country's uranium supply, most of which comes from Wyoming and New Mexico.

It will protect a treasured national park and the drinking water for millions of people.

I am now pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts, a member of the Rules Committee, Mr. MCGOVERN.

Mr. MCGOVERN. I want to thank the ranking member, the gentlelady from New York, for yielding me the time.

I rise today to oppose this rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have two children, ages 13 and 10, and one of our favorite things to do as a family is to go hiking. We have hiked all over this great country. We have a love and a respect for our open spaces and for our environment. Unfortunately, the Republicans' fiscal year 2012 Interior appropriations bill throws that into grave danger.

This Interior appropriations bill represents an unprecedented departure from our Nation's decades-long bipartisan commitment to protecting our shared environment, magnificent natural resources and our cherished cultural treasures. It's a shame that my Republican colleagues prioritize tax breaks and incentives for highly profitable oil companies over the Grand Canyon, the Cape Cod National Seashore, State parks, and even public health.

Mr. Speaker, I could be here all day talking about the harmful cuts and misplaced priorities that are included in this bill: from the more than 25 policy riders that do not belong in an appropriations bill, that do everything from gutting the Endangered Species Act to allowing uranium drilling by foreign companies alongside the Grand Canyon, to the harsh cuts in EPA funding that will result in millions of Americans being exposed to dirtier air and dirtier water.

I give my Republican colleagues credit. They have left no stone unturned in their environmental assault. Unfortunately, though, that stone will be covered in toxic algae, coal ash, and polluted water if they have their way.

One of the most egregious cuts in this bill is to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been one of the greatest conservation success stories over the past 50 years, protecting thousands and thousands of acres of land at the Federal and State levels. States rely on this funding and demonstrate their commitment to its value by providing matching funding for State park and recreational purposes. Not only that, but the Land and Water Conservation Fund has a dedicated source of funding derived from oil and gas leasing in the Outer Continental Shelf and is authorized to accumulate $900 million annually from its dedicated sources. Nonetheless, my Republican friends forget all of this and still slash the Land and Water Conservation Fund funding by 78 percent from the current fiscal year. This represents the lowest level of funding in the 45-year history of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. What's most troubling is that, in the committee report, my Republican colleagues acknowledge the enormous value of the Land and Water Conservation Fund but then go right ahead and decimate its budget.

The bill also cuts clean water and safe drinking water grant programs by nearly 40 percent, threatening Americans' ability to access clean water and adding to the already significant backlog of safe drinking water infrastructure projects.

Look, I know it's politically popular to demonize the EPA right now, and at times I've had my own strong disagreements with the EPA on certain issues, but this Interior appropriations bill is not the way to meaningfully address any of those disagreements. This bill puts the priorities of special interests and scoring cheap political points over public health and our natural resources. It's as simple as that.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that these are tough budgetary times, but what troubles me about the Republicans' approach to this appropriations process is that so many of their cuts are aimed at programs that will lower the standard of living and lessen the quality of life for a majority of Americans. This appropriations process should be about lifting people up, not putting people down, and it should be about a decent respect for our environment, and certainly a respect for our environment over corporate special interests.

When we talk about protecting our environment, we're talking about quality of life issues that impact every single person in this country. This bill undermines our historic bipartisan commitment to our environment.

I would urge my colleagues to reject this rule and reject the underlying bill.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I am once again appreciative that data from newspaper articles were put into the RECORD, because the newspapers have a tendency of quoting one another and also quoting environmental groups. Unfortunately, the data still says the same thing from those who know, the scientific community, that actually knows what they're talking about, who said:

''A few environmental groups claim, without providing any scientific supporting data, that the groundwater in the Colorado would be contaminated with uranium mining. We conclude that even the most implausible accident would increase the amount of uranium in the Colorado River by an amount that is undetectable over those that occur there normally.''

Another said: ''I continue to view such activities as posing no credible threat of environmental harm to either the Grand Canyon National Park or the Colorado River that flows through it. I can see no credible justification for a 1.1 million-acre withdrawal from mineral entry of lands to the north and south of the park.''

Another said: ''It is important to note that the research conducted by the United States Geological Survey and the preliminary findings by the University of Arizona confirm uranium exploration and mining pose no threat to the Grand Canyon watershed or the park.''

This is the study. This is the scientific data. It would be nice if, for once, we used this data instead of quoting one another and quoting things that have no basis in science.

With that, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENISHEK), a member of the Natural Resources Committee.

Mr. BENISHEK. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this rule and final passage of the bill. In a time when government is borrowing over 40 cents for every dollar it spends, this bill makes needed cuts and puts forward a responsible and sensible framework for managing our Nation's natural resources.

I represent a vast district in northern Michigan that includes Federal forests, national parks, and three Great Lakes. I am particularly pleased that the committee included language to boost and streamline timber harvests in Federal forests, similar to legislation that I introduced earlier this year.

Right now on the Federal forests, for them to plan a timber harvest takes nearly 8 years to complete a harvest, from the beginning of the attempt to sell a parcel of land for timber and the actual harvesting; whereas, certified sustainable State forests take less than 2 years and certified sustainable county forests take a year.

Basically it comes down to jobs in my district. We have a lot of Federal land in northern Michigan, and people in my district depend on the timber industry for jobs. Every little town has a mill, a flooring mill. Jobs, high-paying jobs, and the frustration that comes from having a forest full of timber and being unable to harvest it because of onerous regulations and rules result in a less healthy forest and less jobs for northern Michigan.

We have a long way to go to responsibly harvest timber in northern Michigan and elsewhere in this country, but I believe this is a good start, and I am certainly looking forward to working with this committee in the future to continue to promote jobs in northern Michigan.

□ 1250

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds before yielding to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

We're always being told what's junk science in here, but I will tell you right now, I really think that the science is very strong, and thank goodness there's a moratorium on this mining around the Grand Canyon.

I am now pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), who will make it very clear.

Mr. MARKEY. This spending bill represents one of the most egregious assaults on our Nation's environment in the history of our country. If this bill were to pass, our air will be smoggier. Our climate will be hotter. Our water will be more polluted. Our public lands will become more despoiled.

Simply put, this legislation is so toxic, H.R. 2584 is so toxic, that you'd better handle it wearing a hazmat suit because there are so many future environmental crimes committed against the environment in our country that you have to handle this bill with extreme care.

The actual title of this bill is Interior Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations for 2012. But it could be called the Have the Republicans Been Outside Act.

It's hot, ladies and gentlemen. It is hot. The world is warming. All of the evidence has been pointing in this direction for decades, and people are living it on a daily basis.

It's appropriate that this bill starts with the word ''interior,'' because only the House Republicans who have been cooped up inside for weeks debating whether to crater our economy could possibly ignore what's going on outside in our natural environment.

The weather forecasters said we were trapped under a heat dome last week. Well, the Republican majority, under this Capitol dome, would commit us to even more dangerous heat if this bill passes.

And believe it or not, this bill bans the Environmental Protection Agency from increasing the fuel economy standards of the vehicles which we drive in our country, which will basically put the brakes on the all-electric vehicle, plug-in hybrid revolution.

Now, I know that's what the auto industry wants. I know that's what the oil industry wants. They don't want to see cars become more and more efficient so we don't have to consume all that oil so that we can tell OPEC we don't need their oil any more than we need their sand.

But in this bill, they actually ban the EPA from improving the fuel economy standards of the vehicles that we drive, and they ban all 50 States from improving the efficiency of the vehicles that we drive.

And how else could you explain that this bill would increase smog and dirty air days if you didn't have the House Republicans living in their own world?

When families are planning their summer trips to explore our national parks, how else could you explain a bill that allows for mining of nuclear fuel uranium near Grand Canyon National Park?

Under this bill, when families go to enjoy the sunset across the canyon, it won't just be the sun that's causing the glow, but the radiation as well from the uranium mining.

And when Americans are canceling vacations because they can't pay for gas, how else can you explain a bill that would tell auto companies to stop making more fuel-efficient cars and trucks?

If you live in an air conditioned mansion with an indoor pool and you have your bottled water delivered, then this bill makes perfect sense to you, especially if you also work for the oil, coal mining, or chemical industries. For those industries, this bill represents their summer vacation from regulation. For the rest of us, it is a one-way ticket to a dirtier environment for the United States of America.

House Republicans have a tough time raising the debt ceiling, but with this bill they are proving to have no reservations when it comes to raising the death ceiling with more pollution in our air, in our water, making us less healthy, making us more likely to be able to contract diseases that we would not otherwise.

It is bad enough that the House Republicans want to take Medicare away from grandma, but now they want to make the air she and her grandkids breathe and the water they drink more polluted. This bill would cause more premature deaths, more asthma, more harm to children from toxins like mercury.

Yes, they don't want to lift the debt ceiling, but they will be lifting the death ceiling because of the exposure to all of these chemicals, all of these pollutants.

Vote ''no'' on the Republican appropriations bill.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I know that what we do here on the floor is often riveting drama for those who are watching on television. Let me, in some respects, not try to add to that drama and go back to facts, something we don't necessarily like around here.

We've already talked about this so-called uranium issue showing facts. The chart that we just saw from the gentleman from Massachusetts was an interesting chart. The area of the United States that was colored on that chart is the area that there are those in this administration, indeed, on this floor, want to be owned by the Federal Government here.

Let me talk to you just a moment—and I'll even grant some time to the gentlelady from New York if she could actually answer this one—and talk about what some of these issues do to those of us who live under what Nelson Rockefeller called the ''deadening hand of bureaucracy'' because, once again, in the East you don't have to deal with these situations; in the West we do.

Let me talk about simply the Environmental Protection Agency and some of the brilliant things they do in the name of trying to clean up our water and our air and make life more livable for us. One of the suburbs of my community—and I call it a suburb simply because my community only has, what, 18,000 people in it; so I like calling it a suburb—has no rivers, no creeks, no streams, no anything. It does have irrigation ditches. Starting at the top of the mountain, the irrigation water flows down so it covers all the fields, as normally you would want to do.

We passed legislation for the Clean Water Act allowing the Federal Government, especially the EPA, to come in and monitor water that is navigable water systems on interstate commerce. The Great Salt Lake in Utah is all confined in the State of Utah. There are no outlets. That's why it's salty. There is nothing more intra-navigable than the Great Salt Lake.

But because in the 1880s some of the pioneers used to ship sheep over there for summer grazing on the islands in the Great Salt Lake, it is now part of the interstate commerce system and part of the navigable water system of the United States, therefore controllable by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Now, let's see what they did in my particular community. In this community where there were irrigation ditches, the overflow from the irrigation ditches ran down, and the Environmental Protection Agency said the runoff from those irrigation ditches would eventually go into the Great Salt Lake; therefore, that runoff from a ditch was part of the navigable water systems of the United States and controllable as wetlands by the Environmental Protection Agency, even though that irrigation runoff to get to the Great Salt Lake would actually have to run down the mountain, through a culvert for the city road, through one for the train tracks, through one that was the side road of the freeway, through the northbound freeway, through the barrel pit, through the southbound freeway, through another one of the adjacent roads to the southbound freeway, up a 3 percent grade to an area that had been previously determined to be not wetlands area, and eventually into the Bear River system which was stopped from going to the Great Salt Lake by the Bear River Bird Refuge.

□ 1300

They claim that could happen. And because of that, the water from the irrigation system was navigable waters of the United States and the Environmental Protection Agency claimed jurisdiction over it, which meant that the citizens of that community could not expand their sewer system. Instead, they had to take money out of their pockets to ship their sewage either to Brigham City or Willard because the Environmental Protection Agency now controlled the navigable waters because we gave them the power to do that under the Clean Water Act.

One of the things I am talking about here and one of the frustrations we have illustrated by this bill is, unfortunately, time after time these agencies funded in this bill do not consider what they do to real people. Real people in my community are being harmed time after time by decisions made from bureaucrats sitting here in Washington, and then we wonder why we rail against these environmental groups, why we rail against these agencies, and why we don't want to have some kind of control over this process. And the only vehicle we seem to have is the appropriation bill.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is used to buy more land to get more control; if it were not, we would not complain about it. The EPA is used to get more control over people's lives, and they hurt people in the process. If it were not so, we would not complain about it. The withdrawing of uranium mining on the Arizona strip was done, despite all the scientific testimony, for political reasons. Were it not done so, we would not complain about it.

This is a decent bill, which moves us a step forward to try to control our spending habit, dealing with what is really the core issue and core responsibility of our agencies and trying not to harm people.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. May I inquire of my colleague if he has further speakers.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. May I inquire how much time actually remains.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Utah has 11 minutes remaining, and the gentlewoman from New York has 9 minutes remaining.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. To the gentlelady from New York, I have a brilliant 11-minute speech welling within my bosom; but if you are willing to close, I will be willing to close as well.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I thank you for that, and I am willing to close.

Mr. Speaker, let me just close with this: I think we have demonstrated that this bill contains an astonishing array of devastating cuts and special interest riders that jeopardize the water we drink, the air we breathe, and our country's national heritage.

I urge a ''no'' vote on the rule and the underlying legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I think we've also proven in this bill that we are moving in the right direction to try to control the excesses that continuously take place here and still maintain the core responsibilities that have to be there, and we have done it in a rule that is adamantly fair. It is an open rule that will allow anyone to bring anything down here to the floor until we do a UC agreement that stops it. It is a good rule, and I urge adoption of that particular rule.

In closing, I will once again reiterate the fairness of this open rule. I urge its adoption, and I urge the adoption of the underlying legislation.

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

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

REQUESTING RETURN OF OFFICIAL PAPERS ON H.R. 1309

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 368

Resolved, That the Clerk of the House of Representatives request the Senate to return to the House the bill (H.R. 1309) entitled ''An Act to extend the authorization of the national flood insurance program, to achieve reforms to improve the financial integrity and stability of the program, and to increase the role of private markets in the management of flood insurance risk, and for other purposes''.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will remind the House that on July 24, 1998, at 3:40 p.m., Officer Jacob