

Yesterday, President Obama and I fully agreed on the significance of these guidelines. Ladies and gentlemen, we agreed on a document that is historic.

In the early 1990s, in the Persian Gulf, Japan's Self-Defense Forces swept away sea mines. For 10 years, in the Indian Ocean, Japanese Self-Defense Forces supported your operation to stop the flow of terrorists and arms. Meanwhile, in Cambodia, the Golan Heights, Iraq, Haiti, and South Sudan, members of our Self-Defense Forces provided humanitarian support and peacekeeping operations. Their number amounts to 50,000.

Based on this track record, we are resolved to take yet more responsibility for the peace and stability in the world. It is for that purpose we are determined to enact all necessary bills by this coming summer. And we will do exactly that.

We must make sure human security will be preserved in addition to national security. That is our belief, firm and solid.

We must do our best so that every individual gets education, medical support, and an opportunity to rise to be self-reliant. Armed conflicts have always made women suffer the most. In our age, we must realize the kind of world where finally women are free from human rights abuses.

Our servicemen and -women have made substantial accomplishments. So have our aid workers, who have worked so steadily. Their combined sum has given us a new self-identity.

That is why we now hold up high a new banner that is "proactive contribution to peace based on the principle of international cooperation." Let me repeat. "Proactive contribution to peace based on the principle of international cooperation" should lead Japan along its road for the future.

Problems we face include terrorism, infectious diseases, natural disasters, and climate change. The time has come for the U.S.-Japan alliance to face up to and jointly tackle those challenges that are new. After all, our alliance has lasted more than a quarter of the entire history of the United States. It is an alliance that is sturdy, bound in trust and friendship, deep between us.

No new concept should ever be necessary for the alliance that connects us, the biggest and the second biggest democratic powers in the free world, in working together. Always, it is an alliance that cherishes our shared values of the rule of law, respect for human rights, and freedom.

When I was young in high school and listened to the radio, there was a song that flew out and shook my heart. It was a song by Carole King.

When you're down and troubled . . . close your eyes and think of me, and I will be there to brighten up even your darkest night.

And that day, March 11, 2011, a big quake, a tsunami, and a nuclear accident hit the northeastern part of

Japan. The darkest night fell upon Japan. But it was then we saw the U.S. Armed Forces rushing to Japan to the rescue at a scale never seen or heard before. Lots and lots of people from all corners of the U.S. extended the hand of assistance to the children in the disaster areas. Yes, we have got a friend in you. Together, with the victims, you shed tears. You gave us something, something very, very precious. That was hope, hope for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, the finest asset the U.S. has to give to the world was hope, is hope, will be and must always be hope.

Distinguished representatives of the citizens of the United States, let us call the U.S.-Japan alliance an alliance of hope. Let the two of us, America and Japan, join our hands together and do our best to make the world a better—a much better—place to live.

Alliance of hope: together, we can make a difference.

Thank you so much.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

At 12 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m., His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President's Cabinet;

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

JOINT MEETING DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The purpose of the joint meeting having been completed, the Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 9 minutes p.m.), the joint meeting of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

The SPEAKER. The House will continue in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1241

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee) at 12 o'clock and 41 minutes p.m.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2015.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of rule II of

the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on April 29, 2015 at 11 a.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 304.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

PRINTING OF PROCEEDINGS HAD DURING RECESS

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the proceedings had during the recess be printed in the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2028, ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016; PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2029, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016; AND PROVIDING FOR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM MAY 4, 2015, THROUGH MAY 11, 2015

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 223 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 223

Resolved, That (a) at any time after 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 any bill specified in section 2 of this resolution. The first reading of each such bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of each such bill are waived. General debate on each such bill shall be confined to that 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 each such bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in each such bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived.

(b) During consideration of each such bill for amendment—

(1) each amendment, other than amendments provided for in paragraph (2), shall be debatable for 10 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent and shall not be subject to amendment except as provided in paragraph (2);

(2) no pro forma amendment shall be in order except that the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations or their respective designees may offer up to 10 pro forma amendments each at any point for the purpose of debate; and

(3) 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.

(c) When the committee rises and reports any such bill back to the House with a recommendation that the bill do pass, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on that bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. The bills referred to in the first section of this resolution are as follows:

(a) The bill (H.R. 2028) making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

(b) The bill (H.R. 2029) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

SEC. 3. During consideration of H.R. 2028 and H.R. 2029 pursuant to this resolution—

(a) the provisions of House Concurrent Resolution 27, as adopted by the House, shall have force and effect in the House as though Congress has adopted such concurrent resolution; and

(b) the allocations printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered for all purposes in the House to be allocations under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

SEC. 4. On any legislative day during the period from May 4, 2015, through May 11, 2015—

(a) the Journal of the proceedings of the previous day shall be considered as approved; and

(b) the Chair may at any time declare the House adjourned to meet at a date and time, within the limits of clause 4, section 5, article I of the Constitution, to be announced by the Chair in declaring the adjournment.

SEC. 5. The Speaker may appoint Members to perform the duties of the Chair for the duration of the period addressed by section 4 of this resolution as though under clause 8(a) of rule I.

□ 1245

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

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), 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. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WOODALL. If Members were listening to the Reading Clerk read this rule, we got into some housekeeping issues at the end. We have got a district workweek coming up next week. We needed to give the Speaker some authorities to continue to conduct the business of the House in a collaborative and a pro forma way. But it was the first part of that rule that is exciting.

I confess, I was talking to the Parliamentarian the other day, and he was

telling me about the way the history of the rules had evolved, as folks stand on the House floor during Committee on Rules debate and actually go through line by line explaining to the House what is in the rule. It is not every day that I am excited about doing that, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee on Rules has a tough job. Sometimes the Committee on Rules' job is saying no. Sometimes the Committee on Rules' job is being that gatekeeper to the floor of the House, and we have to deliver some bad news to folks. I don't particularly enjoy reiterating that bad news on the floor of the House.

But today is good news. Today it is all good news for every Member of the House who has any ideas at all about how better to fund the responsibilities of this Nation. They are going to be able to have their voice heard.

Let me read, as the Reading Clerk did. We have two bills in this rule, Mr. Speaker: H.R. 2028 and H.R. 2029. I have them here. H.R. 2029 makes appropriations for military construction, Veterans Affairs, and related agencies. I daresay there is not a single Member on the floor of this House that has not grappled with how to better serve the veterans at home in our districts, that has not grappled with how to provide better accountability to the Veterans Administration that is tasked with providing those services. This rule provides that any Member of this Chamber—Republican or Democrat, senior or junior, freshman or retiring—has an opportunity to have their ideas heard. It is the best of what we do in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to do it on H.R. 2029.

This rule also provides for consideration of H.R. 2028. That is the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, Mr. Speaker. Again, I daresay that there is anyone, particularly east of the Mississippi, that has a district that is not in some way impacted by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Army Corps of Engineers is funded in this legislation. Individual projects are funded in this legislation.

What this rule provides is that any Member of this Chamber that has an idea about how to better appropriate these dollars—these dollars that belong not to us as individual Members, but to the American taxpayer—how to better be accountable, be effective, be efficient with these tax dollars, Mr. Speaker, they can come to this floor and have their amendments heard.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard it said often that the Senate only has two rules: the unanimous consent and exhaustion. The Committee on Rules prevents us from having to have that structure here, but it is true that you can effectively filibuster in this Chamber as well: you can come down; you can move to strike the last word; you can have debate go on forever. I don't believe that serves us particularly well.

There is obviously an opportunity and a need to have your voice heard, to

have your constituents' voices heard; but what this rule does do, which is why we are going to call it a modified open rule instead of a completely open rule, is it restricts what one might call dilatory amendments, what one might call clarifying conversation. It restricts these pro forma amendments, where you are not actually trying to change any language, you just want to come down here and talk, 10 on each side controlled by the subcommittee chairmen.

Mr. Speaker, what is so neat about these two bills that we are going to make in order under this bill is they both passed out of the Committee on Appropriations on a voice vote. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there are some contentious things that we do in this institution and, arguably, appropriating is one of the hardest things that this institution has to do, but passing these bills out of committee on a voice vote tells us about the collaborative way in which these bills were put together.

Now, I can tell you, there are going to be folks on both sides of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, who disagree with the funding levels in these bills. There are going to be Republicans who wish that they funded less, Democrats who wish they funded more; there are going to be Democrats who wish they funded less, and Republicans who wish they funded more.

The funding levels of the total bill, that is not for debate today. That is set in the funding allocations. We call them 302(a) allocations, Mr. Speaker. That is my responsibility on the Committee on the Budget and others who serve on the Committee on the Budget. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we are this close—oh, golly, we are this close—to having conferred the first balanced budget for the United States of America in over 10 years—in over 10 years. The House and the Senate are about to agree on funding levels for this Nation. It is embarrassing that we don't do it every year, but it is wonderful that we have an opportunity to do it this year, and we will.

Ordinarily, Mr. Speaker, we would have done that first. And candidly, as a member of the House Committee on the Budget, a Member who proudly supported the budget that passed here on the floor of the House, I thought that conference report was going to be ready on Monday of this week. It is not. It is not. So this rule also deems those levels that the House has already passed, those levels that we absolutely expect to be the levels of funding in that conference report, to be the levels of funding for this Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, for this Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, as is appropriate.

We are beginning the appropriations process today, Mr. Speaker, at the earliest point in 40 years. How many of my colleagues are frustrated, disappointed,

disillusioned when this Chamber cannot get its work done?

Oh, the list is long, Mr. Speaker, and there are legitimate reasons why we cannot accomplish some of the goals that we have set out to accomplish, but I promise you, Mr. Speaker, the funding clock waits on no Member. Come September 30 of this year, funding will expire for the entire Federal Government. The earlier we start to solve that issue, the better chance we have of getting it done. And working together, collaboratively, voice votes out of subcommittee, big votes out on the budget bill, we are starting earlier than we have since 1973.

Good processes yield good results, Mr. Speaker; flawed processes yield flawed results. This is the kind of rule that I think every Member of this body wishes we could see more of here on the House floor. This is going to allow for the kind of debate that is not going to predetermine the outcome, but is going to allow Members to come down to the floor and make their case to their colleagues, have the kind of debate the American people expect, and let the chips fall where they may. You get 218 votes, you get to change this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I signed up to be on the Committee on Rules because I knew that we would have the opportunity to unleash this institution, the opportunity to allow every Member who comes from such diverse backgrounds, who have so much to contribute. Mr. Speaker, I just got here 4 years ago with my voting card lent to me by the Seventh District of Georgia. Folks in my class that came in 4 years ago, they are already in the top 50 percent of seniority in this institution. The American people have been turning folks out at record speed, which means we have been bringing in new talent like never before.

Sometimes folks think the system around here is geared towards those who have been here the longest. They think that only after you have achieved a subcommittee chairmanship or a committee chairmanship will you be able to have input on the process. The Committee on Rules says no. The Committee on Appropriations says no. On these bills in this process, every single Member has a chance to have their voice heard, a chance to come down here, make their case, and have an impact on the final product.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be carrying this rule today, and I urge strong support from my colleagues on both sides of the aisle as we consider this bill throughout the afternoon and on final passage.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia, my good friend, for yielding me the customary 30 minutes for debate, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, totally unrelated to my assigned task, I do feel very strongly, as I am sure many Members of the House of Representatives and many

American citizens feel, the horror of what transpired in Nepal, and I would just like to say, probably speaking for just about every Member, that our heartfelt condolences are with the Nepalese people, and our hope is that the world will rally to them, as have many, including America, and allow the injured and the homeless to be taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2029, the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2016 provides for a total of \$76.6 billion in discretionary funding, including overseas contingency operations, as well as \$7 billion for military construction and family housing projects, and \$163.2 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 2028, the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2016, provides a total allocation of \$35.4 billion for energy and water resource projects.

First, I find it important to mention, as did my colleague from Georgia, that this rule is a modified open rule, with time limits set to 10 minutes' debate per amendment, and not an open rule to allow all Members to have a full and robust debate on the House floor.

I commend my colleague from Georgia, who has been a continuing advocate for open rules, and I also recognize his explanation that the, in his words, restriction of time was to avoid what would amount to unnecessary debate.

But as has become custom under Republican leadership, we are once again limiting the amount of deliberation permitted on issues that are critically important to our Nation and our constituents. Nevertheless, I am proud, as is my friend from Georgia, that Republicans and Democrats—the word he used is “collaborated,” and I agree—were able to come together to draft H.R. 2029, the legislation that appropriates funds to military construction projects, improves the quality of life for veterans and military families, and allows for the continued operation of the essential functions of our Nation's governing body.

These measures include the implementation of stringent, but effective, reporting requirements for the Vista electronic health records system, as well as the continued efforts to eliminate the veterans' claims backlog by fully funding endeavors to implement digital scanning of health records and improvements to centralized mail.

□ 1300

These commendable provisions bring us another step closer to ensuring that those who have dedicated themselves to defending our Nation will receive the benefits they have rightly earned and deserve.

Despite reaching common ground on several important aspects, the Republican's fiscal year 2016 budget caps will have real and drastic cuts to essential programs that are necessary to support

the brave individuals who served our great Nation in combat and who will bear the costs of those wars for decades to come.

As a result of the majority's FY 2016 budget resolution spending caps, political maneuvering, and gimmicks—I remember when I was a child and I first learned about the magical terminology “hocus-pocus,” and it comes to mind that we are sort of in imaginary land here, with the political maneuvering and gimmicks—military construction funding stands to be slashed by \$1.2 billion, and the Department of Veterans Affairs comes in at \$1.4 billion below the amount requested.

Yesterday, in the Rules Committee, we had a lengthy proceeding, and every member on the Rules Committee had an opportunity to speak to this issue. Almost as a collective voice, there was criticism of Veterans Affairs and how it functions and its failures over a protracted period of time.

I raised a question for information about how many people work for VA, total; and I learned for the first time that there are 340,000 people that work in interrelated capacities for VA.

The arguments that were being made were made about people who are flawed and rightly should be criticized, but I don't feel all 340,000 people who work on behalf of veterans, particularly in areas that I am privileged to serve, have seen changes that are positive and helpful, although there is always room for improvement.

There was one measure for Veterans Affairs employees to receive the same 1.3 percent increase in their pay, and this measure disallows that, and I don't think that is right. I believe that many of those persons have rightfully earned what other Federal employees are to receive as a minimal increase in these very troubled economic times.

My Republican colleagues' efforts to shift \$532 million to the overseas contingency operations account—which, incidentally, does not count against the budget cap—creates the appearance that we have allocated the robust and necessary funding that our military requires when, in reality, we fail to do so.

Americans who currently serve and have served in our military, along with their families, deserve the very best our Nation has to offer. When it comes to investments in our infrastructure, our military, and our country, we all must recognize that not all spending is bad spending. We can and we must do better.

H.R. 2028, the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2016, is also an important piece of legislation. This bill provides funding for many critical defense and nondefense areas, from vital water resource projects to essential weapons, naval reactor, and nuclear proliferation funding. All of these funding projects enjoy largely bipartisan support.

That is why it is a shame, in my view, that my Republican friends have

taken this opportunity to poison these bipartisan funding measures by attaching partisan policy riders, and I am sure Members are going to be down here speaking loudly about some of them.

On the one hand, this bill provides very robust funding for the Army Corps of Engineers at \$5.6 billion in total. That is an increase of \$142 million from fiscal year 2015.

I applaud this strong funding effort. Unfortunately, my friends on the other side have elected to add an amendment to this funding that will allow guns to be carried on all Corps of Engineers land.

I spoke passionately last night about this, and I anticipate that, beginning in the month of May, I will speak more not just about this particular measure, but about the epidemic of gun violence in this society. I did not coin that phrase. The former Surgeon General, Mr. Satcher, pointed that out a decade ago—nearly—and it is as true today as at any other point.

Why would we add an amendment to an important appropriations bill that will allow more guns into recreational areas used by families? I just simply cannot understand that. Does anyone really believe an appropriations bill is the appropriate place to amend our gun laws?

It would appear that reasonable minds do not. Clause 2 of rule XXI prohibits members of the House Rules to legislate on an appropriations measure. Significantly and dangerously, Republicans have granted a waiver of this important rule.

I won't speak more about it. As I indicated, there will be more to come on this business of guns in our society, and I will make it very clear where I am coming from. I feel it is in the interest of society and not in opposition to the Second Amendment.

Here is another example. This bill allocates \$1.178 billion for the harbor maintenance trust fund, vital funding needed to help further usher our ports and harbors in the 21st century, but then my friends on the other side of the aisle saw fit to attach an amendment that will prevent the Army Corps of Engineers from taking commonsense steps to clarify which waters are protected by the Clean Water Act.

Why, in one instance, are we going to fully fund an agency as vital as the Army Corps of Engineers and then, in the next breath, tie their hands by preventing them from making commonsense determinations on what is widely acknowledged to be a state of confusion about the scope of the law's pollution control programs? Let the Corps do its job.

Why are my friends on the other side of the aisle trying to weigh down this important funding bill with unnecessary and partisan policy riders?

This bill funds essential nuclear proliferation activities—\$1.9 million worth—as well as environmental clean-up efforts. We should not be threat-

ening the funding to stop the spread of nuclear weapons or the preservation of our environment and construction of our harbors just so the Republicans can have a partisan fight over gutting the Clean Water Act or attempting to change our gun laws.

The American people deserve better. The funding of these projects is too important.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we have an important responsibility in budgeting in this institution—again, one that has not been fulfilled, I would argue, in more than a decade, that will be fulfilled this year for the very first time.

We had a choice in the Budget Committee. I serve on the Budget Committee as well, Mr. Speaker. We had a choice in the Budget Committee about whether or not we were just going to pretend that we could fund at certain levels or whether we were going to actually follow the law.

Mr. Speaker, it may not surprise you that we have those conversations in Washington; but, yes, the conversation goes: Am I just going to do whatever I want to do? Or am I going to follow the law?

It is very striking to me that this conversation occurs at all. I would have said that that is kind of the definition of the law: you don't get whatever you want to do; you have to follow the law. I wish that we could drive that message home across so many different parts of our society. The law is the law.

The President absolutely sent some budget requests to us for these bills, as he will for other appropriations bills, Mr. Speaker.

In the case of the Energy and Water Appropriations bill, the President requested a 5 percent increase in that funding. Now, had we passed that 5 percent increase without changing the law, we are going to roll around to October 1, at the beginning of the fiscal year, and the law is going to snap that 5 percent increase right back down to legally allowed levels.

The choice we had in the Appropriations Committee—and I so admire my friends on the Appropriations Committee, Mr. Speaker—we had a choice of either pretending we were going to spend a lot of money funding all of our priorities, only to have the law snap those down across the board, or we could be honest about how much money was available and make sure we were prioritizing every single dollar as best we could.

In the case of Energy and Water, the President asked for a 5 percent increase. The Appropriations Committee provided a 3 percent increase, as the law allows. In the case of Military Construction and the VA, the President asked for just over an 8 percent increase. The Appropriations Committee provided a 6 percent increase, as the law allows.

I would challenge my friends on the other side of the aisle. I would challenge my friends on this side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker. Thirty years ago, two-thirds of what the Federal Government funded in this country was funded out of this institution. It was funded through the Appropriations Committee. It was this body making decisions and choices based on our constituents' needs and desires about how to use taxpayer dollars—not so today.

Today, it is exactly the opposite; instead of this institution funding two-thirds of the budget and one-third of it being mandatory spending, now, two-thirds is mandatory, and only one-third is available for this body to make decisions about.

I would challenge my colleagues: let's find that agreement that reforms mandatory spending, as every Member of this Chamber knows needs to happen, and let's reallocate those dollars to what was designed in the Budget Control Act of 2011 to allow us to fund these discretionary priorities at a higher level.

Mr. Speaker, I want to build things. I want to build things. For Pete's sake, in this Energy and Water Development bill, we do. We fund the Corps of Engineers in this bill.

We have the Savannah Harbor expansion project in the great State of Georgia. We are the fastest growing container port in the Nation, Mr. Speaker—the fastest growing in the Nation—trying to prepare for the new Panamax ships coming through the new Panama Canal.

The Corps of Engineers tells us that in order to maximize the use of taxpayer dollars, in order to make sure that taxpayers get the best bang for their buck on this project of national importance, we need to build it in 6 years, at the rate of \$100 million a year. Six years, \$100 million a year, is the way we maximize taxpayer dollars.

This bill funds that project at \$21 million. That is \$21 million. We are going to string that project out year after year after year, costing the taxpayer more.

Now, I don't blame my friends on the Appropriations Committee, Mr. Speaker. As it turns out, the rules of the House don't allow us to prioritize those projects. That is what the President asked for. The Appropriations Committee wasn't able to ask for any more than the President asked for.

This is the President's funding level, but that is not the right way to appropriate, and if we could work together to reallocate those dollars, I would do it tomorrow.

I challenge my friends to find a mandatory spending reform bill that I will not support. It is critical that we do it. It is critical to our seniors. It is critical to the young people. It is critical to the governance of this Nation.

But to the degree that I have complaints about this bill, my friends have complaints about this bill, with the passage of this rule, we are going to

allow every single Member to come down here and make those improvements known. We will have up-or-down votes. Some amendments will lose; some amendments will win.

We will perfect this bill together. That is the way this bill was written, and that is the way this bill will be passed, and that should make us all very proud.

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

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I so much enjoy the passion of my good friend from Georgia. I am sure he feels the same as me. He kind of has an advantage over me today, in that he is on the Budget Committee. Happily, I would report to him I brought along some people from the Budget Committee that can take up the slack that I might offer.

I am delighted at this time to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. YARMUTH), my good friend from the Budget Committee.

□ 1315

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend being willing to yield.

I rise in opposition to this rule which deems, as if passed, a budget resolution that, at best, is an economic fantasy and, at worst, does serious damage to our country.

The rule before us today is further proof that our Republican colleagues are continuing to rely on faith-based accounting in this budget. They are closing their eyes and praying that it works. But it doesn't work. The numbers don't add up, and this rule makes those shortcomings clear.

The funding levels deemed in this measure do not meet our moral obligation to move our country forward and help the American people. Not only do they fail to meet the needs of the people we represent, they fail to meet a basic standard of honest budgeting.

For example, we know that trickle-down economics doesn't work. We have seen that time and time again, unfortunately, in this century. Yet, this rule puts in place funding levels that are supposedly balanced by the unsupportable belief that tax cuts generate more revenue.

The Republican budget proposals will result in dramatic cuts to education, infrastructure, and innovation, cuts to investments that we know we need to prepare our children and grandchildren to lead the world in the new global economy and to grow our economy.

This deemed budget resolution pretends we can afford more tax cuts for the ultrawealthy who do not need them, while it increases taxes for middle class families that they can't afford.

This rule deems in place funding levels that will continue to use the overseas contingency operations account budget line as a slush fund, abandoning the Republicans' own commitments to

maintaining sequester-level spending for our national defense, while cutting nearly every program that helps hard-working Americans get ahead.

At every turn, this measure misses the mark in fulfilling our obligation to adequately fund investments that will allow us to continue our economic recovery. Simply put, this budget falls woefully short.

I urge my colleagues to oppose the funding levels deemed in this rule and ensure that American families will not be forced to work harder and get less.

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

I enjoy serving on the Budget Committee with my friend from Kentucky. The budget is that first step of any accounting process for the year, and my friend is absolutely right.

If we could have, we would have passed that budget conference report first thing when we got into town this week. Anybody who is reading the newspaper knows it slowed down in the Senate. We have all the numbers worked out. There are some other issues going on. I won't bore folks with those details.

So this rule absolutely does, in the name of getting the people's business done, take those budget levels that have passed in this House, that have passed in the Senate, that are on their way back over here in a conference report, and sets those as the funding levels for this year.

Again, these are the levels that exist in law. That is the fantasy part of some of our funding debates. I could agree with all my colleagues that we need to triple funding on X, Y, or Z project, but the law won't allow it. We will pass that on the floor of the House, but as soon as the beginning of the fiscal year rolls around, the law will sequester those dollars, snap that funding back down.

We have an obligation to prioritize these dollars ourselves. Golly, when we have tough decisions to be made, I don't want to leave those tough decisions to an automatic sequestration process. I don't want to leave those tough decisions to some automatic process of law. I want to take responsibility for those decisions here. I want us to make these decisions together.

If we have to grapple with it, let us grapple together, but let's be honest with folks that there is no free lunch here. If we want it, we have to pay for it.

Now, to my friend from Kentucky's point, we are paying for a lot of it out the overseas contingency operations account. I voted "no" on that decision when it came to the House floor, as my friend from Kentucky did as well. We lost.

That is the funny thing about this institution, Mr. Speaker. I told my constituents about all the amazing things I was going to get up here to do, I was going to do them on their behalf. It turns out, if I can't get 217 of my colleagues up to agree with me, I can't do squat.

We tried and we failed on that account. So now we have the numbers that we have; we have the bill that we have; we have the law that we have; and as much as we might want it to be different, it isn't.

That is why this open rule is so important, Mr. Speaker, because we have the bill that we have; we have the law that we have; and now we have a process that allows every Member of this Chamber to come down here and improve it.

We don't know what it is going to look like at the end of the process. It is not a foregone conclusion who has the votes and who doesn't, and I believe in my heart the bill will be better at the end than it was at the beginning because that is what the collective wisdom of this institution brings.

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

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am very pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE), another member of the Budget Committee, a dear friend of mine.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, before I start, may I make a parliamentary inquiry, sir.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will state her parliamentary inquiry.

Ms. MOORE. My inquiry is, has the concurrent budget passed? Is it law?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair cannot respond to a parliamentary inquiry on a non-pending measure.

Ms. MOORE. Well, the rule, Mr. Speaker, is really clear. It says that the provisions of the House Concurrent Resolution 27, as adopted by the House, shall have the force and effect in the House as though Congress has adopted such concurrent resolution. I am hearing that we have adopted it, so have we?

In order to take up these appropriations bills, we are supposed to have passed that. I am on the budget conference committee, and I didn't recall that we had passed it, sir.

So I renew my inquiry as to whether or not we are operating under a passed budget resolution that has passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman may consult the records of the House for that information.

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule because, once again, here we are with all kinds of flowery notions about the law and so forth, and we are actually deeming this budget as passed.

As a member of the Budget Conference Committee, I can tell you that the reason for the delay is not because there was an attempt to reach a bipartisan agreement. Oh, no. The Democratic budget conferees have been completely shut out of the budget negotiation process.

You would think that without these pesky Democrats in the way, it would not have been that hard for the majority-controlled House and the Senate to

come up with an agreement of how best to shred the social safety net, drive more people into poverty, cut our investments in infrastructure, block grant Medicaid, slash SNAP, end the Affordable Care Act and then, of course, keep the money and the savings from the Affordable Care Act, and take 69 percent of nondefense cuts from low-income and moderate-income families. They could have done it.

So instead of the majority party governing, they have resorted to this plan B and deeming the budget as passed.

Now, you know, this Republican budget claims to balance in 10 years, but it doesn't do it. It gets the savings from the Affordable Care Act, which it eliminates. And also, to appease the war hawks in the Republican caucus, they throw this money into the overseas contingency operations, also known as a slush fund.

And in the underlying budget, we see the Republican Party doubling down on the same "cut our way into prosperity" approach. That is another charade claiming that block grants are just another form of enabling States to have more flexibility. When you hear the word "flexibility," think massive cuts. It means eviscerating the social safety net.

So I ask my colleagues to reject this rule.

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

I know the Speaker is constrained to just ruling on parliamentary issues. I have no such constraint here. I can opine on the budget process itself.

And I would say to my friend that I share her frustration. I absolutely do. I have been in this Chamber 4 years. We have had to deem appropriations levels every single year. Not once—not once—have we been able to agree on conference budget numbers in the 4 years that I have served in this House.

Now, for the previous 4 years, I confess, I pointed the finger at the Senate, and I pointed the finger at the Senate's leader who, at that time, was Senator REID from Nevada. Today we have a new Senate leader, and I can't point the finger at the other party. If we can't get this right, it is my leader in the Senate who can't get this right. But I believe we are. Mr. Speaker, I believe we are.

Open up any newspaper, look at any report. It was supposed to be done earlier this week. We have never had a shot at getting it done in the past. We are on the brink of that agreement. So what is happening here today, far from being an unusual circumstance, is the best we have done in 5 years.

Now, candidly, that is what I expect from new leadership in the Senate. I expect us to do better than we did last year; I expect us to do better than we did 2 years ago; and I expect us to be even better next year than we are this year. The first time in more than a decade, the first time in more than a decade we have had a shot at a governing budget document.

But to be fair, Mr. Speaker, I want to distinguish between the budget and the law. A lot of folks believe that the budget of the United States becomes the law of the land. It does not. The President never signs the budget of the United States. It is an agreement between the House and the Senate. That distinguishes it from the budget caps and the Budget Control Act, which are absolutely the law of the land, passed by the House and Senate, signed by President Obama.

So when we talk about what it is that we want to see in funding levels, we can decide anything we want to in this Chamber. But the law of the land is not what we decide in our budget document; it is what was decided back in August of 2011 when the budget caps from the Budget Control Act came into being.

Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to have this conference budget agreement, the opportunity to be working from the same sheet of budgeting music on both sides of the Hill, is amazing. I can't tell you, as a Budget Committee member, how hard we have worked to achieve it and how much I anticipate it. It wasn't yesterday; so far it is not today; but it is going to be soon.

I don't want that to stand in the way of getting the people's business done. We have two great appropriations bills here, again, passed by voice votes out of committee, composed in collaborative ways within the Appropriations Committee. These two bills deserve to be heard on the floor of the House; they deserve to be heard this week; and with passage of this rule, they will be.

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

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida, the great State of Florida (Ms. BROWN), my very, very good friend who is an expert in veterans affairs, among other things.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House: dead on arrival. You know, you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. I rise in strong opposition to this rule and to the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill.

After taking a step forward with the new Choice Act program, this Republican budget takes two steps back with its cuts in veterans health care. Just another example of Republicans talking the talk but not walking the walk.

But you don't have to take my word for it. You can ask the veterans service organizations who represent the interests of our veterans. Every last one of them oppose this bill.

□ 1330

The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars said the following about the Republicans' veterans bill: "The VA cannot fulfill its mission without proper funding, but the House, for whatever reason, now wants to ration care, eliminate infrastructure

projects, and stop improving upon the programs and services that the VA was created to provide. This bill is bad for veterans, and any vote for it is unconscionable."

We are going to vote on a Republican budget later this week that provides more money for the Department of Defense than the Pentagon requested, while cutting funds for health care and services for every veteran that is returning from battle.

George Washington, the first President of the United States, said: "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by our Nation."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 1 minute.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Sadly, this bill truly fails the test of appreciation our veterans deserve.

Vote "no" on the rule, and vote "no" on the Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill, and send this bad legislation back to the drawing board.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will cut 70,000 veterans from health care. I can't imagine any Democrat or any Republican voting for this bill.

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

One of the things I love about this institution is the passion with which folks come to the floor of this House, and so often that passion is directed at improving the services for those who have served us.

My friend from Florida is absolutely right when he said in his opening statement that in the Rules Committee last night, the frustration with the VA and in trying to provide accountable services to our veterans was universal. This is not a partisan issue. Serving those who have served us is an issue that comes from the heart, and it comes from every Member of this Chamber.

But I will remind all of my friends, if you are wondering whether or not we are fulfilling that commitment, this is the bill that this institution passed last year with only one dissenting vote. And this bill increases funding over last year by 6 percent.

Mr. Speaker, let no man and no woman question the commitment of our friends on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, our friends doing the Military Construction and VA Appropriations bill. I know the commitment to be universal, which is why in a time of budget cuts, which is why in a time of sequestration, which is why in a time when almost every account of the Federal budget is under strain, this account goes not down but up, and up by 6 percent over what this body passed almost unanimously last year.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I would inquire how much time remains for both sides.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida has 9½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Georgia has 7½ minutes remaining.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I would advise my friend from Georgia that I have no further requests for time, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I am also prepared to close.

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

I wish to place the Statement of Administration Policy, with reference to both these matters, in the RECORD.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 2029—MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

(Rep. Rogers, R-KY, Apr. 28, 2015)

The Administration strongly opposes House passage of H.R. 2029, making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes. The bill fails to fully fund critical priorities, including veterans' medical care and military and VA construction. Furthermore, the legislation includes a highly problematic ideological rider that would constrain the President's ability to protect our national security. If the President were presented with H.R. 2029, his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.

Moreover, enacting H.R. 2029 while adhering to the congressional Republican budget's overall spending limits for fiscal year (FY) 2016 would hurt our economy and short-change investments in middle-class priorities. Sequestration was never intended to take effect: rather, it was supposed to threaten such drastic cuts to both defense and non-defense funding that policymakers would be motivated to come to the table and reduce the deficit through smart, balanced reforms. The Republican framework would bring base discretionary funding for both defense and non-defense for FY 2016 to the lowest real levels in a decade. Compared to the President's Budget, the cuts would result in tens of thousands of the Nation's most vulnerable children losing access to Head Start, more than two million fewer workers receiving job training and employment services, and thousands fewer scientific and medical research awards and grants, adversely impacting the pace of discovery and innovation, along with other impacts that would hurt the economy, the middle class, and Americans working hard to reach the middle class.

Maintaining sequestration would also negatively impact programs that provide important services to our Nation's veterans and are funded in appropriations bills where House Republicans propose to make even deeper cuts relative to the President's Budget than in H.R. 2029. For example, American Job Centers serve 1.2 million veterans annually, including 300,000 who receive intensive employment services. Transition assistance provides 200,000 service members each year with employment guidance and information as they prepare to enter the civilian workforce. And hundreds of thousands of veterans rely on a wide range of Department of Housing and Urban Development programs for housing support and homeless assistance each year.

Sequestration levels would also put our national security at unnecessary risk, not only through pressures on defense spending, but also through pressures on State, USAID, Homeland Security, and other non-defense

programs that help keep us safe. More broadly, the strength of our economy and the security of our Nation are linked. That is why the President has been clear that he is not willing to lock in sequestration going forward, nor will he accept fixes to defense without also fixing non-defense.

The President's senior advisors would recommend that he veto H.R. 2029 and any other legislation that implements the current Republican budget framework, which blocks the investments we need for our economy to compete in the future. The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to reverse sequestration for defense and non-defense priorities and to offset the cost with commonsense spending and tax expenditure cuts, as Members of Congress from both parties have urged.

The Administration would like to take this opportunity to share additional views regarding the Committee's version of the bill.

Veterans Affairs Medical Care. The Administration appreciates the Committee's support for our Nation's veterans; however, the Administration objects to the Committee's overall \$585 million reduction to the FY 2016 Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Care request. If enacted, this reduction would negatively impact medical care services for tens of thousands of veterans and reduce VA's ability to activate new and replacement facilities with sufficient staff and equipment and to adequately maintain facility infrastructure.

Veterans Affairs Construction. The Administration objects to the Committee's \$582 million reduction to the FY 2016 VA major construction request. This reduction would prevent building upgrades and renovations, including necessary expansions to medical facilities and national cemeteries that would improve services to our veterans. The bill would significantly constrain VA's ability to make progress on its highest priority capital projects.

Other Veterans Affairs Reductions. The Administration also objects to the Committee's other reductions to the overall VA request, including \$159 million in reductions for employee awards, bonuses, and the President's proposed 1.3 percent pay raise for Federal employees. As VA attempts to enhance staffing to deliver better care to veterans, these reductions will hinder the Department's ability to recruit and retain personnel critical to the provision of benefits and services to veterans. The Administration urges the Congress to provide the proposed 1.3 percent pay increase for Federal civilian employees.

Military Construction. The Administration objects to the Committee's underfunding of military construction in the President's FY 2016 base defense budget by \$1.3 billion, which will delay or defer projects that serve critical needs for members of our Armed Forces and their families. The projects requested in the FY 2016 Budget reflect the highest priority projects for the Department of Defense, and the Administration requests full funding for each project.

Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) Funds. The Administration strongly objects to the Committee's use of \$532 million of OCO funds intended for wars and not subject to the budget caps to pay for long-term infrastructure investments. Shifting long-term defense costs to OCO is bad budget policy and bad defense policy, since it undermines long-term planning. Moreover, the Administration has made clear that it will not accept attempts to fix defense without non-defense by using OCO as a mechanism to evade the defense budget cap.

Detainee Matters. The Administration strongly objects to section 512 of the bill, which prohibits the use of funds to con-

struct, renovate, or expand any facility in the United States to house individuals held in the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. This provision would constrain the flexibility that the Nation's Armed Forces and counterterrorism professionals need to best protect U.S. national security, intruding upon the Executive Branch's ability to carry out its mission.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress as the FY 2016 appropriations process moves forward.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 2028—ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

(Rep. Rogers, R-KY, Apr. 28, 2015)

The Administration strongly opposes House passage of H.R. 2028, making appropriations for energy and water development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes. The bill drastically underfunds critical investments that develop American energy sources to build a clean and secure energy future; develop and commercialize the emerging technologies that create high-quality jobs and enhance the Nation's economic competitiveness; and improve resilience against current and ongoing climate impacts that threaten our economy, public health, and natural resources. As a result, it would put at risk U.S. competitiveness in new markets for clean energy industries such as advanced vehicles, advanced manufacturing, energy efficiency for homes and businesses, and domestic renewable energy such as wind, solar, and biomass. It would also harm efforts to implement the President's nuclear strategy and advance counter-proliferation objectives. Furthermore, the legislation includes highly problematic ideological riders, including provisions that threaten to undermine our ability to protect a resource that is essential to America's health: clean water. If the President were presented with H.R. 2028, his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.

In addition, enacting H.R. 2028, while adhering to the congressional Republican budget's overall spending limits for fiscal year (FY) 2016 would hurt our economy and short-change investments in middle-class priorities. Sequestration was never intended to take effect: rather, it was supposed to threaten such drastic cuts to both defense and non-defense funding that policymakers would be motivated to come to the table and reduce the deficit through smart, balanced reforms. The Republican framework would bring base discretionary funding for both defense and non-defense for FY 2016 to the lowest real levels in a decade. Compared to the President's Budget, the cuts would result in tens of thousands of the Nation's most vulnerable children losing access to Head Start, more than two million fewer workers receiving job training and employment services, and thousands fewer scientific and medical research awards and grants, adversely impacting the pace of discovery and innovation, along with other impacts that would hurt the economy, the middle class, and Americans working hard to reach the middle class.

Sequestration levels would also put our national security at unnecessary risk, not only through pressures on defense spending, but also through pressures on State, USAID, Homeland Security, and other non-defense programs that help keep us safe. More broadly, the strength of our economy and the security of our Nation are linked. That is why the President has been clear that he is not willing to lock in sequestration going forward, nor will he accept fixes to defense without also fixing non-defense.

The President's senior advisors would recommend that he veto H.R. 2028 and any other legislation that implements the current Republican budget framework, which blocks the investments needed for our economy to compete in the future. The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to reverse sequestration for defense and non-defense priorities and offset the cost with commonsense spending and tax expenditure cuts, as Members of Congress from both parties have urged.

The Administration would like to take this opportunity to share additional views regarding the Committee's version of the bill.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE)

Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. The Administration strongly objects to the \$1.6 billion provided in the bill for the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. Overall this level is \$1.1 billion below the FY 2016 Budget request. Relative to the FY 2016 Budget request, the bill reduces funding for renewable energy by 49 percent, sustainable transportation by 35 percent, and energy efficiency by 40 percent. The proposed reductions significantly underfund critical activities that support the development and commercialization of clean energy technologies. At this funding level, the number of research, development, and demonstration projects supported in cooperation with industry, universities, and the national labs would be reduced, limiting innovation and technological advancement, curtailing solutions to cut U.S. dependence on oil and reduce energy waste, and undermining the Nation's industrial competitiveness in the future global clean energy economy. The Congress is urged to fully fund the FY 2016 Budget request of \$2.7 billion. The Administration is also disappointed that the bill does not include transfer language necessary to support joint efforts with the Navy and the Department of Agriculture to develop advanced drop-in biofuels for military applications, a provision included in the FY 2015 enacted bill.

Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E). The Administration objects to the \$280 million provided in the bill for ARPA-E, which is \$45 million below the FY 2016 Budget request. This funding reduction would impact investments and delay improvements in technologies that reduce energy-related emissions, increase energy efficiency across multiple economic sectors, and reduce energy imports.

Fossil Energy and Nuclear Energy. The Administration notes that the bill includes funding above the FY 2016 Budget request in some areas that are already well established in the market, including for nuclear and fossil energy, and yet makes drastic reductions in those that are most crucial to the Nation's clean energy future and continued U.S. technology leadership. The Administration encourages the Congress to fund DOE's energy programs at the requested level, as this balances the portfolio among items of short, medium, and long-term progress and promotes U.S. leadership in these technology areas.

Office of Science. While the Administration appreciates the Committee's support for the Office of Science, the level of funding provided, which is \$240 million below the FY 2016 Budget request, is insufficient to maintain U.S. leadership in high performance computing as the United States moves into capable exascale systems to support discovery science, national security, and economic competitiveness.

Disposition of Weapons-Usable Plutonium. The Administration objects to language in the bill that requires the Secretary of Energy to continue construction of the Mixed

Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility. This language is unnecessarily restrictive and would preclude alternative, and potentially more cost-effective, approaches to implementing U.S. commitments in the 2000 Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement and its 2010 annex to dispose of excess weapons plutonium. DOE contracted for an independent validation of costs for plutonium disposition alternatives in accordance with congressional mandates. The results of that analysis will inform the Administration's approach to plutonium disposition. Information on the first phase of that analysis was provided to the Congress on April 21st.

Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). The Administration opposes the \$212 million level provided for SPR. In addition to base program activities, the FY 2016 Budget request of \$257 million includes resources to fund timely replacement of equipment and physical systems, to begin to address the backlog of deferred maintenance activities, and to enhance distribution flexibility and reliability.

Energy Information Administration (EIA). The Administration urges the Congress to fully fund the FY 2016 Budget request of \$131 million for EIA to support expanded domestic energy data and analysis, address critical energy data gaps (including monthly movements of crude oil by rail), and increase integration of EIA energy data with Canada and Mexico.

Yucca Mountain. The Administration objects to the funding provided in the bill for Yucca Mountain and is disappointed with the rejection of the practical solutions proposed in the President's nuclear waste strategy. As reflected in the FY 2016 Budget request, this strategy incorporates important and workable elements, such as consent-based siting, interim storage of waste, and program funding reforms that are essential to the success of a Nuclear Waste Program.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Yucca Mountain. The Administration objects to the funding provided in the bill for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to continue adjudication of the Yucca Mountain license application.

Office of the Federal Coordinator (OFC) for Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Projects. The Administration appreciates full funding for the OFC at the level of the FY 2016 Budget request, but is disappointed that the statutory amendment proposed in the FY 2016 Budget request is not included. The amendment is critical to the OFC's ability to fulfill its mission under current market conditions, which have changed the nature of projects being proposed.

CORPS OF ENGINEERS—CIVIL WORKS (CORPS)

Overall Funding. The bill provides nearly \$5.6 billion for the Corps civil works program. The Administration believes the more appropriate overall funding levels proposed in the FY 2016 Budget request would limit wasteful spending on projects that provide a low or marginal return to the Nation and would avoid reductions in other priority areas, such as protecting the Nation's water resources and important investments in clean energy technologies.

Corps Regulatory Program. The Administration encourages the Congress to fund the Corps regulatory program at the requested level. A \$5 million reduction in funding would inhibit the Corps' ability to issue permits in a timely manner and to protect important aquatic resources, while undertaking needed programmatic improvements, including implementation of the pending Clean Water rulemaking.

Clean Water Act (CWA). The Administration believes that the CWA riders in the bill undermine efforts to protect America's clean

water resources, which are critical to American families and businesses. The Administration strongly objects to section 105 of the bill in particular, which would disrupt the Administration's current efforts to clarify the scope of CWA, hamstringing future regulatory efforts, and create significant ambiguity regarding existing regulations and guidance.

Firearms Policy. The Administration objects to section 107 of the bill, which prohibits the Corps from enforcing its ban on firearms at a water resources development project. If enacted, this provision would prevent the Secretary of the Army from using the discretion now provided in law to enforce or revise the current Corps policy, based on considerations such as the security of critical infrastructure, public and employee safety, and the manner in which the firearm is carried (e.g., open vs. concealed). Corps rangers are not authorized to carry firearms and do not have full Federal law enforcement authority.

National Ocean Policy. The Administration objects to section 505 of the bill, which prohibits any funding provided in the bill from being used to implement the marine planning components of the National Ocean Policy. This rider would prohibit DOE and the Corps from participating in marine and coastal planning efforts, a process to better determine how the ocean, the Nation's coasts, and the Great Lakes are managed in an efficient manner.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF RECLAMATION AND CENTRAL UTAH PROJECT

Overall Funding. The bill provides nearly \$1.1 billion for the Bureau of Reclamation and \$9.9 million for the Central Utah Project. The Administration appreciates the Committee's support for the Bureau of Reclamation water resources program.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress as the FY 2016 appropriations process moves forward.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, while I am pleased with the level of support provided in these pieces of legislation for essential military, veterans, defense, and water resources programs, they should not serve as vehicles to make substantive policy changes to our Nation's gun laws or gut important environmental protections; nor should we stand idly by while Republicans in Congress slash funding for critically important veterans and military services under the guise of a spending increase.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I talked about last night, I offered an amendment that would self-execute to the rule that would strike section 107 from the Energy and Water Appropriations bill. This is one of the riders in H.R. 2028 that would allow guns to be carried on Army Corps land.

If enacted in its current form, this legislation would strip the Secretary of the Army from using the discretion currently provided to enforce or revise the Corps' policy prohibiting firearms on Corps land.

Removing the discretionary powers from law enforcement officials that allow them to determine what is best for the security of our Nation's infrastructure and the safety of public employees, in my judgment, is dangerous and wrong.

Substantive changes to our gun laws do not belong in an appropriations bill.

And that could not have happened but for a waiver, which my friends tend to do for a variety of measures, and they wind up being poison pills in substantive legislation.

While I believe in the right of Americans to own firearms, last night I made it very clear: I own a gun. When I was a child, at age 7, I had a BB gun. When I was 12 years old, I had a single-shot rifle. And I was taught, as were all of my friends, to not point those guns at people unless you intended to do them harm.

We, as boys, had the same kinds of fights that I imagine occur at any of our institutions. But not one of us would run home and get a gun or carry a gun. To proliferate this society with the variety of gun laws that exist, where people can carry guns openly on Corps land or concealed in certain other States, that is just plain crazy.

Last night, I referenced a statement by then-Surgeon General Satcher that I used again today: "Youth violence is an epidemic." He delivered that in response to a report he commissioned in the year 2002. At the time, his study revealed that 13 children each day died as a result of guns.

Indeed, the gun violence epidemic that plagues our Nation has not diminished in recent years. In Riviera Beach last week, a child 2 years old was shot. In the same constituency that I am privileged to serve, a mother was fatally shot by her 3-year-old that got her gun from her purse.

People, we need to pay attention to what is going on. And I intend in May to raise this issue in this body and around this Nation so that people can learn just how many people are dying in this way.

I want to make it very, very clear. The National Rifle Association does not control this body nor the Florida Legislature nor any other body. As I said, I don't mind arguing for the Second Amendment. But to carry it to the extent that it has gone is just plain wrong. Everybody in our society knows that, and I am going to try to make sure that they continue to know that.

Now, there is another thing about this bill. It locks in sequestration. The administration speaks to that subject in their Statement of Administration Policy.

The Republican framework would bring base discretionary funding for both defense and nondefense to the lowest levels in a decade. Compared to the President's budget, the cuts would result in tens of thousands of the Nation's most vulnerable children losing access to Head Start; more than 2 million fewer workers receiving job training and employment services; and thousands fewer scientific and medical research awards and grants, adversely impacting the pace of discovery, any innovation, along with other impacts that would hurt the economy, the middle class, and Americans working hard to reach the middle class.

Sequestration levels were never meant to put us in this unnecessary

risk, and I would urge that we not go forward in this manner.

I would say to my good friend from Georgia that we may be on the brink of what excites him—and it would excite me as well—if we got ourselves a balanced budget, but a part of that has gimmickry in it as well. It is done on the reconciliation because the great majority of people over in the other body may not have the same sentiment as some who serve on the relevant committee at this point in time in the U.S. Senate.

Cliche allows that Yogi Berra be utilized here; that is, "It ain't over 'til it's over."

I was told last week that we were going to pass this thing, that it was going to come back from the Senate on Wednesday. Last time I looked, this was Wednesday. Or as my daddy used to say, It is Wednesday all day long unless it rains. I never did know what would happen if it rained. I guess it would just be a rainy Wednesday.

But it ain't here Wednesday. And now I am hearing from my good friend from Georgia that they are close. That is what happened when we set up this thing with this special committee, superpeople, supercommittee that was supposed to bring us back a budget, and then missed out on opportunities with Erskine Bowles and brought us back this sequestration that has this body hamstrung and has us in the position of allowing that authorizers and appropriators are locked into the position that they are in because of sequestration.

We need to get rid of that. We need to return to earmarks. We need to do a number of things that will allow for this body—and not for the bureaucracy—to control many aspects of what is the implementation of policy that is made here.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose this rule. I have stated a number of reasons. I will not go into every one of the riders. There are others, and I am sure people are going to speak about them. But I urge a "no" vote on the rule.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, my friend from Florida says, It's not over 'til it's over.

I say to my friend, it is only just beginning. It is only just beginning with this rule today. With the passage of this rule today, Mr. Speaker, we are beginning the 2016 appropriations process. And we are doing it in ways that we have not done before since I received a voting card in this body.

Number one, we are beginning at the earliest date in 40 years. Not since 1973 has this Chamber gotten about the people's business as early as we are this year. The people deserve it. The people have earned it. And we are delivering on it today. I am proud of that fact.

Number two, Mr. Speaker, we are, in fact, on the brink of the first balanced budget conference report this body has seen since 2003. It is too long coming.

We have had to deem appropriations levels year after year after year, not on just two bills, as we are today, but on the entire package. That report could be filed as early as this afternoon, and there is no question but that it is going to pass both of these bodies. It is good work from this institution and the Senate across the Hill.

But, Mr. Speaker, as you could hear in the passion in my friend from Florida's voice, not everyone is going to be happy with every line in these two bills.

□ 1345

I don't have to just look to the Democratic side of the aisle. I can look to the Republican side of the aisle. Not everyone is going to be happy with every line of this bill; but do you know what, any Member can come and change any line.

The Rules Committee protected no language in this bill. Any Member can come and change any line. Any Member can come and make these bills better. Any Member can come and have their district's voice heard. All you have to do is find 217 of your friends to agree with you; we will pass it, and we will send it to the United States Senate for consideration.

Mr. Speaker, that is the way it ought to be. These are going to be some long nights we are going to have; these are going to be some lengthy amendment debates we are going to have; these are going to be some vote-a-ramas we are going to have, but America is going to be the better for it because the laws of the land that we pass are going to be better for it.

I have the Statement of Administration Policy here, Mr. Speaker. I have one for each one of the bills that this rule makes in order. The President has said in these Statements of Administration Policy that his senior advisers are going to recommend that he veto these bills. Why? It is because these bills and other legislation implement the current Republican budget framework which blocks the needed investments for our economy to compete in the future.

Mr. Speaker, it is not the Republican budget framework. It is called the law of the land as signed by President Barack Obama. We can pretend the law doesn't exist, or we can confront the law as it exists. That is what these bills do, a 6 percent increase in veterans funding and a 3 percent increase in our energy and water investment. In a time of austere budgets, we are plussing up those accounts that are so important to our constituents back home.

Mr. Speaker, I urge strong support for this rule, I urge strong support for the underlying bills, and I urge strong support for beginning the process where every single Member will be able to have his or her voice heard.

It is the way this institution ought to be, and it is the way this institution will be if we pass this rule today.

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

The previous question was ordered. The 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. HASTINGS. 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, this 15-minute vote on adoption of the resolution will be followed by a 5-minute vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 651.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 240, nays 186, not voting 5, as follows:

[Roll No. 176] YEAS—240

- Abraham, Aderholt, Allen, Amash, Amodel, Babin, Barletta, Barr, Barton, Benishkek, Bilirakis, Bishop (MI), Bishop (UT), Black, Blackburn, Blum, Bost, Boustany, Brady (TX), Brat, Bridenstine, Brooks (AL), Brooks (IN), Buchanan, Buck, Buechson, Burgess, Byrne, Calvert, Carter (GA), Carter (TX), Chabot, Clawson (FL), Coffman, Cole, Collins (GA), Collins (NY), Comstock, Conaway, Cook, Costello (PA), Cramer, Crawford, Crenshaw, Culberson, Curbelo (FL), Davis, Rodney, Denham, Dent, DeSantis, DesJarlais, Diaz-Balart, Dold, Duffy, Duncan (SC), Duncan (TN), Ellmers (NC), Emmer (MN), Farenthold, Fincher, Fitzpatrick, Fleischmann, Fleming, Flores, Forbes, Fortenberry, Foxx, Franks (AZ), Frelinghuysen, Garrett, Gibbs, Gibson, Gohmert, Goodlatte, Gosar, Gowdy, Granger, Graves (GA), Graves (LA), Graves (MO), Griffith, Grothman, Guinta, Guthrie, Hanna, Hardy, Harper, Harris, Hartzler, Heck (NV), Hensarling, Herrera Beutler, Hice, Jody B., Hill, Holding, Hudson, Huelskamp, Huiזengא (MI), Hultgren, Hunter, Hurd (TX), Hurt (VA), Issa, Jenkins (KS), Jenkins (WV), Johnson (OH), Johnson, Sam, Jolly, Jordan, Joyce, Katko, Kelly (PA), King (IA), King (NY), Kinzinger (IL), Kline, Knight, Labrador, LaMalfa, Lamborn, Lance, Latta, LoBiondo, Long, Loudermilk, Love, Lucas, Luetkemeyer, Lummis, MacArthur, Marchant, Marino, Massie, McCarthy, McCaul, McClintock, McHenry, McKinley, McMorris, Rodgers, McSally, Meadows, Meehan, Messer, Mica, Miller (FL), Miller (MI), Moolenaar, Mooney (WV), Mullin, Mulvaney, Murphy (PA), Neugebauer, Newhouse, Noem, Nugent, Nunes, Olson, Palazzo, Palmer, Paulsen, Pearce, Perry, Pittenger, Pitts, Poe (TX), Poliquin, Pompeo, Posey, Price, Tom, Ratcliffe, Reed, Reichert, Renacci, Ribble, Rice (SC), Rigell, Roby, Roe (TN), Rogers (AL), Rogers (KY), Rohrabacher, Rokita, Rooney (FL), Ros-Lehtinen, Roskam, Ross, Rothfus, Rouzer, Russell, Ryan (WI), Salmon, Sanford, Scalise, Schweikert, Scott, Austin, Sensenbrenner, Sessions, Shimkus, Shuster, Simpson, Smith (MO), Smith (NE), Smith (NJ), Smith (TX), Stefanik, Stewart

- Stivers, Stutzman, Thompson (PA), Thornberry, Tiberi, Tipton, Trott, Turner, Upton, Valadao, Wagner, Walberg, Walden, Walker, Walorski, Walters, Mimi, Weber (TX), Webster (FL), Wenstrup, Westerman, Westmoreland, Whitfield, Williams, Wilson (SC)

NAYS—186

- Adams, Aguilar, Ashford, Bass, Beatty, Becerra, Bera, Beyer, Bishop (GA), Blumenauer, Bonamici, Boyle, Brendan F., Brady (PA), Brown (FL), Brownley (CA), Bustos, Butterfield, Capps, Capuano, Cárdenas, Carney, Carson (IN), Cartwright, Castor (FL), Castro (TX), Chu, Judy, Cicilline, Clark (MA), Clarke (NY), Clay, Clyburn, Cohen, Connolly, Conyers, Cooper, Costa, Courtney, Crowley, Cuellar, Davis (CA), Davis, Danny, DeFazio, DeGette, Delaney, DeLauro, DelJán, Ben Ray, DeSaulnier, Deutch, Dingell, Doggett, Doyle, Michael F., Duckworth, Edwards, Ellison, Eshoo, Esty, Farr, Fattah, Foster, Frankel (FL), Fudge, Gabbard, Gallego, Garamendi, Graham, Grayson, Green, Al, Green, Gene, Grijalva, Gutierrez, Hahn, Hastings, Heck (WA), Higgins, Himes, Hinojosa, Honda, Hoyer, Huffman, Israel, Jackson Lee, Jeffries, Johnson (GA), Johnson, E. B., Jones, Kaptur, Keating, Kelly (IL), Kennedy, Kildee, Kilmer, Kind, Kirkpatrick, Kuster, Langevin, Larsen (WA), Larson (CT), Lawrence, Lee, Levin, Lewis, Lieu, Ted, Lipinski, Loebsack, Lofgren, Lowenthal, Lowey, Lujan Grisham (NM), Luján, Ben Ray (NM), Lynch, Maloney, Carolyn, Maloney, Sean, Matsui, McCollum, McDermott, McGovern, McNeerney, Meeks, Meng, Moore, Moulton, Murphy (FL), Nadler, Napolitano, Neal, Nolan, Norcross, O'Rourke, Pallone, Pascrell, Payne, Pelosi, Perlmutter, Peters, Peterson, Pingree, Pocan, Polis, Price (NC), Quigley, Rangel, Rice (NY), Richmond, Roybal-Allard, Ruiz, Ruppersberger, Rush, Ryan (OH), Sánchez, Linda T., Sanchez, Loretta, Sarbanes, Schakowsky, Schiff, Schrader, Scott (VA), Scott, David, Serrano, Sewell (AL), Sherman, Sinema, Sires, Slaughter, Smith (WA), Speier, Swalwell (CA), Takai, Takano, Thompson (CA), Thompson (MS), Titus, Tonko, Torres, Tsongas, Van Hollen, Vargas, Veasey, Vela, Velázquez, Visclosky, Walz, Wasserman Schultz, Waters, Maxine, Watson Coleman, Welch, Wilson (FL), Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—5

- Chaffetz, Cleaver, Cummings, Royce, Engel

□ 1415

Messrs. PETERSON, MOULTON, and Ms. KAPTUR changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama changed his vote from "nay" to "yea." So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1415

MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

(Mr. ROSKAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, April 25, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Nepal—the most powerful earthquake in the region in nearly a century. Estimates are that 5,000 people have perished and that thousands more are injured or are missing.

This week, here in Washington, the House Democracy Partnership is hosting a multilateral conference, which includes a delegation of parliamentary staff from Nepal.

On behalf of Congressman PRICE, who leads the House Democracy Partnership with me, and Congressman CRENSHAW and Congressman POLIS, who chair the Congressional Nepal Caucus, we wish to extend the condolences of the House to the people of Nepal and pledge our continued support and cooperation as they embark on the long road of rebuilding and recovery.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that Members of the House now rise and observe a moment of silence in solidarity with the people of Nepal.

SISTER ANN KEEFE POST OFFICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, 5-minute voting will continue.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 651) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 820 Elmwood Avenue in Providence, Rhode Island, as the "Sister Ann Keefe Post Office", on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (JODY B. HICE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 423, nays 0, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 177] YEAS—423

- Abraham, Aderholt, Aguilar, Allen, Amash, Amodel, Ashford, Babin, Barletta, Barr, Barton, Bass, Beatty, Becerra, Benishkek, Bera, Beyer, Bilirakis, Bishop (MI), Bishop (UT), Black, Blackburn, Blum, Blumenauer, Bonamici, Bost, Boustany, Boyle, Brendan F., Brady (PA), Brady (TX), Brat, Bridenstine, Brooks (AL), Brooks (IN), Brown (FL), Brownley (CA), Buchanan, Buck, Buechson, Burgess, Bustos, Butterfield, Byrne, Calvert, Capps, Capuano, Cárdenas, Carney, Carson (IN), Carter (GA), Carter (TX), Cartwright, Castor (FL), Castro (TX), Chabot