

(1) In section 6(8), strike "6" and insert "7".

(2) In section 9(7), insert "and" after the semicolon, in section 9(8), strike ";" and insert a period, and strike paragraph (9) of section 9.

(3) In section 12(c), strike "7" and insert "6".

(4) In section 15(a)(2), strike "8" and insert "7".

(5) In section 15(b)(1), strike "5(a)(2)," and in section 15(b)(2), strike "8" and insert "7".

(6) In section 24(b), strike "13, 14, 15, and 16" and insert "9, 10, 11, and 12".

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2099,
DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

Mr. LEWIS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 280, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2099) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EMERSON). Pursuant to rule XXVIII, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of November 17, 1995, at page H13249).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] each will be recognized for 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS].

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report on H.R. 2099 as well as the Senate amendments reported in disagreement, and that I may include charts, tables and other extraneous materials.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, we have before us H.R. 2099, which is a very, very complex bill dealing with diverse agencies such as veterans, housing, EPA, NASA, and a variety of other independent agencies and commissions.

Mr. Speaker, I would first like to start my comments by expressing my deep appreciation for my colleagues within the subcommittee who have worked so hard to bring this package together in a successful fashion. Be-

yond that, Mr. Speaker, I want my colleagues to know that this work would not have been able to be done successfully without the assistance of very fine staff, headed by my chief of staff within the committee, Mr. Frank Cushing, and his colleagues.

I would also like to mention, Mr. Speaker, that within my personal staff a great deal of assistance was provided for me, I would like to extend my appreciation particularly today to David LesStrang, Jeff Shockey, and one of my key staff people who will be leaving us shortly, Mr. Doc Syers.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a combination of pleasure and pain that I bring this bill to the floor today, and I would suggest first that the pleasure is there because I am very proud of the fact that this subcommittee has led the way in putting Uncle Sam on a diet. This bill represents \$10.1 billion as a down payment toward balancing the budget by 2002.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, up until now we have been talking about moving toward balancing the budget. This, however, is where the rubber meets the road. It is one thing to talk. It is another thing to make the very, very tough decisions.

Let me suggest that the pain that I mentioned earlier involves that very fact. Unfortunately, the spirit of bipartisanship among the committee members that has long been a hallmark of the Committee on Appropriations has suffered as a result of our taking a different turn in the road regarding this country's spending habits. Even as we continue to travel on that road to balance the budget, I pledge to do all that I can, Mr. Speaker, to bring this subcommittee back to that bipartisan spirit that we have lost this year.

This conference report reflects a willingness to make the very tough decisions and to meet the spending targets necessary to balance the budget in 7 years. As I have suggested, out of 13 appropriations subcommittees, the VA-HUD bill makes the single largest contribution toward balancing the budget. It does not wait until year 5 or year 7 or year 10. We are making the tough decisions today. No longer will we tolerate paying lip service to the goal of deficit reduction.

This conference report of \$61.3 billion in new discretionary spending represents a reduction in budget authority of 13.1 percent, and it is about \$9.25 billion below the administration's requested spending level for fiscal year 1996.

To say the least, the decisions that led to these reductions were certainly not easy ones to make. The work of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies has changed dramatically from last year. No longer do we simply compare the agency account on the basis of what they received last year, then add on a certain amount for inflation and maybe tack on some more there to establish a new base level.

□ 1145

We have now completed a bottom-up review of all of our agencies. This is all part of a process of justifying each program's existence and examining how taxpayer dollars are being used. I intend to continue this approach next year so that every program within every agency under our jurisdiction receives the kind of necessary scrutiny to find appropriate savings.

The subcommittee began working on this bill on January 24 when we held the first of over 20 separate hearings. When our bill passed the House in late July we showed a reduction from the 1995 enacted level of \$9.7 billion, while the Senate showed a reduction of \$8.4 billion in budget authority.

As I noted, the conferees essentially split the difference for a net reduction of over \$9 billion.

However, during the process we were also able to take advantage of an additional 1 year's legislative savings, a provision at HUD, thus giving us an additional \$1 billion, with which to better fund housing programs.

Let me at this time take a moment to share some of the positive actions recently taken by the House-Senate conference meeting. We provided an increase of \$400 million over the 1995 level for VA medical care and were able to do away with the so-called incompetent veterans' legislative savings provision that was of concern to many. We provided some \$24.4 billion for HUD programs. While this is a reduction from the budget request, it actually represents a program level of \$1 billion over the earlier House-passed bill.

Most importantly, this increase would achieve for 1996 without adversely impacting our outlay problems in 1997 and beyond.

In the bill we terminated four Federal agencies for savings of \$705 million, including the Office of Consumer Affairs, the Chemical Safety and Hazards Investigation Board, Community Development Financial Institutions, and the Corporation for National Community Service.

We fully funded the space station and space shuttle programs, even though NASA took its fair share of downsizing like every other department and agency under this subcommittee's jurisdiction.

We provided over \$1.1 billion to continue the Superfund Program at EPA and over \$2.3 billion for wastewater, drinking water, and various categorical grants to the States so they can adequately meet Federal environmental mandates.

We also created a performance partnership program between the EPA and the States so that these funds can be used where the States believe they are most needed.

Finally, we have not included any of the EPA legislative provisions as passed by the House and only four passed by the Senate. Of those, three were included in last year's bill signed by the President.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me to digress for just a moment with respect to the HUD programs. As I mentioned, we were able to do a little more this year than we first thought. However, each successive year will get more and more difficult with respect to HUD outlays as payment for some of the budget authority approved in past years finally comes due.

The choices we make this year will go beyond fiscal year 1996. Indeed, they

set the foundation for the years ahead. One specific area of special note in this regard is the renewal of section 8 subsidy contracts. Over the next 2 years, the cost of renewing section 8 expiring contracts will increase from \$4.35 billion in 1996 to \$14.4 billion by 1998. This will occur despite the fact that we have passed legislation which actually lowers HUD spending levels from past years.

The challenge facing the subcommittee in the coming years will be difficult, but we have made great progress this year, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to find reasonable solutions to complex issues like this section 8 issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am including in the RECORD a table illustrating the aforementioned section 8 problem.

SECTION 8—RENEWAL OF EXPIRING CONTRACTS
[Dollars in thousands]

	Units	1996 Budget authority	Units	1997 Budget authority	Units	1998 Budget authority
Certificates	241,206	\$2,993,597	213,590	\$2,709,631	579,193	\$7,517,923
Vouchers	58,798	729,739	100,389	1,273,548	242,256	3,095,473
LMSA	120,587	475,354	126,591	1,637,370	227,794	2,835,182
Property disposition	4,464	35,194	12,738	103,439	17,351	156,649
Moderate rehabilitation	8,016	99,486	18,232	231,294	30,409	394,709
New construction/substantial rehabilitation	1,957	17,492	15,667	144,233	45,208	436,083
Total	435,028	4,350,862	487,207	6,099,515	1,142,211	14,436,019

Note.—Totals may not add due to rounding. Budget authority in 1997 and 1998 reflects LMSA contract renewals with one-year terms calculated from assumptions contained in HUD's 1996 estimates.

Mr. LEWIS of California. I would like to make an additional observation with regard to HUD. My experience in working with HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros and NASA Administrator Dan Golden illustrate how valuable partnerships can be when faced with tough spending decisions. Both have reached out and been helpful in outlining their specific priorities.

I had hoped such a partnership would be possible in working with President Clinton's chief of staff Leon Panetta to fashion a bill President Clinton would support. To date it appears we are far from any final agreement.

It is important to note to my colleagues for the record that the administration fully expects to veto this bill. At a meeting almost 2 weeks ago, Mr. Panetta informed Chairman BOND, Senator MIKULSKI, the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. STOKES, and me that this bill would be vetoed regardless of what we did to address the President's priorities. If this is correct, then the true losers will be the millions of Americans who counted on the many programs that would be continued and properly funded under this agreement.

I might mention, Mr. Speaker, at this point that for those of you among my colleagues who care about veterans' medical care programs, who care about housing programs, who are concerned about EPA, it should be noted that the only money those programs will receive in the coming year will be as a result of this conference report successfully being signed into law. To do otherwise will leave them with a base of funding considerably less than available in this bill.

So I would suggest my colleagues on both sides of the aisle make note of that. This is your chance to provide funding that is needed for veterans' programs and housing and the like.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report strikes a careful balance in caring for our veterans, housing people in need, protecting the environment, ensuring America's future role in space, and

meeting many other critical needs. This is a good, tough, fair bill, and it deserves the bipartisan support of this body. I strongly urge adoption of the conference report and urge your support.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, there is no one in this House for whom I have greater respect or higher regard than the chairman of our subcommittee, JERRY LEWIS of California. He brings before the House a tough bill and I am aware of the long hours and how much personal time and sacrifice he has committed to this effort. I also want to recognize all of the subcommittee staff for their tireless work on this bill, along with my own staff persons.

I regret having to rise in opposition to the conference report on H.R. 2099, the Fiscal Year 1996 Appropriations Act for the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies. My opposition to this legislation is predicated upon the fact that the lives of millions of Americans will be devastated if this measure is passed in its current form.

Mr. Speaker, we have witnessed during this Congress, a new leadership with an ambitious plan to implement its Contract With America. While my Republican colleagues laud their discipline in terms of advancing the contract, I worry that they have shown a blindspot to the high cost in human suffering and damage to this country's precious resources that this legislation will extract. This is certainly the case with the conference report on H.R. 2099.

Having previously served as chairman of the VA-HUD Subcommittee, I am acutely aware of the complexities of the subcommittee's bill. I am also aware of the problems with the Federal deficit and the call for Government reform which have heightened the problems of providing funding for essential

needs, many of which are under the subcommittee's jurisdiction. I believe, however, that there is considerable opportunity to try to meet these basic and pressing priorities upon which millions of Americans depend—even in this budget climate.

When this bill first came before the House in July, I argued then against drastic funding cuts and harmful legislative provisions in housing, the environmental, and veterans programs. I think my colleagues on this side of the aisle can take tremendous credit for having heightened awareness about these negative actions to the extent that the conference report before us has made some important positive steps to correcting some of these concerns. Unfortunately, not enough has been done and therefore I must still oppose this measure.

In fact, the President agrees with my position and has already indicated that he will veto this bill if it is presented to him in its present form. In his statement on H.R. 2099, the President stated and I quote:

The bill provides insufficient funds to support the important activities covered by this bill. It would threaten public health and the environment, and programs that are helping communities help themselves, close the door on college for thousands of young people, and leave veterans seeking medical care with fewer treatment options. This bill does not reflect the values that Americans hold dear.

Let me take a moment to explain to you why this bill is so unacceptable to the President and those of us who care about the people dependent upon the programs in this bill.

For veterans programs, this bill is still almost \$1 billion below the President's request. You know how misguided this bill must be when programs serving those brave men and women who sacrificed and protected our national interest are not adequately funded. Further, there are unprecedented retaliatory limitations placed on the Secretary of Veterans Affairs because he spoke out strongly against the cuts in these programs for these

veterans. According to the majority they are sending him a message. The message clearly is that they don't tolerate free speech.

Housing programs, which already suffered under the \$6.3 billion cut to HUD in the 1995 rescissions bill earlier this year, face another \$4 billion in reductions in fiscal year 1996. This constitutes a wholesale assault on those individuals and critical programs that provide safety net and human service programs through Federal housing. Hardest hit are those programs that provide affordable and decent housing for the elderly and poor, like section 8 incremental rental assistance and public housing.

Now, my colleagues on the other side will claim that these actions are fair; that HUD is mismanaged and an unwieldy bureaucracy that has gotten out of control. Well, I don't think that our elderly, our families with children, and our poor would agree that these cuts are fair. I am certain that threatening them with homelessness and hopelessness is not a price worth paying to satisfy the Republican Contract With America.

But my Republican colleagues did not stop here. Added to these reductions are nearly 20 pages of extensive legislative changes—legislation that clearly falls within the jurisdiction of the authorizing committee. Like many other provisions the majority party has adopted this year, this legislation showed up in the chairman's mark of the bill. While certain provisions have been deleted, just as many others have been added and are now in the conference report before us. These damaging changes come at a time when affordable housing is at a record short supply.

Mr. Speaker, as if there are not enough problems, not enough reasons for the President to veto this piece of legislation, there remains the undisguised attack on the environment that this bill represents. As all of us remember, this bill as passed by the House included an assortment of anti-environment riders that the Republican leadership insisted the bill carry. To no one's surprise, Members from both sides of the aisle joined in saying that these extreme legislative changes should have no place in this bill. And so most, but not all, have been removed.

Does this make this bill an environmentally sound measure? Does this mean that the majority leadership's assault against the environment is over? Does this mean that my friends from across the aisle who fought so hard with me on my various motions to strip the rider may now vote—with a clear conscience—for this bill? The answer is a resounding no.

This bill makes a huge, unprecedented cut in EPA's operating budget. This cut of more than 20 percent is intended to and will devastate the Agency's ability to protect public health and the environment.

And let us be clear here. These cuts go far beyond what is necessary to balance the budget. That is the smoke screen. If the Republicans really favored protecting the environment, they would find a way to ensure that EPA receives adequate funding even under a balanced budget plan. Instead they have targeted a huge, disproportionate, arbitrary reduction, that belies any claim that Republicans are interested in protecting the environment.

Furthermore, contained within the details of the big cut are other attacks to the environment.

At a time when Americans continually indicate their support for increased environmental enforcement, this measure targets EPA's environmental enforcement activities for extra cuts. Last year, EPA investigated over 500 cases of criminal misconduct, including cases involving loss of life, tainted food, and falsified laboratory data.

Last year EPA brought over 2,200 administrative and civil cases resulting in reductions in hundreds of thousands of pounds of pollutants and over \$740 million in remediation efforts to clean up damage caused by violations of the environmental laws. What number of civil and administrative actions can we expect this fiscal year?

Right now the Center for Disease Control has told vulnerable Americans—the elderly, cancer and AIDS patients and others—to boil tap water due to the danger from microorganisms in much of the Nation's drinking water. The Republicans respond by cutting safe drinking water funds in half from the President's request. Not money for regulations, mind you, but money that would be used by local communities to build and improve their water purification equipment.

The Republicans also cut hazardous site cleanups by 25 percent and sewage treatment funds by 30 percent. With these actions, the bill undermines the capacity of EPA and States to clean up toxic sites and keep raw sewage out of our streams, lakes, and oceans.

And let us not forget about the riders. While most have been eliminated from the bill language itself, the conference report still bluntly pressures EPA into making exceptions and exemptions for natural gas processors, oil refineries, pulp and paper facilities, and cement kilns that burn hazardous waste. The special interests will not be disappointed by this bill.

One rider, that is still in, cuts EPA out of wetlands permitting so that the permitting can proceed without the environmental experts allowed a voice.

The conference on H.R. 2099 also terminates the Corporation for National and Community Service [Americorps], the Community Development Financial Institutions Program, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the Office of Consumer Affairs. These programs and agencies are of highest priority to the administration.

I do not think that this is a close vote for anyone who believes in meet-

ing our obligations to our Nation's veterans, providing affordable and decent housing for all Americans, protecting the environment, and rewarding community service. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on this bill.

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] for purposes of a colloquy.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my friend, the gentleman from California, the chairman of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies, might help clarify the intent of the conferees with regard to the language contained in the Senate report accompanying the fiscal year 1996 VA, HUD and independent agencies appropriations bill.

Mr. LEWIS of California. If the gentleman will yield, I will be happy to do so.

Mr. METCALF. As the gentleman knows, the Senate report addressed a particular site on the national priorities list, the Tulalip landfill in Marysville, WA. The Senate language requires EPA to complete the comprehensive baseline risk assessment at the site and to then conduct an alternative dispute resolution procedure in order to achieve a remedial act plan based on sound science all parties agree on.

Mr. Speaker, that direction to the agency represents the views of the majority of those Members from the Washington State delegation. The site involves over 300 large and small businesses in my home State. It is critical to all of them that EPA follow this direction at the site.

Ms. DUNN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. METCALF. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Ms. DUNN of Washington. I thank the gentleman and rise in strong support of the request of the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] that the EPA be required to complete a comprehensive baseline risk assessment at the Tulalip landfill in Washington State.

Many of us from Washington State represent constituents who have been severely impacted by EPA's handling of this site. The Senate report language was very clear in its direction the agency, and the chairman's support of this directive is appreciated.

Mr. METCALF. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. LEWIS of California. If the gentleman will yield further, let me, by way of responding to both of my colleagues from Washington, say that I want to assure you both that the presence of that particular language in the final conference report in no way diminishes the intent of the conferees that the Senate language serves as the clear and final direction to the EPA at the Tulalip site during the fiscal year.

My recollection is that both Washington State members of the Committee on Appropriations, one from each

side of the aisle, have strongly supported this language, and it is certainly my intention to see that the agency conducts a comprehensive baseline risk assessment and responds to your request. So I appreciate my colleague raising the question.

Mr. METCALF. I thank the gentleman.

□ 1200

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. DINGELL], the distinguished ranking minority member of the Committee on Commerce.

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

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, this is an outrageous bill. I rise in strong opposition to the conference report on H.R. 2099. I urge my colleagues to reject it.

I hope all Americans know what is in this bill, because it reveals the real essence of the Republican vision for this country.

In a budget where sacrifices had to be made to protect tax breaks for the wealthy and Republican pet projects, something had to give. Here is what gave.

One group that is being forced to give is our Nation's veterans, their widows, and their children. This bill reduces funds for VA construction and improvement projects by 62 percent. It cuts \$400 million from the Administration's requests for veterans' health care.

What does this mean? By the year 2000, cuts mandated by this Republican budget plan will require 41 veterans' hospitals to close their doors. More than 1 million veterans will be denied health care. The Republican plan will force the elimination of about 60,000 health care positions and the cancellation of 40 construction projects for the VA.

More shockingly—and one of the really spiteful things that I have seen done by the Republicans in this Congress, and that is an extraordinary event—because Secretary Jesse Brown dares to speak his mind about this bill and Republican budget priorities, the majority has added to the conference report provisions aimed at stripping huge sums and personnel out of his office. As a matter of fact, they totally eliminated his travel budget. The question then is how will he travel about the country to look at VA facilities, VA projects, and to talk to the veterans? So much for free speech and so much for the veterans in this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is going to also cut 20 percent off of EPA's budget. It is going to see to it that cleanup of Superfund sites and the dirty waters of this Nation will be set back enormously. So much for the environment.

This is also the worst attack on housing since the Hoover administration.

Housing programs face \$4 billion in reductions. These cuts are on top of more than \$6 billion cut in last summer's rescission bill. Wrongheaded provisions are also included to undercut enforcement of fair housing and antiredlining requirements.

I urge my colleagues to reject it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. KNOLLENBERG] for purposes of a colloquy.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I seek the time just to engage our chairman, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], in a colloquy. I would like to reserve a serious reservation that I have with respect to the statement of the manager's language regarding amendment No. 58. Section 223(D) of the administrative provisions was intended to address HUD's pattern of regulation regarding property insurance. My problem is simply this: The language does not precisely reflect the compromise that was reached with the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] and others. I want to address that.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. KNOLLENBERG], his concern is appropriately addressed. I share his reservation. The House bill, which contained a spending limitation in the bill language, was rather clear. Unfortunately, I think the final manager's language goes beyond what the gentleman attempted to develop, and he is the author of the provision. It was carefully worked out with the staff on the other side.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. I appreciate the gentleman's comments. Can I get the chairman's assurance that the offending language will be removed if this bill is vetoed and if negotiations on H.R. 2099 are resumed for any other reason?

Mr. LEWIS of California. If the gentleman will continue to yield, I can assume the gentleman, Mr. Speaker, that if we have another opportunity to go back at this language by way of a separate bill, or a bill to follow one that is vetoed, the gentleman's voice will be very clearly heard.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GONZALEZ], the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services.

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

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I strongly oppose this mean-spirited and

draconian HUD-VA appropriations conference report for fiscal year 1996. This will victimize people who are helpless—they have neither money nor power, which are commodities that seem to get attention these days. H.R. 2099 slashes one fifth of the budget for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. It starves all efforts to expand, preserve, and rehabilitate all kinds of public, assisted, and affordable housing. And through the legislation that is included in this appropriations report, housing policy has shifted and changed course dramatically.

But bad as it is, this conference report is much better than the bill that left the House in July.

Let me tell my colleagues what will happen if this conference report becomes law. If we pass this bill, we virtually ensure that affordable housing will continue to decrease and deteriorate; we will lose our \$90 billion investment in public housing; and hundreds of thousands more families will become or remain homeless.

Public housing residents in the more than 3,400 local housing authorities throughout the Nation are at risk of seeing their everyday maintenance requests go unanswered for lack of operating funds, which are set at only \$2.8 billion, some \$400 million below this year's HUD funding request.

Inevitably, housing that is good will fall into ruin, and the eyesores of deteriorated and dilapidated housing in many of our urban centers will remain vacant and crumbling, further destroying neighborhoods.

Because nearly one-third of the modernization funds and 50 percent of the urban revitalization grants for severely distressed public housing projects will be lost if this conference report passes.

Under this bill there will be no new public housing funded and no incremental or new section 8 certificates available for the first time in 20 years. There will be only certificates for replacement housing—even though there are more than 5.6 million families today who pay more than 50 percent of their incomes for rent, or who live in substandard housing. The number of families who need help grows each year by more than ten times the number that would be assisted under this bill. During this fiscal year 88,400 units of affordable housing were financed through the various Federal housing programs but—next year there will be fewer than 15,000 units.

The conference report leaves two of the core programs untouched—HOME and CDBG. That's good; however, don't be surprised when the mayors and the Governors are here begging for more money. Why? Because, the deep, deep cuts in public housing and section 8, and the increases in the cost of that housing inevitably will mean trouble for our cities and States—more deteriorated housing and more homelessness—more people with nowhere safe and sound to live.

What this conference report does, make no mistake, is place the burden on cities and States, while the Federal Government takes a walk and abrogates its responsibilities.

I have watched these programs work for poor and working families, for the elderly and

for the disabled throughout my public career. One of my jobs in my home city of San Antonio before I came to Congress was with the San Antonio Housing Authority. Public housing worked; and despite the problems in some places, public housing in most areas is safe, decent, and sound. But this bill by the Republican majority will devastate the lives of thousands of families currently residing in public and assisted housing and those who wait, sometimes for years, for such housing.

The Republicans talk about their historic balanced budget bill. They talk about their willingness to make hard decisions about discretionary spending to control spending. Despite what our colleagues on the majority contend, these are not hard decisions, they are merely heartless attacks on those too poor and too inconsequential to count on the scales of political calculations. The insistence and desire to provide foolhardy tax breaks for the wealthy at the expense of America's poor and working families drives this bill just as it drives the whole budget process. That is the thrust of this massive and mean assault on our most vulnerable citizens.

I urge a "no" vote on this conference report, which merely victimizes further the victims of poverty.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada [Mrs. VUCANOVICH], a member of the committee.

Mrs. VUCANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, the conference report of H.R. 2099 shows a real commitment to our future and our citizens. While it takes a major step toward eliminating our Nation's deficit, it does so while providing medical care to our veterans, housing for the poor, and preserving the challenges to be explored in space. One might call it a balancing act—but it is a skill that Chairman LEWIS and his excellent staff have refined. I commend them on their fine work. I would also like to give thanks and a wish of good luck to Doc Syers of the chairman's staff, who will be leaving the Hill to boldly go where no man has gone before. Doc has been a great friend over the years and we will miss him.

Returning to the matter at hand, our veterans represent one of our Nation's finest resources. This conference report appropriates \$37.7 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, of which \$16.5 billion is included for medical care. After listening to the concerns of many veterans groups, the subcommittee determined the controversial incompetent veterans language should be deleted. Our commitment to our veterans is unwavering and I believe this bill is proof of this fact.

The conference report also provides \$19.3 billion for housing programs to help our poor, our homeless, and to give homebuyers a chance to reach the American dream of owning their own home.

In this time of fiscal restraint, the conference report takes strong action in eliminating programs which are ineffective or duplicative, such as the

AmeriCorps Program and the Health and Human Services Office of Consumer Affairs.

When faced with the tough challenges of a decreasing budget, the subcommittee made effective decisions. This is a conference report in which we can all be proud and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this essential legislation. A ye vote is a vote in favor of our veterans and our commitment to our Nation's future.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from New York [Mrs. LOWEY].

(Mrs. LOWEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in very strong opposition to the conference report. Although admittedly an improvement from the draconian version originally passed by this body a few months ago, this bill still is a glaring indication of wrong-headed priorities.

In addition to slashing funding for housing and veterans programs, this appropriations bill severely curtails the Government's historic role in ensuring the most basic guarantees of clean air and clean water. It cuts the Environmental Protection Agency by 21 percent, including a 19-percent cut in the program that cleans up hazardous waste sites. It also cuts hundreds of millions of dollars from wastewater treatment grants that provide critical assistance to local communities in keeping drinking water safe and beaches swimmable. In the area I represent, these funds are critical to helping to clean up Long Island Sound.

This legislation is premised on the false assumption that a strong economy and a clean environment are natural enemies. The authors of this bill try to polarize the debate as a choice between jobs and environmental stewardship.

Well, my colleagues, do not be fooled. A strong environment and a strong economy go hand in hand.

My constituents and I know from our experience with Long Island Sound that pollution-based prosperity is shortsighted and costs more—financially and otherwise—in the end.

There is no denying that these environmental rollbacks will cripple the EPA's ability to protect the quality of our air and water.

Let us not turn back the clock on environmental protection. Defeat the conference report.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN].

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman LEWIS, Congressman STOKES, and the subcommittee staff for all of their hard work in producing this compromise agreement.

This conference report contains funding for many vital programs for our

Nation's veterans, protects and preserves our environment, helps house the needy and disabled, and moves scientific research and discovery forward.

As Chairman LEWIS has said it has been a difficult task balancing these needs against the critical need to balance our Federal budget. I believe that it has been done responsibly.

In total, this report provides \$80.6 billion for these important programs. That number is \$9.6 billion less than last year and \$894 million more than the House-passed bill. This action shows that we have truly compromised in order to produce a sound piece of legislation.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we were able to increase the Superfund program by \$163 million for a total of \$1.16 billion. In addition, this agreement removes the December 31 "drop dead" date for the Superfund program. By removing this provision, we will be allowing this important program to operate while the authorization committee acts on reforming the Superfund law.

Representing a State with more Superfund sites than any other, I want to thank Chairman LEWIS for these actions and for realizing the importance of keeping work at all current Superfund sites moving forward. This funding increase brings the total number very close to what the program received last year.

This conference agreement also removes the controversial 17 EPA riders that were included in the House-passed bill. I am particularly happy that the clean water riders were removed. As I have always said, these riders should not have been included in this bill. We should give the authorization committees a chance to fine-tune the Clean Water Act, instead of prematurely halting many of the programs that have been working under this Act.

While I do not agree with all the reductions in this conference agreement, I do believe that it is time to stop throwing good money after bad and start focusing our limited resources toward programs that work.

Three such programs are at HUD, section 202, Senior Housing, and 811, Disabled Housing, and HOPWA, Housing Opportunity for People With AIDS. These programs have a proven track record and have worked. While the House-passed bill consolidated these three programs under one account, the conference agreement keeps these accounts separate allowing each of them to run independent of one another. This is something I supported and worked in conference to achieve. I would have liked to provide more funding, however, the committee agreed to freeze all these accounts at the current level.

As regards scientific research and development, I am pleased that this agreement recognizes that our Nation's future depends on properly educating all Americans so that we can continue to be number one in developing and producing various technologies. New Jersey is already the home to the brightest and best in both the public and private sector. This report dedicates itself to renewing our Nation's

commitment to science by providing new resources, both fiscal and physical.

This report also funds the Department of Veterans Affairs. Nearly half of our allocation supports these activities and the committee increased medical care above the current year by \$337 million. This should be adequate funding to keep all our veterans who rely on the VA for medical care fully supported.

I would also like to comment on the behavior of VA Secretary Brown who has politicized this budget process. Under the guise of so-called "free speech" he has needlessly alarmed veterans throughout the Nation. As a veteran myself, I am insulted by his actions.

Mr. Speaker, we have drafted a sound agreement and I urge my colleagues to support this conference report.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MARKEY].

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, before the Thanksgiving holiday, we came to an agreement on a framework to work toward a balanced budget. Within this framework, we agreed to a set of priorities to guide our actions. We agreed to preserve Medicare, strengthen our educational system, and protect the environment for our children and our future.

Well, today we have the opportunity to stand up for one of the priorities we outlined over a week ago. It is time to stop this Congress from rolling back existing environmental protections. In the VA-HUD appropriations bill before us now, most of the infamous regulatory riders have disappeared, but the EPA has still been put on a starvation diet.

This bill radically cuts the EPA's budget, from the \$7.2 billion appropriated last year, down to only \$5.7 billion, a reduction of \$1.5 billion, or 21 percent. The EPA enforcement budget is specifically targeted for an even larger 25 percent cut. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, taking the environmental cops off the beat by slashing their budget is just another way to gut strong environmental laws.

The GOP cuts slash \$270 million from the Superfund program. The EPA Administrator, Carol Browner, has testified that this will delay cleanups of toxic waste sites at hundreds of communities around our Nation.

And at the same time this Congress is cutting the budget for environmental protection, we just sent the Defense Department \$7 billion the Pentagon did not even ask for.

Mr. Speaker, this all comes down to a question of priorities. Should we be giving tax cuts to the wealthy and buying more B-1 bombers, which we do not need? Or, should we be insuring that our children have clean air and clean water and that toxic waste sites in our communities get cleaned up?

We cannot say one day that we believe the preservation of our environment is a national priority, and then 10 days later turn around and agree to radical cuts in environmental enforcement and cleanup programs. It is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this proposal.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my colleague, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. KNOLLENBERG], a member of the committee.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the bill, and I commend the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the staff for all their hard work. Without the chairman and, obviously, the staff, we would not be here today.

Mr. Speaker, the VA-HUD bill has never been an attractive piece of legislation. Never. It contains funding for a wide variety of programs that represent different and often conflicting priorities. What we have before us is the product of this task, and it is a good one. The bill does not simply spread the pain throughout all of the programs in its jurisdiction, it makes the tough choices which are necessary, but it also preserves funding for those programs which work well.

There are some who will complain that the spending cuts in our bill are just simply too deep.

□ 1215

Mr. Speaker, let me make one point. We spend over \$5 billion for environmental protection and over \$20 billion for affordable housing in this bill. Just a few days ago, as my colleagues know, during the Government shutdown only 4 percent of EPA's 18,000 employees were considered essential and, I repeat, only 1 percent of HUD's employees were considered essential. So it seems to me that it would be much easier to say that perhaps these cuts are not deep enough; they should be deeper.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that every Member of this body, given the chance, would draft a different VA-HUD bill. I would like to make a few changes myself. But to use an often-heard quote, we cannot allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO].

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

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this bill. What is wrong with this bill is what is wrong with the priorities. There is no consideration or deliberation, much less public awareness, of votes on these topics. Wholesale policy changes are made without consideration, Mr. Speaker, all of this, of course, under the mantra of a balanced budget.

The impact of the GOP spending cuts priorities for the poor, the environment, the homeless, the veterans. It is not fair, and it is not right. The fact is that it is bad policy. A Congress that

creates and bloats the human deficit, the environmental deficit, but claims to balance the budget is out of balance; out of balance with the common sense and values of the people we represent.

Mr. Speaker, the shortest distance between legislation and law is to get the President to sign this. I suggest we defeat this conference report, send it back to conference committee, and get on with the job of making compromises and reflecting the values of the people that we represent that stand for a sound environmental policy, sound policies and fairness to the poor and the programs that are important to them. I suggest we send this back to conference and a "no" vote on this measure.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the conference agreement on H.R. 2099, the VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies appropriations bill. This conference agreement has positive modifications from the radical bill passed by the majority party of the House earlier this year, but it remains wholly out of step with people, priorities and shared sacrifice which should characterize reductions in spending necessary to achieve a sound fiscal result.

On the whole, the agreement cuts housing programs by 21 percent, guts homeless programs by almost 30 percent, reduces Environmental Protection Agency spending by 21 percent, eliminates a number of community programs, and subsumes many into larger block grants thereby diluting the funds and in the end, atrophying the programs. These cuts are represented as being necessary for deficit reduction, but what is proposed in this measure is a fundamental retreat from proper Federal responsibilities and support. The conference agreement cuts housing on the ground by \$4 billion from the administration request, but manages once again to provide over \$2.1 billion for the latest version of the questionable space station. This VA, HUD and Independent Agencies conference agreement continues to balance the budget on the backs of those least able to support cuts: the poor, the homeless and our seniors. Our congressional priority should be to help those unable to help themselves but this measure reneges.

As I mentioned, the conference agreement cuts homeless funds, both at HUD and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The statement of managers indicates that the funds should be used as localities see fit under the rubric of options available under the McKinney Act programs. I cannot agree that any one HUD homeless assistance program should receive any priority over another such program as the statement of managers suggests. If demand were any indicator, the supportive housing program would be the likely model program, not the shelter plus care program emphasized in this agreement. The record should further reflect the reality that in shifting

these reduced funds—a shell and pea game—in no way alters the loss and adverse impact on the homeless. In fact, it only compounds and complicates the use of the programs.

I am also concerned about the great number of authorizations rewriting policy in this appropriations conference agreement. The Banking Committee today continues to cede its authority and role to the Budget and Appropriations Committees and in the process jeopardizes the integrity of important housing and community development programs.

Frankly, the committee process in this Congress is in a shambles. The new Republican majority has adopted an authoritarian posture. Through the budget and appropriation scheme the GOP leadership has dictated without consideration, much less public awareness and votes on the topics, wholesale policy changes under the guise of fiscal crisis and the mantra of balancing the budget. They—the majority Gingrich Republicans—rationalize and gloss over the fundamental impact of the GOP spending priorities that cut programs for the poor, the environment, the homeless, and the veterans in this measure for example. This isn't fair and it isn't right. We can and should balance the budget but how we do it is the key to our role as policy makers. A Congress that creates and bloats the human deficit and the environmental deficit but claims to balance the budget is out of balance with the common sense and values of the American people we represent.

What it all comes down to is that despite the changes in this HUD-VA appropriations legislation from the House-passed version and at least two round trips to the House and Senate conference table, the priorities and the funding levels guarantee that we will see more people denied housing opportunities in public and assisted housing, fewer people receiving homeless assistance in order to get back on their feet, veterans excluded from needed service, and more chances for polluters to desecrate our precious air and water. All this by virtue of this deficient appropriations measure.

Mr. Speaker, I do not oppose every aspect of this measure. However, because the cuts and sacrifices are not balanced, I must strongly oppose this conference agreement. I urge my colleagues to heed the President's concerns with regards to this measure and vote against this report. By defeating the conference report today and addressing the serious deficiencies in a House/Senate conference report we can attain the shortest distance from legislation to law. We do not have to experience a certain veto that will force us to start all over again.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. HEINEMAN] for the purpose of a colloquy.

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

Mr. HEINEMAN. Mr. Speaker, will the distinguished gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the chairman of the Subcommittee on VA-HUD and Independent Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations engage me in a brief colloquy?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, If the gentleman will yield I would be happy to.

Mr. HEINEMAN. Mr. Speaker, let me first say that I very much appreciate the support of my good friend, Chairman LEWIS, over the past several months regarding plans to construct a new consolidated facility for the EPA and the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina.

As the chairman knows, the EPA is currently scattered in 11 separate buildings which are privately owned and in bad shape. The chairman made this freshman Member aware that previous Congresses have not dealt with this problem.

After studying the matter and after touring these existing facilities, I learned that recent studies show that renovating the existing buildings and signing new leases would cost \$400 million. For only \$232 million, a brandnew, consolidated facility can be built, making this the most realistic, cost-effective plan available to further the important mission of the EPA.

I know that the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] has pledged his support to find the additional funds necessary in the next fiscal year to make this new facility a reality, and I want to thank the gentleman for that support.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me express my appreciation to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. HEINEMAN] for bringing to our attention in such an effective manner the importance of this research facility, and the committee does very much want to be of assistance.

As I indicated in the earlier colloquy, the Research Triangle Park facility is one of the three major infrastructure projects requested for the EPA. Funding was not available for the current fiscal year, but I have pledged my support to the gentleman to do my very best to find funds necessary for the project in the next fiscal year.

It is my understanding that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure is currently updating the authorization for this project, and I look forward to addressing this in the years ahead.

Mr. HEINEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO].

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this conference report.

Once again, we are witnessing an all out assault on the quality of our Nation's water, air and land. The Republican Party is trying to accomplish

through funding cuts what they failed to do through an open debate on environmental policy.

Time and again this year, and the last several years, Democrats and Republicans have come together in a spirit of bipartisanship to protect the environment. This conference report will cut enforcement of environmental laws, cut funding for safe drinking water, cut funding for wastewater treatment, and cut hazardous waste cleanup.

Slashing EPA's budget by more than 20 percent, will cripple the EPA's ability to ensure that our water is safe to drink, our food is safe to eat, and our air is safe to breathe.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this conference report.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. BORSKI].

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

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, this conference report will roll back 25 years of environmental protection and it should be defeated.

This bill slashes the funding for the Clean Water Act. It slashes the funding for Superfund. It slashes the funding for EPA to even conduct an effective management and enforcement program.

EPA, will be barred from any role whatsoever in decisions on development of our Nation's most valuable wetlands.

It is absolutely incredible that we can give the Pentagon \$7 billion more than the President of the United States wanted but, unbelievably, we can't find the money for the Environmental Protection Agency to enforce the laws that protect our water and our air.

Mr. Speaker, in the Philadelphia region, there have been and will be cancellations of numerous Superfund inspections, leaving potentially dangerous toxic waste undiscovered at sites that threaten the community.

The conference report means no new Superfund priority cleanups, whether or not there is a toxic threat to drinking water.

Mr. Speaker, the American public does not want less environmental protection. They want more protection of their water and their air.

This bill does not give them that protection. It should be defeated and sent back to conference.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY].

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of reasons to vote against this bill, but the truth of the matter is, whether we are concerned about the fouling of our air and our water and our streams or whether or not we are concerned about the cuts in the veterans' health care budget, what is the most egregious in this budget is what we have done to the housing of our Nation's poor and our Nation's senior citizens.

We see cuts in this budget that will decimate our housing programs. We see politicians constantly marching before public housing projects and condemning them for the condition that they are in, and yet what this housing budget does is gut the very provisions that are necessary to improve those housing projects. At the same time, we turn around and cut the homeless budget of our country by 40 percent. So what we are going to do is we are going to gut our public housing, we are going to come in and hurt our assisted housing projects, and once our senior citizens and our poor are not able to live in those projects, we then are going to turn them to the streets where we then gut the homeless budget of this country. It is a crying shame, and we ought to do better than this.

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

Mr. Speaker, I just might mention, in responding to the gentleman's comments, that, indeed, the assisted housing, for example, in this country has increased in terms of budget by 50 percent in the last 4 years. All one has to do is look across the country at boarded-up buildings in housing projects everywhere to know that it is time for us to rethink where we have been in terms of those programs. Clearly, this side is very concerned about those future programs in terms of their effectiveness, and it is time for us to take some new direction.

I said in my opening remarks the Secretary Cisneros has publicly said on many occasions it is time to rethink where we are going on housing. Money is one way to do it; but, indeed, it is important to make sure that the House recognizes that it has a positive role to play in terms of the change as well.

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

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the bill primarily because of the impact on the environment. No other agency faces the type of cuts in this House that the EPA does in this conference report.

It has already been mentioned that EPA funding is cut by approximately 20 percent, with enforcement being the hardest hit in terms of cuts, almost 25 percent. We all read in the New York Times last week that the EPA has had to cut back on inspections and enforcement already. This will only make it worse.

In addition, more than half of the original 17 antienvironmental riders have been included either directly or through report language in this conference report. Since agencies often have to follow the dictates of the appropriators, this shift to report language in my opinion does not mean that the damage to the environment will be any less. So I ask once again that we oppose this bill and that it go

back to conference to improve in particular the funding for the EPA.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS].

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, two-and-a-half weeks ago we celebrated Veterans Day, and we told the veterans of America how much we respect them and how grateful we are for the sacrifices that they have made for this Nation. Well, two-and-a-half weeks have come and gone and how quickly we have forgotten.

This bill cuts \$43 million from the VA programs, a larger cut than the House version, but that is just the beginning. The Republicans' 7-year budget, which begins with a funding bill we are discussing today, cuts entitlements for veterans by \$6.7 billion over 7 years. Under the Republican budget, many veterans would pay more for their prescription drugs. In some cases, the cost that veterans pay for prescription drugs would double, and the cuts do not stop there.

The Republican budget demands that, in addition to the \$6.7 billion veterans' cuts, all discretionary spending, including veterans' programs, be reduced by 20 percent over the 7-year combined period.

Let us defeat this bad bill. It is unfair to our veterans.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from New York [Ms. VELÁZQUEZ].

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

Mr. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this draconian conference report. This conference report is nothing more than a cruel attack on our children, the elderly and the poor. These cuts are not about arbitrary numbers of the elimination of port barrel projects. They are about human beings. Behind every dollar of this reduction, there is human tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, by gutting the MCKINNEY program, hundreds of thousands of Americans will be forced to live in the streets. As we begin the coming winter months, the action taken on the floor today will constitute a death sentence for many.

These cuts mean less security services and the elimination of critical social services. For the 500,000 public housing residents in the New York City area, this reduction translates into deteriorating buildings, greater insecurity and fewer opportunities for economic advancement. This is shameful. It is not enough that Republicans have slashed education, cut Medicare, and eliminated job training programs. Now they are planning to throw poor people out on the street. Enough is enough.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for yielding to me at this time.

Mr. Speaker, this is a more-than bill. This is more than what we had before, but what is that? I certainly applaud the assurance that has been given to the space program, but where are we in research and development dollars, far less than needed. Then when we begin to look at the Department of Housing and Urban Development we see that this bill cuts 17 percent, the Environmental Protection Agency is almost gutted with cuts of 21 percent, and our Federal Emergency Management Agency is cut 17 percent. What will occur if disasters occur in our States.

Then we look at the Community Development Bank initiatives which were designed to revitalize economically distressed areas that program is being absolutely eliminated. The housing assistance under section 8 which helps house poor Americans is being cut. Homeownership grants, wherein we in this Congress have stood on the House floor and said we want Americans to own homes, is being cut by 48 percent.

□ 1230

Public housing modernization programs are being cut by 32 percent. Then the one-for-one replacement program to restore public housing is being cut. Also when we talk about negotiations in my city regarding a final solution to APV, located in the 18th Congressional District in Houston, intrusions to prevent us from considering historic preservation issues and the repeal of the Frost-Leland amendment which does not take into account the need for a local master plan for public housing being completed, are not helpful. This is not a good bill. This is an intrusive bill in some areas and it takes away the money from the people who need it most. More-than is simply not good enough.

Mr. Speaker, I include my complete statement on the conference report for the RECORD, as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my opinion regarding the conference report on the VA-HUD appropriations bill. I applaud the conferees for appropriating \$13.8 billion for NASA. This funding is more than the amount contained in the House bill. The Space Agency will receive full funding for the space station. Funding for other programs such as human space flight, mission support and science, aeronautics and technology is slightly below current level.

While there are still challenges that remain with respect to the space program, I believe that NASA will continue to provide leadership to the rest of the world.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs also receives funding that is only slightly below the current level, with the major spending reductions relating to the construction of VA facilities. Our veterans have made numerous sacrifices on behalf of our country and we must ensure that the needs of veterans remain a top priority.

Some of the provisions of the bill, however, trouble me, particularly funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development and

the Environmental Protection Agency. The bill reduces spending for the Department of Housing and Urban Development by 17 percent and for the Environmental Protection Agency by 21 percent. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's funding has been cut by 17 percent.

Furthermore, the conference report eliminates funding for the AmeriCorps Program, which is providing numerous opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities. The Community Development Bank initiative is also eliminated. The Community Development Banking Program was designed to revitalize economically distressed areas by providing grants, loans, and technical assistance to financial institutions and community development organizations in such areas.

With respect to housing, the conference report eliminates funding for section 8 rental assistance contracts and hope homeownership grants. Low-income assisted housing programs are cut by 48 percent, public housing modernization programs by 32 percent, section 202 elderly housing by 39 percent, section 811 disabled housing by 40 percent and homeless programs by 27 percent.

I do not believe that it is necessary to make these drastic cuts in spending. We have now learned that the economic projections provided by the Congressional Budget Office on the level of the budget deficit need to be revised.

Other housing reforms include the suspension of the one-for-one replacement rule, which requires local public housing authorities to replace each public housing unit it demolishes with a replacement unit. Affordable housing should be a major priority for our country.

In connection with the issue of public housing, I am concerned that the conference report contains language that states:

That historic preservation is an admirable goal, but that it is not good policy to require the preservation of buildings unsuitable for modern family life at the expense of low-income families in need of affordable housing.

I believe that it is necessary that we clarify the issue of the importance of historic preservation to the cultural heritage of our country. Historic preservation guidelines contained in current law and regulations have not delayed the process of rehabilitating facilities such as Allen Parkway Village in Houston. Let me also add that many officials in my hometown of Houston also recognize the role of historic preservation in providing affordable housing to the citizens of Houston.

I also believe it was unnecessary to include language in the conference report, at this time, that repealed the Frost-Leland provision, which prohibited Federal funds from being used to demolish Allen Parkway Village in Houston. This repeal is untimely because all interested parties in the effort to rehabilitate and build new housing at the Allen Parkway Village facility met yesterday to reach an agreement to move the process forward and to create a master plan. I recognize, however, that it is important that municipalities have the ability to make the best use of taxpayers funds by being able to seek reimbursement from the Federal Government when some of the structures within a housing facility must be demolished. At the appropriate time with the establishment of an inclusive master plan to restore housing for needy and working families such a repeal should be implemented.

The provisions of the bill that relate to the Environmental Protection Agency greatly concern me since the bill reduces overall funding for the Superfund Program by 13 percent. There are several communities in my congressional district that have experienced problems with toxic waste areas such as Pleasantville and Kennedy Heights. This is not the time to reduce funding for the Superfund Program.

I am concerned about the reduction in funding for State loan funds relating to upgrading facilities to provide safe drinking water and infrastructure repair such as possibly Houston's own wastewater project. And spending cuts for programs that enforce other environmental and public health standards.

The VA-HUD appropriations bill is a comprehensive bill and a controversial bill. As we debate the various provisions contained in this bill, I hope that my colleagues will carefully consider the policy assumptions that were involved in drafting the bill and the potential impact of such policies on millions of Americans.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my very effective colleague from Florida [Mr. WELDON].

Mr. WELDON of Florida. I thank the kind gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in very strong support of this conference bill and urge all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote in favor of this.

I was particularly pleased that the conference was able to fully fund the shuttle and the space station at near the request level of the President, and I am particularly pleased that the conference restored \$100 million that the Senate had cut from the shuttle program.

It allows NASA's vital field research centers to remain open so that they can continue to perform the important research work, and I am particularly pleased that there is \$25 million for a VA medical clinic in my district. The veterans in my district have been waiting 12 years for a medical facility. This will allow these veterans to begin to receive good quality medical care that they have long deserved and they have long been waiting for.

I would again urge all my colleagues to put aside their partisan differences and vote in favor of this bill. It is a good bill. It is good for veterans. It is good for NASA. I would encourage its support.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT].

Mr. DOGGETT. I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill should be properly entitled the Unilateral Disarmament Act of 1995 because what it is all about is unilaterally disarming our capability to provide for clean air and clean water. It just returns to the old Gingrich-ite philosophy of the environment, "Polluters know best."

Well, we do not think they know best, and we think it is essential that this Nation have the capability to provide for clean air and clean water.

This is a bill for unilateral disarmament. It says to those who would

police the polluters that they will not have the resources to get the job done. This is the same group that tried to tie up and bind and shackle with 17 different binders the right to protect against the environment, and even some elements of their own party rebelled against it and said it would not stand. So now they have come back and they have tried every way they can to cut the power of our law enforcement officers to protect and preserve our environment. It needs to be rejected.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California [Mr. FARR].

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

Mr. President, you should veto this bill. It kills a program that evokes the spirit of a national service program, the AmeriCorps.

There are many other bad aspects of this bill but eliminating AmeriCorps is penny-foolish. It is a program that benefits the very heart of our communities.

In my district in California, we have AmeriCorps workers involved in the Boys and Girls Clubs, in Big Brothers and Sisters, in the Food Bank of Monterey.

We have 20 AmeriCorps volunteers involved in the Senior Companion Program. I happened to swear in as a former Peace Corps volunteer new AmeriCorps workers. The pledge of office is something this Congress ought to learn. The pledge of office to be AmeriCorps is to get the job done. The job that they are doing is essential to make our communities get back on their feet both socially and economically.

I suggest that to eliminate that program is not a very wise thing to do. Mr. President, if this House cannot reject the bill, then veto it.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York [Mr. ENGEL].

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is an awful bill and I hope it is defeated. Let us look at what it does. It cuts housing programs by 21 percent. It cuts environmental protection by 21 percent, the Superfund by 19 percent, homeless programs by 27 percent.

The Republicans give our veterans an amendment against burning the American flag, but what do they do to veterans' needs? They cut construction or improvement at VA facilities by 62 percent and slash all kinds of other help to our veterans. It is nothing but a sham and a shell game that is being perpetrated on our veterans. The AmeriCorps Program, the community development bank initiative and dozens of housing programs are eliminated. All of the original 17 EPA riders which the House instructed to drop were removed from the bill.

We are talking about America's future here. What we are doing is we are

slashing all these good programs to pay for a tax cut for the rich. It is really a disgrace.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from New York [Mr. BOEHLERT] for purposes of a colloquy.

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

I appreciate the work the chairman has done to ensure that the bill and the managers' language reflect the House concerns about environmental riders. As the chairman knows, I am still a bit uncomfortable with the managers' language. I just want to ask the gentleman to make clear that report language does not have the force of law. So am I correct in saying that the managers' language is not binding and should not be interpreted by the courts as having the force of law?

Mr. LEWIS. If the gentleman will yield, bill language has the force of law, managers' language does not, especially when recognizing the way the agency the gentleman is concerned about relates to the Congress.

Mr. BOEHLERT. I thank the gentleman for his response.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY], the distinguished ranking member of the full Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, when I first came to Congress and later joined the Committee on Appropriations as a very young Member of Congress, in fact the youngest Member of Congress at that time, I was asked why I had tried so hard to get on the Committee on Appropriations rather than some of the other committees around here. I said at that time that the reason I did that is because I thought that, more than anything else that Congress does, our budgets define what it is that we value.

I think this bill tells a very sad story about what this Congress apparently values because, as the previous speaker on our side of the aisle indicated, this bill makes huge reductions in housing, it makes huge reductions in our ability to enforce environmental cleanup legislation. In that sense I think it will leave this country much poorer, both in terms of the housing stock available to low-income people in this society and most especially poorer in terms of the quality of the air, the quality of the water, and the quality of the living environment that our kids and our grandkids will be living.

This bill is going to be vetoed and it should be vetoed because it is, I think, an abdication of our responsibilities to be stewards of the environment and to be stewards of the entire ecosystem.

I also think it abdicates in many ways the responsibilities that we have to our veterans. It cuts \$900 million from the VA request.

It eliminates, it is true it eliminates 17 anti-environment riders which were earlier attached to this bill and then later stripped out by a motion on the

House floor, and that is good. But as the previous colloquy indicated, many of those riders have found their way back into the statement of managers.

While those riders in the statement of managers do not have the force of law, they certainly do place a considerable burden on the agency, in that they require the agency to try to take into account the opinion of the committee when they drafted that statement on the part of the managers. When we are dealing with an agency such as EPA, which has tended to follow guidance provided in statements of the manager in years past unless they are forbidden to do so by law, I think that what it really does is put the Congress on record in support of a good many anti-environmental positions which I do not believe the Congress wants to do, given its vote on those riders just a few weeks ago.

Let me also note with respect to veterans that despite the fact that this bill had about \$1.5 billion more to work with in reality than the bill had when it left the House, that despite that fact, veterans' medical care is funded \$213 million below the amount originally contained in the House bill. I think that is wrong.

Let me state that again. Despite the fact that the committee and \$1.5 billion more to work with than the House bill, veterans got \$213 million less than they would have gotten in the House bill for veterans' medical care.

I congratulate the committee for dropping its plan to reduce benefits for what are known as incompetent veterans. That was also mentioned by one of our friends on the Republicans side of the aisle earlier. I congratulate the committee. As Members know, we offered an amendment on this side of the aisle to try to require that that provision be eliminated. It was not accepted on the floor. I am happy it was accepted now.

But nonetheless, I do not think that we can justify cutting veterans' medical benefits by \$213 million. My motion to recommit will eliminate that reduction and would restore that \$213 million. I would urge that Members vote "yes" on the motion to recommit and then "no" on the bill.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO].

(Mr. LAZIO of New York asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this conference report with some resesuations. We need to pass this bill to move the process forward. Although I have the greatest respect for the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee, Chairman LEWIS, and I agree with him more often than not, I hoped the result of the House-Senate conference on H.R. 2099 would be better.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, I have worked hard to make sure this

legislation established appropriate funding levels for programs and policies and did not create new programs without the direction of authorizing committees.

I remain convinced that the original House funding levels for housing programs supporting vulnerable populations should be maintained. Section 202, which provides housing support for elderly families, and section 811, which assists disabled families, are programs we should strongly support. We need to do better.

Section 202 represents hope for many of our seniors seeking a decent home. These are our parents and grandparents, people whose lives were spent contributing to their community and who deserve our support now.

Section 811 allows families trying to raise children with disabilities or disabled adults looking for supportive housing to get the assistance they need and the support they deserve. Again, this is the type of program this House must protect.

Mr. Speaker, there are improvements in the conference agreement. The authorization committees are aware of the problems the appropriators face. In fact, we donated over a billion dollars from a change to the FHA assignment program inserted by the House Banking Committee to assist the Appropriations committees in their work. We realized the difficult pressures on the Appropriations Committee, and therefore we allowed them to claim a portion of the savings from our reconciliation package to benefit housing programs, to ensure that low-income families would not face higher rents, so that public housing authorities would not face new reductions in their operating subsidies without giving time for new reforms and deregulations to take effect.

Obviously, we must include some provisions to alleviate difficult budget pressures. These provisions are good policy choices as well. Removing disincentives that prevent low-income tenants from going to work is a great step forward for this Congress and I applaud Chairman LEWIS for working with me to correct this for fiscal year 1996. But I would stress that the real work of drafting policy reforms is not to be found here in an Appropriations bill, rather it is the subject of the hard work of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity is currently engaged in.

I intend to work with my very distinguished colleague and chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. LIVINGSTON, as well as with my friend, Mr. LEWIS, to ensure that the House position on these areas that remain in conflict are maintained when the bill comes back to this House.

I would ask my colleagues who vote to support this legislation today to withhold their support of any future bill unless changes are made to shift priorities back to deserving low-income families and to eliminate unnecessary legislative provisions.

□ 1245

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, first, I want to strongly support the motion to recommit which has been offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY].

I think it is important that we recommit this bill, and, therefore, I urge my Members and our colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, it is unusual for a bill to be so bad that none of the Democratic conferees on the House side would sign the conference report. It is a bill which the President has told the conferees is so bad that he will veto it in its current form.

The conference agreement eliminates funding for the President's AmeriCorps service program, the community development bank initiative, the FDIC affordable housing program. It also eliminates several other housing programs.

I can understand why the chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity has just said to the House that he is voting for it with some very severe reservations in light of the cuts in these programs. I can understand why he made that statement.

It also cuts the office of consumer affairs.

There are provisions in the bill which will act to raise rents for families living in public housing, in section 8 housing.

In a letter received from the Administration, the President expresses concern about the \$162 million reduction in funds that were requested to go directly to the States and needy cities for clean water and drinking water needs. He cites the more than 50 percent cut for the Council for Environmental Quality. He also cites the failure of the bill to provide funding for economic development initiatives.

Finally, in his letter or communication to us, the President says, and I quote, "Clearly this bill does not reflect the values that Americans hold dear." He urges the Congress to send him an appropriations bill for these important priorities that truly serve the American people.

This bill, in its present form, does not adequately serve the American people. The President is going to veto it.

I urge my colleagues to defeat this conference report.

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, this is a very, very important vote.

I would mention one more time to the House that any funding that is made available to very important programs—such as those serving veterans, those serving housing, those programs that involve the EPA, a variety of other agencies—any funds that go in

the coming fiscal year to those programs will be voted for up or down on this vote. So if you are for supporting veterans, then you should be voting "aye" on this measure.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the most important challenge that we have during this Congress, the people have said very clearly that we must move toward balancing the budget. The President has signed on. The House has committed by way of its budget actions we will move toward balancing our budget at least in a 7-year period.

Beyond the rhetoric of balancing the budget, this is a time to begin voting. This bill, of all appropriations bills, makes the single largest reduction in a pattern of ever-increasing Federal spending. Because of that, I suggest my colleagues take a hard look at saving \$9.2 billion below the President's request.

This bill is an important bill because it does make a difference if you believe in balancing the budget.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to Conference Report 104-353 for the VA-HUD and independent agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year 1996.

According to a November 9, 1995, article in the Honolulu Star Bulletin:

The Honolulu median price among existing houses and apartments changing hands, \$350,000, was one-third higher than the next-highest city, San Francisco, where the median was \$263,300, according to a report today by the National Association of Realtors.

H.R. 2099, appropriates a mere \$19.3 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is less than either the House or Senate-passed versions of the bill. It is a \$5.3 billion reduction from the fiscal year 1995 appropriation and it is \$6.2 billion, or 24.3 percent, less than the administration budget request.

H.R. 2099 would permit the Secretary to manage and dispose of multifamily properties owned by HUD and multifamily mortgages held by HUD without regard to any other provision of law. Provisions established to protect the needy will be ignored.

Assistance for homeless programs would be cut by \$297,000, dropping funding in this area from \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 1995 to \$823 million in fiscal year 1996.

Finally, opportunities for tenant-sponsored organizations, nonprofit organizations, and others, to purchase the buildings they reside in, would be eliminated. H.R. 2099 sunsets preservation programs after October 1, 1996. The Emergency Low Income Preservation Act of 1987 and the Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990 would be eliminated by this time next year. These programs help tenant-sponsored organizations, nonprofit organizations, and many others acquire buildings for their low-income residents.

These cuts are not slowing growth, but deliberate and undeniable reductions in program funding.

In addition to all of these cuts in the VA-HUD appropriations bill, the budget reconciliation bill contains further reductions and will eliminate the low-income housing tax credit which encourages investment in housing for low-income families.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "no" vote on this conference report.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, this is a bad bill camouflaged by the military uniforms of our former service men and women. Not only will this bill hurt veterans, the environment, and tenants in low-income housing, but it eliminates funding for AmeriCorps, the national service program.

In my district, there are tens of thousands of veterans and military retirees who rely on medical assistance and quality medical facilities. Unfortunately, the cuts in this bill will threaten the quality care they depend on. For example, it cuts nearly \$400 million in medical care from the administration's request and eliminates educational help for those who agree to work at VA facilities.

Many veterans and military retirees are willing to make a sacrifice in the effort to end the deficit, but we should not target them unfairly—and, unfortunately, this bill does just that.

This bill will also hurt the environment by cutting the EPA's funding by over \$1.5 billion from this year's budget. In my coastal district, less money will be given to help local communities keep the Monterey Bay clean and healthy. This bill will also hurt the public by preventing EPA from expanding its list of the toxic chemical releases that companies must make public. Finally, this bill hurts our young people.

As we approach a new millennium, we need to renew the spirit of our Founding Fathers. A program that evokes that spirit is the national service program, AmeriCorps. It is a volunteer program that works—it should not be arbitrarily cut. It is an investment in our future—according to IBM for every dollar AmeriCorps invests, the community will realize a return of \$1.60 to \$2.60 or more in direct benefits. AmeriCorps workers are involved in every aspect of our communities, teaching in schools, feeding the homeless, and counseling troubled youth.

In my district in California, we have AmeriCorps workers involved with the Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers and Sisters, and the Food Bank of Monterey. We have 20 AmeriCorps members involved in the Senior Companion Program which has low-income seniors assisting other seniors, allowing them to lead independent lives.

Several weeks ago I had the privilege of swearing in two AmeriCorps volunteers in Hollister. They will be working on developing a new youth center and administering the city's housing rehabilitation program. Unfortunately, this bill terminates funding for AmeriCorps.

As a former Peace Corps volunteer, I know the benefits of volunteer service. No one can quantify the benefits an AmeriCorps worker gives to his or her community. Unfortunately, the communities of Hollister and Monterey will notice the loss of this valuable volunteer service benefit.

This is yet again another example of Republican budget-cutting that is penny-wise and pound-foolish.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the conference report on HUD-VA.

This bill contains some of our Nation's most important priorities, and I was pleased that the conference agreement protects space research. Nevertheless, the overall cuts which were sustained by the EPA and Superfund are unacceptable. Preserving our environment is

too important to be traded off for other priorities. Therefore, I oppose this bill.

I commend the conferees for providing funding to NASA to continue important work on space science and move the space station forward. I especially want to thank the conferees for providing \$1.26 billion for mission to Planet Earth. The research this sponsors will greatly enhance weather forecasting, and allow us to protect lives and property by giving better advance warning before severe weather such as hurricanes. I am pleased that today, this bill reaffirms the importance of the work that is done at the Goddard Space Center.

Nevertheless, the funding cuts for EPA in this bill are an unacceptable attack on our environment.

Funding for Superfund cleanup has been cut by 19 percent. This leaves no flexibility to take care of sites which will be identified as problems in the upcoming year. The Fifth District of Maryland has five areas which are currently being considered for Superfund cleanup assistance. All five contain pollution which threatens the health and well-being of Fifth District residents. It is unfair to limit clean up progress to currently identified sites. This bill will exclude many dangerous areas from getting clean up help.

I am also concerned about the impact of EPA cuts on our ongoing efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. Under this conference report, EPA funding would be cut more than one-fifth. This means that available funding will be directed to dealing with crises. Long-term restoration efforts will bear the brunt of the cuts. For example, we recently discovered that as much as 30 percent of the nitrogen pollution in the bay is due to airborne, not waterborne, contamination. The cuts in this bill will force the EPA to stop much of this type of research. Likewise, our ongoing programs to reintroduce rockfish and other species to the bay may also be put on hold.

I am pleased that the Chesapeake Bay program has been funded under this bill. However, as any fisherman will tell you, our efforts to restore the bay and its oyster population are dependent upon the quality of the water that flows into the bay. The ultimate success of our efforts to restore the economic and environmental vitality of the bay depend on cleaning up the Patuxent, Anacostia, and Potomac Rivers. These are precisely the sorts of long-term projects which are most likely to be delayed as scarce funding turns to short-term emergency responses and crisis management.

These cuts show the folly of attempting to cut taxes while balancing the budget. I believe we must balance the Federal budget, for the sake of our children and grandchildren. But I do not believe that spending \$245 billion to give tax breaks to our wealthiest Americans is a wise use of taxpayer funds. These cuts are not to balance the budget—they are paying for the tax cut. How will our grandchildren judge us if we fail to preserve our Nation's environmental and economic viability? Will giving a tax cut be an adequate defense? I believe not, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting against this bill.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the conference report on H.R. 2099, the fiscal year 1996 VA—HUD appropriations bill. While the measure before us is slightly better than the one passed by the House, it has a long way to go before it is acceptable. I am particularly concerned about

the 26 percent cut in housing programs, the 27 percent cut in homeless programs, and the 21 percent cut in the programs of the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA].

I would like to thank the chairman of the committee and the conferees for continuing to fund the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS [HOPWA] program as a separate program. The \$171 million provide for HOPWA, the same level as the post-rescission funding in fiscal year 1995, will help communities across the Nation as they develop local solutions to problems confronting people with HIV/AIDS. Because new communities qualify for HOPWA funds this year, the level of funding to communities already receiving HOPWA grants will be reduced. This problem could have been resolved by providing a higher level of funding. However, I am pleased that HOPWA is being maintained as a separate program and will, therefore, not have to compete with housing for the disabled and the elderly.

I would also like to commend the conferees for their efforts to address the continuing threat to the affordable housing stock posed by prepayment. This conference report provides \$624 million for a modified preservation/prepayment program. Although I am concerned that the funds are insufficient to meet the needs, I am pleased that the conferees recognized that there is a serious problem and are interested in developing a solution to it.

Despite these provisions, I oppose this bill because it reneges on our Federal commitment to help this Nation's families. Strong families make our communities strong and strong communities make our Nation strong. For families to be strong, they must have access to the basics—employment, education, healthcare, and housing. This bill dramatically decreases the ability of local communities to provide access to decent, safe, and affordable housing for America's families.

The costs to our society of homelessness are significant and they are long-term. At the simplest level, the costs are financial. It costs more to return homeless people to the mainstream of society than it costs to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. But, the costs to society of homelessness go far beyond financial ones.

Children growing up homeless in the streets today will carry the scars of their childhood experiences and the memories of society's indifference to them into their adulthood. We are being willfully blind if we refuse to see that society's indifference today will cost us tomorrow.

The conference report to H.R. 2099, like so many of the pieces of the agenda of this Republican-controlled Congress, targets its hardest hits at the most vulnerable. In the case of housing, those hit the hardest are the poorest residents in public and assisted housing and poor working families, too many of whom live on the streets. The median income of households receiving Federal housing assistance is \$8,000. These households simply have no additional resources with which to pay for increases in housing costs.

Currently, more than 5.6 million very-low-income households in this country pay half or more of their incomes for rent or live in substandard housing. Between 1989 and 1993, this group grew by 600,000 households—a growth rate which will be dwarfed by the one ahead of us if this bill becomes law. More than

8 percent of our Nation's children—our future—live in these households.

In this Nation, we already have at least 4.7 million fewer affordable rental units than we need, and more than 1.5 million households are on waiting lists for public or assisted housing. This number will increase dramatically and quickly if this bill becomes law. Under the funding levels contained in this bill, no additional families will receive Federal housing assistance, and for those families who have been on waiting lists, sometimes for years, their hopes for decent housing grow even dimmer.

These cuts would be bad enough if they were being done on their own. They are not. Coupled with the dismantling of the Federal safety net and draconian cuts in Federal programs contained in other legislation passed by Congress—including cuts in welfare, food stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid, education and job training—the cuts in housing and homelessness programs in this bill add up to disaster. These cuts create insurmountable odds for America's struggling working lower income families and increased demand for local community assistance, with no hope of Federal assistance. The needs do not go away because Congress has taken the money away. In many cases, the needs will grow. This bill is cruel and cold-hearted. It does not reflect American values.

I also oppose the provisions in this conference report which would cut the funding levels for the Environmental Protection Agency by 21 percent.

These provisions not only severely limit the agency's ability to protect our lands, air, and water; but they also continue the full-scale assault on the environment that began on the first day of the 104th Congress.

Poll after poll has indicated that the American people favor strong environmental laws. We should not be willing to sacrifice the health and safety of our children. For the families, children, and citizens of America, I urge my colleagues to oppose this conference report.

Mr. EWING. Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise some strong concerns I have with language contained in the conference report on H.R. 2099 concerning the ongoing efforts in the Department of Housing and Urban Development to move toward Federal regulation of so-called redlining within the property insurance industry, an area of regulation traditionally left to the States.

The VA/HUD bill approved by the House earlier this year contained language requested by me, Representative KNOLLENBERG, and a number of other Members from throughout the country which would have reestablished the States' right to regulate the insurance industry and address rules dealing with any redlining problems in their respective States, and prohibited HUD from spending fiscal year 1996 dollars on promulgating redlining regulations and funding projects by activist groups. I commend and thank Chairman LEWIS for working to include this language in the House bill.

HUD has no statutory authority to be involved in this area, and under the McCarran/Ferguson Act regulation of insurance is properly handled by the States. The States are exercising that authority to address redlining problems where they exist, and there is absolutely no reason for HUD to get involved.

The House of Representatives clearly endorsed this view when it voted 266 to 157

against an amendment to strike this section from the bill. The Senate bill did not contain similar language when it went to conference.

I am deeply distressed that the conference committee not only deleted this section, but replaced it with report language which takes a position directly opposite of the House-approved language prohibiting redlining regulation. In particular, the language calls for congressional committees to take action "so that a clear statutory basis of regulation can be provided, and effective antidiscrimination regulation of insurance activities enforced" with respect to redlining. This is a position with which I vehemently disagree and which is diametrically opposed to the position taken earlier by the House.

I have every confidence that if this bill is vetoed by the President, as is expected, this matter will be addressed again by the Appropriations Committees. I thank Chairman LEWIS for his support and look forward to working with him in the future to include the previously adopted language to prohibit HUD for regulating property insurers in any future version of this legislation.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the VA-HUD appropriations conference report.

This bill makes dangerous and unnecessary cuts in programs protecting the health and welfare of our Nation.

It decimates important environmental protection programs by cutting EPA funding by 21 percent—the largest targeted cut for any single Federal agency.

It also slashes public housing programs by 21 percent and homeless programs by 27 percent, at a time when public housing needs are rising, not falling.

The impact of these cuts will be felt in urban and rural areas throughout the Nation. For example, in Los Angeles County alone, reductions in the incremental section 8 housing program will deny rental assistance to 40,000 individuals and families currently on the county's waiting list.

I urge my colleagues to reject the flawed funding priorities reflected in this bill by defeating the conference report.

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are playing an increasingly dangerous game with public health and the environment.

Every poll shows that Americans oppose the weakening of environmental standards. In fact, an ABC/Washington Post poll showed that 70 percent of respondents felt that the Federal Government has not done enough to protect the environment. If you ask questions about the protection of communities and employees from hazardous industries and substances, the public support is even higher.

And yet the Republican leaders of this Congress, beginning with the blatant efforts to repeal much of the Clean Water Act as part of the Contract With America, have unleashed an unprecedented assault on the safety of America's communities. That assault has been promoted, drafted, and financed by the very industries and special interests that are benefiting from the Republican revolution.

This conference report is a startling example of this capitulation by the Republican Congress to the special interests who have long challenged the authority of public entities to regulate the safety of the workplaces, the safety of their products, and the safety of their

operations. Provisions in this report hamstring the ability of the Environmental Protection Agency to enforce the laws that keep our water clean, our air safe, and our communities free from toxic dangers.

This conference report bars EPA from protecting wetlands, limits EPA's authority to list new hazardous waste sites, and bars the issuance of new standards to protect the public from drinking water contaminated by radon.

As a representative of a heavily industrial district where constituents have often been subjected to health hazards both on the job and in the community, this legislation contains unacceptable waivers from basic laws intended to protect the public from serious threats to health and safety. Instructions buried in the legislative history of this conference report direct EPA to: Exempt the oil and gas industry from requirements to develop accident prevention plans; excuse the oil and gas industry from reducing toxic air pollution from refineries; and infringe on the public's right to know by limiting the kinds of information about air and water pollution that industries must report for the Toxic Release Inventory.

The Seventh District of California—like much of the San Francisco Bay area—has had a long and unhappy history with industries that have leaked, spilled, spewed, emitted, discharged, and released up to 40,000 tons of hazardous materials, with serious results on our community. Indeed, our region has been affected by dozens of releases of hazardous chemicals and other substances into our water, our air, and our lands.

The San Joaquin River, which discharges into the fragile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, dumps the following loads every year into that estuary: arsenic, 12 metric tons; chromium, 66 tons; lead, 51 to 55 tons; and nickel, 51 tons.

In 1993, the General Chemical Co. of Richmond, CA, released a huge amount of oleum into the air, forcing 24,000 people to seek medical attention. General Chemical was charged with numerous violations of civil and criminal law, including failure to maintain equipment, failing to provide adequate employees training, failure to provide employees with protective equipment, and negligently emitting an air contaminant.

The General Chemical crisis illustrates the accuracy of the principle: prevention pays. General Chemical was required to pay \$1.18 million in fines to the Government agencies and recently agreed to a \$180 million settlement with thousands of its victims. For a small amount of that money, General Chemical could have had in place the safety policies and technology that would have prevented the release, and the subsequent damage and costs, in the first place.

There are those who believe that industry will act to minimize risks to its employees, the community, and the environment without the compulsion of safety regulations. They are sadly naive. Time and again, in my community and around this country and indeed the world, we have learned the lesson that removing safety regulations invariably leads to short cuts and practices that endanger thousands of lives. Those who seek, in this legislation, to pare back the important work of the Environmental Protection Agency, or elsewhere attack the Occupational Safety and Health Administration or the Mine Safety and Health Administration, would do well to consider this record.

The Shell refinery in Martinez, CA, like other local refineries, discharged large amounts of

selenium into local waterways, with potentially serious results on waterfowl and other marsh wildlife. Shell, like Unocal and Exxon, failed to meet a 1993 deadline to reduce selenium discharges. Some also charge the refineries with the release of dioxins that have been linked with cancer and other serious health problems.

Earlier this year, a pipeline leak at the Dow Chemical plant in Pittsburg, CA, released dissolved chlorine hydrochloric acid and carbon tetrachloride, affecting nearby residents. The examples go on and on: Unocal of Rodeo dumped 200 tons of toxic chemicals onto surrounding communities over a 16-day period. Although plant managers were aware of the leak and workers informed their supervisors, the leak was permitted to continue for 16 days before the damaged unit was finally shut down, leaving hundreds of people with long-standing illnesses.

There are a lot of people in this House who obviously do not believe our communities, our constituents, or our employees need or deserve the protection of their Government from the contamination and poisonings associated with industrial actions. I do not know if they are misinformed, naive, or swayed by the special interests who are behind the weakening of the EPA and behind this legislation. But the effect is the same.

Laws written to protect our citizens and our communities are being trampled by special interest money and influence and, quite literally, people are going to die as a result of this capitulation to corporate interests.

I recognize everyone in this House can point to some example of another of bureaucratic overstepping, and we need good faith efforts to minimize that kind of obstructionism and redtape. But protecting our constituents from the well-documented cases of industrial contamination and poisoning by undercutting the EPA is irresponsible and condemnable. We should vote against this legislation and stand up for the men and women who work in our factories, live in our communities, and look to their Government to provide them with a basic amount of protection and security.

I urge the House to reject the conference report.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, last month I had the honor to host in my district one of the finest public servants who has ever served the combat veterans of this Nation—the Honorable Jesse Brown.

Secretary Brown did not just talk to the veterans at the VFW hall in Davison, MI—he took the time to carefully listen to the concerns of each veteran who attended the town hall meeting. He talked individually to literally dozens of the veterans that day.

But now some Members of Congress want to muzzle Secretary Brown because he has become a real advocate for the veterans and their needs.

In yet another attempt to stifle opposition to their agenda, these Members of Congress want to severely cut funding for the veterans Secretary's office as a means of sending Jesse Brown a message.

These cuts in the Secretary's personal office are in addition to the harsh cuts already contained in the appropriations bill.

Mr. Speaker, such behavior should be beneath the dignity of this House.

I urge Members to join me in opposition to this attack on the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs—and oppose this appropriations bill.

Mr. LARGENT. Mr. Speaker, I support passage of the VA-HUD conference report to H.R. 2099. I want to thank Chairman Lewis and the conferees for their diligence on this bill, and their willingness to work with me and members of the Oklahoma delegation, to incorporate report language compelling the EPA to properly notify corporations or persons as a potentially responsible party [PRP] for facilities on the Superfund's national priorities list.

I know that the House Commerce and Transportation and Infrastructure Committees are currently in the process of reauthorizing and reforming the Superfund Program which is in critical need of improvement. However, for some unfortunate parties, Superfund reform may be a case of too little—too late.

Presently, there are policies which the EPA should be implementing that would save a great deal of time, money, and legal maneuvering in the context of reform and good government. Superfund's overreaching, illogical, and unfair liability snarls have deflected the program from its intended function: to protect human health and the environment in a realistic cost-effective manner. Despite the expenditure of at least \$25 billion in Federal and private funds over the past 15 years, cleanup construction has been completed at only 291 out of nearly 1,300 sites—a whopping 12 percent success rate.

I wholeheartedly concur with the conference report language which states,

Potentially responsible parties [PRP's] have a reasonable expectation to be notified by the EPA in a timely manner and within a time frame that permits participation in remedy selection and execution. In particular, it is inequitable and unconscionable for the agency to identify a PRP without the means to effectively participate in remedy selection and execution and then, after the remedy has been substantially completed, to attempt to identify other parties to pay for remedial activity.

Additionally, the report language makes clear that the EPA should review all of its activities to determine the extent to which such situations have occurred and, in conjunction with the Department of Justice, make every effort to remedy such actions in a nonconfrontational, nonlitigious manner.

I strongly encourage EPA Administrator Browner to abide by the spirit of this language and not take any premature actions which may lead to innocent corporations or persons expending unnecessary legal costs for a problem they did not have any association with and/or did not create.

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

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

There was no objection.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR. OBEY

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the conference report?

Mr. OBEY. That is safe to say, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. OBEY moves to recommit the conference report on the bill H.R. 2099 to the

committee of conference with instructions to the managers on the part of the House to insist on the House position on Senate amendment numbered 4.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

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

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

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

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 216, nays 208, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 829]

YEAS—216

Abercrombie	Fox	Meehan
Ackerman	Frank (MA)	Meek
Andrews	Franks (CT)	Menendez
Baessler	Frost	Mfume
Baldacci	Funderburk	Miller (CA)
Barcia	Furse	Minge
Barrett (WI)	Gejdenson	Mink
Becerra	Gephardt	Moakley
Bentsen	Gibbons	Mollohan
Berman	Gilman	Montgomery
Bevill	Gonzalez	Moran
Bishop	Goodlatte	Murtha
Bonior	Goodling	Nadler
Borski	Gooding	Nadler
Boucher	Gordon	Neal
Brewster	Green	Oberstar
Browder	Gutierrez	Obey
Brown (CA)	Hall (OH)	Olver
Brown (FL)	Hall (TX)	Ortiz
Brown (OH)	Hamilton	Orton
Bryant (TX)	Harman	Owens
Burr	Hastings (FL)	Pallone
Cardin	Hayes	Pastor
Castle	Hefley	Payne (NJ)
Chapman	Hillery	Payne (VA)
Clay	Hilliard	Pelosi
Clayton	Hinchee	Peterson (FL)
Clement	Holden	Peterson (MN)
Clyburn	Hoyer	Pickett
Coble	Jackson-Lee	Pomeroy
Coburn	Jacobs	Poshard
Coleman	Jefferson	Rahall
Collins (IL)	Johnson (SD)	Rangel
Collins (MI)	Johnson, E. B.	Reed
Condit	Johnston	Richardson
Conyers	Jones	Rivers
Costello	Kanjorski	Roemer
Coyne	Kaptur	Rose
Cramer	Kennedy (MA)	Roybal-Allard
Danner	Kennedy (RI)	Rush
Davis	Kennelly	Sabo
de la Garza	Kildee	Sanders
Deal	Kleckza	Sawyer
DeFazio	Klink	Scarborough
DeLauro	LaFalce	Schroeder
Dellums	Lantos	Schumer
Deutsch	Levin	Scott
Dicks	Lewis (GA)	Serrano
Dingell	Lincoln	Sisisky
Dixon	Lipinski	Skaggs
Doggett	LoBiondo	Skelton
Dooley	Lofgren	Slaughter
Doyle	Lowe	Spratt
Durbin	Luther	Stark
Edwards	Maloney	Stearns
Engel	Manton	Stenholm
Ensign	Manzullo	Stockman
Eshoo	Markey	Stokes
Evans	Martinez	Studds
Farr	Mascara	Stupak
Fazio	Matsui	Tanner
Fields (LA)	McCarthy	Taylor (MS)
Filner	McDermott	Tejeda
Foglietta	McHale	Thompson
Ford	McKinney	Thornton
	McNulty	Thurman

Torkildsen
Torres
Torrice
Traficant
Velazquez
Vento
Visclosky

Wamp
Ward
Waters
Watt (NC)
Watts (OK)
Waxman
Whitfield

Williams
Wilson
Wise
Woolsey
Wyden
Wynn
Yates

NAYS—208

Allard
Archer
Army
Bachus
Baker (CA)
Baker (LA)
Ballenger
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Bartlett
Barton
Bass
Bateman
Beilenson
Bereuter
Billbray
Bilirakis
Bliley
Blute
Boehler
Boehner
Bonilla
Bono
Brownback
Bryant (TN)
Bunn
Bunning
Burton
Hyde
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Canady
Chabot
Chambliss
Chenoweth
Christensen
Chrysler
Clinger
Collins (GA)
Combest
Cooley
Cox
Crane
Crapo
Cremins
Cubin
Cunningham
DeLay
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Doolittle
Dornan
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Ehlers
Ehrlich
Emerson
English
Everett
Ewing
Fawell
Fields (TX)
Flanagan
Foley
Forbes
Fowler
Franks (NJ)
Frelinghuysen

Frisa
Gallegly
Ganske
Gekas
Geren
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Goss
Graham
Greenwood
Gunderson
Gutknecht
Hancock
Hansen
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayworth
Heineman
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hoke
Horn
Hostettler
Houghton
Hunter
Hutchinson
Inglis
Istook
Johnson (CT)
Johnson, Sam
Kasich
Kelly
Kim
King
Kingston
Klug
Knollenberg
Kolbe
LaHood
Largent
Latham
LaTourette
Laughlin
Lazio
Leach
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Lightfoot
Linder
Livingston
Longley
Lucas
Martini
McCollum
McCrery
McDade
McHugh
McInnis
McIntosh
McKeon
Metcalf
Meyers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Molinar
Moorhead
Morella
Myers

Myrick
Nethercutt
Neumann
Ney
Norwood
Nussle
Oxley
Packard
Parker
Paxon
Petri
Pombo
Porter
Portman
Pryce
Quillen
Quinn
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Riggs
Roberts
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roukema
Royce
Salmon
Sanford
Saxton
Schaefer
Schiff
Sensenbrenner
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Shuster
Skeen
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Solomon
Souder
Spence
Stump
Talent
Tate
Tauzin
Taylor (NC)
Thomas
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Upton
Vucanovich
Waldholtz
Walker
Walsh
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
White
Wicker
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)
Zeliff
Zimmer

NOT VOTING—8

Fattah
Flake
Hefner

Roth
Seastrand
Towns
Tucker
Volkmer

□ 1311

Messrs. LINDER, SALMON, FOLEY, LEWIS of Kentucky, RIGGS, and BILBRAY changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

Mrs. KENNELLY, Messrs. ROEMER, BARCIA, FUNDERBURK, HAYES, GOODLATTE, FOX of Pennsylvania, MURTHA, MANZULLO, GOODLING, HILLEARY, and STOCKMAN, and Ms.

ROYBAL-ALLARD changed their vote from "nay" to "yea."

So the motion to recommit was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. SEASTRAND. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 829, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was unavoidably detained in my district, but had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on both rollcall votes 822 and 823.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. ROTH. Mr. Speaker, today because of inclement weather and airport delays, I was delayed on two votes.

For H.R. 2564, I would have voted "yes"; and for H.R. 2099 I would have voted "yes."

□ 1315

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I would ask my friend, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARMEY], to explain the schedule this afternoon and for tomorrow. If we are going on Amtrak tomorrow, I would ask the gentleman, why can we not do it today? It is 1 o'clock in the afternoon and we have a good part of the day left.

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

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

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, this last vote is the last vote of the day. The Committee on Rules will be meeting at 2:30 or later this afternoon to write a rule on the Amtrak legislation that we intend to bring up tomorrow. We do not anticipate any vote on Friday or Monday.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, if I can reclaim my time, I ask unanimous consent that we bring the Amtrak bill up today. There would not be any objection on this side of the aisle. We would be happy to take it up today. We do not need a rule, unless the gentleman plans to close the rule. We do not need a rule.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EMERSON). The Chair is unable to recognize the gentleman for that unanimous-consent request.

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

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the gentleman to yield for the purposes of inquiring of my good friend, the gentleman from Texas, the distinguished whip on the majority side, are we going to bring up the securities reform legislation?

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman from Michigan will continue to yield, we intend to bring up that piece of legislation sometime next week.

Mr. DINGELL. Next week, not tomorrow or Thursday, Friday?

Mr. DELAY. Sometime next week.

Mr. DINGELL. Would it come up Monday or Tuesday of next week?

Mr. DELAY. We have not set the schedule for next week, but it would be sometime next week.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank the gentleman.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. SCHROEDER addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

RECOMMITTING THE VA-HUD APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT WILL ALLOW FOR THE GREATER PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to see that the VA-HUD appropriations conference report, which, of course, includes funding for the Environmental Protection Agency, was recommitted to conference today, primarily because of two provisions related to the Environmental Protection Agency. One is that the amount of money that is appropriated to the EPA is probably one of the lowest amounts for any agency, and specifically with regard to enforcement, there is a 25-percent cut in terms of the EPA's enforcement.

Already we know that the EPA has cut back significantly on inspections and on enforcement because of the level of funding that they have received pursuant to the continuing resolution. In other words, as we proceed in trying to put together an appropriations bill for the EPA, less money can be spent on a monthly basis since October 1, because we have not had an appropriations bill signed into law.

Mr. Speaker, the point I was trying to make is that this conference report, which fortunately was sent back to conference today, cuts back on EPA's

enforcement ability by about 25 percent. Since we are already into fiscal year 1996 and we are operating on a continuing resolution which significantly cuts back the amount of money available to the EPA, already inspections and other enforcement actions have been reduced at the Environmental Protection Agency. This 25-percent cut in enforcement will simply magnify that problem.

What it means essentially is that, although we have good environmental laws on the books, they cannot be enforced. Polluters will go free, and there will not be the ability for the EPA to go in and even know exactly what is going on, whether someone, for example, is violating their discharge permit into waters.

In addition to the problem with enforcement, this House has several times, at least on two occasions now, voted to take out riders that were in the EPA appropriations bill which I characterize as anti-environment, because they prohibit the agency from actually enforcing certain actions pursuant to the current law. Yet, we know that of the 17 House riders that were in the EPA appropriations bill, two of them remain in the conference report, and at least half of them have been placed into what we call report language. They are not actually in the law, but they are placed in the conference report, and normally Federal agencies have some sort of requirement to try to go along with what the report, what the conference report language says.

Specifically, there are two provisions, two of the riders that are still in the bill and I hope will be taken out when this bill goes back to conference. One of the two would essentially say that the EPA has no ability to enforce wetlands protection. Right now the EPA has the authority under certain circumstances to permit the filing in of wetlands where the agency feels there has been substantial or will be substantial detriment to the environment. That has been taken out; that rider is still in the bill, but that prohibits the agency from providing any kind of wetlands protection.

The other rider that still is in the bill is one that would prohibit the designation of new Superfund sites. Again, if we are supposed to use a scientific basis, which we traditionally have, for deciding whether or not a hazardous waste site would be put on the national priority list for Superfund status, then there is no reason why an appropriations bill, or a conference report in this case, should specifically say that no new Superfund site can be designated.

In addition, through, Mr. Speaker, there are at least another eight or nine riders that are put into what we call report language. These are essentially loopholes that are created to provide