health and the environment at risk, it will prevent economic redevelopment in those areas.

EPA, through our administrative reforms, has done much to improve the overall pace, cost, and fairness of the program. These administrative reforms represent permanent changes in the way EPA does business and reflect the Administration's vision for the future of Superfund—a future that builds upon our progress over the past four years. These reforms are building a faster, fairer, more efficient Superfund program which: (1) achieves our goal of 20% reduction in total cleanup process time, with 439 completed cleanups (as of 7/7/97) and more than 480 site cleanup constructions underway; (2) includes 75% of Superfund long-term cleanups performed by responsible parties; and (3) reduces cleanup costs towards our goal of 20% cost reduction.

Based on the Agency's administrative reforms, EPA is ready to accelerate the cleanup program. Much of the pre-cleanup work has been completed and actual cleanup work is ready to begin at many toxic waste sites. The necessary contracts to implement an accelerated cleanup program are in place. We have worked with state offices in identifying sites ready for cleanup and will continue to coordinate with them on cleanup activities.

I urge you to support the funding level for the Superfund program as outlined in the Budget Agreement while we continue our discussions on Superfund reauthorization.

Sincerely,

CAROL M. BROWNER.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET,

Washington, DC. June 25, 1997.

Hon. JOHN D. DINGELL,

Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE DINGELL: I am writing to clarify the Administration's views regarding the Superfund funding that was included in the recent Bipartisan Budget Agreement.

On June 5th, Congressmen Kasich and Oxley conducted a colloquy on this subject on the floor of the House of Representatives. As they discussed, the Budget Agreement establishes a reserve fund to provide $200 million per year for Superfund orphan shares. As this would be mandatory spending, the reserve fund requires authorizing legislation to be reported by the Committees on Commerce and Transportation and Infrastructure, although the reserve fund could be authorized in a reconciliation bill, a Superfund reform bill, or other legislative vehicle. The Administration does not agree that these funds should become available only after the Congress passes a Superfund reform bill.

Regarding the $700 million of additional requested funding, the Administration adheres to the language of the Budget Agreement, which provides that Superfund appropriations will be at the President's level ''if policies can be worked out.'' We have always understood this to mean that the Administration needs to reach agreement with the appropriate Committees regarding the way in which the supplemental cleanup funds would be spent. We do not agree that the additional Superfund cleanup funding agreed to in the budget Agreement is contingent on any prior legislation, much less a comprehensive reform bill.

The Administration remains committed to working with Congress to enact a bipartisan consensus-based Superfund reform bill. However, we believe that the increased Superfund appropriations should not be held up until this occurs, since these funds are urgently needed to eliminate the backlog of Superfund cleanups and improve the quality of life for more than 27 million Americans, including over four million children, who live within four miles of a Superfund site.

Please do not hesitate to contract me if I can be of further assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

FRANKLIN D. RAINES,
Director.

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

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

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill (H.R. 2158) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, and that I be permitted to include tables, charts and other extraneous material.

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

There was no objection.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 184 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for consideration of the bill, H.R. 2158.

□ 1830

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2158) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, with Mr. COMBEST in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] will each control 30 minutes.

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

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

Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure today to outline the work of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies as well as the full Committee on Appropriations in developing the fiscal year 1998 VA–HUD and Independent Agencies appropriations bill.

First, I want to thank my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], and his staff for their helping in crafting this bill. Our working relationship, I believe, is a model of how appropriations subcommittees can and should work together on a bipartisan basis. We have effectively controlled the rate of growth of Federal spending through our bill while making sure that the needs of our constituents are met in communities across the country.

Mr. Chairman, beginning with the fiscal year 1995 rescission bill, this subcommittee has led the way in our battle with the budget by reducing spending and fully paying for the emergency supplemental. While the administration and Congress have finally agreed in principle to balancing that budget by 2002, this subcommittee has been moving in that direction for well over 2 years now, and so far we have produced some $20 billion in spending cuts to show for our efforts.

Because of the bipartisan budget agreement with the President, this year the subcommittee had the chance to catch its breath. The subcommittee's 602(b) allocation for fiscal year 1998 will provide us with the funding levels necessary to continue our commitment to serving veterans, protecting the environment, providing housing for the poorest of the poor, and ensuring America's future leadership in space.

With regard to space programs, I hope that each of my colleagues have had an opportunity to focus upon the remarkable NASA Pathfinder mission to Mars. If this mission does not provide the catalyst for our next generation of scientists, then I certainly do not know what will.

We are able to achieve all of these important results while still holding a line on spending of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars. Our allocation should allow us to go through the process quickly and eventually gain a signature by the President.

Since our counterparts in the Senate received an allocation well below ours in the House, we are in for some very tough decisions nonetheless as we go down this road. Not everything in this bill will find its way in the final conference report. While the President may not wholeheartedly endorse every decision reflected in this bill, it is my hope that when we conference in September, we can come to a mutual agreement on a final bill that will be signed.

Let me quickly move to some of the specifics of this bill beginning with our 602(b) allocation.

Due to the structure of the budget resolution, there is some confusion about our allocation. Basically, when we take into account the recent rescission of $3.6 billion we enacted to pay for the emergency disaster supplemental, our allocation this year is the same as for fiscal year 1997, amounting to some $60.8 billion. When we consider that, it would be a mistake, however, not to look at the fact that within this whole package there is an additional $9.2 billion that is necessary to pay for HUD's section 8 program, a program that suddenly has blown up before us and creates ongoing problems that all of us must deal with.

Since the gentleman from Ohio and I have proposed funding the section 8 program at the administration's request of $9.2 billion, our allocation increased by that amount once we reported our bill from the full committee. With that in mind, even this funding level may not be enough if the administration, in dealing with section 8, working along with the House and the Senate housing authorizing committees, do not work in a way to solve this critical section 8 problem, a difficulty which, as I have indicated, will balloon in the years ahead of us.

Now, let me explain the highlights of the larger agencies funded through this measure.

First, the veterans medical care is funded at the full budget request of $17 billion, and we expect an additional $468 million will be made available when the reconciliation bill becomes law.

Veterans research operating expenses and construction activities are moderately increased over the budget request levels.

For the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the section 8 program, as I have indicated, at $9.2 billion, is a part of the package.

Severely distressed housing and drug elimination grants are at the President's request of $524 million and $290 million respectively. CDBG, HOPWA, and Homeless Assistance Grants are also funded at the budget request level.

□ 1845

The native American housing block grant program is funded at $650 million, an increase of some $165 million above the budget request. Likewise, the HOME Program has also increased by $191 million to a figure of $1.5 billion for fiscal year 1998.

Finally, and thanks to an amendment offered during our subcommittee markup by the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK] and the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN], the section 202 elderly housing program is funded at $645 million, which is $345 million above the President's request.

The section 811 housing for the disabled program is funded at $194 million, at an increase of $20 million over the budget request.

For EPA, the budget agreement requires us to produce a bill which funds the EPA operating programs at the budget request level of $3.4 billion. The operating programs include all programs at the agency except Superfund; Leaking Underground Storage Tank Program, known as LUST; and the clean and safe drinking water State revolving funds. We have met this obligation in a way that I believe accurately reflects congressional priorities.

For example, we have proposed an additional $40 million for particulate matter and ozone research, something I believe most Members strongly support and all of us wish the EPA would utilize before implementing new PM and ozone regulations that many would suggest have questionable scientific backing. We have also increased by $25 million the funds going to States and cities for air monitoring and data collection, a necessary component of better research in this very important area.

Furthermore, the Great Lakes programs are fully funded, many above the budget request. The State revolving fund programs have been increased by $200 million over the President's request. Brownfields are funded at $85 million. And the Superfund Program, although it continues to need serious, comprehensive reform, is funded at $1.5 billion.

Space station and shuttle programs at NASA are fully funded, and NASA will receive a modest increase of $148 million over the budget request. I would note, however, that NASA's funding level still represents a decrease of $61 million below last year's level. NASA is a prime example of an agency that has responded to our charge of doing more with less. One need only look at the $200 million Pathfinder program as a prime example of doing more with less.

The National Science Foundation would, likewise, receive a modest increase above the President's request, including an additional $23 million for research, $90 million for major research equipment, and $7 million for education programs. We have provided the full budget request for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA.

Finally, we have frozen funds for AmeriCorps at the 1997 level of just over $402 million. This year's funding level for AmeriCorps represents a reduction of $146.5 million, or 27 percent below the President's request.

I want my colleagues to know that together, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], members of the subcommittee and I have worked hard to produce a fair and balanced bill, one that can and should be supported all the way to the Presidential signature. It is true that it will be a long and hot summer while we all work on this and the other 12 appropriations bills that are necessary to keep our Government operating. On the other hand, the bipartisan support that this measure has already received will certainly make the summer a little easier.

Again, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], my friend and ranking member, and his staff Fredette West, David Reich, and Del Davis, as well as Rose ROBERTS, Valerie Baldwin, Tim Peterson, Paul Thomson, and Frank Cushing of my committee staff, and Dave Les Strang, Alex Heslop, and Jeff Shockey of my personal staff for their help and support for putting together this difficult bill which is full of competing interests but balanced funding priorities.

Mr. Chairman, I want to take just a moment to say that it is obvious this is a very complex bill, dealing with programs that are very, very important to the American public as well as those individual families that receive many of the services involved. In shrinking budgetary circumstances, the competition between accounts is all the more difficult.

There will be amendments, as we go forward in this discussion, which people will come to the floor and suggest that their program has higher priority than another, let us say taking away from AmeriCorps and putting in another program, maybe a veterans' program, without necessarily evaluating the good work we have already done on the veterans programs. That sort of exchange is part of the process. But I urge the Members to recognize that this is a very difficult process and we have done a very good, I think, bipartisan job in putting this bill together.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Chairman, I include the following for the RECORD:

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL (H.R. 2158)

	FY 1997 Enacted	FY 1998 Estimate	Bill	Bill compared with Enacted	Bill compared with Estimate
TITLE I					
Veterans Benefits Administration					
Compensation and pensions	18,671,259,000	19,932,997,000	19,932,997,000	+1,261,738,000	
Supplemental (P.L. 105-18)	928,000,000			-928,000,000	
Readjustment benefits	1,377,000,000	1,366,000,000	1,366,000,000	-11,000,000	
Veterans insurance and indemnities	38,970,000	51,360,000	51,360,000	+12,390,000	
Veterans housing benefit program fund program account (indef)		192,447,000	192,447,000	+192,447,000	
(Limitation on direct loans)		(300,000)	(300,000)	(+300,000)	
Administrative expenses		160,437,000	160,437,000	+160,437,000	
Guaranty and indemnity program account (indefinite)	158,643,000			-158,643,000	
Administrative expenses	105,226,000			-105,226,000	
Loan guaranty program account (indefinite)	14,091,000			-14,091,000	
Administrative expenses	33,810,000			-33,810,000	
Direct loan program account (indefinite)	30,000			-30,000	
(Limitation on direct loans)	(300,000)			(-300,000)	
Administrative expenses	80,000			-80,000	
Education loan fund program account	1,000	1,000	1,000		
(Limitation on direct loans)	(3,000)	(3,000)	(3,000)		
Administrative expenses	195,000	200,000	200,000	+5,000	
Vocational rehabilitation loans program account	49,000	44,000	44,000	-5,000	
(Limitation on direct loans)	(2,822,000)	(2,278,000)	(2,278,000)	(-544,000)	
Administrative expenses	377,000	388,000	388,000	+11,000	
Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program Account	205,000	515,000	515,000	+310,000	
Total, Veterans Benefits Administration	21,327,936,000	21,704,389,000	21,704,389,000	+376,453,000	
Veterans Health Administration					
Medical care	16,313,447,000	16,958,846,000	16,393,846,000	+80,399,000	-565,000,000
Delayed equipment obligation	700,000,000		565,000,000	-135,000,000	+565,000,000
Total	17,013,447,000	16,958,846,000	16,958,846,000	-54,601,000	
Medical care cost recovery collections:					
Offsetting receipts		-604,000,000	-604,000,000	-604,000,000	
Appropriations (indefinite)		604,000,000	604,000,000	+604,000,000	
Total available	(17,013,447,000)	(17,562,846,000)	(17,562,846,000)	(+549,399,000)	
Medical and prosthetic research	262,000,000	234,374,000	267,000,000	+5,000,000	+32,626,000
Medical administration and miscellaneous operating expenses	61,207,000	60,160,000	60,160,000	-1,047,000	
General Post Fund, National Homes:					
Loan program account (by transfer)	(7,000)	(7,000)	(7,000)		
Administrative expenses (by transfer)	(54,000)	(54,000)	(54,000)		
(Limitation on direct loans)	(70,000)	(70,000)	(70,000)		
General post fund (transfer out)	(-61,000)	(-61,000)	(-61,000)		
Total, Veterans Health Administration	17,336,654,000	17,253,380,000	17,286,006,000	-50,648,000	+32,626,000
Departmental Administration					
General operating expenses	827,584,000	846,385,000	853,385,000	+25,801,000	+7,000,000
Offsetting receipts	(32,000,000)	(36,000,000)	(36,000,000)	(+4,000,000)	
Total, Program Level	(859,584,000)	(882,385,000)	(889,385,000)	(+29,801,000)	(+7,000,000)
National Cemetery System	76,864,000	84,183,000	84,183,000	+7,319,000	
Office of Inspector General	30,900,000	31,013,000	31,013,000	+113,000	
Construction, major projects	250,858,000	79,500,000	155,600,000	-95,258,000	+76,100,000
Construction, minor projects	175,000,000	166,300,000	175,000,000		+8,700,000
Parking revolving fund	12,300,000			-12,300,000	
Grants for construction of State extended care facilities	47,397,000	41,000,000	60,000,000	+12,603,000	+19,000,000
Grants for the construction of State veterans cemeteries	1,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	+9,000,000	
Total, Departmental Administration	1,421,903,000	1,258,381,000	1,369,181,000	-52,722,000	+110,800,000
Total, title I, Department of Veterans Affairs	40,086,493,000	40,216,150,000	40,359,576,000	+273,083,000	+143,426,000
(By transfer)	(61,000)	(61,000)	(61,000)		
(Limitation on direct loans)	(3,195,000)	(2,651,000)	(2,651,000)	(-544,000)	
Consisting of:					
Mandatory	(21,187,993,000)	(21,542,804,000)	(21,542,804,000)	(+354,811,000)	
Discretionary	(18,898,500,000)	(18,673,346,000)	(18,816,772,000)	(-81,728,000)	(+143,426,000)

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL (H.R. 2158)—Continued

	FY 1997 Enacted	FY 1998 Estimate	Bill	Bill compared with Enacted	Bill compared with Estimate
TITLE II					
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT					
Selected Housing Programs					
Housing Certificate Fund		10,676,000,000	10,393,000,000	+10,393,000,000	-283,000,000
Expiring section 8 contracts		(9,232,000,000)	(9,200,000,000)	(+9,200,000,000)	(-32,000,000)
Section 8 amendments		(850,000,000)	(850,000,000)	(+850,000,000)	
Section 8 relocation assistance		(594,000,000)	(343,000,000)	(+343,000,000)	(-251,000,000)
Prevention of resident displacement	4,640,000,000			-4,640,000,000	
Expiring section 8 contracts	(3,600,000,000)			(-3,600,000,000)	
Section 8 amendments	(850,000,000)			(-850,000,000)	
Section 8 relocation assistance	(190,000,000)			(-190,000,000)	
Transfer from recaptures	(50,000,000)			(-50,000,000)	
Subtotal	(4,690,000,000)	(10,676,000,000)	(10,393,000,000)	(+5,703,000,000)	(-283,000,000)
Annual contributions (rescission)		-855,000,000	-565,000,000	-565,000,000	+290,000,000
Rescission (P.L. 105-18)	-3,650,000,000			+3,650,000,000	
Public housing capital fund		2,500,000,000	2,500,000,000	+2,500,000,000	
Public housing operating fund		2,900,000,000	2,900,000,000	+2,900,000,000	
Preserving existing housing investment	5,750,000,000			-5,750,000,000	
Public housing operating subsidies	(2,900,000,000)			(-2,900,000,000)	
Public housing modernization	(2,500,000,000)			(-2,500,000,000)	
Preservation	(350,000,000)			(-350,000,000)	
Rescission of recaptures	-150,000,000			+150,000,000	
Prepayment authority	2,000,000			-2,000,000	
Supplemental (P.L. 105-18)	3,500,000			-3,500,000	
Subtotal	(5,605,500,000)	(5,400,000,000)	(5,400,000,000)	(-205,500,000)	
Drug elimination grants for low-income housing	290,000,000	290,000,000	290,000,000		
Revitalization of severely distressed public housing (HOPE VI)	550,000,000	524,000,000	524,000,000	-26,000,000	
Homeownership and opportunity for people everywhere grants (HOPE grants) (transfer out) (P.L. 105-18)	(-30,200,000)			(+30,200,000)	
Native American housing block grant		485,000,000	650,000,000	+650,000,000	+165,000,000
Indian housing loan guarantee fund program account	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000		
(Limitation on guaranteed loans)	(36,900,000)	(36,900,000)	(36,900,000)		
Development of additional new subsidized housing	1,039,000,000			-1,039,000,000	
Housing for the elderly	(645,000,000)			(-645,000,000)	
Housing for the disabled	(194,000,000)			(-194,000,000)	
Indian housing development	(200,000,000)			(-200,000,000)	
Capacity Building for Community Development and Affordable Housing					
National community development initiative (by transfer)	(30,200,000)			(-30,200,000)	
Community Planning and Development					
Housing opportunities for persons with AIDS	171,000,000	204,000,000	204,000,000	+33,000,000	
Transfer from recaptures	(25,000,000)			(-25,000,000)	
Community development block grants	4,600,000,000	4,600,000,000	4,600,000,000		
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 105-18)	250,000,000			-250,000,000	
Emergency appropriations, FY 1998 (P.L. 105-18)	250,000,000			-250,000,000	
Section 108 loan guarantees:					
(Limitation on guaranteed loans)	(1,500,000,000)	(1,261,000,000)	(1,261,000,000)	(-239,000,000)	
Credit subsidy	31,750,000	29,000,000	29,000,000	-2,750,000	
Administrative expenses	675,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	+325,000	
Brownfields redevelopment		25,000,000			-25,000,000
HOME investment partnerships program	1,400,000,000	1,309,000,000	1,500,000,000	+100,000,000	+191,000,000
Supportive housing program (rescission)		-6,000,000	-6,000,000	-6,000,000	
Shelter plus care (rescission)		-4,000,000	-4,000,000	-4,000,000	
Homelesss assistance grants	823,000,000	823,000,000	823,000,000		
Youthbuild		30,000,000			-30,000,000
Housing counseling assistance		23,000,000			-23,000,000
Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities		100,000,000			-100,000,000
Total, Selected housing programs (net)	16,003,925,000	23,657,000,000	23,842,000,000	+7,838,075,000	+185,000,000
Housing Programs					
Housing for special populations		474,000,000	839,000,000	+839,000,000	+365,000,000
Housing for the elderly		(300,000,000)	(645,000,000)	(+645,000,000)	(+345,000,000)
Housing for the disabled		(174,000,000)	(194,000,000)	(+194,000,000)	(+20,000,000)
Rental housing assistance:					
Rescission of budget authority, indefinite		-125,000,000	-125,000,000	-125,000,000	
(Limitation on annual contract authority, indefinite)	(-2,000,000)			(+2,000,000)	
Federal Housing Administration					
FHA - Mutual mortgage insurance program account:					
(Limitation on guaranteed loans)	(110,000,000,000)	(110,000,000,000)	(110,000,000,000)		
(Limitation on direct loans)	(200,000,000)	(200,000,000)	(200,000,000)		
Administrative expenses	350,595,000	333,421,000	333,421,000	-17,174,000	
Offsetting receipts	-350,595,000	-333,421,000	-333,421,000	+17,174,000	

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL (H.R. 2158)—Continued

	FY 1997 Enacted	FY 1998 Estimate	Bill	Bill compared with Enacted	Bill compared with Estimate
FHA - General and special risk program account:					
Program costs	85,000,000	81,000,000	81,000,000	-4,000,000	
(Limitation on guaranteed loans)	(17,400,000,000)	(17,400,000,000)	(17,400,000,000)		
(Limitation on direct loans)	(120,000,000)	(120,000,000)	(120,000,000)		
Administrative expenses	207,470,000	222,305,000	222,305,000	+14,835,000	
Subsidy - multifamily	-18,000,000	-18,000,000	-18,000,000		
Subsidy - single family	-64,000,000	-64,000,000	-64,000,000		
Subsidy - Title I	-25,000,000	-25,000,000	-25,000,000		
Total, Federal Housing Administration	185,470,000	196,305,000	196,305,000	+10,835,000	
Government National Mortgage Association					
Guarantees of mortgage-backed securities loan guarantee program account:					
(Limitation on guaranteed loans)	(110,000,000,000)	(130,000,000,000)	(130,000,000,000)	(+20,000,000,000)	
Administrative expenses	9,383,000	9,383,000	9,383,000		
Offsetting receipts	-218,000,000	-204,000,000	-204,000,000	+14,000,000	
Policy Development and Research					
Research and technology	34,000,000	39,000,000	39,000,000	+5,000,000	
Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity					
Fair housing activities	30,000,000	39,000,000	30,000,000		-9,000,000
Management and Administration					
Salaries and expenses	420,000,000	451,000,000	451,000,000	+31,000,000	
(By transfer, limitation on FHA corporate funds)	(546,782,000)	(544,443,000)	(544,443,000)	(-2,339,000)	
(By transfer, GNMA)	(9,383,000)	(9,383,000)	(9,383,000)		
(By transfer, Community Planning & Development)	(675,000)	(1,000,000)	(1,000,000)	(+325,000)	
Total, Salaries and expenses	(976,840,000)	(1,005,826,000)	(1,005,826,000)	(+28,986,000)	
Office of Inspector General	36,567,000	36,567,000	45,567,000	+9,000,000	+9,000,000
(By transfer, limitation on FHA corporate funds)	(11,283,000)	(11,283,000)	(11,283,000)		
(By transfer from Drug Elimination Grants)	(5,000,000)	(10,000,000)	(10,000,000)	(+5,000,000)	
Total, Office of Inspector General	(52,850,000)	(57,850,000)	(66,850,000)	(+14,000,000)	(+9,000,000)
Office of federal housing enterprise oversight	15,500,000	16,312,000	16,312,000	+812,000	
Offsetting receipts	-15,500,000	-16,312,000	-16,312,000	-812,000	
Administrative Provisions					
Sec. 203 - FHA Assignment Reform, 1997	-128,000,000			+128,000,000	
Sec. 204 - Multifamily property disposition - FHA fund	-80,000,000			+80,000,000	
Sec. 210 - financing adjustment	464,442			-464,442	
Sec. 212 - demonstration	10,000,000			-10,000,000	
Total, administrative provisions	-197,535,558			+197,535,558	
Total, title II, Dept of Housing & Urban Development (net)	16,303,809,442	24,573,255,000	25,123,255,000	+8,819,445,558	+550,000,000
Appropriations	(19,453,809,442)	(25,563,255,000)	(25,823,255,000)	(+6,369,445,558)	(+260,000,000)
Rescissions	(-3,650,000,000)	(-990,000,000)	(-700,000,000)	(+2,950,000,000)	(+290,000,000)
Emergency appropriations	(250,000,000)			(-250,000,000)	
Emergency appropriations, FY 1998	(250,000,000)			(-250,000,000)	
(Limitation on annual contract authority, indefinite)	(-2,000,000)			(+2,000,000)	
(Limitation on guaranteed loans)	(238,900,000,000)	(258,661,000,000)	(258,661,000,000)	(+19,761,000,000)	
(Limitation on corporate funds)	(573,123,000)	(576,109,000)	(576,109,000)	(+2,986,000)	
TITLE III					
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES					
American Battle Monuments Commission					
Salaries and expenses	22,265,000	23,897,000	26,897,000	+4,632,000	+3,000,000
Department of the Treasury					
Community Development Financial Institutions					
Community development financial institutions fund program account	50,000,000	125,000,000	125,000,000	+75,000,000	
Consumer Product Safety Commission					
Salaries and expenses	42,500,000	45,000,000	44,000,000	+1,500,000	-1,000,000
Corporation for National and Community Service					
National and community service programs operating expenses	400,500,000	546,500,000	400,500,000		-146,000,000
Office of Inspector General	2,000,000	2,500,000	2,000,000		-500,000
Total	402,500,000	549,000,000	402,500,000		-146,500,000
Court of Veterans Appeals					
Salaries and expenses	9,229,000	9,380,000	9,319,000	+90,000	-61,000
Department of Defense - Civil					
Cemeterial Expenses, Army					
Salaries and expenses	11,600,000	11,815,000	11,815,000	+215,000	

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL (H.R. 2158)—Continued

	FY 1997 Enacted	FY 1998 Estimate	Bill	Bill compared with Enacted	Bill compared with Estimate
Environmental Protection Agency					
Science and Technology	552,000,000	614,269,400	656,223,000	+104,223,000	+41,953,600
Transfer from Hazardous Substance Superfund	35,000,000	39,755,900	35,000,000		-4,755,900
Subtotal, Science and Technology	587,000,000	654,025,300	691,223,000	+104,223,000	+37,197,700
Environmental Programs and Management	1,752,221,000	1,887,590,900	1,763,352,000	+11,131,000	-124,238,900
Office of Inspector General	28,500,000	28,500,000	28,501,000	+1,000	+1,000
Transfer from Hazardous Substance Superfund	11,000,000	11,641,300	11,641,000	+641,000	-300
Transfer from Leaking Underground Storage Tanks	577,000			-577,000	
Subtotal, OIG	40,077,000	40,141,300	40,142,000	+65,000	+700
Buildings and facilities	87,220,000	141,420,000	182,120,000	+94,900,000	+40,700,000
Hazardous Substance Superfund	1,294,245,000	2,094,245,000	1,500,699,000	+206,454,000	-593,546,000
Delay of obligation	100,000,000			-100,000,000	
Transfer to Office of Inspector General	-11,000,000	-11,641,300	-11,641,000	-641,000	+300
Transfer to Science and Technology	-35,000,000	-39,755,900	-35,000,000		+4,755,900
Subtotal, Hazardous Substance Superfund	1,348,245,000	2,042,847,800	1,454,058,000	+105,813,000	-588,789,800
Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund	60,000,000	71,210,700	60,000,000		-11,210,700
Transfer to Office of Inspector General	-577,000			+577,000	
(Limitation on administrative expenses)	(7,000,000)		(7,000,000)		(+7,000,000)
Subtotal, LUST	59,423,000	71,210,700	60,000,000	+577,000	-11,210,700
Oil spill response	15,000,000	15,000,000	15,000,000		
(Limitation on administrative expenses)	(8,000,000)		(8,000,000)		(+8,000,000)
State and Tribal Assistance Grants	2,236,000,000	2,043,000,000	2,275,925,000	+39,925,000	+232,925,000
Categorical grants	674,207,000	750,257,000	750,257,000	+76,050,000	
Subtotal, STAG	2,910,207,000	2,793,257,000	3,026,182,000	+115,975,000	+232,925,000
Working capital fund	(101,526,000)	(101,000,000)	(101,000,000)	(-526,000)	
Total, EPA	6,799,393,000	7,645,493,000	7,232,077,000	+432,684,000	-413,416,000
Executive Office of the President					
Office of Science and Technology Policy	4,932,000	4,932,000	4,932,000		
Council on Environmental Quality and Office of Environmental Quality	2,436,000	3,020,000	2,506,000	+70,000	-514,000
Total	7,368,000	7,952,000	7,438,000	+70,000	-514,000
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation					
Office of Inspector General (transfer)		(34,365,000)	(34,365,000)	(+34,365,000)	
Federal Emergency Management Agency					
Disaster relief	1,320,000,000	370,000,000	500,000,000	-820,000,000	+130,000,000
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 105-18)	3,300,000,000			-3,300,000,000	
Emergency approp (transfer out) (P.L. 105-18)	(-20,000,000)			(+20,000,000)	
Disaster assistance direct loan program account:					
State share loan	1,385,000	1,495,000	1,495,000	+110,000	
(Limitation on direct loans)	(25,000,000)	(25,000,000)	(25,000,000)		
Administrative expenses	548,000	341,000	341,000	-207,000	
Community disaster loans (by transfer) (emergency)	(20,000,000)			(-20,000,000)	
Salaries and expenses	170,500,000	171,773,000	171,773,000	+1,273,000	
Office of Inspector General	4,673,000	4,803,000	4,803,000	+130,000	
Emergency management planning and assistance	218,701,000	202,146,000	321,646,000	+102,945,000	+119,500,000
Emergency food and shelter program	100,000,000	100,000,000	100,000,000		
National Flood Insurance Fund (limitation on administrative expenses):					
Salaries and expenses	(20,981,000)	(21,610,000)	(21,610,000)	(+629,000)	
Flood mitigation	(78,464,000)	(78,464,000)	(78,464,000)		
Working capital fund	(16,816,000)			(-16,816,000)	
Administrative provision: REP savings	-12,251,000	-12,000,000	-12,000,000	+251,000	
Total, Federal Emergency Management Agency	5,103,556,000	838,558,000	1,088,058,000	-4,015,498,000	+249,500,000
General Services Administration					
Consumer Information Center Fund	2,260,000	2,119,000	2,419,000	+159,000	+300,000
Department of Health and Human Services					
Office of Consumer Affairs	1,500,000	1,800,000		-1,500,000	-1,800,000

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL (H.R. 2158)—Continued

	FY 1997 Enacted	FY 1998 Estimate	Bill	Bill compared with Enacted	Bill compared with Estimate
National Aeronautics and Space Administration					
Human space flight	5,362,900,000	5,326,500,000	5,426,500,000	+63,600,000	+100,000,000
Science, aeronautics and technology	5,767,100,000	5,642,000,000	5,690,000,000	-77,100,000	+48,000,000
Mission support	2,562,200,000	2,513,200,000	2,513,200,000	-49,000,000	.....
Office of Inspector General	17,000,000	18,300,000	18,300,000	+1,300,000	.....
Administrative provision: Transfer authority	(177,000,000)	.....	(150,000,000)	(-27,000,000)	(+150,000,000)
Total, NASA	13,709,200,000	13,500,000,000	13,648,000,000	-61,200,000	+148,000,000
National Credit Union Administration					
Central liquidity facility:					
(Limitation on direct loans)	(600,000,000)	(600,000,000)	(600,000,000)	.....	.....
(Limitation on administrative expenses, corporate funds)	(560,000)	(203,000)	(203,000)	(-357,000)	.....
Revolving loan program	1,000,000	.....	.....	-1,000,000	.....
National Science Foundation					
Research and related activities	2,432,000,000	2,514,700,000	2,537,700,000	+105,700,000	+23,000,000
Major research equipment	80,000,000	85,000,000	175,000,000	+95,000,000	+90,000,000
Education and human resources	619,000,000	625,500,000	632,500,000	+13,500,000	+7,000,000
Salaries and expenses	134,310,000	136,950,000	136,950,000	+2,640,000	.....
Office of Inspector General	4,690,000	4,850,000	4,850,000	+160,000	.....
Total, NSF	3,270,000,000	3,367,000,000	3,487,000,000	+217,000,000	+120,000,000
Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation					
Payment to the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation	49,900,000	50,000,000	70,000,000	+20,100,000	+20,000,000
Selective Service System					
Salaries and expenses	22,930,000	23,919,000	23,413,000	+483,000	-506,000
Total, title III, Independent agencies	29,505,201,000	26,200,933,000	26,177,936,000	-3,327,265,000	-22,997,000
(Limitation on administrative expenses)	(114,445,000)	(100,074,000)	(115,074,000)	(+629,000)	(+15,000,000)
(Limitation on direct loans)	(625,000,000)	(625,000,000)	(625,000,000)	.....	.....
(Limitation on corporate funds)	(560,000)	(203,000)	(203,000)	(-357,000)	.....
Grand total (net)	85,895,503,442	90,990,338,000	91,660,767,000	+5,765,263,558	+670,429,000
Appropriations	(85,745,503,442)	(91,980,338,000)	(92,360,767,000)	(+6,615,263,558)	(+380,429,000)
Rescissions	(-3,650,000,000)	(-990,000,000)	(-700,000,000)	(+2,950,000,000)	(+290,000,000)
Emergency appropriations (net)	(3,550,000,000)	.....	.....	(-3,550,000,000)	.....
(By transfer)	(82,170,564,442)	(91,024,764,000)	(91,695,193,000)	(+9,524,628,558)	(+670,429,000)
(Limitation on administrative expenses)	(114,445,000)	(100,074,000)	(115,074,000)	(+629,000)	(+15,000,000)
(Limitation on annual contract authority, indefinite)	(-2,000,000)	.....	.....	(+2,000,000)	.....
(Limitation on direct loans)	(985,095,000)	(984,551,000)	(984,551,000)	(-544,000)	.....
(Limitation on guaranteed loans)	(238,900,000,000)	(258,661,000,000)	(258,661,000,000)	(+19,761,000,000)	.....
(Limitation on corporate funds)	(573,683,000)	(576,312,000)	(576,312,000)	(+2,629,000)	.....
Total amounts in this bill	85,895,503,442	90,990,338,000	91,660,767,000	+5,765,263,558	+670,429,000
Scorekeeping adjustments	-3,832,100,000	32,100,000	32,100,000	+3,864,200,000	.....
Total mandatory and discretionary	82,063,403,442	91,022,438,000	91,692,867,000	+9,629,463,558	+670,429,000
Mandatory	21,187,993,000	21,542,804,000	21,542,804,000	+354,811,000	.....
Discretionary: General purposes:					
Defense	125,930,000	128,919,000	129,413,000	+3,483,000	+494,000
Nondefense	60,749,480,442	69,350,715,000	70,020,650,000	+9,271,169,558	+669,935,000
Total, General purposes	60,875,410,442	69,479,634,000	70,150,063,000	+9,274,652,558	+670,429,000
Total, Discretionary	60,875,410,442	69,479,634,000	70,150,063,000	+9,274,652,558	+670,429,000

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

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do likewise. I could not make a similar statement last year or the year before that for the VA–HUD appropriation bills. I am pleased that I can support this legislation, and I am pleased with the circumstances that have made this possible.

First, I wanted to take a moment to thank the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the chairman, for the open and inclusive way that he has approached the drafting of this bill. Both the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and his able staff have been extremely courteous and helpful during the hearing process and especially preparing for the markup of this bill in subcommittee.

I want to thank the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] publicly for the comity which has been restored to the operation of this subcommittee and for the pleasure it is to work with him in crafting this bill.

While I cannot wholeheartedly embrace every recommendation contained in the bill and report, I think overall the bill represents a fair balance for the diverse and worthwhile programs which it funds. I think the administration currently holds a similar opinion. In the last statement of administration policy, there is no mention of a possible veto for the bill as it now stands.

However, the statement continues that if an amendment is adopted to eliminate funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service, or AmeriCorps, a veto is likely. The administration is already deeply concerned that the committee's recommendations for AmeriCorps is $146 million below their request and does not provide for the new America Reads initiative.

An amendment was offered in committee and may be renewed in the House to eliminate AmeriCorps funding. I sincerely hope that amendment is not offered or, if offered, is defeated. We all know how strongly the President believes in this program. He has fought hard for it in the past, and I am sure he will continue to do so.

After some understandable startup issues, the program appears to be operating much more smoothly. Reforms have been made, costs are coming down, and results are being achieved. So I would hope that we would avoid the histrionics and posturing and the tired old arguments about AmeriCorps and pass a bill that the President will sign.

As I said, all and all, this is a fairly well balanced bill, one that is worthy of the Members' support. In notable contrast to the experience during the last Congress, this bill contains virtually no legislative provisions. There are no antienvironmental riders, unlike the score of such controversial riders 2 years ago, and there is no major rewrite of housing law as there was last year.

The combination of the subcommittee's section 602(b) allocations and the provision in the budget resolution providing an additional $9.2 billion in budget authority and associated outlays for the section 8 contract renewal situation has allowed the subcommittee the flexibility to craft a bill with many positive aspects. In particular, the bill provides the full amount requested for renewal of all expiring section 8 housing assistance contracts. It also provides the full administration request for operation and modernization of public housing and for revitalization of severely distressed public housing.

Further, the bill includes substantial increases over last year's level for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, two relatively small programs that are nevertheless very important to economic development in cities and rural areas alike.

The measure also maintains funding for housing for the elderly and disabled and provides the full amount requested for homeless assistance programs. It also gets the new native American housing block grant program off to a good start by providing a $165 million increase over the levels spent on comparable programs this year.

I do wish that we could have done more in some areas. I especially wish we could have provided the 50,000 new section 8 housing certificates proposed by the administration. This will be the third year in a row without any additional units of assisted housing. The need for affordable housing for low-income families is growing, while the supply is shrinking.

I also wish we could have funded the administration's proposal for grants to promote the redevelopment of brownfields, that is, former industrial properties with moderate environmental contamination. The problem of brownfields is one of the most serious difficulties hampering redevelopment in many inner cities.

I also wish we could have provided the requested increase in the Superfund Program to speed the cleanup of contaminated sites across the country. There appears to be a considerable difference of opinion regarding the wording of the budget agreement as it relates to Superfund.

The Republican leadership says the agreement means ''enactment of comprehensive Superfund reform legislation.'' OMB Director Frank Raines has stated, and I quote him, ''We do not agree that the additional Superfund cleanup funding agreed to in the budget agreement is contingent on any prior legislation, much less a comprehensive reform bill.''

Because there has not been any movement yet with regard to Superfund policies, I believe the committee's action not to include the requested increase at this time is understandable. However, in effect, by taking the extra Superfund money and spending it on other programs and activities instead of keeping a reserve against the day the Superfund policies are worked out, I fear that we have prejudiced the program unfairly. I doubt that we have heard the last from the administration on the additional Superfund spending.

I also wish we could have provided additional funding for veterans' medical care. Although increases above the President's request are recommended for NASA, the National Science Foundation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, veterans' medical care receives only the requested amount.

If the proceeds of the third party reimbursement proposal are realized in the amounts estimated, and if the legislation to enable individual medical centers to keep such funds is enacted, the crunch will be eased somewhat. However, there is some concern that the estimated level of third party reimbursements may be overly optimistic. Concerning veterans' medical care funding, Mr. Chairman, I have received a letter signed by all the Democrats on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I quote in part from their letter, which is dated June 25:

> As you know, the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 1998 did not request a level of appropriations expected to be needed to meet the cost of veterans' health care. We disagreed with this approach when it was initially proposed and we continue to disagree with the President's proposal today. As our veterans age and their health-related needs increase, this is surely not the time to provide an appropriation for VA which is insufficient to meet the health care needs of veterans.

I share their concerns. Even with the additional funding from third party reimbursements, veterans' medical care is not sufficient to sustain the current services level, much less provide for any increase in patient work load.

In sum, Mr. Chairman, while I have some concerns about the bill, on the whole it is a bill which we should support. It is a good bill now, and I hope that it can be made even better by the time we go to conference and we send it to the President. Again, I express my appreciation to both the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the chairman, and his staff for the excellent cooperation that we have received in crafting this bill.

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

□ 1900

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WHITFIELD].

Mr. WHITFIELD. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of this bill. I commend the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTON], the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] for

the fair and equitable manner in which they have sorted out the competing priorities of the agencies funded by this proposal. I particularly want to express my appreciation for the commitment this appropriation makes to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Department of Veterans Affairs plays a vital role for the thousands of veterans in America. I want to share with my colleagues the story of Mr. Joe Atterbury of Hansen, Kentucky. As a 17-year-old in Vietnam, Joe, like many soldiers of that era, experienced many traumatic events, some so traumatic that I really cannot discuss them.

After serving in Vietnam, Joe returned home to western Kentucky, got a job, married and began raising a family. He worked hard as his family grew, with the addition of each of his six children. But by 1972, he began to have serious doubts about his ability to work and support his family. There was something affecting Joe Atterbury. He turned to the Department of Veterans Affairs for help seeking disability compensation. Seven years later, after several appeals, Joe was denied his claim. The VA found no cause for his inability to hold a job. He continued to work, off and on, trying to make ends meet for his family and it was very difficult. But in 1991 with the help of a caring physician, Joe refiled his claim.

I am pleased to say today, with the help of the Department of Veterans Affairs, after 25 years of denials and frustrations, Joe Atterbury was awarded a disability claim in excess of $100,000 for the posttraumatic stress disorder he had suffered since 1972.

The bill before us today represents a modest increase for veterans benefits, health administration, construction projects and other programs. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the bill and to renew their commitment to ensuring that all American veterans will find the help and the hope they deserve as did Joe Atterbury.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4½ minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GONZALEZ], the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 2158, a bill making appropriations in 1998 for VA, HUD and the independent agencies. Although I continue to be deeply troubled by the severe budgetary limitations on domestic discretionary spending, particularly for the most vulnerable and working families in future years, I applaud the Committee on Appropriations for the work that they have done this year.

H.R. 2158 is devoid of noxious legislative riders and most authorizing language that should be developed by the Committee on Banking and Financial Services. Indeed I am hopeful that even the few housing provisions will not be necessary here and that the Congress will enact real and fair public housing reform this year. On one of the problems of the last appropriations bill, the very complicated issue of section 8 portfolio restructuring, I am hopeful that the budget reconciliation conference will provide the legislative framework for reviewing section 8 contracts. The Committee on Appropriations took the most critical step in this bill. H.R. 2158 provides sufficient funding for all renewals coming due in 1998. I applaud them for their work and foresight.

Now the authorizers must do their work in reconciliation. We are well on our way to balancing all the disparate interests of the tenants, owners, communities, and the Federal Government in preserving as much affordable housing as possible, reducing the costs to the Federal Government, reasonably protecting the financial investments of the owners and protecting the tenants from unnecessary displacement. We thank them for making our job a little easier.

Mr. Chairman, that having been said, there are two glaring deficiencies in this bill. For the third year in a row, there is absolutely no money for incremental section 8 housing assistance, even in the face of continued, mounting evidence that greater numbers of very low income families and the working poor are finding it ever more difficult to find affordable housing. Some 5.3 million Americans have worst-case housing needs. That number grows by leaps and by bounds. I find it unconscionable that this refuses to fund any new section 8 assistance in this proviso.

The bill also fails to provide funding for preservation. Since its inception, 751 properties with more than 90,000 units have received preservation funding. Another 477 properties with about 56,000 units costing $1.6 billion are ready and waiting for preservation funding. The 1997 appropriations will take care of only about 58 of the approved preservation units, or plans, but that leaves more than 400 properties where owners or nonprofit and community groups that wish to preserve affordable housing will not be funded. Affordable housing will be lost.

Mr. Chairman, we are building precious few new affordable housing units. We simply cannot afford to lose this scarce and precious affordable housing resource.

On balance, however, this bill is about as good as we can get under our severe budget constraints. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2158.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN], an outstanding member of our committee.

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

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in support of the bill.

Mr. Chairman, I would first like to thank the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES]) and the subcommittee staff for their guidance throughout the year.

This bill contains funding for many vital programs for our Nation's veterans, for protection and preservation of our environment, for meeting the housing needs for our elderly and disabled, and for scientific research and discovery.

Nearly half of this bill's funding of $40.4 billion supports the Department of Veterans Affairs efforts to provide health care, housing and benefits. As a member of this subcommittee, I am pleased that this bill provides full funding for the VA health care system.

In addition to veterans funding, H.R. 2158 provides funding for the section 811 program, housing for people with disabilities at $194 million, $20 million more than the President requested, and for the section 202 program, housing for older Americans, the number is $645 million, $300 million more than the President's request. Both of these programs are working extremely well at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and I am pleased that the committee provided increased funding for both of them.

This bill also continues a set-aside program that the committee started last year to meet housing needs for people with disabilities. The committee has again included, and I commend the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] in particular, $50 million for tenant based rental assistance to ensure decent, safe and affordable housing in communities for low income people with disabilities.

Finally, this bill includes more funding for Superfund cleanups. Specifically, $1.5 billion is included for the program, $106 million more than last year's funding.

Mr. Chairman, there is a desperate need for Superfund reform and change. First, the program needs to be reauthorized. Secondly, it needs to promote actual cleanups based on sound science, not the rhetoric of political science. Polluters need to pay and steps need to be taken to ensure that public or private funds are used for environmental cleanup, not to sustain endless litigation.

Mr. Chairman, I am proud to be a member of this committee and I support the bill.

This bill contains funding for many vital programs for our Nation's veterans, for protection and preservation of our environment, for meeting the housing needs for our elderly and disabled and for scientific research and discovery.

In total this bill provides over $91 billion for the Departments of Veteran Affairs, Housing and Urban Development and 17 independent agencies and offices. Nearly half of the bill's funding $40.4 billion, supports the Department of Veterans Affairs' efforts to provide health care, housing and benefits.

As a member of this subcommittee I am pleased that this bill provides full funding for

the VA Health Care System. However, I remain concerned over the way the VA has chosen to implement the Veterans Integrated Network System [VISN]. My concern lies with the fact that veterans' health care funding has increased each year for the last 2 years by some $400 million yet some area networks are not seeing any increases and in fact are receiving cuts in funding and services.

In testimony before our subcommittee this year VA Secretary Jesse Brown told the subcommittee that no services will be reduced under the VISN proposal. In spite of this promise, the VA continues to reduce the number of veteran services to VA hospitals in New Jersey and veterans are beginning to believe that the Secretary's promise is meaningless.

During subcommittee markup I offered report language, accepted by the subcommittee, which would delay by 4 months the cuts to specific veterans' networks until the General Accounting Office has reviewed the new system. This review would determine if funding is being equitably distributed and if services to our veterans are adequate. I believe that this provision is a fair way of assessing the new VA plans to distribute these important health care funds.

In addition to veterans funding, H.R. 2158 provides funding for the section 811 program, housing for people with disabilities, at $194 million, $20 million more than the President requested and the section 202 program, housing for older Americans, at $645 million, $300 million more than the President's request. Both of these programs are working extremely well at the Department of Housing and Urban Development and I am pleased that the committee provided increased funding for them.

This bill also continues a set-aside program that the committee started last year to meet housing needs for people with disabilities. The committee has again included $50 million for tenant-based rental assistance to ensure decent, safe, and affordable housing in communities for low income people with disabilities.

Finally, this bill includes more funding for Superfund clean-ups. Specifically, $1.5 billion is included for the program, $106 million more than last year's funding.

There is a desperate need for Superfund reform and change. First, the program needs to be re-authorized and second it needs to promote actual clean-ups based on sound science, not the rhetoric of political science. Polluters need to pay and steps need to be taken to assure that public or private funds are used for environmental clean-up, not to sustain endless litigation.

Mr. Chairman, I am proud to be a member of this committee and I support this bill.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK], a very distinguished member of this subcommittee, very hardworking and very knowledgeable.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I thank the leadership of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the chairman, and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], the ranking member. I am pleased to have served on this subcommittee.

I think that the work that was done by this subcommittee was surely a bipartisan kind of effort, where both Democrats and Republicans worked well for the benefit of the people of this country. I want to congratulate them and their staffs for the work on this fine bill.

This particular bill will not do everything for everybody, Mr. Chairman, but what it does, it does a lot for people in need to improve the housing in this country. It is a responsible compromise that merits the support of every Member of this House. I think there is something in this bill, Mr. Chairman, that every Member of the House can go back home and say, ''This is what this subcommittee did and we are very proud of it.''

This has been a very tight budget year. Each of us is aware of that. The 602(b) appropriation is not as high as many of us thought it would be. Of course in the Senate it is probably much lower. So I think this committee did an outstanding job. They prepared for the renewal of expiring section 8 contracts, increased funding for EPA research which is so direly needed, the Superfund cleanups, housing for people with AIDS, community development financial institutions and a 40-percent increase for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. They really went out and reached out to those groups that really needed help and those programs that have been working well.

This bill also continues the Nation's commitment to space exploration and research, including development of the space station as well as the AmeriCorps national service program.

I particularly thank the chairman for working with the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN] and myself in increasing funding for the section 202 housing program for the elderly and for working with us on increasing funding for the self-help home ownership opportunity program. The gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the chairman and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], the ranking member, were very receptive to ideas that would be workable for the people of this country as far as veterans housing and independent agencies. Many groups like Habitat for Humanity that our chairman so graciously decided that we would go out and help them, this was a show to this country and to those of us on that subcommittee that we not only deal with projects and with numbers but we deal with human lives in trying to rebuild housing for people in need.

Another thing in my district, like Centro Campesino dealing with the Mexicans in that area who are in so much dire need of housing. The chairman provided for those kinds of people to make possible the home ownership, Mr. Chairman, for people who perhaps would never get that opportunity. While this bill is not perfect, I want to again congratulate the chairman and the ranking member. It is a responsible bill and it is supportable. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. KNOLLENBERG], a member of the subcommittee.

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

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Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of the bill. I want to thank the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], who has done an outstanding job along with, of course, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], the ranking member. I think the two of them forged a relationship that brings about some bipartisanship that frankly we need in this body, and I applaud both of them for that.

As we began this appropriations process this year, the biggest unanswered question was whether we could fashion a good bill acceptable to a bipartisan majority. I would say that this subcommittee has done just that in a definitive fashion. This appropriations bill is unique in that it covers an array of diverse agencies ranging from AmeriCorps, to the environment, to space exploration. It is not easy to bring such a wide range of interests together into a single bill. In fact, it is one of the most difficult legislative juggling acts that my colleagues will ever encounter in this body, and again the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the ranking member, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], deserve a lot of credit.

I believe that H.R. 2158 strikes a unique balance that addresses the needs of our veterans' housing programs, the environment and special needs of space exploration. Veterans funding is increased by more than 330 million, sending, I believe, a clear message of continued support for those who risk their lives for our country. We preserved funding for NASA's core mission, and in light of the recent success of Sojourner's mission to Mars, I think we should applaud what has been done and exciting to see some of the results of that spending. While we increased EPA funding to protect our environment, I have some grave concerns over EPA's use of these funds to implement the proposed new clean air standards. Much of the debate surrounding this issue has become emotional, polarizing, rather than constructive and innovative. Without question, I believe the administration is attempting to impose costly new regulations on our communities, workers, businesses and families without anything more than a shred of concrete evidence that the new standards will help.

A part of me would really like to see this bill separated in the fashion so we could look at it, analyze it and apply some cost-benefit analysis and some risk analysis to this whole process. I do not believe that is the case.

But in conclusion, the bill before us is a good bill. I am very sure, very sure that every Member in this body could

find something wrong with it, and probably has, but on the basis of what has been presented I believe it is a good bill and, frankly, if they can find something wrong with it, that is the nature of the process down here on the floor. We can all find something wrong with whatever comes through in the way of a product.

But I again want to take a moment to applaud the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the staff who have done an outstanding job, again the ranking member, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], and I particularly wanted to thank Mr. STOKES for his working with me on an issue that in times passed has been a bit of a hang-up, but it has come about, I think, where we have reached a conclusion that we have agreed that we can agree on this issue.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

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

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to express my appreciation to the gentleman for his kind remarks and in the same turn that the matter which the gentleman and I were able to work out satisfactorily to both of us I think is one that also demonstrated the bipartisan manner in which the gentleman and I have approached matters relating to this committee, and it has been a pleasure to serve and work with him.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES]. I appreciate his comments.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. EVANS].

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the ranking member, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] for yielding this time to me.

Mr. Chairman, I prepared an amendment to this appropriations bill that would have prohibited the VA from using fiscal year 1998 dollars to contract with businesses that have serious and repeated violations of Federal labor and safety laws. I will not, however, offer my amendment at this time. The Committee on Rules did not agree to waive possible points of order against it. But I want to remind Members that our Nation's Federal contracting laws are in need of much reform.

The amendment I had hoped to offer this evening is similar to H.R. 1624, the Federal Procurement and Assistance Integrity Act that I introduced during this Congress. The amendment was narrowly tailored, however, so it would only apply to VA appropriations during the next fiscal year. It would have prohibited the VA from contracting with businesses with a history of serious and repeated labor and safety law violations. The amendment would have helped ensure that the VA only does business with entities that comply with the laws that protect America's working men and women from unfair working practices and unsafe workplace conditions.

Beverly Enterprises is one of the largest nursing home operations in the United States. It has an extremely poor safety record and a longstanding record of vindictive and illegal labor practices. The GAO has labeled Beverly as one of the most serious labor violators among our Nation's Federal contractors. The U.S. District Court in Pennsylvania recently stated that Beverly's labor law practices have been ''selectively geared to destroy or at least impede communication among union members.'' On the health and safety front Beverly has repeatedly refused to allow investigators from OSHA to visit their facilities, even when the inspectors produce a warrant.

These facts speak for themselves. It is time to stop pouring taxpayer dollars down the corporate coffers of the Federal contractors who play fast and loose with the employees' rights and jeopardize the lives of American workers for the sake of the bottom line.

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to consider this kind of contracting reform as we take up future appropriations bills in this Congress.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. QUINN] for purposes of a colloquy.

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Chairman, I thank the chairman of the subcommittee for his courtesies today.

Mr. Chairman, as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Benefits, I am very concerned about the gradual decline in the overall appearance at our Arlington National Cemetery. The cemetery staff does a marvelous job, Mr. Chairman, of trying to keep the Nation's premier veterans' cemetery up to the standards of a National shrine that it is, but relatively flat budgets and a growing workload make that more and more difficult every year.

For instance, in 1992, Arlington employed a staff of 140 and interred 4,352. Five years later in 1997, the cemetery interred 5,400 with a staff of only 117. We know construction funds are also lagging, and these are the funds that are needed to replace an aging infrastructure such as old buildings and roads and to open new areas for burial. In 1992, Arlington received $4.8 million; this year's budget requests only $2.4 million, and clearly, Mr. Chairman, if this continues, our standards will not be met.

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

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Veterans Benefits is right on target. The gentleman from New York [Mr. QUINN] and I have discussed this matter on other occasions. Arlington National Cemetery holds a very special place in the hearts of the Nation, and I think it is important that Arlington be maintained at the highest standards. I am very aware that the cemetery's maintenance backlog has been growing.

Mr. Chairman, does the gentleman have a proposal?

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Chairman, I believe that they can probably absorb several millions of dollars worth of improvements, but the budget pressures that we are under, and others have worked so hard, I was going to offer an amendment to add $250,000 to the cemetery's budget. I appreciate the gentleman's leadership and respect the hard work of the subcommittee.

So I would merely request that during the conference with the other body the gentleman from California seek to add that $250,000 to the operations and maintenance accounts so that we can maintain Arlington in the manner reflecting the deeds of those who are buried there.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for his cooperation and consideration of the subcommittee's work and the difficulty we face. This is a modest sum, and I am sure that it will be well used at Arlington. I would be pleased to seek additional funds during conference.

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from California.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. BROWN], the ranking member of the Committee on Science.

(Mr. BROWN of California asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BROWN of California. Mr. Chairman, I would like to say a few words about the VA-HUD-Independent Agencies' appropriation bill developed under the able leadership of the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], the ranking member. While there are, of course, specific items to which I may object, I believe that the bill is, on balance, a good one. Thus, in the brief time that I have I would like to comment on a few of the NASA provisions that have generated some controversy.

The bill, as reported, provides the NASA Administrator with the authority to transfer up to $150 million from the science, aeronautics, and technology and mission support accounts to the space station account. I shared the concern of the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. SENSENBRENNER] with that provision, and I am disappointed that the rule protects the provisions against a point of order. However, I do want to be clear about the reasons for my opposition.

I do not oppose providing NASA with additional funds to complete the development of the space station. I recognize that both NASA and the space station prime contractor have suffered cost growth and schedule problems over the past year. That does not make me happy, but it would be foolish to ignore reality and to pretend that all is well with the program and that additional funds will not be needed.

The situation has been exacerbated by the $2.1 billion annual funding cap that was imposed on the space station program in 1993. The cap may have been politically advantageous, even necessary, but it has further constrained NASA's ability to respond to Station development problems.

It is not very surprising to me that an R&D undertaking as large and as complex as the space station has run into difficulties, especially since we are at the point in the development program where we would anticipate such problems typically would arise. Moreover, I fully expect that the space station program will need additional funds prior to its completion, and I am prepared to support additional funding as appropriate.

However, I strongly believe that additional funding requests should not be quietly slipped into appropriations bills without prior review by the authorizing committee. Neither do I believe that it is prudent to indiscriminately raid NASA's other important activities to pay for space station cost growth. We will need to be flexible in our approach in order to ensure that no programs are damaged. Conversely, I would also oppose a limitation on the administration's ability to add funds to the space station engineering account, subject to congressional approval.

In a related vein, I intend to oppose the amendment that I understand will be offered by Mr. ROHRABACHER and Mr. ROEMER to eliminate the $100 million Russian program assurance account. While the amendment may reflect an understandable frustration with Russian delays in meeting their space station commitments, this amendment would have the net effect of damaging American interests—not promoting them.

That is because the $100 million is intended to reduce United States dependence on the Russians by funding the development of United States-owned contingency hardware that would help take Russia off the space station's critical path. Moreover, it is money that will be almost entirely spent within the United States—it is not a gift to the Russians, nor is it a blank check. Eliminating those funds would, in all likelihood, force NASA to curtail its work on contingency options and alternatives. Fundamentally, we can't have it both ways: We can't direct NASA to reduce the space station program's dependence on the Russians, and at the same time eliminate the funds NASA requires to carry out that directive.

The authors of the amendment have tried to add additional provisions that they hope will make it more appealing. However, Members should not be confused. If adopted, I believe that this amendment would lead to increased space station costs, further delays, and continued vulnerability to potential Russian delays. I intend to support Chairman LEWIS and oppose the amendment.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER], my colleague and friend.

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

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank, first of all, the chairman and the ranking member and all the members of the subcommittee for the excellent work they did under difficult budgetary restraints, and I want to particularly comment favorably upon their treatment of some of the housing programs. Section 8, section 184, section 202, and section 811 programs were funded as adequately as we can under the circumstances, and they are very important, and I appreciate the subcommittee's good work.

Mostly, however, I would like to address the Safe Drinking Water Act. Legislation was enacted last year to amend that act and inject more common sense in the process of testing and treating our Nation's water. This Member is concerned, however, that the Environmental Protection Agency's groundwater disinfection program may be ignoring congressional intent. Specifically, the EPA may attempt to implement a rule which would result in enormous disinfection costs for small communities, but with no actual benefit to the citizens of those communities. In recognition of the general good quality of our Nation's groundwater, the excellent existing State water quality protection programs and the expense and other complications of unneeded treatment, the Safe Drinking Water Act of l996 provided the EPA with only the authority to promulgate regulations requiring disinfection as a treatment technique as necessary, and I stress the words as necessary, for all public water systems using groundwater. Therefore, it appears that the EPA staff, all too predictably and as this Member predicted, would be the problem in his floor comments on June 25, 1996. It appears they may be focusing on a proposed regulation which goes far beyond the regulation of those systems with groundwater quality problems. Agency drafts have proposed regulatory measures that exceed disinfection and which are currently and properly covered under State authority or State programs.

Therefore, this Member would request that the chairman of the appropriations Subcommittee on VA–HUD enter into a colloquy on this matter.

Mr. Chairman, is it the committee's intention that a small community using groundwater should not be subject to EPA-directed improvements unless the community's groundwater poses a genuine health risk?

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

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Unless the community's groundwater poses a genuine health risk, yes, there is such a requirement.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Chairman, is it also the committee's intention that in order not to override creative and locally supported State efforts, which are effective in assuring public health, the EPA should develop a rule that clearly demonstrates that the groundwater poses a genuine health risk before requiring systems to disinfect?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Yes, it is, and I must say to my colleague that I very much appreciate his raising this question, for across the country there are other districts that have similar concerns, and the answer is yes.

Mr. BEREUTER. This Member thanks the distinguished gentleman for this clarification. Since Nebraska has more communities, all except five public water systems, that depend upon groundwater, more than any other State, this is a matter of great importance to our State, and I understand it affects other districts around the country as well.

Mr. Chairman, once again, the Appropriations Committee has completed the tough task of allocating limited resources to many deserving programs. As a member of the House Banking Committee, the committee with jurisdiction over Federal public housing programs, this Member is keenly aware of the growing strain section 8 contract renewals are placing on the HUD budget. This Member commends the appropriators for dealing with this difficult task in the absence of a legislative solution.

Although there are numerous deserving programs included in this funding bill, this Member would like to mention three specific programs. First, the bill provides $3.0 million for the section 184 Indian Housing Loan Guarantee Program which is administered by HUD. According to the committee report, this appropriation will result in over $36.9 million in loan guarantees. The section 184 Indian Housing Loan Guarantee Program has already proven to be an excellent program that for the first time is providing privately financed homes through a guarantee program for Indian families who are otherwise unable to secure conventional financing due to the trust status of Indian reservation land.

Second, appropriators should be applauded for including $4.6 billion for the Community Development Block Grant [CDBG]. This amount, which is the same as the fiscal year 1997 enacted level will efficiently provide block grants for many successful programs, including Youthbuild.

Finally, this Member would like to thank appropriators for retaining the fiscal year 1997 enacted level of $645 million for the section 202 elderly housing program and $194 million for the section 811 disabled housing program. These levels, which this Member supported during House floor consideration last year, are a minimum commitment Congress should make to these special needs citizens.

Mr. Speaker, this Member rises in support of H.R. 2158 and urges his colleagues to support this measure.

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Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes and 10 seconds to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. BORSKI], the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

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

Mr. BORSKI. I thank the distinguished gentleman for yielding me this time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, while this bill has many positive attributes, it fails to

adequately fund the Superfund toxic waste cleanup program. It violates the budget agreement by refusing to fund the President's request. It shortchanges the millions of Americans and their children whose lives and welfare are threatened by toxic waste.

By failing to provide the $650 million requested by the President for Superfund cleanup in fiscal year 1998, up to 120 Superfund site cleanups will not begin. There will be an enormous reduction in the relief that could be afforded to nearly 70 million Americans, including 10 million children who live within 4 miles of a Superfund site. The money requested sits in a trust fund collected for the very purpose of providing relief to these people who live with hazardous waste, threatening the water supplies and health.

Mr. Chairman, in the past the Superfund program has been justly criticized for the speed with which it cleaned up sites. As ranking member of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, I am all too aware of the history of the program. But I can tell the Members with a certainty that EPA, under the effective leadership of Carol Browner, has implemented over 50 initiatives to reform and improve the program.

The criticisms of the past do not accurately reflect the Superfund program of today. Eighty-two percent of sites on the final list are undergoing cleanup construction or already have construction completed.

Superfund has 439 completed cleanups and an additional 492 underway. These numbers indicate that the current program is clearly much more effective than in years past. The President proposed funding in his budget to complete an additional 500 cleanups by the year 2000. These are cleanups that are ready to go.

Despite their insistence that they, too, are committed to speeding up cleanups, the Republican leadership refused to provide needed cleanup funding.

Mr. Chairman, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Committee on Commerce, along with the administration, have been meeting on a bipartisan basis to reauthorize the Superfund program. However, that process should not be the excuse to fail to fund cleanups which are ready to begin today. I do not know what a revised Superfund might look like, but I do know that the failure to provide additional cleanup funding will delay cleanups.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Chairman, I want to urge support of this bill, and I must say that I am pleased with the overall funding for the EPA, plus language that was put in in an appropriation of $4 million for our decontamination effort of toxic dredge material in the New York Harbor, which impacts New Jersey. I wanted to thank the chairman, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], as well as the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN] for that effort in particular.

But I do have to say, as my previous colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. BORSKI] did, that there is not enough money to significantly expand the Superfund program as proposed by the President. The President's initiative to clean up an additional 3,500 Superfund sites by the end of the year 2000 was designed to protect the public from the risks that these sites posed to health and the environment. I think this was an important initiative. It was recognized by the Congress. It was part of the accommodation in the balanced budget agreement.

What we intend to do, myself, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MARKEY] and the gentlewoman from Colorado [Ms. DEGETTE], is to offer an amendment that restores the $650 million in additional funding requested by the President.

Many of Superfund's detractors are fond of saying that the sites do not get cleaned up fast enough. I think this is the opportunity to make a difference. We should reauthorize and reform Superfund, but we have to fund the cleanups while we work on the bill.

I just wanted to say that in my home State of New Jersey, there are some 70 percent of our 107 sites that are either being cleaned up or are cleaned up. A great number of the sites have not been delisted in New Jersey only because long-term monitoring is still ongoing or long-term treatment of groundwater is still ongoing, but we have worked very hard with the EPA administrator and the President to put in place a Superfund program that is leaner and cleaner than it ever was before.

Nationally, the reforms put into place by the EPA have revived the Superfund program after many years of neglect. In the last 4 years the EPA has cleaned up more sites than in all of the 12 years of the program's previous years.

Mr. Chairman, the President made a promise to clean up these additional sites by the year 2000. To do that, I think we should include this money in the bill.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to my colleague, the gentleman from Cleveland, Ohio [Mr. KUCINICH].

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Chairman, at this hour the ailing Russian astronaut Tsibliyev is aboard the Mir space station awaiting help in outer space to see if an American astronaut, Michael Foale, can take charge to make critical repairs to the space station.

As often happens in the universe, the drama in the sky above mirrors that on the Earth below, because we are faced with the possible elimination of $100 million in the fiscal year 1998 appropriations for NASA's Russian Program assurance activities. This $100 million is needed to continue NASA's contingency against Russian delay in the delivery of the International Space Station service module.

The majority of these funds will be spent in the United States to develop and modify hardware needed to ensure that the International Space Station will be built on time. The elimination of these funds would put the program at risk and delay the critical research that is being planned for the space station.

Mr. Chairman, NASA has made significant progress towards the on-orbit assembly of this unique international research facility. The $100 million allows NASA to fulfill a mandate that has been emphasized by Congress, the importance of contingency planning to prepare the United States to deal with delays in Russian hardware for the space station.

The day is near when the International Space Station, the product of an international partnership between the United States and 13 other countries, will begin to be assembled in orbit around the Earth. When it is completed soon after the turn of the century, it will serve as a world class laboratory for microgravity research.

Mr. Chairman, the International Space Station represents the future of aerospace technology, medical research, international cooperation, and space travel. The continued support of this orbiting laboratory is critical. We wish the Russian astronaut well and Godspeed, and we wish our American astronaut good luck as he faces this critical moment. We are with him, and I hope that we will support the continuation of the International Space Station.

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

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] is recognized for 2 minutes.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I do not expect to take all the time. I just want to once again say to my colleagues that this is a good bill. I want to say also that this is a difficult bill to craft. It is a bill that takes a number of months to put together. The staffs on both sides, the majority and minority staffs, have spent a lot of time working on this bill. Then the chairman and I spent long hours working to craft this bill.

Mr. Chairman, we wish, both of us I am sure, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and I, that we could have had the resources to do many more things with this bill, but with the resources that were available to us I think we have crafted a bill that the House can take pride in.

Right now this bill has the support of the President. I hope we will not put any onerous amendments on this bill to place it in jeopardy of any type of a veto. I would like to see us be able to pass this bill and go to conference, and bring back to the House an even better bill.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, once again I want to thank my esteemed colleague, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], and say what a pleasure it is to work with him in crafting this very difficult bill. I offer him full support for this bill and hope that our colleagues will pass it.

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

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

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] is recognized for 6 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, it has been suggested that the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] and I, working on this very complex bill, have found ourselves in a circumstance where perhaps this subcommittee is a model for the work of the balance of our subcommittees.

I think more important than that, the bill involves, as has been suggested, a great variety of very complex issues that cover the gamut in terms of services to the American public. Veterans' medical programs are important, obviously. Housing programs are important. We are all excited today about NASA. EPA's work is critical to the country's future.

Indeed, when those kinds of programs are involved and there is competition head-on, the point that shortly comes to the fore is that major public policy issues, when we can get down to the nub of it, have very little to do with partisan politics. It is searching for alternative solutions and answers that lead to the best result for the American public. In this bill, I think we come very close to accomplishing much of that.

Because of that, I give my thanks to our staff, as the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] has suggested, but very much to my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. LEWIS STOKES, for his cooperation as well.

Mr. Chairman, I urge Members to support this bill.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to voice unqualified support for one of the Nation's most vital housing programs—the Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act [LIHPHRA] of 1990 and its predecessor, the Emergency Low Income Housing Act of 1987. This program has, without qualification, preserved the homes of thousands of low- and moderate-income families and senior citizens. Yet, the HUD–VA appropriations bill that we have before us today includes zero funding for this popular and effective program.

In Chicago, there are presently 600 units of housing that have been approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for preservation. These apartments involve sales to community-based nonprofit organizations that are awaiting funding. But they will not be preserved as affordable housing if this Congress fails to provide funding for the LIHPHRA Program.

In the First Congressional District, there are presently 418 units approved for preservation and awaiting funding. Since its inception, LIHPHRA funds have contributed to the preservation of 1,500 apartments in the First Congressional District and 7,500 units in Illinois. This includes the recent transfer of a 312-unit senior citizen property on Chicago's south side—Cambridge Manor—to resident nonprofit ownership. Just weeks ago I had the opportunity to share in the celebration of this achievement with residents of the community.

LIHPHRA has proven a cost-effective approach to preserving affordable housing in our financially strapped cities. The national average cost to acquire and rehabilitate housing under LIHPHRA is $40,000 per apartment. This compares to an average cost of $80,000 to $120,000 per unit for total replacement of housing in the First Congressional District.

Regrettably, the actions of the HUD–VA Appropriations Committee will result in hundreds of prepayments of HUD-assisted mortgages. The end result will be the conversion of quality housing stock that has been financed with taxpayer dollars to market-rate uses.

In place of continued and expanded LIHPHRA funding, the committee is recommending the use of housing vouchers. But experience shows that in Chicago, at least 20 percent of tenant-based assistance is returned to the housing authority unused because of economic and racial barriers faced by tenants who try to use the certificates. Clearly, the voucher alternative does not offer a workable viable vehicle to preserve housing stock as a source of low-income housing for current tenants and future generations.

I regret that the VA–HUD appropriations bill reported by the committee failed to include funding for the preservation program. I urge my colleagues in the Senate and the conferees to ensure that funding for the LIHPHRA Program is restored.

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to extend my support for the legislation before us. I especially commend Chairman LEWIS and his colleagues on the VA–HUD Appropriations Committee for their cooperation with the Committee on Veterans Affairs in reaching a consensus and commitment to adequately fund the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 1998.

Chairman LEWIS has provided a total appropriation of $40.0 billion in fiscal year 1998 for programs and benefits provided to our veterans by the VA. This total is $143 million more than requested by the administration and includes $17.0 billion in direct appropriation for medical care and treatment of eligible beneficiaries. The legislation also takes an important step to allow the VA to retain for its own use the collections and user fees paid from third parties as reimbursement for VA-provided medical care.

While this Congress is dedicated to spending less of the taxpayers dollars on unnecessary programs and departments of Government, we cannot and should not jeopardize veterans healthcare, compensation, and other program benefits. This country made a commitment to every single veteran and we have a responsibility to follow through. I believe that this legislation is true to this commitment.

This Congress should, however, expect the Department of Veterans Affairs to commit taxpayer dollars toward programs and services in a fiscally responsible manner. I am particularly concerned with the manner in which the VA is progressing toward VA hospital integrations across the country.

Let me first say that I support consolidating VA facilities. I believe this process is necessary to improve the efficiency of healthcare delivery for America's veterans. However, the VA should never implement an integration of facilities before designing a detailed integration plan. Unfortunately, the VA proceeded with the formation of the Central Alabama VA Health Care System and implementation of clinical and administrative changes without a business plan. The GAO considers the VA proposal inadequate, at best. Further, the GAO suggests that the plan raises more questions that it provides answers.

For this reason, I have requested that the VA halt the integration of two facilities in Alabama until such time as the Department has provided critical information on the consolidation process, specifically, on the formation of the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System through the integration of the Montgomery, AL, VA Medical Center, and the Tuskegee, AL, VA Medical Center.

The General Accounting Office [GAO] is reviewing the integration of these facilities and has identified specific issues which should be addressed before further implementation takes place. The VA agreed to temporarily halt this integration in June.

At my request, Chairman LEWIS has included report language in the bill directing the VA to not proceed with further integration of these two facilities until a detailed plan of the integration has been submitted to the Congress and the General Accounting Office issues a report reviewing the plan.

I believe, and the committee agrees, that given the specific circumstances surrounding the integration of these two facilities, integration should be halted until the VA and the GAO can assure this Congress that the integration of the Montgomery and Tuskegee facilities will serve the best interests of the veterans of Alabama and the taxpayers of this country.

Mr. Chairman, I stand in strong support of this legislation and thank Chairman LEWIS, once again, for this attention to the concerns of veterans in my district and throughout the country.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Chairman, I want to commend the members of the Appropriations Committee and its leaders, Mr. LIVINGSTON, Mr. OBEY, Mr. LEWIS, and Mr. STOKES, for their work on this bill. It is a good bill for veterans.

Earlier this year, when the administration sent its budget to the Congress, there was a great deal of concern about the proposed funding scheme for veterans health care. For the first time, the administration proposed that part of the funding for veterans health care would be dependent on what VA could collect from insurance companies and others who are obligated to pay for VA health care.

The funding level contained in this bill assumes that Congress will send to the President authority for the Secretary to spend amounts collected from insurance companies for veterans' health care. However, it is important to note that the House has taken a number of steps to make this less risky than the administration's original proposal. In the House-passed reconciliation bill, the VA Committee inserted several provisions to avoid a situation in which veterans are denied health care because of an unexpected shortfall in collections. The House-passed provisions

would: Provide additional appropriations if collections from third parties fall short of projections by more than $25 million; authorize VA to collect the same amount that insurance companies pay other health care providers; require VA to develop a plan to maximize collections through appropriate incentives; and establish a monitoring mechanism so that Congress can accurately assess whether this new authority is working.

The language reported by the VA Committee would have made these collections available without any further action by the Congress, and I still believe that if we want to maximize collections, that is the best policy.

There are a number of other noteworthy improvements to the administration's budget proposal for veterans contained in this measure. It adds $32.6 million to the President's request for veterans medical research. I am concerned, however, that the reported bill includes unwise and unnecessary restrictions on how this money is to be spent. The bill includes increased funding for the State veterans home construction grant program, an action which the VA Committee recommended earlier this year. The bill provides the funds requested by the administration to upgrade the National Cemetery in Arizona. It also adds funds to modernize some of the VA's health care facilities, a necessary investment even though the VA is going through a nationwide restructuring of the way in which health care is delivered. Finally, it adds modestly to the funds needed to administer the benefits which the Congress has authorized for veterans. All of these increases were recommended earlier this year and I congratulate the committee for its wise choices.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Chairman, I rise in overall support of this legislation which will provide $91.7 billion in fiscal year 1998 for housing programs, veterans programs, environmental programs, and a myriad of other independent agencies' programs.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that this bill is acceptable, in relative terms, for housing, an area of appropriations that continues to bear the scars and burden of the 1995 rescissions bill which gutted important housing and homeless programs. We see in this bill a recognition of the section 8 renewal needs at $9.2 billion, a recognition of the political realities. The measure as reported does not antagonize Presidential priorities with regard to AmeriCorps or community development financial institutions, and there is a recognition in the bill of the need for balance among the programs funded through this important mixture of programs. These programs in effect display the full spectrum of Federal Government activities.

Mr. Speaker, I do have reservations about some of the spending priorities in this VA–HUD-independent agencies appropriations bill. For example, while these are exciting times on Mars and as a person with a strong science interest, I celebrate the discoveries, I only wish we could see such exuberance, ingenuity, and funding commitment in tackling our Nation's housing challenge. If only we could see such commitment to funding and supporting efforts to clean up our Nation's air, and those in our Nation's Capital these past few days in July has only shown too ''clearly'' that our air is in need of help, and other environmental cleanup needs of spaceship Earth. Certainly I recognize that this is an acceptable bill than recently has been presented on the floor because the 602(b) appropriation allocation permitted the subcommittee, led by Messrs. LEWIS and STOKES, a more equitable allocation.

There are several issues I am pleased to note specifically: for one, the level funding of the AmeriCorps Program at $400 million. There has been a lot of talk about the Minnesota/North Dakota/South Dakota floods; about funding; and about the necessity of expedited funding. AmeriCorps put its people and money where its promises were and sent close to 100 AmeriCorps members to help flood victims. They came from all over the country, from Colorado, from Virginia, to help slog through the mud of the Red River that clogged people's basements, to pitch sandbags, to deliver food, and to work in other important jobs that were essential during this still trying time. These volunteers did all this and more for an opportunity to help people and to restore hope for people who really needed it.

AmeriCorps helped more than 9 million individuals throughout 1995–96. Although we could do more for this vital win-win program that wins for the volunteers and those who are served, level funding is a step ahead of where we were in the previous bills. I urge the House to defeat amendments to strike or reduce AmeriCorps funding.

I am surprised and dismayed that the bill does not fund the additional 50,000 section 8 certificates and vouchers requested by the administration. The third year without new housing being made available. The need for housing persists. It has not gone away. The changes that welfare reform will bring are going to impact our housing programs in many ways including a likely increase in demand for section 8 housing. Affordable housing supplies are not keeping pace with the growth in housing needs. It has been estimated that the gap between the number of affordable housing units and the number of people needing them is 4.7 million units. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that over 11 million Americans have worst case housing needs. Families with children represent 43 percent of the households with those needs—paying more than half of their income for rent and utilities, or living in substandard housing. These are housing canyons forming in our Nation, not mere housing gaps and the numbers clearly show that many, many millions of Americans are but an accident, a job loss, or a health care crisis away from unfortunately becoming homeless.

In its annual survey, the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that 20 percent of all requests for emergency shelter went unmet this year because of a lack of resources. Emergency shelter requests increased in the 29-city survey by an average of 5 percent, with the requests for assistance from homeless families increasing by 7 percent. On average, people remain homeless for a disappointing 6 months in the survey cities. The No. 1 reason, among many reasons to be sure, is the lack, of affordable housing. And now, with the impact of welfare reform starting to be felt, it is even more evident that we must marshal the necessary resources to keep American citizens off the streets.

I intend to offer an amendment to restore the Federal Emergency Management Agencys' Emergency Food and Shelter Program to $130 million, up from $100 million in the bill, and to support the Kennedy amendments to increase funding from the HUD McKinney Act homeless programs for $823 million to $1.1 billion and to add 45,000 units of incremental section 8 assistance. I urge my colleagues to consider that same course of action. This would indeed bring homeless funding to its 1995 level and provide some new additional support.

The public housing program will be affected by welfare reform, especially in their operating subsidies. Although public housing programs are level funded, I fear that a proper accounting has not been made on the real potential impacts of welfare reform cuts on public housing in the future. Public housing authorities are strapped already. I am pleased, however, that the committee fully funded the important Drug Elimination Grants Program, a program I've been fighting to save in the authorizing legislation process, the spending commitment is necessary and deserves the support of the house.

Other housing and community development programs are in need of mentioning. Last Congress, we reorganized the native American housing programs into a block grant. Although the bill provides $165 million more than requested by the administration for this new block grant, I am concerned that be shielded from cuts as it goes through the congressional process. Housing needs in Indian country are great, and block grants that dribble out are not as effective as those that come out with meaningful allocation amounts to the designated housing entities.

I thank the committee for allocating additional resources to the Community Development Financial Institutions [CDFI] fund. This important fund seeks to increase the availability of credit and investment capital in distressed communities as a means of increasing economic opportunity and revitalizing distressed communities. In many places, like rural Minnesota and right here in Washington DC, allocations have been approved that may well work through innovative micro credit lending that is being advanced through the CDFI. Funding this program at $125 million will give the CDFI program additional boost to help more communities, businesses, and individuals the opportunity to help themselves. CDFI works. Now its appropriate to realistically fund the CDFI's.

In this same vein, H.R. 2158 has allocated $70 million for the highly successful and proven work of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. As a long-time supporter of this program and an author of the law expanding their mission several Congresses ago, I am pleased at the dollar commitment for the Neighborhood Reinvestment and Neighborhood Housing programs serving hundreds of cities across our country.

With regard to the funding level for the EPA, the bill on the whole is positive but has some serious flaws. I am very concerned about the failure to fund to restore the environment in communities burdened with toxic waste sites. By providing only $1.5 billion for the Superfund hazardous waste cleanup program, the bill translates into 29 percent less than requested by the administration. I would also like to have seen funds allocated from Brown fields cleanup, not just $85 million for assessment. Our cities need assistance in cleaning up sites so that they can turn these areas into positive areas, environmentally and economically. I regret that the politics of reauthorization has resulted in shortchanging these key

programs, Superfund and Brownfields which are integral to the economic vitality of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2158 and to support the several important amendments that will be offered to increase funding for housing and homeless assistance programs.

Mr. HOBSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of the H.R. 2158, the fiscal year 1998 VA, HUD and independent agencies appropriations bill. As a member of the VA–HUD Subcommittee I have enjoyed working with Chairman LEWIS, my fellow subcommittee members, and the fine subcommittee staff and I commend their work on this often difficult bill.

This year, as always, the subcommittee was faced with many challenges as it worked to approve funding for the wide array of programs under its jurisdiction. Nonetheless, I am pleased that we were able to appropriate $70 billion to meet the important needs of our veterans, protect the environment, address the Nation's housing and emergency assistance needs, and retain our commitment to space and science programs. The 1998 funding level in this bill is $600 million more than the President's request and approximately $6 billion higher than last year, guaranteeing that our most vulnerable citizens receive the assistance they need to lead productive lives.

As someone who has served on active duty, I firmly believe that we can never thank our veterans enough for putting their lives on the line in defense of our Nation. I am proud that the VA–HUD bill continues the House's strong support for veterans by protecting the veterans medical care account from reductions by funding it at $17 billion, with an extra $468 million to follow when the Balanced Budget Act is passed.

The bill also provides funding to ensure that those Americans who need housing assistance can receive it. H.R. 2158 funds the section 202 housing program for the elderly at $645 million and the 811 housing program for persons with disabilities at $195 million, both of which have been a concern of residents of Ohio's seventh district. Spending in both of these programs represents an increase over the President's request. Also, section 8 contract renewals are fully funded at $9.1 billion ensuring that all expiring contracts will be renewed for 1 year. The extremely popular Community Development Block Grant Program and HOME home investment partnerships are funded at $4.6 billion and $1.5 billion respectively, which protects CDBG funding and expands the HOME effort by $100 million.

The Environmental Protection Agency also received an increase of $433 million which will allow for the protection of our Nation's resources, for increased environmental research and for the clean-up of hazardous sites. More specifically, H.R. 2158 appropriates $656 million for EPA research including $40 million to study aspects of the controversial proposed EPA air regulations. The Superfund receives $1.5 billion, an increase of $100 million, and $85 million is allocated to help clean-up brownfield sites and restore them to useable condition, which is $48 million over the 1997 level. Finally, the clean water state revolving loan fund is funded at $1.25 billion and the safe drinking water revolving fund at $750 million, a total increase of $200 million. These funding levels will help preserve our valuable resources for future generations and help ensure that small communities receive the technical assistance to continue providing pure, clean water for rural families.

H.R. 2185 fully funds the Federal Emergency Management Agency's disaster relief account. This agency is of vital importance to coordinating the Federal Government's emergency preparation, response and recovery efforts. FEMA works closely with State and local governments in managing emergency programs and offering technical assistance and I am pleased to see these efforts being maintained.

Finally, the VA–HUD bill increases funding for NASA by $148 million over the President's request. Over the past few weeks we have marveled at the Mars Pathfinder mission and other projects such as the microgravity experiments developed by Ohio's NASA Lewis Research that are being conducted on the Space Shuttle *Columbia*. In Ohio and other locations across the country NASA taps the excitement of space exploration to help underserved children learn about science and math, and I'm glad to see these efforts adequately funded in this bill. It is important that our Nation continue our investment in science and space exploration, and that we use these efforts to improve life on Earth—H.R. 2185 provides the funding necessary to do all of these.

Tough decisions are made in this bill, such as the action to close the Office of Consumer Affairs—whose functions can be transferred to existing agencies—and freeze funding for the expensive Americorps program. These were carefully considered actions, and make it possible for the 1998 VA–HUD bill to provide for our veterans, meet the country's housing and environmental needs, invest in emergency planning, and support science and space exploration. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. CUNNINGHAM] having assumed the chair, Mr. COMBEST, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill, (H.R. 2158), making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 181 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2107.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2107, making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, with Mr. LATOURETTE in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, the final lines of the bill had been read.

SEQUENTIAL VOTES POSTPONED IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 181, proceedings will now resume on those amendments on which further proceedings were postponed in the following order: the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT]; amendment No. 3 printed in House Report 105–174 offered by the gentleman from Idaho [Mr. CRAPO]; the amendment offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. ISTOOK]; amendment No. 2 offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. COBURN]; and amendment No. 2 printed in House Report 105–174 offered by the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON].

The Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the time for any electronic vote after the first vote in this series.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. CHABOT

The CHAIRMAN. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT] on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. CHABOT:

Beginning on page 76, strike line 14 and all that follows through line 10 on page 77.

RECORDED VOTE

The CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 96, noes 328, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 270]

AYES—96

Aderholt	Cunningham	Kasich
Archer	Deal	King (NY)
Armey	DeLay	Kingston
Barr	Doolittle	Largent
Bartlett	Dreier	Latham
Barton	Duncan	Linder
Boehner	Ehrlich	Manzullo
Bono	Emerson	McIntosh
Brady	Gekas	McKeon
Bryant	Goodlatte	Myrick
Burton	Goodling	Neumann
Buyer	Graham	Norwood
Canady	Gutknecht	Nussle
Chabot	Hall (TX)	Paul
Chambliss	Hansen	Paxon
Chenoweth	Hastert	Pease
Christensen	Hastings (WA)	Petri
Coble	Hayworth	Pombo
Coburn	Herger	Radanovich
Collins	Hilleary	Riley
Combest	Hostettler	Rogan
Condit	Hunter	Rohrabacher
Cox	Hyde	Royce
Crane	Inglis	Ryun
Crapo	Istook	Salmon
Cubin	Jones	Scarborough