

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

SPEECH OF

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 1997

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union 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:

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Chairman, I congratulate Chairman LEWIS and Ranking Member STOKES on producing a bipartisan bill with broad support in the House.

However, Mr. Chairman, I would like to highlight the multi-Family Preservation Program in the hopes that the HUD-VA Conference Committee will appropriate funding for this essential program. This program is very important to low-income communities not only in my congressional district but throughout the Nation because it is critical to maintaining our country's dwindling affordable rental housing supply.

The Preservation Program keeps housing affordable for low-income families, the disabled and the elderly by allowing private owners to transfer their rental properties to tenant-endorsed nonprofits who will continue to serve this vulnerable residential population. As a consequence of HUD's Preservation Program, over 800,000 units of affordable housing have been preserved.

Currently, there are 260 projects nationwide, consisting of more than 29,000 units, that need funding to avoid their conversion to market-rate rentals and prevent the displacement of thousands of low-income tenants.

The Preservation program continues to have solid bipartisan support. As recently as June 20th, I joined 27 of my California colleagues from both sides of the aisle in sending a letter of support for the Preservation Program. In our letter, we stressed that California alone has 25 percent of the country's unfunded preservation properties. This represents approximately 5,000 units awaiting preservation funding in California alone.

The Preservation program has been criticized as being too expensive and many references have been made to a pending GAO report, which is critical of the program. While there have been some high costs associated with the program, the fact is that it is relatively inexpensive. In its findings, GAO cites almost exclusively the high cost preservation projects, which are not representative of the entire group of properties in the national queue. While I have no doubt that the GAO findings are accurate for the small sample studied, this report does not mean that Congress should make hasty or ill-advised conclusions about the program's overall true costs to the taxpayer based on an unrepresentative sampling.

It is important to note that temporary enhanced vouchers—which are being proposed to mitigate the loss of housing for thousands

of displaced low income families and the elderly—are not a viable or cost-effective substitute for this important housing stock. Vouchers will not protect the physical housing stock, nor will they guarantee the current residents any long-term security because it is dependent on annual congressional appropriations.

The HUD-VA Conference Committee has consistently recognized the value of the Preservation Program and provided adequate funds over the past 2 years. I rise to ask the conference committee to mirror the sensible and cost-effective efforts of past years and fund the Preservation Program at a level of \$350 million for fiscal year 1998.

TRIBUTE TO COL. WILLIAM D. CUMMINGS

HON. HOWARD COBLE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 1997

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the dedication, public service, and patriotism of Col. William D. Cummings, U.S. Air Force, on the occasion of his retirement after a career of faithful service to our Nation. Col. Bill Cummings' strong commitment to excellence will leave a lasting impact on the vitality of our modern warfighters, commanding admiration and respect from his military and civilian colleagues as well as Members of Congress.

Colonel Cummings of Summerfield, NC, is a graduate of East Carolina University. He is serving his last assignment in the Air Force as Deputy for Program Integration and Congressional Activities, Deputy Chief of Staff, Air and Space Operations, in the Pentagon.

After earning his pilot's wings at Vance Air Force Base, OK in 1968, Colonel Cummings worked as a C-130 pilot at Sewart Air Force Base in Tennessee. As an AC-130A gunship aircraft commander in Thailand, Colonel Cummings accumulated 118 combat missions during the Vietnam War with the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing. After returning to the United States he was assigned as a tactical airlift director, and in June 1982 he was selected to command the 375th Transportation Squadron.

Just 4 years after he was named senior airlift controller, Colonel Cummings became vice commander for the 322d Airlift Division at Ramstein AB, Germany in 1991. As commander of the 621st Air Mobility Support Group, he directed strategic airlifts in 12 countries through Europe and Saudi Arabia. Upon his return to the United States he assumed his current responsibility of Deputy for Program Integration and Congressional Activities for Deputy Chief of Staff, Air and Space Operations.

The colonel is a command pilot with over 3,000 flying hours. His military decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Air Medal with seven oak leaf clusters, and the Air Force Commendation Medal. He has also received the Outstanding Unit Award with "V" for valor and five oak leaf clusters, the Organizational Excellence Award, the Combat Readiness Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with two service stars, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with palm.

Our Nation, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Air Force, and his family can truly be proud of the colonel's many accomplishments. He is a man of extraordinary talent and integrity. While his honorable service will be genuinely missed in the Department of Defense, it gives me great pleasure to recognize Col. William D. Cummings. On behalf of the citizens of the Sixth District of North Carolina, we wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

SUPPORT VICTIMS OF FLOODS IN POLAND

HON. ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 1997

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring news of the severe flooding that has ravaged Poland. As we speak, the people of Poland and much of Eastern Europe are struggling bravely to resist the brute forces of nature as the flood waters continue their unrelenting rise. So far, dozens of innocent people have died in what is being described as Eastern Europe's worst tragedy since Chernobyl. As survivors of the floods can tell you, the worst part is the wait; the slow, anguished wait as the flood waters slowly consume these peoples' homes, their businesses, their property. The wait as an entire life sinks below the muddy ripples of the flood.

Thankfully, compassion is not dead in our society, and countless concerned Americans, many of Polish descent, have heeded Poland's desperate cries for help. In my own home town of Chicago, churches and community organizations have responded to the call for flood relief. I have been happy to be able to assist local leaders and communities in the effort to get disaster relief to those who need it most.

While the response so far has been impressive, the need is still greater. Congress cannot stand idly by in Poland's time of need. It has been less than a decade since Poland threw off the shackles of communism. The damage from these floods threatens the gains Poles have made in building a free and prosperous society.

The Polish American Congress Charitable Foundation as well as the American Red Cross are spearheading efforts to channel relief from America to needy families in Poland. These contributions will help provide food, medicine and shelter to victims of the flooding. Please call the Polish American Congress at (773) 763-9944, or the American Red Cross at 1-800-435-7669 (1-800-HELP-NOW), to find out what you can do to help. I urge all Americans to heed the urgent call for disaster relief in Poland.

A DEMOCRATIC VIEW ON HONG KONG

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 1997

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, over the past month, we have been subjected to a barrage of Communist Chinese propaganda on the reversion of Hong Kong to China. The Communist Chinese view was amply covered in