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House of Representatives

The House met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. LATOURETTE].

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 9, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable STEVEN C. LATOURETTE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Reverend James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

Whatever our need, O God, whatever our concern, whatever our hopes and dreams, we pray this day that You would breathe into us the spirit of understanding and peace. Pervade our hearts with Your spirit of goodness and mercy and cause us to hear Your still small voice, calling us to repentance for when we have missed the mark and endowing us with all the wonderful gifts of life. As we look to this new day of grace, give our minds a vision of justice, give our hands opportunities to do good work, and give our hearts a full measure of Your abiding love. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Chair's approval of the Journal.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. TRAFICANT] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces that he will postpone 1 minute recognition until the end of the business day.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2607, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS, MEDICAL LIABILITY REFORM, AND EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 1998

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 264 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 264

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 1(b) of rule XXIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2607) making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against the revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule and shall be considered as read. The amendment printed in part 1 of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered as adopted in the House and in the Committee of the Whole. Points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, for failure to comply with clause 2 or 6 of rule XXI are waived. No further amendment shall be in order except those printed in part 2 of the report of the Committee on Rules. Each further amendment may be considered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment except as specified in the report, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against amendments printed in the report are waived. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be fifteen minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee

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shall rise and report the bill, as amended, to the House with such further amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California [Mr. DREIER] is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Dallas, TX [Mr. FROST], pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks and to include extraneous material.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, this is a modified closed rule providing for consideration of H.R. 2607, the District of Columbia appropriations bill for fiscal year 1998. The rule provides for 1 hour of general debate divided equally between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations, waives all points of order against consideration of the bill, and provides that the amendment printed in part 1 of the Committee on Rules report shall be considered as adopted.

The rule waives points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, for failure to comply with clause 2 and clause 6 of rule XXI regarding unauthorized appropriations, legislative provisions, and reappropriations in appropriations bills.

The rule provides for consideration of only those amendments printed in part 2 of the Committee on Rules report, by the Member designated, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified, shall not be subject to amendment except as specified in the report, and shall not be subject to a division of the question. All points of order against the amendments are waived.

The rule also grants the authority to the chairman of the Committee of the Whole to postpone recorded votes on amendments and to reduce the voting time on amendments to 5 minutes provided that the first vote in a series is not less than 15 minutes.

Finally, the rule provides for one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Congress passed the National Capital Revitalization Act which transferred certain State functions to the Federal Government and eliminated the traditional Federal payment. The committee's bill reflects those actions, providing for a total of $828 million in Federal funds, including funds to provide pay raises to police officers, firefighters, and teachers.

Mr. Speaker, of all the troubles and problems facing our Nation's Capital, I believe the most sad and distressing is in the school system. The district's children, especially those at the lower end of the economic spectrum, are having their futures stolen from them by a failed education system that eats up over half a billion dollars and spends more per student than schools offering a far better education. In the D.C. school system, money is not the problem.

Education is first, last and always, Mr. Speaker, about children. Children are the future of the Nation. That is why we must do whatever it takes to improve the education system here. While I believe that parents and local communities can best solve our education problems, this is our Nation's Capital. This Congress has the obligation to step in and do what is right.

Every child in America has the right to a safe, drug-free environment in which to learn. That is all too often an unrealized dream for children in this city. We must put parents at the head of the line when it comes to making decisions about education, not government bureaucrats or union bosses. Most important, every child, regardless of income, should receive a quality education. Not one should be left behind because of where she or he lives or because her parents' financial situation is not that strong.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is first and foremost prochild because it supports education. Opposition to the education section of this bill cannot be about money. The committee bill spends more on the D.C. public school system than actually was requested by the city. Instead, the opposition to the parental choice provisions in the bill are driven by politics and ideology.

It is sad that there are special interests that will do anything to block parental choice. Where we should expect overwhelming support for bold experiments to empower parents to give their children the best education possible, we get extremism in defense of a failed bureaucracy. Well, I believe that we owe it to children starting in this city to give them a better opportunity for a brighter future.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members on both sides of the aisle to look beyond the blinders of special interest ideology and support both the rule and the committee bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this rule gives the Members of this House an opportunity to do the right thing for the residents of the District of Columbia. The rule provides Members the opportunity to vote for a fair deal for the District and its citizens and to reject the unfair bill reported from the committee. The Moran substitute deserves the support of the House, and because the majority has made this substitute in order, I will support the rule. But Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the bill unless it is amended by the Moran substitute.

Because of the deplorable financial condition this city was in 2 years ago, the Congress and the President have sought through tough measures to bring about drastic change. But in doing so, I fear that the residents of the District of Columbia have been denied democratic representation. The Mayor, the council, and the school board have been effectively removed as voices in or for the city. I am not a defender of the old order, but at the same time I cannot support what the Republican majority has proposed as a remedy.

Mr. Speaker, if the Republican majority wants to revoke home rule for the District, then the Republican majority ought to deal straight with the residents of this city instead of micromanaging every aspect of the city's government. Using the city as a Petri dish for experimentation in Republican social engineering is unacceptable. I urge every Member to reject the committee bill and support the Moran substitute.

There are many reasons why Members should oppose the committee bill, not the least of which is inclusion of $7 million for a school voucher program. The state of affairs in the schools of this city is sorry. We have all read the papers and know what is going on. But, Mr. Speaker, taking $7 million away from the public schools to provide scholarships for poor students to attend parochial and private schools will not repair the roofs and buy the books for the hundreds of students who will be left in the classrooms of the public schools.

Mr. Speaker, if the Republican majority is determined to implement school vouchers as an educational alternative to public schools in this country, I call upon them and the supporters of vouchers to bring out a bill and let us debate it fair and square. Do not use the kids in the District to further their social agenda and provide them with photo ops.

This bill seeks to completely revamp the medical malpractice system in the District of Columbia and to cap damages for injury at $250,000. Mr. Speaker, the medical malpractice system in the District is not in any way related to providing the funding for the operations of the government and services of this city in fiscal year 1998. How the Republican majority thinks the inclusion of this 16-page title will make this government work more effectively for the benefit of the citizens of this city is beyond my understanding. This provision is clearly irrelevant to the appropriations process and deserves to be stricken from the bill. However, I should point out to my colleagues that the only opportunity Members will have to strike this provision is by voting for the Moran substitute.

Mr. Speaker, this rule also makes in order an important amendment which will be offered by the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. SABO]. The Republican majority has included in the bill a provision which waives the Davis-Bacon

prevailing wage standards for school construction projects. The Sabo amendment seeks to strike that provision and deserves the support of the House.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bad bill which, if the House supports the Moran substitute and the Sabo amendment, can be made acceptable. The people of the District do not deserve the bill reported by the Committee on Appropriations. They want their city to work for the benefit of its residents and the many millions of visitors it receives each year. I think the Congress should help the city recover, not use it to further the Republican social agenda.

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. CUNNINGHAM], my very good friend and fellow Californian.

□ 0945

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the D.C. appropriations bill, and first of all I would like to commend the chairman, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. TAYLOR]. The gentleman underwent a stroke, and he fought through a very difficult situation, and he is back to 100 percent now, but during that time he persevered.

I would like to go through a couple of things. My colleague on the other side said this is a bad bill. The reason that the Democrats do not like this bill is because it is the unions that support their particular issues. The unions, with the voucher system, and the unions with Davis-Bacon, both hurt, and both are opposed by the National School Board Association and the majority of the residents in every category.

Now, the District of Columbia only has about 14 percent Republicans, yet over 60 percent of the parents with school age children in the District support removing Davis-Bacon, which inflates the cost of construction between 20 and 30 percent. Now, if they really care about children, like the other side purports all the time, they will do this for the children, waive Davis-Bacon, because it saves over 20 percent.

The average age of a school in Washington, DC is 86 years. They had trouble even getting the roofs repaired so that the children could go to school this year. There are safety hazards. We need the dollars to be infused after generations of neglect in the D.C. school system. That is why the residents of Washington, DC, want to waive the Davis-Bacon Act.

The bill gives D.C. schools the authority to waive the act. It does not do anything with Davis-Bacon. It just gives Washington the right to waive the act themselves. Congress does not do that. But it reduces the inflationary cost if they do that and they have chosen that exact thing. The National School Boards Association supports this provision.

The study by Dr. Thiebolt found that States with Davis-Bacon laws pay 13 percent more for their classrooms than the 20 States without them. Yet I say to my colleague that just spoke, who is working with the DNC, the unions have, time after time, and time again, infused illegal money into the campaigns of Democrats. That is under investigation right now. Of course, they do not want this. This is their power base, both in construction and with the teachers unions. They do not want it.

My wife is an elementary school principal with a doctorate degree. The last thing we want to do is hurt public education, but this program is needed. Of the over 20 Members of Congress that live in the D.C. area, not a single one have their students in public schools. They put them in private schools. Why? There are good teachers in Washington, DC, and there are some good schoolhouses as well, but the great majority are failing and the teachers are not credentialed. I would not put my children here. I do not think many of my colleagues would either.

All we are asking for is an opportunity for these parents to have their children go into a school that is free of drugs, that is free of crime, where they have a shot at the 21st century. That is not the case now, Mr. Speaker. That is why the gentleman from North Carolina, in this bill, has done everything he can to help the schools.

Now, if the other side really wants to help the children instead of their union bosses and support the DNC and their fundraising, then they will support this. They say this is a terrible bill. What they mean to say is it is terrible against the unions, their big supporters.

I would say that time and time again we have our groups that are like a domino effect. We feel that if something passes, that it will domino the rest of the issues that we support. And I am sure that that is what it is with the unions and Davis-Bacon, but this is an emergency situation, Mr. Speaker, an emergency situation with schoolhouses that are over 86 years old.

The schoolchildren have almost zero chance at the American dream. This is a chance where we can help them instead of helping the unions for once. And, again, it does not waive Davis-Bacon, it just gives the city the right to waive it because it saves between 20 and 30 percent in construction costs. That is not asking too much, I do not think. Yet that is why my colleague says this is a terrible bill.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

The gentleman on the other side seems to be a little confused, and I can understand that because it is difficult to follow all these things, but I am not affiliated with the DNC. I am chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Also, I would point out to my friend on the other side that there has been one conviction of a sitting Member of Congress during this session for campaign violations. It was a Republican Member, who pleaded guilty to accepting over $200,000 in illegal corporate contributions.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia [Ms. NORTON].

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today we will have before us an appropriation bill that is at odds with our core beliefs. It takes the tough, fiscally responsible work of a district that is not our own, presided over by a no-nonsense control board, and tears it up.

No amount of rhetoric about the constitutional obligation to run, or is it run over, the Nation's capital will work this time, not when the control board and the city have submitted a budget that uses almost all its small surplus for deficit reduction. No righteous rhetoric will explain some 60 instances of legislating on an appropriation in fine detail, some of it quickly altered to appropriation language, but just as devastating to the work of the control board and the city.

No amount of crocodile tears for the District's children, from Members with a long history of not supporting these children or District bills for these children will make credible the ideological baggage, especially vouchers, they have stuffed into this bill.

Here are five questions we should ask ourselves as we hear today's debate.

One. Ask yourselves: ''If my District had voted 89 percent against vouchers in a referendum, would I then vote for vouchers on the basis of manipulative polls that ask poor people and ministers not whether they desire vouchers for public money but whether they would like some free money for scholarships.'' It is a scam on poor people and I resent it.

If my colleagues are from one of the many States that have turned down vouchers, they must vote for the substitute. They should know who they are: New York, Michigan, Nebraska, Oregon, Idaho, Maryland, Washington State, Missouri, Alaska, California, Massachusetts, Utah, Colorado.

The so-called free ''scholarships'' or vouchers come from the District's own meager surplus funds. The District's public schools desperately need every cent of public money. Every child in the District could have a place in an after school program with the $7 million that would go to private and religious schools in the District, Maryland, and Virginia. Think of what that money would do for our kids' education and for elimination of juvenile crime in this city.

Two. Will it help or hurt the District if we prevent a contract for a state-of-the-art financial management system to be awarded on a competitive basis after years of delay?

Should the Congress override all of the experts who advise that the upgrade of the present nonfunctional system is unworkable and wasteful? Is

this body prepared to take responsibility for the serious delay in the congressionally mandated management and financial reforms that will result from preventing the contract?

Three. Should Congress cancel a contract for the annual audit now in progress that was won through a competitive bid about which no question whatsoever has been raised?

Four. Will it help or hurt the District's fragile recovery to cancel the city's authority to eliminate its accumulated deficit using exactly the same approach that was necessary to bring New York and Philadelphia out of insolvency? Why would we want to retract this authority when we just gave it to the control board in the Balanced Budget Act?

Five. Does Congress want to keep the control board from using self-generated interest to do studies, such as those that are the basis for wholesale reform of the police department and the school system now in progress?

I believe my colleagues will be puzzled by these provisions. They reveal only the tip of a volcano of an appropriation that is dangerously capricious.

I do not believe that a substitute for an entire appropriation bill has ever been offered in 23 years of home rule. When the substitute is copied from the fiscally conservative bill of a conservative North Carolina Senator that even has my support, Members perhaps get a sense of how radically damaging to my constituents, how arbitrary the bill before us is.

I ask my colleagues to reject this bill and to vote for the rule so we can vote for the Moran substitute that rejects this bill.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1½ minutes to respond to my friend, and let me say that I have the highest regard for the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia. She and I have worked together on a wide range of issues.

I do not seek to stand here and speak as the greatest authority on the District of Columbia. I do happen to reside here when I am in Washington, DC. But I think that it is important for us to look at a couple of facts.

First of all, District voters have never actually voted on a voucher or scholarship referendum. In 1981, which is over a decade and a half ago, voters rejected a referendum that would have permitted tax credits for educational expenses, but this is not actually a tax credit, because a tax credit would primarily help those who pay taxes and are generally not poor. In contrast, the scholarship legislation is targeted at children from low-income families.

In addition, I think it is important for us to recognize that an awful lot has changed since 1981, including public opinion on a wide range of issues. Polls show that parental choice enjoys strong support in the District of Columbia, especially among African-Americans. There was a recent poll that was conducted of District residents showing that 44 percent favor scholarships while only 31 percent oppose them, and among African-Americans support outweighs opposition by a margin of 48 to 29.

A poll conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, an African-American think tank that opposes school choice, found that 57 percent of African-Americans actually support parental choice.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY].

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, in the last session of Congress our friends on the Republican side of the aisle made clear that they were willing to shut down all of Government in order to get what they wanted on certain ideological issues. This year it appears that they have more modest goals and are simply talking about shutting down or severely crippling only portions of Government if they do not get their way.

For instance, many of them would like to hold hostage the Labor, Health, and Education appropriation bill unless they get their way on school testing. A number of them have said publicly they are willing to shut down the foreign operations appropriation bill unless they get their way on Mexico City policy and abortion. A number of others have indicated they would just as soon shut down the Interior appropriation bill unless they get their way so they can continue to see Yellowstone polluted and continue to see redwoods cut in California. And now we see that a significant number indicate to the press that they are willing to hold hostage the District of Columbia bill for the next year unless they get their way on vouchers.

□ 1000

I would simply suggest that the time for that is past. We are now 1 week into the new fiscal year. We ought to be resolving differences, not continuing to exacerbate them. That is why I support this rule, because it gives us an opportunity to deal with this bill in the fastest way possible.

I would hope that after the rule passes, that we pass the Moran amendment, which corrects a wide variety of gross overreaches by this Congress.

The Moran amendment would, essentially, simply have the House adopt the House version of the D.C. appropriations bill, which is brought to the House by Senator FAIRCLOTH. He is not, as my colleagues know, exactly a left wing liberal. I think conservatives are safe with him. And it just seems to me that that is the best way to approach this issue if we want to do our duty by the District and if we want to get all of our business done across the board.

I would invite my colleagues' attention to the Washington Post editorial this morning, which says as follows:

> The House of Representatives should not dishonor itself today by adopting the long list of wide-ranging riders tacked onto the D.C. appropriations bill by the subcommittee.

I agree with that editorial. I think that the proper course is to support this rule and then to support the Moran amendment so that we can overcome Congress's efforts to try to use Washington, DC, as a social experiment for pet ideas of right wing think tanks around the country.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from California [Mr. CUNNINGHAM].

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, besides thanking the chairman, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. TAYLOR], there is another gentleman that should be thanked, and that is General Becton. General Becton has taken on an enormous job in saving the schools in Washington, DC. He did so where he came before.

But I would say that, speaking to the bill itself, who supports removing Davis-Bacon? Sixty-five percent support allowing D.C. officials to repair the D.C. schools without mandating higher Federal wages, 53 percent of union households support it, 60 percent of the Democrats in the District agree, 68 percent agree it is more important to remove Davis-Bacon, and 56 percent give D.C. schools a D or an F. It is time, and it is an emergency.

Here is what ''20/20'' said: ''That's the argument: We need Davis-Bacon to guarantee good wages to make sure Government buildings are well-built. Sounds logical, 'til you realize that most buildings in America are not Government-built buildings. In fact, three-fourths of construction is private work. Are these buildings lower quality than Government buildings? Of course not. They may be better built. In most American life, we do quite well without Government setting wages and prices.'' That is John Stossel and ''20/20.''

We would also say that, who supports it? The National School Board Association, for vouchers and for both removing Davis-Bacon, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Associated Builders and Contractors.

D.C. Board chairman Dr. Andrew Brimmer told the Committee on Education and the Workforce that, ''Waiving the Davis-Bacon Act would be helpful in our ability to attract donated services.'' And 65 percent of D.C. residents support this provision.

Florida eliminated its State Davis-Bacon law in 1974 for schools. They saved 15 percent. Kentucky, likewise, they reinstated it and increased their construction cost by $35 million. Ohio is saving millions.

We ask for the support of the opportunity scholarships and removal of Davis-Bacon and support the rule.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN].

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas [Mr. FROST] for yielding me the time.

I rise in support of this rule. The Committee on Rules yesterday considered a number of amendments to the District of Columbia Appropriations

Act. There was an amendment offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. DIXON], who had been the chair of this D.C. Appropriations Act that would have struck the vouchers provision. He made an eloquent argument in the full Committee on Appropriations against that provision.

There was an amendment offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. HORN] that limited the application of the bill's voucher provision to only schools located within the District of Columbia.

There was an amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK] to correct the provisions that condition funding for the University of the District of Columbia School of Law. And they are receiving accreditation next year by the American Bar Association.

There was an amendment offered by the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER] to strike the provisions in the bill that reopen Pennsylvania Avenue. There was an amendment that I sought to offer that would have struck a number of provisions through which the Committee on Appropriations was attempting to micromanage the District of Columbia government, and particularly micromanaging its financial management system, which is essential to getting the D.C. government back on its feet. But none of these amendments were made in order.

Yet, this is a fair rule because it has made in order a substitute amendment that we will offer. This substitute amendment will strike all of the provisions included in the House version of the D.C. Appropriations Act except the provisions that grant a pay raise to public safety employees.

In its place, my amendment will substitute the version of the D.C. Appropriations Act that was drafted by the, may I say, conservative Republican Senator from North Carolina, and it was approved by a nearly unanimous Senate Committee on Appropriations and passed out of the other body last night.

That is what we want to do. It incorporates the consensus budget from the Control Board, the Mayor, D.C. City Council. We think that is the way to go. It leaves these kinds of legislative decisions to the legislative committee. This is a fair rule because this substitute amendment incorporates all the amendments that Democrats and Republicans sought to offer in the Committee on Rules.

The substitute will strike provisions in the bill that give a sole-source contract for the District's financial management system to a vendor that has not even bid for it. The vendor does not want it, and yet it would insist that they take it and take it away from a vendor that, in fact, was approved and has the capability and qualifications to carry out the financial management system that the city desperately needs.

It will strike the provisions of the bill that prohibit private companies from operating helicopter tours over the Nation's Capitol. Maybe this is a good idea, but it is not up to us to make those kinds of decisions.

It will ensure that no vouchers are made for the schools outside of the District of Columbia. In fact, it will ensure that no voucher provision is enacted, because this is a poison pill, it is a killer amendment. If it is included, the bill will be vetoed.

My substitute amendment will ensure that the budget submitted by the District's governing bodies, the governing bodies that Congress set up in terms of the Financial Control Board, a budget that is balanced 1 year earlier than required, just exactly what we asked them to do, a budget that reduces the District's operating deficit by two-thirds, and it cuts spending from last year.

That bill deserves to be signed into law. If this substitute amendment is approved, that bill will be signed into law. This is a modified closed rule that does limit debate and it limits our freedom to offer amendments, yet it is a fair rule. It allows Members to make a fundamental choice as to whether they are going to allow the District's government and the congressionally created budget process to work or whether they are going to continue to try to micromanage the District of Columbia and make this, the smallest of the 13 appropriations bills, one of the most controversial and contentious.

I support the rule, and I support the substitute that I will be offering pursuant to it. I hope every Member will join me in supporting this rule and in supporting my substitute amendment and, in fact, reaffirming the very concept that the other side has been urging, devolution: Give power back to the people at the local level. Let them make the decisions that they are entitled to make under a democratic process. I urge my colleagues very strongly not only to support this rule, but to support the amendment.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN] also for his very strong support of this bipartisan rule, which I am happy to say that we have been able to work out.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. DAVIS], chairman of the District of Columbia Subcommittee on Government Reform and Oversight and my very dear friend.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California [Mr. DREIER] for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule as well. It is not perfect, but with a bill like this within so many different agendas, it is difficult to frame them.

I am in a bit of a bind because, on the one hand, I certainly have supported the scholarship program, support and spoke for it the last time, support the Davis-Bacon repeal, and yet there are other pieces of this bill that I find really contrary to what we have been trying to do at our committee level. But we will sort this out as it moves, and there are a number of amendments that we will have a chance to address.

I think the legislative process, though, has to move along. It has many steps along the way, and at each one of these steps changes can be made. But if he were to terminate this process, defeat this rule, defeat this bill in whatever form today, and send it back, we are playing a very dangerous game.

Brinkmanship like this in the past has resulted in the Government closing down, the District of Columbia government closing down, through no fault of their own, because of Congress' inability to act. It is unnecessary, because instead of playing beat-the-clock, with one continuing resolution after another, it is far more prudent to move the process along after making whatever changes are possible at this time.

With the District of Columbia appropriations bill, there are other reasons as well for advancing to the next stage of the legislative process. We all know the D.C. Revitalization Act, which passed the Congress as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. Medicaid changes and tax incentives were included as well in that enactment and in the equally historic Tax Reform Act of 1997.

To have enacted such significant reforms, and these were the most significant reforms enacted in the District of Columbia in the last 25 years, and to see them signed by the President is a legislative accomplishment we can all take pride in helping to achieve.

With patience and perseverance, the reforms that we have enacted for the District of Columbia have begun to have their intended effect. In fact, the President's proposals, which we used as the starting point for our Revitalization Act, were made possible by the previous effective measures which Congress had taken in establishing the District of Columbia Control Board.

We now have a rare opportunity, sanctioned by both Congress and the White House, to restructure and improve the complex relationship between the Federal Government and the Nation's Capital. But time is of the essence, and we are at a moment of truth.

Many of the issues addressed in the D.C. Revitalization Act are particularly urgent and time sensitive. To take just one example, a trustee must be up and running to help establish reforms in the District's prison system. Just last week, the court-appointed monitor said of the medium-security security facility at Lorton, ''It has deteriorated to a level of depravity that is unparalleled in its troubled history.''

Many of the changes this Congress enacted for the Nation's Capital simply cannot be implemented within the limited framework of a continuing resolution. They can only be achieved within the framework of a duly enacted budget.

I must respectfully remind my colleagues that we are talking about an

actual living and breathing city. It is tragic enough when Congress reaches an impasse in consideration of a budget for one of our executive departments, but if we are unable to enact a budget for the Nation's Capital, that real city which exists just beyond the monuments is placed at a grave risk of immediate harm. And when you consider most of the District's budget consists of self-generated funds, it makes the spectacle of congressional delay even more difficult to explain.

Some of us have differences with various sections of the bill before us. Many have reservations which I share. But I appeal to all of my colleagues, as chairman of the authorizing subcommittee for the District, to join me in voting for this bill in its final form, whatever it may take today, letting it pass to the next phase of the legislative process. There really is no alternative to that.

If I can take another minute to talk about the procurement in terms of the management reforms and the District's financial management system, there has been a duly authorized procurement. It has been competed widely and openly. It was won fairly. Most of the work is under a fixed-cost arrangement. A very small portion of the work is under an hourly billing arrangement. But the total hours are capped.

A company previously in a previous version, I think we will be taking care of the manager's version today, that was going to be earmarked, is not interested in the business and does not want the business. I think the manager's amendment on this is absolutely essential if we are to move ahead.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK].

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas [Mr. FROST] for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I stand to support the rule. And, hopefully, the Moran amendment will be passed following this rule.

This rule has several things in it with which I do not agree. But it has a lot of good things in it, this particular rule does. With the Moran amendment passing, it certainly will clear up, in my mind and for the people I represent, the District of Columbia's dilemma. But I cannot take my seat unless I say a word or two about this process, which at many times is not a good one.

I had an amendment before the Committee on Rules yesterday concerning the University of the District of Columbia's Law School. I was given permission to bring that rule to the floor. I was given permission to have 10 minutes for debate. And through some kind of chicanery, it did not reach here this morning.

I want this Congress to understand that I shoot from the hip and will always shoot from the hip, I deal straightforward, and some of the kinds of intramural kinds of gymnastics I see here I do not appreciate.

□ 1015

But I can say to my colleagues that I hope that this rule will pass and that the Moran amendment will follow, in spite of some of the arcane kinds of methodologies that some of my colleagues use to fight what they do not want to see. Now, that applies to both parties, both Democrat and Republican. Do not try that with CARRIE MEEK.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to my very good friend, the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT], a hard-working member of the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California and a former Kansas native. We miss the gentleman up there in the State of Kansas, by the way.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very fair rule. It does limit the number of amendments, but we do have, I think, an opportunity to deal with the issues that are contentious in this legislation.

Frankly, the District of Columbia is in need of some change. If we look at the bureaucracy, it seems very heavy. It is laden with inefficiency. If we look at some of the political motivations that have been behind the programs that have been experimented with, they seem to be liberal to most of America.

One of the problems that is very common here is the welfare benefits inside the District of Columbia are much higher than any welfare benefits in the surrounding area. There needs to be some adjustment down.

In the area of safety, many of the people feel unsafe in Washington, D.C. It has often been referred to as the murder capital of America, rather than the Capital of the United States, and that is sad. So we do need to have some changes to the police. We found out recently that 90 percent of the arrests are made by 10 percent of the police force. So there need to be some changes in the police department, some incentives for them to be on the street, in the communities, in the neighborhoods. This incentive is in the D.C. appropriations bill.

We also have a way of dealing with the degenerating schools in the District of Columbia by allowing a limited voucher program to take the most difficult situations in education, the children that are having the least hope, that are getting the worst grades, and in a poverty level, and allow them the opportunity with this voucher to have the same ability to go to a private school like the Vice President and the President have. They can take these vouchers and try to increase their ability to compete in the employment market in the future. So it deals with education.

This bill also deals with abortion. A majority of Americans do not want to have their tax dollars coming to Washington, D.C. to fund someone else's abortion. The bill that we have here will prohibit that. It will also prohibit funding of domestic relationships.

There are a myriad of other changes that are necessary, I believe, for us to attempt for the District of Columbia to try to move this into the shining city that we would like to see sitting here on the Hill.

I think what we have is an opportunity for the proponents of these new ideas to come up and defend the status quo, to strike down these new ideas. Through an amendment, they could repeal a lot of initiatives that we have to change the way life is going here in the District of Columbia, to try to reclaim areas of this city, to try to make tax incentives to bring businesses and new people into the area.

So I would urge my colleagues to support the rule and support the D.C. appropriations bill.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if I could quote from today's Washington Post editorial: This bill shows the House at its worst. The bill has been loaded down with heavy ideological and political baggage that ultimately may doom the city's $4.2 billion budget if it reaches the White House. There is a good chance that the school voucher add-on to the appropriations bill will invite a Presidential veto. The House of Representatives need not do this to the Nation's Capital or to itself.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats have made education a top priority this Congress, and our emphasis has been on improving public schools, including raising educational standards and addressing infrastructure needs. My concern is that the Republican leadership, after trying to make the deepest education cuts in history last year, are now emphasizing vouchers to pay for private schools as a way to reform our education system.

In my opinion, vouchers will not help public schools; just the opposite. They will drain away resources that could be used to improve public school standards and rebuild crumbling or overcrowded schools.

The Republican leadership's latest experiment with vouchers will be considered today as part of this bill. As much as $45 million in Federal funds will be made available for pay for private education for only 3 percent of the District of Columbia students. This GOP voucher plan provides a select few D.C. public school students, about 2,000, with vouchers, while providing no answers for the 76,000 students left behind in the D.C. public schools. The D.C. public schools, like all of America's schools, need to be improved, not abandoned. The GOP voucher plan is nothing but a strategy of failure, of giving up on the Nation's public schools here and throughout this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to oppose this bill and support the Moran substitute. Let us take out

the voucher program and all of the other ideological and political baggage that hurts the District of Columbia and will delay passage of this appropriation bill that is so vital to the city of Washington's future.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO].

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this bill. The headline in the Washington Post editorial page this morning reads, and I quote: ''The House at Its Worst on D.C.'' ''Republican and Democratic Members ought to be embarrassed even to consider such a small-minded measure on the House floor.''

It certainly is the truth. For after proposing the biggest cuts in education in this Nation's history, after attempting to shut down the Department of Education, the Republican majority is now trying to end public education in this country.

Education is the single-most important issue that faces us today. It is education that opens the doors for opportunity in our society. It is education that levels the playing field, provides every single American child with the opportunity to make the most of his or her God-given talents. Mr. Speaker, 89 percent of American students attend public schools, and our schools need fixing. They have serious problems, and we all know that.

But the Republican voucher plan, an experimental plan, would do nothing to improve the D.C. schools. It would drain precious taxpayer funds from these schools and put money into private schools, money that could be used to repair leaky roofs, buy new computers and books.

We need to spend our time focused on improving public schools for all of our children, not providing an out for a select few which will further degrade educational equality for those who remain in the system. Mr. Speaker, 2,000 kids. What about the 76,000 other children?

Proponents of vouchers argue that they will enable poor families to have the same choice of school as wealthy ones. This is a false promise. Not only do vouchers weaken the public schools by siphoning off funds, they typically do not even cover the high cost of tuition at private schools.

Example: The bill would provide a D.C. student with $3,200 toward tuition at a private school, yet this does not come close to paying for tuition at the District's most prestigious schools, Georgetown Day School, Sidwell Friends cost $11,000. Vouchers will not solve the problems in our public schools; they will create new ones.

Speaker GINGRICH wants to test this program on children who live here in the Nation's Capital. It is an experiment, an experiment that they want to try to foist on this entire country. I have a message for the Speaker. Our children are not guinea pigs and the American public understands that. They do not want to see taxpayer dollars put into private education, and that is a poll number by 54 to 39 percent. The American public says no to taking taxpayers' dollars and putting them into private education. Democrats are not going to allow the experiment to go forward; neither will be American public.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill. Let us work to find ways in which we can rebuild America's schools, not to destroy them.

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

My very good friend from Connecticut just quoted the town crier of liberalism, the Washington Post, and I would like to actually share a little bit of a Post editorial that was carried about 10 days ago in which they said:

> A modest voucher experiment might help energize the public schools. It won't replace them. People who think of vouchers as a way somehow of evading the responsibility for public education are blowing smoke. And such a program, we believe, will not do harm to the system or by implication suggest that it is a permanent loser. As we say, the schools in this city do not present one solid, bleak picture such as the political critics somehow paint. The point, the hope, would be that such an experiment could be one small part of the effort being undertaken with vigor and optimism by the new school team to bring the District system to a higher, more even standard of achievement, one that reflects the quality of our best schools, which are the models.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my very good friend, the gentleman from San Diego, CA [Mr. CUNNINGHAM].

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO], states her own opinion as fact, and I would say that the gentlewoman is factually challenged in the fact that it does not go just to private schools, the opportunity scholarship. If a parent in the D.C. school system finds that there is an unsafe school where it does not offer a fair education, then that parent, like anyone that would want their child to get a good education.

Second, the gentlewoman says Republicans cut education. Mr. Speaker, $10 billion we saved. We cut the President's direct lending program out of bureaucracy, $10 billion, because it inflated $5 billion capped at 10 percent, but yet we increase scholarships by 50 percent, we put money into the IDEA program for special education, we increased the Pell grant to the highest level ever, we increased Eisenhower grants for teacher training. What we cut is the liberals' precious bureaucracy. That is the same thing that they are trying to do here, is fight for the unions. We are trying to fight for the children.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. DIXON].

Mr. DIXON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I have been listening to the debate on TV and I was reminded that H.I. Hayakawa is no longer in the Chamber, but seemed to be in language and thought and action, all the snarl and pearl words that were being thrown back and forth here.

I noticed with interest my friend from California cited the Washington Post about this great experiment. What the Washington Post says and fails to say is that if 2,000 children get vouchers, what happens to the other 76,000?

There is no doubt that there are good public education schools. There is no doubt that there are good schools in our country, and in fact, we are going to talk about some that are good in Washington, DC. And there is no doubt that there are private schools in this country and in Washington DC, that are good. But the issue is, What happens to these kids that are left behind?

Mr. Speaker, 2,000 out of 76,000 is a noble experiment, but what does it prove? We already know that there are problems in public education. We already know that there are some success stories both in the private and public sector.

I would note to my friend from California [Mr. DREIER], that he cited a poll. That poll, he said, said that 60 percent of the people here in the District supported the voucher system. That is not correct. It is a joint center poll. I think the figure is 57.8 percent. However, it is a sampling of 800 and some odd people.

Now, we have had a great debate on this floor about sampling, and the gentleman from California now has extracted that for all of the people in the District. So what is good for the goose is good for the gander.

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO].

□ 1030

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, my colleague who pointed out that I was factually incorrect in fact is factually incorrect. I would like to make a clarification with regard to the bill.

It says directly in the bill with regard to the District that tuition scholarships may be used at private schools in the District. It is right here in the language of the bill.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. DELAURO. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. I did not say it was not used, I said it was not restricted to private use; that you can choose to go to another public school if you desire.

Ms. DELAURO. It says private schools in the District. The gentleman is incorrect.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would respond to my good friend, the gentleman from Los Angeles, who I should say has spent a good deal of time working on behalf of

the issues of concern here in the District of Columbia.

I would simply point to the fact that under our proposal that exists here, the amount spent for public schools is literally twice that that would be expended under the voucher program. In fact, for those 76,000 students, we propose spending $570 million, which is twice as much per student than those who would actually receive the parental choice scholarships.

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

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

Mr. DIXON. Mr. Speaker, I say to the gentleman from California [Mr. DREIER], my point is, what is this all about? Let us concede that 2,000 children will get a better education. I am not sure of that, but let us concede that. Then what? Is the suggestion that in the District of Columbia we will turn all the schools over to private? What is the point? We have been through this exercise.

Mr. DREIER. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, the point is to try and encourage competition, to try to improve education, to try to get a system into place which can be successful, rather than the one that we have seen which virtually everyone has acknowledged is a failure.

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

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

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I would say to my friend, the issue is not private versus public schools. It is trying to bring a school system that is in an emergency up to a level to help.

Sure, we would like more money than for just the 2,000, but if we take a look, and I would like to submit, it is a civil right, fighting for school choice, per Dr. King. Here, school choice finds satisfaction, parents are pleased and pupils improve scores.

If we look at national scores, the African-American community supports school choice. Bishop McKinney in my own city takes at-risk children, and 97 percent of them end up going to school.

Mr. DIXON. Mr. Speaker, If the gentleman will continue to yield, this debate is not about whether private or public schools are good or bad.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. I have not yielded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The gentleman from California [Mr. DREIER] controls the time at the moment.

Mr. DREIER. I continue to yield to my friend, the gentleman from San Diego, CA [Mr. CUNNINGHAM].

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, we are saying that the school system, especially in Washington, DC, is in an emergency situation, that we would like to take a look at that, that it has succeeded in other places in the country.

Yes, there are good teachers here. I have met some of them. General Becton is trying to change things. But we are saying that yes, there are only 2,000 students, but we would like to help the system as we can, and in the future bring up the public schools to the same level.

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

This is all, Mr. Speaker, about giving parents some choice and control over these decisions that are made here. If the Washington Post can advocate pursuing this sort of experiment, I think that we responsibly can do that.

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California [Mr. DIXON].

Mr. DIXON. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman from southern California that the issue is not whether private schools do good work or whether public schools do good work, and some are in trouble. I would suggest that there are a lot of schools in our society that do good work.

The issue is not whether Martin Luther King said some statement that you are now using to support this, or the bishop in San Diego. The issue here is what the District should do in their school system.

The gentleman has been a big supporter of the general that has been appointed superintendent. That was a bold step. We need to give him an opportunity, and if we are to do anything at the Federal level, it is to support his bold efforts, not to take off 2,000 kids, to prove what? That is my point.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my good friend, the gentleman from Falls Church, VA [Mr. DAVIS], the chairman of the Subcommittee of the District of Columbia of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Just to correct some misunderstandings, this 2,000-student system where they will get the scholarships, I think that is a good idea. I will tell the gentleman why. I generally do not support vouchers. I am a strong supporter of the public schools, where I have three kids.

But the city's public schools today, as the gentleman knows, are in a state of disarray. There is a dropout rate of about 40 percent. The most difficult thing is we cannot even certify to some of the parents that the schools are safe.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. DIXON. What is the inference of what the gentleman is saying?

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. The inference of what we are saying is while we are fixing the public schools, while we are putting more resources into public schools with this bill, that some of these kids that are there now and will be there next year, they will only be in third grade once. You do not take that year away from them. Let us give them the same kinds of opportunities that our children have.

Not one Member of Congress, not the President, not the Vice President, sends their kids to the District of Columbia public schools. What it means is we would like to give some of these parents, the poorest of the poor, some of the opportunities that the rest of us have while we are trying to fix the system and make it work better.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield 2 minutes to my good friend and congressional classmate, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. WOLF].

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the scholarship program. I have had five kids. All have attended public schools in Fairfax County.

To verify what the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. DAVIS] said, I would just tell the gentleman from California [Mr. DIXON], my daughter taught for a year in the D.C. schools. If all of us had children in the D.C. schools, we would be up in arms trying to change it.

I know of a family that took a young boy out of the District of Columbia and put him in, and he was not doing very well in school, put him in the Fairfax County schools, where he is now excelling and getting a B, and doing very, very well.

We have an obligation. We have an obligation. None of us in this body, and there may be one or two, and if I am wrong, I apologize, but I do not believe there are more than two in this body that send their children to the D.C. schools. If they did, they would be up in arms.

I strongly support the scholarship program. I commend the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARMEY], the majority leader. I think the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. DAVIS] has it exactly right. We have an obligation. If we were a mom or dad and we had a youngster in that school, we would be revolutionaries, trying to change that school system. Here is an opportunity trying to help at least 2,000.

As Mother Teresa said when she went into Calcutta to help one, she could not help everybody in Calcutta, but she could help one. If we can help 1 or 10 or 2,000, we ought to do it. I strongly support it, and hope we get a majority on our side, but also a majority from this side.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend, the gentleman from Palm Bay, FL [Mr. WELDON].

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this school choice experiment for the District of Columbia. Twenty percent of Americans have school choice. They are the wealthy, they are the upper middle class. The people who do not are the poor and needy. I believe we have a responsibility to try to do something to try to make a change.

It has been demonstrated that just pouring more money into the system is not working. By looking at this and studying this, we can see firsthand if it is going to work. Frankly, I think it is irrational for anybody to be opposed to such a small school choice study right here in the capital city of the United States. For the life of me, I do not understand why anybody would oppose something this small, just to see if it works. If it fails, they will have their day. They can all rise up and say, ''It has been a disaster.''

But if it works, we have set a new model, a new standard for communities all over the country.

Mr. DIXON. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, we know some private schools work.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER].

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER] is recognized for 2½ minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I came late to the floor. I understand that my colleagues are for this rule because the Moran amendment is made in order. I understand that rationale and I am for the Moran amendment.

I do not believe the majority has the intent of supporting the Moran amendment. I do not know that. Some will vote for it, I hope, on the other side. If not, this process is a sham, it is an ideological quest that will ultimately clearly and unequivocally fail. It will be the closing down of Government of November 1995. Everybody knows if the Moran amendment is not adopted, this bill is deader than a doornail. They are wasting our time and America's time with this ideological quest they are about.

Why do we waste time pretending that we are going to make policy when everybody knows, America knows and we all know, that this bill will be deader than a doornail if the Moran amendment is not adopted?

I rise, in addition to that, to say that I lament the failure of the Committee on Rules to be responsible on this legislation, and precluded me from making an amendment to strike a provision which puts at risk the President of the United States, his family's safety, the staff of the White House's safety, and the visitors to the White House's safety.

After a bipartisan group, of which Bill Webster, the former head of the FBI and the CIA, was a member, former General Jones, chairman of the Joint Chiefs was a member, unanimously recommended the closing of Pennsylvania Avenue, and I know that is controversial, but to change that policy in the twinkling of an eye denies the reality of the bombing in New York, denies the reality of the deaths of 168 people in Oklahoma City, denies the reality of the deaths of over 100 military personnel in Saudi Arabia.

It is irresponsible, I say to my colleagues, to not give this House the opportunity to strike the provision which puts at risk the symbol of executive leadership, not just of America but of the world, knowing full well that we have terrorists throughout this country who would use that as a symbol for some demented objective. I urge the rejection of this rule.

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

I should say, Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief one minute remaining, so I do not plan to yield, even to my friend, the gentleman from Los Angeles, CA [Mr. DIXON].

Mr. Speaker, let me say that what we have come down to here, Mr. Speaker, is a very important question. My friend, the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER] just talked about partisanship and ideology. The fact of the matter is we should get beyond those things. I agree with that. What we should do is look at why it is that we are here dealing with this very important question.

What is it? We want to empower parents to have some choice to do what? Help their children, improve their plight. Everyone acknowledges that the education system here in the District of Columbia is in very serious trouble. The Washington Post has said we should try this experiment of parental choice, and when we do that, with this experiment we will be spending half as much as is being expended on a per student basis today here in the District of Columbia.

So let us put this issue of partisanship and ties to these special interests to the side, and at least try some creativity, an innovative way to deal with this very serious question.

I urge support of this bipartisan rule. I said on WAMU this morning, in response to Mark Plotkin, we have a bipartisan agreement on the rule. Let us pass the rule, and then move ahead with what obviously will be a very interesting debate.

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

The previous question was ordered.

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I, further proceedings on this question will be postponed until later today.

The point no quorum is considered withdrawn.

□ 1045

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2169, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 263 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 263

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2169) making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LINDER] is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MOAKLEY], pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 263 waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration. The rule also provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

Mr. Speaker, in brief, the transportation appropriations bill for fiscal year 1998 provides vital transportation resources that will ensure a strong infrastructure for the United States and contains significant safety and security protections for American families across the Nation.

The conferees have provided $9.07 billion for the Federal Aviation Administration and assured the necessary funding to ensure aviation safety and security, enhance the capacity of the aviation system, improve weather forecasting systems, and provide automatic alerting systems to prevent runway collisions. These are provisions that are vital to provide the effective services and protection that the American public deserves.

Mr. Speaker, the conference report also provides $333.5 million to reduce fatalities on the Nation's roadways, $3.9 billion for the Coast Guard, and $354.1 million for the Coast Guard's drug interdiction program, $1.7 billion for the airport improvement program, and highway spending that is consistent with levels assumed in the bipartisan budget agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to compliment the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. WOLF], the subcommittee chairman, for providing no special highway