Visclosky
Vitter
Walsh
Wamp
Waters
Watkins
Watt (NC)
Watts (OK)
Waxman
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Wexler
Weygand
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson
Wise
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—10

Berry
Cooksey
Crowley
Hutchinson
Pryce (OH)
Rangel
Rogan
Sununu
Towns
Young (AK)

□ 1609

Mr. MCHUGH, Ms. BERKLEY, and Mr. SCARBOROUGH changed their vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

Messrs. COBLE, ROHRABACHER, ARMEY, BURTON of Indiana, SHERWOOD, and HOYER changed their vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 275, the Chair announces that he will reduce to a minimum of 5 minutes the period of time within which a vote by electronic device will be taken on the amendment on which the Chair has postponed further proceedings.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. HINCHEY

The Chairman. The pending business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The Clerk designated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The CHAIRMAN. This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 158, noes 266, not voting 9, as follows:

[Roll No. 400]

AYES—158

Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Bachus
Baldacci
Barcia
Barrett (NE)
Barton
Bass
Bereuter
Berman
Biggert
Blagojevich
Boehlert
Bonior
Borski
Boswell
Brady (PA)
Camp
Capuano
Castle
Chabot
Conyers
Costello
Coyne
Crane
Davis (IL)
Delahunt
DeLauro
Doyle
Ehlers
Engel
English
Evans
Ewing
Fattah
Forbes
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Franks (NJ)
Frelinghuysen
Ganske
Gejdenson
Gekas
Gilman
Goodling
Graham
Green (WI)
Greenwood
Gutierrez
Hinchey
Hoeffel
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Houghton
Hulshof
Jackson (IL)
Johnson (CT)
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kelly
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind (WI)
King (NY)
Kleczka
Klink
Kucinich
LaFalce
LaHood
Larson
Latham
LaTourette
Lazio
Leach
Levin
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lowey
Luther
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Markey
Martinez
Mascara
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McGovern
McHugh
McNulty
Meehan
Meeks (NY)
Menendez
Moakley
Mollohan
Murtha
Nadler
Neal
Ney
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Payne
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Phelps
Pitts
Pombo
Porter
Quinn
Ramstad
Reynolds
Riley
Rivers
Roemer
Rothman
Roukema
Rush
Ryan (WI)
Sanders
Sawyer
Saxton
Schakowsky
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Shays
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Spence
Stabenow
Stupak
Sweeney
Terry
Tierney
Toomey
Traficant
Upton
Velazquez
Visclosky
Walsh
Waters
Waxman
Weiner
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Weygand

NOES—266

Abercrombie
Aderholt
Archer
Armey
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Ballenger
Barr
Barrett (WI)
Bartlett
Bateman
Becerra
Bentsen
Berkley
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop
Bliley
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonilla
Bono
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (TX)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Bryant
Burr
Burton
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Campbell
Canady
Cannon
Capps
Cardin
Carson
Chambliss
Chenoweth
Clay
Clayton
Clement
Clyburn
Coble
Coburn
Collins
Combest
Condit
Cook
Cox
Cramer
Cubin
Cummings
Cunningham
Danner
Davis (FL)
Davis (VA)
Deal
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLay
DeMint
Deutsch
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Dooley
Doolittle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Edwards
Ehrlich
Emerson
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Farr
Filner
Fletcher
Foley
Ford
Fowler
Frost
Gallegly
Gephardt
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Goss
Granger
Green (TX)
Gutknecht
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hansen
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Herger
Hill (IN)
Hill (MT)
Hilleary
Hilliard
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hooley
Horn
Hostettler
Hoyer
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Inslee
Isakson
Istook
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Kaptur
Kasich
Kingston
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kuykendall
Lampson
Lantos
Largent
Lee
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lofgren
Lucas (KY)
Lucas (OK)
McCarthy (MO)
McCollum
McCrery
McDermott
McInnis
McIntosh
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinney
Meek (FL)
Metcalf
Mica
Millender-McDonald
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Minge
Mink
Moore
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Morella
Myrick
Napolitano
Nethercutt
Northup
Norwood
Ortiz
Ose
Oxley
Packard
Pastor
Paul
Pease
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Pickering
Pickett
Pomeroy
Portman
Price (NC)
Radanovich
Rahall
Regula
Reyes
Rodriguez
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ryun (KS)
Sabo
Salmon
Sanchez
Sandlin
Sanford
Scarborough
Schaffer
Scott
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Sherman
Shows
Simpson
Sisisky
Skeen
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Souder
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stenholm
Strickland
Stump
Talent
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Thomas
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Thune
Thurman
Tiahrt
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Vento
Vitter
Walden
Wamp
Watkins
Watt (NC)
Watts (OK)
Weldon (FL)
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson
Wise
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—9

Berry
Cooksey
Crowley
Pryce (OH)
Rangel
Rogan
Sununu
Towns
Young (AK)

□ 1620

Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. DOOLITTLE, and Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas changed their vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

Mr. VISCLOSKY and Mr. NEY changed their vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of vote was announced as above recorded.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Chairman, due to circumstances beyond my control, I was unable to be present for rollcall votes 390 through 400.

If I had been present, I would have voted ''yes'' on rollcall No. 390, ''yes'' on rollcall no. 391, ''No'' on rollcall No. 392, ''yes'' on rollcall No. 393, ''yes'' on rollcall No. 394, ''yes'' on rollcall No. 395, ''no'' on rollcall No. 396, ''yes'' on rollcall No. 397, ''yes'' on rollcall No. 398, ''yes'' on rollcall No. 399, and ''no'' on rollcall No. 400.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. GREEN OF WISCONSIN

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following new section:

SEC. . None of the funds appropriated by this Act may be used to terminate inpatient services at the Iron Mountain Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Iron Mountain, Michigan or to close that facility.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I intend to withdraw this amendment after entering into a brief colloquy with the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the chairman of the subcommittee, regarding the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain, Michigan.

I have drafted this amendment because I am greatly concerned that the VA considered and is considering closing and reducing this facility and service to the point where veterans will not be able to receive the care they need or so richly deserve.

There are currently 72,000 veterans in northern Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan who are eligible for care at this facility. This facility provides important and unique services to the veterans throughout this region.

Earlier this year, the VA announced efforts to develop a, quote, conceptualized plan to reengineer health services in VISN 12. There has been talk that part of this reengineering strategy would involve the reduction in the number of acute care beds in Iron Mountain from 17 to 8, and taking those 8 remaining beds and using them merely for stabilization, where patients would be stabilized and then transferred via ambulance to Milwaukee.

As one might imagine, the veterans in this region are worried and with good reason. Currently, nearly 14,000 veterans are enrolled in the Iron Mountain facility. This represents a 20 percent increase over last year. In 1998, there were a total of 1,066 admissions, 1,066 admissions for only 17 beds. It is obvious that these beds are badly needed and overutilized.

Unfortunately, if veterans are not treated at Iron Mountain, they will be forced to make an ambulance ride of over 200 miles to receive acute care in Milwaukee. It has been estimated that 770 veterans a year would have to make that ambulance trip at a cost of nearly $2,000 per ride to receive care. We are asking the sickest, those who are in the greatest need, to travel hundreds of miles to receive care, and that their family members make a similar trip.

Mr. Chairman, I ask the gentleman from New York (Chairman WALSH) what can be done to ensure that VISN 12 will continue to maintain their inpatient services at the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center in the future?

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for his continued concern and efforts on behalf of the veterans in his district and the State of Wisconsin and bringing this important issue before the committee's attention.

In H.R. 2684, we provided a $1.7 billion increase for veterans medical care, the largest increase in history. With this increase, the VA will be able to continue to provide services to his veterans and ours.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I thank the chairman and the committee for their hard work this year to ensure that the VA will continue to provide quality health care to the veterans in my district and all across America.

I also ask the chairman for his help in working against efforts in the future to reduce health services at the Iron Mountain facility.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman again for his comments, and we look forward to working with him on this important issue.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK).

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for yielding to me.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and others for their interest in the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center and thanks to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) for his efforts on this behalf here.

This facility is in my district. In Michigan, my congressional district has more veterans than anyone else. The Iron Mountain Medical Center is the second largest acute care facility in the patient service area covering an area of 25,000 square miles. So veterans from the upper peninsula, northern Wisconsin, and other geographic areas depend on a full range of services at the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center.

Now, earlier this year, as was pointed out, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), Senator FEINGOLD, Senator KOHL, myself, and others will have joined in because they are going to cut the last acute care beds in this area.

We have spoken with VA officials, and they have told us that the beds will not be cut. It is interesting to note that this bill does not call for any cuts in beds or services. Despite the last amendment, we in rural areas are concerned about proposed cuts. It seems like, as soon as the VA faces a crunch, they always look to the rural areas, and we are the ones to get hit first.

So a primary concern for veterans and their families, as has been pointed out, is the geographic remoteness of the area and the vast distances that are required to travel for care. For instance, if Iron Mountain was closed, the next closest VA facility is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Some of my veterans would have to travel 500 miles one way just to get services from the VA. So not only is it an unnecessary hardship, but potential serious danger to their health as they are trying to move back and forth.

I am pleased to note, and the way I understand it, the Veterans Millennium Health Care Act, H.R. 2116, contains provisions which may actually be favorable to rural facilities such as Iron Mountain, because H.R. 2116 would require the Veterans Administration to maintain the current level of service while at the same time encouraging long-term reform.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) has expired.

(On request of Mr. STUPAK, and by unanimous consent, Mr. GREEN was allowed to proceed for 2 additional minutes.)

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman from Wisconsin will continue to yield, H.R. 2116 would encourage long-term reform, improve access through facility realignment, eligibility reform, and enhance revenues.

It is vitally important that the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center remain strong, and any reduction in service would be fairly detrimental to those who have served our country for so long.

Again, I appreciate the interest of the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN), and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) and all the rest who worked together.

We look forward to continue to work with him to ensure our Nation's veterans receive the health care they earn and deserve and to ensure there is no reduction in services at the Iron Mountain VA center.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I would just thank the Chair and thank the chairman of the subcommittee once again for his hard work, not just his pledge of support to work with me with respect to the VA medical facility, but on this bill, the largest increase in history for veterans health care.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, reserving the right to object, I would simply like to reiterate to the gentleman what the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) has indicated; that when we first discovered the possibility of the reduction of the beds for that facility that Senator KOHL and Senator FEINGOLD and Senator LEVIN, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) and I sent a letter to the VA noting the illogical nature of closing the remote hospital beds while we had such an overlap in some of our largest urban areas.

I talked personally with the leadership of the VA; and after that conversation, they made it quite clear to me that they had no intention of closing any of those beds in that facility. Certainly this budget has no provision for closing those beds.

I appreciate very much the willingness of the VA to reconsider what, to me, was an ill-advised approach. I do think Members of Congress have to be careful because it is very difficult for us to be logically consistent if we are voting for budgets which appear to demand overall reductions and then if we object when specific reductions are then made in either our own areas or in our own favorite programs.

□ 1630

But in this instance I am very happy that we received the response that we have from the VA.

Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, reserving the right to object, I want to pick up on the comments of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

I agree with the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) with regard to the case that the gentleman has made for Iron Mountain, and certainly the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) have made strong cases as members of the gentleman's delegation. But as the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) said, it is more than illogical. It could border on hypocrisy I could say, that the folks on this side of the aisle

get up and argue for their medical centers and their clinics to stay open, for their services to go unimpeded, and then, when the chance is offered, as it was yesterday on at least eight occasions, for Members to vote to allow the funding of the VA, which is vastly underfunded, when my colleague had the chance to vote on that, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) voted no.

So to come here and argue for a VA center in a particular district, to come up and argue for that, but to vote no on additional funding for the VA and then go back home and say how much you fought for your VA, borders a little bit, I will say on the illogical to keep the same frame of reference of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY), in earlier debate I think, said very eloquently if we move funds to do what different individuals want to do with their particular VA hospitals means that we will cut quality here, that we will cut services there, because we do not have enough money in the VA budget. We are underfunded in VA health care by at least $1.5 billion in spite of the plus-up that the subcommittee gave.

So unless the gentleman is willing on his side of the aisle to join us in raising the budget to the $3 billion that the veterans of this Nation came up with, then I think that the other side has some soul searching to do with these kinds of amendments.

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

Mr. FILNER. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me, and I would ask him if he was aware that this bill increases veterans' medical care by $1.7 billion?

Mr. FILNER. Reclaiming my time under my reservation, Mr. Chairman, I would respond to the chairman that I am very aware, and I would ask in return, is the gentleman aware that the independent budget of 300 veterans' organizations around this country said that the minimum, the absolute minimum, to keep our VA health system going and not to have closures like the gentleman wants to protest about in his district, like I would not want in my own district, that that budget asks for $3.2 billion for veterans' health care? So the gentleman gave one-half of what was needed. And we are going to have these issues all through the next year based on the budget.

I agree with the chairman when he called the budget the President's budget plus 1.7. I think it might be called the Walsh budget minus 1.5. That is, it is higher than the President's; but it is lower than what it should be. And the gentleman's Members are going to come up every day in the coming session and say please do not close my hospital.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman continue to yield?

Mr. FILNER. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. WALSH. In the event that we do provide this 1.7 increase in this bill, is the gentleman prepared to support that $1.7 billion increase? Because if he does not he is then, in effect, supporting the President's level of level funding.

Mr. FILNER. No, I am supporting the independent budget of 3.2. I am going to vote against the bill on the floor because it is insufficient. And everybody in this House ought to vote against it so we do not have the problems that the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) raises, and that the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) is about to raise, and that we had raised earlier by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARR). We are going to have colloquies from 435 districts about closing VA facilities unless we pass a reasonable bill.

Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MRS. KELLY

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mrs. KELLY:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following new section:

SEC. ——. None of the funds provided by this Act may be used to close any Department of Veterans Affairs medical center.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer a very simple amendment. This amendment would prohibit the VA from closing any VA hospitals during fiscal year 2000.

We are in the midst of a great deal of change in the way the VA provides medical care to our veterans. The health care being provided by VA medical centers is moving from an inpatient-based hospital system to more of an outpatient-based clinical system. The VA is reacting to the same forces that are changing our private health care. There is a great deal of uncertainty for our veterans. I am constantly hearing from veterans expressing their concerns over the potential closing of hospitals.

To these concerns of our veterans Secretary West has responded. In numerous speeches before veterans service organizations this year, and in meetings with the New York congressional delegation, Secretary West has made a pledge to keep all VA hospitals open throughout the year 2000. With this in mind, it is prudent to assist the Secretary in his efforts and put a temporary hold on the closing of any VA hospitals until October 2000.

In recent weeks, the GAO came out with a report citing their findings of underused, inefficient VA hospitals wasting our VA dollars. It seems to me that the wise course would be to allow the VA to review and examine the facilities in question before any long-term decisions are made. The VA has assets and it has needs. We must take advantage of those assets, namely the existing infrastructure, and use them to help address the growing needs of our aging veteran population's needs.

The GAO has noted that these hospitals are antiquated and do not measure up to current standards. That is no fault of the hospitals; it is the result of a lack in proper funding for infrastructure and improvements. Congress has already passed initiatives that can assist the VA in realizing the potential of these underused facilities through the Enhanced Use Lease Authority. While this authority is in need of improvement, it is the right idea and we must ensure that any closure of hospitals maximizes the use of this authority.

One way this could be used is to lease the space to provide, for example, much-needed long-term geriatric care to our veterans. They represent the fastest growing need for our veteran population. Over the next 21 years, the veteran population over 85 years of age is expected to increase 333 percent. This demonstrates an imperative situation. Let us not close down one of the greatest assets of the VA system, namely, its infrastructure. Let us make it work for our veterans.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to carefully consider these issues and support this amendment.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, the arguments the gentlewoman just made were extremely good. I support the gentlewoman's amendment. And I need to be nice to her, since she represents my daughter up in Bedford, New York. So I thank her for her representation. But, once again, I cannot fail to point out that the logic of the budget that the majority party is pushing and that the gentlewoman voted for and refused to amend is pushing toward exactly the situation that she wants to prevent.

I am with the gentlewoman. I think we should do exactly what the gentlewoman said. And she has laid out a rational, objective policy for the VA to follow. Unfortunately, we are putting them in the position, by underfunding them, that they are going to have to take positions that none of us will like when it comes to health care. And as the gentlewoman said earlier in regard to the debate on another matter, if they do not do this, they are going to cut quality or cut services. Something has got to give if they do not have enough money, and assuming they are using the money efficiently and assuming they are using the money to the best degree. And we all have to question that, and the gentlewoman's amendment asks for that.

But I will tell my colleague that, again, I find it highly illogical, bordering on hypocrisy, that the majority party puts forward these amendments to stop the closure of Iron Mountain, to put a clinic in the district of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARR), to stop the closing of VA hospitals anywhere; and yet when they are given the opportunity to vote additional funds,

not to break the budget, not to be doing something irresponsible, but to put in what the veterans of this Nation have said is absolutely essential to keep the quality of our VA system going, they vote no. And then my colleagues are on TV and they are back home saying that they are fighting for their veterans. Yet on all the procedural motions, not to mention the substantive motions, that will allow the majority to really back up what they are saying with the money to cover it, they vote no.

So I am going to continue to point out this illogic. I am going to continue to point out that the dynamics of my colleague's own budget undercuts what she is trying to do. If the gentlewoman's amendment passes, which I hope it does, then, as she said earlier in her comments, they are going to give way somewhere else. So the gentlewoman's constituents are going to face a lack of quality of services or a lack of some specialist or other service. And until the majority party votes to increase this funding, we are going to have the positions that the gentlewoman is arguing for.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FILNER. I yield to the gentlewoman from New York.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, I hear what my colleague is saying; however, I think it is very important that we focus on a couple of things that I think are of importance.

One is that the President's budget asked for only $200 million, whereas this bill puts in $1.7 billion. It is the largest increase that we have ever had.

Mr. FILNER. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Chairman, we have heard that. We stipulated yesterday and for the last 2 months that the President's budget was irresponsible and not good policy. We are not passing here the President's budget. Throw that out. My colleagues cannot keep answering my criticisms and the country's criticisms that they do better than the President. The President did lousy. This is our budget and this budget is lousy.

This budget underfunds VA health care by $1.5 billion, and until we correct that, the amendments that the gentlewoman is offering is going to be of little help.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to my colleague's amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleague from New York, who has put in so much time and energy into her staunch defense of veterans medical care for her district and for the rest of the State of New York. I think she has done it in a responsible way, unlike some others, who have talked about advocacy for the veterans and then offered funds that were not available; offered budgetary gimmicks to present the image that there are funds available for veterans health care that are not actually there.

There has been a lot of discussion today about the independent budget. If this budget was so good, why did the American Legion, the largest veterans service organization in America, not support it? They did not. But they did support this budget.

The independent budget was presented by veterans advocacy groups at the beginning of the budget process as a marker. Blue sky, best possible scenario, this is what we would like. How many people, how many organizations have not done that in a discussion or in a negotiation? They ask for the sky, and they get what they need. And that is exactly what this budget provides; what the Veterans Administration needs to provide quality health care in America for our veterans.

Who am I talking about when I say that the veterans organizations support this bill? The American Legion supports this bill. The Veterans of Foreign Wars supports this level of funding. Noncommissioned Officers Association, Retired Enlisted Men's and Women's Association, the Military Coalition, the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Who would know better the importance of medical care for veterans than the Military Order of the Purple Heart? They endorse this bill. Jewish War Veterans, Gold Star Wives. Who would know better than a Gold Star wife or a Gold Star mother of the importance of veterans medical care than these women? They support this bill.

It is easy to wave a budget that was a negotiating position that was created months ago before the rubber met the road in terms of this budgetary process.

□ 1645

Fleet Reserve Association, Reserve Officers Association, National Military and Veterans Alliance, Retired Officers Association, Air Force Sergeants Association, Catholic War Veterans, National Association for Uniformed Services, Korean War Veterans Association.

Who are the experts? Who are the veterans? Who speaks for the veterans? I think the veterans.

Let them speak for themselves. And they have. Yes, the independent budget was presented as a negotiating piece. But if my colleagues ask these organizations what is the right number, they are going to tell them and they have told us $1.7 billion is the right number.

The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) has produced a document that shows how each and every VISN around the country is affected positively by this bill. We have to proffer support for this level of funding. Those who would not vote for this bill do not get off scot free. There is a price, and the price is they go home and they say to their veterans, I could not support that bill. And they say, Why? We needed that money. We needed that $1.7 billion.

And they are going to hold our feet to the fire if we do not support that level of funding. They know what is real and what is not real more than most others do, and that $3-billion figure is not real. The $1.7 billion is real money for real people for real programs and real health care.

Getting back to the initial amendment, I reluctantly cannot support the amendment. I respectfully ask the gentlewoman to withdraw it. I know the VA in her district faces some difficult challenges. It does all over in the Northeast and the West, the Midwest. We heard that today. But I think we can address those issues outside of this amendment.

I promise to work with her and other Members representing VISN 3. We are going to make sure our staff is engaged with the leadership in VISN 3 to try to resolve these issues regarding her concerns.

So I would complete my comments by asking the gentlewoman to withdraw the amendment if she could.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Kelly amendment and in opposition to the proposed VA-HUD budget. I do so for a number of reasons.

First of all, I have some serious concerns about the proposed benefits for veterans, especially in the area of health care and housing. Almost every 3 or 4 months there is a discussion, there is a rumor, there is a report that one of the Veterans' Administration hospitals in my district is going to close. This raises the level of uncertainty among veterans in terms of whether or not they are going to be able to get the care that they so rightly deserve.

Neither do I believe that now is the time to decrease funding for space, environmental protection, FEMA, or the National Science Foundation.

However, Mr. Chairman, I take this time also to express strong opposition to the proposed cuts in the budget for HUD. This bill proposes to cut $945 million less for HUD housing than was available in fiscal year 1999. This bill provides for $982 million less than requested.

No funding is provided for new vouchers to provide assistance to additional families. It cuts public housing modernization by 15 percent, drug elimination grants by 6 percent, Hope VI, and generally distressed housing revitalization by 8 percent, housing opportunities for people with AIDS by 4 percent, community development block grant monies by 6 percent, community development block grant loan guarantees by 14 percent, Brownfields cleanup and development 20 percent less, lead-based paint abatement 13 percent less, fair housing activities 2 percent less, and the HOME program 1 percent less.

Under this bill, Chicago, Illinois, the center of the Midwest, will lose $6,982,000; 527 jobs; 442 fewer housing units for low-income families; 77 fewer housing units for people with AIDS; 1,000 vouchers for Section 8; 33,000

fewer home buyers. It takes away support services for 43,000 homeless people. Thirty thousand homeless people will have no emergency beds, and 6,500 people with AIDS will be without services. And 212,500 people overall will not have any aid which they could get without these cuts.

There is indeed a rental housing crisis in America, and this bill falls $1.6 billion short of U.S. needs. And without these greatly needed 100,000 Section 8 vouchers, matters will become significantly worse.

So, Mr. Chairman, you see, this bill, while well-meaning, while thorough efforts have been made to analyze it, while serious attention has been given to it, the real fact of the matter is that it undercuts the very basic needs and services of those constituents that it was designed to help.

So I would urge that we go back ultimately to the drawing board. It does not provide veterans with the care that they need. It does not provide the level of assurance that veterans need to have.

So again, I reiterate my support for the Kelly amendment and urge its passage.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY).

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, I would like to engage in a short dialogue with the chairman of the committee if I may.

Mr. Chairman, my concern is closing of the hospitals because I see the hospitals as being a piece of the assets that the VA actually owns. I look at an aging veterans population that is strongly in need of support in terms of assisted living and skilled nursing and that type of care; and I am concerned that if we step down these assets, which are currently full care, acute care hospitals, that we are closing a possibility, closing a doorway for those elderly veterans.

I would like to ask the chairman of the committee if he would help me and work with me through addressing these assets that we have in trying to use them in a better way. I think it is very important that the enhanced use lease authority be addressed in this manner and used in this manner.

I think that I could perhaps comfortably withdraw this amendment if I can get that kind of a pledge from the committee.

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I would pledge to the gentlewoman that we would make it a priority to work with her to make sure that the facts and figures on services and properties and everything within each individual VISN were provided for review to make sure that these assets are being dealt with and used wisely and in a proper way and, as I said earlier, providing staff to help to resolve some of the issues in VISN 3. I pledge that support to the gentlewoman.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman would yield further, I ask that there be an ability for those of us who are not on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and for Congress as a whole to have an opportunity to see more clearly, with more transparency, some of the ways that the VA is using money within each individual VISN.

At present, I am not able to get those figures, and that also inhibits my ability to ascertain how carefully the money that is being allocated is being used by the regional visions.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman would yield further, let me be brief because I know the gentleman is waiting to reclaim his time and it is precious.

We have requested that report as soon as it may be available to us. We will share it with the gentlewoman and work through those issues with her.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman would yield further, if all options could be explored, that would include the enhanced use authority, then I would be willing to ask unanimous consent to withdraw my amendment.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Chairman, how much time do I have remaining?

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) has 1 minute remaining.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) be given an additional 2 minutes.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I simply rise at this point to speak directly to the issue of what we are doing in this veterans budget under the leadership of the subcommittee chairman. We are increasing veterans health care spending by $1.7 billion. That represents an increase of almost 10 percent.

One of the concerns that I actually have with this very generous increase is I do not know if the VA will be able to spend all this money efficiently. I would not be surprised if they have some of the money left over. That is a huge increase for the agency to absorb.

By giving them these additional funds, there will not be any hospitals closed. If anything, what will happen is the badly underserved areas like the district that I represent, the whole State of Florida, and what the gentleman from California is saying is that, no, a 20-percent increase is necessary and anything short of a 20-percent increase is underfunding.

Frankly, I believe that position is ridiculous and the chairman of the subcommittee has clearly spelled out that the veterans organizations are behind this. I think this is a very clear statement that the Republican Party, the Republicans in Congress, support our veterans and we are giving a very, very generous increase in this budget to veterans affairs. And to hold out a pie-in-the-sky number of, no, $3 billion and anything short of that is underfunding I believe is ludicrous.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, reserving the right to object, let me first say to the gentleman from Florida and the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee, the $3 billion figure is not my figure. It comes from a process that was initiated and sustained by the major veterans organizations in this Nation. They came up with a professional budget that was designed to accommodate the basic needs of the health care system, needs that had been left unmet for the last 5 years.

When the gentleman from Florida says that he doubts that they would be able to use the funds, I would refer him to the Alzheimer's patients who are being released from hospitals because there are not the funds to keep them. I will refer the gentleman to hepatitis C victims, almost 2 million of them, who are suffering from a potentially fatal disease with no money to meet their health care needs. I would refer the gentleman to the Persian Gulf War illness victims who cannot get either their treatment or the explanation for their illness in any respectful fashion because there are no funds to do that.

Every veteran in this Nation will tell us that there are needs that can be met, and I suspect that the veterans organizations think that the $1.7 billion that the chairman should be commended for achieving, and I do not understate that achievement, I say to the chairman, given the numbers they have to work with. And please take my criticism as of the process and not of my colleague, because I think he and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) did an incredibly good job in plussing that up.

But I would argue that it is still insufficient given the needs and given the aging population and given the new areas that we have discovered that need to be dealt with.

I would remind the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), who is the chairman of the subcommittee, this $1.7 billion plus-up which comes out of the Republican budget resolution rests on a downminus, if I can use that word, over the next 10 years. That is, the VA budget will start decreasing based on their numbers and for the biggest decrease in our history.

□ 1700

So we have not sufficiently funded this budget, and I would say to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), I suspect that if he gave those organizations a vote between this budget and my budget, mine would win. We would have letters supporting that.

So once again, I say to the veterans of this Nation, this Congress is poised to pass a bill that does not meet the health care needs, does not meet the commitment and benefits that we have promised; and we should vote it down and say to the veterans, we can do better.

Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my reservation of objection to the unanimous consent request.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

The CHAIRMAN. The amendment is withdrawn.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. KLECZKA

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. KLECZKA:

At the end of the bill, insert after the last section (preceding the short title) the following new section:

SEC. . None of the funds made available in this Act may be used by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to promulgate final national primary drinking water standards for Radium 226 and 228 under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Chairman, as the reading of the amendment indicates, this amendment would prevent the EPA from using fiscal year 2000 funds to promulgate a final rule regarding radium in drinking water.

The EPA, I am told, intends to issue a rule later in the year 2000 using a five pico curies per liter standard, the smallest amount measurable.

This issue has been addressed by Congress before. In 1996, Congress required EPA to delay a proposed standard for radon and radium until the National Research Council prepared a risk assessment on both substances.

At that point, I should add, the level talked about by or discussed by the EPA was a 20 pico curies level in drinking water.

The EPA finally did complete the study on radon but failed to study radium. The EPA cites the study on airborne radon as evidence that exceeding the level of radium in water beyond five pico curies per liter may result in adverse health effects.

The EPA is moving ahead on radium even though the study's authors are careful to note in the findings that, and I quote, ''Whether these considerations also hold for other carcinogens such as X-rays was not an issue that was addressed by this committee.''

This rule will affect over 600 communities nationwide. A water utility in my district and the district of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) estimates that it would cost rate payers about $40 million to build a treatment facility that will enable them to comply with EPA's mandates.

What we ask through adoption of this amendment is for the EPA to gather the scientific data on the health effects of radium in our water and to determine at what level the standard should be set.

This can be done by conducting two studies: a bone cancer risk study, which is a population-based study that will assess the association of radium in drinking water with the occurrence of bone cancer; and a second study, a cellular biomarker study which will answer the question of whether drinking water exceeding the five pico curies per liter level will cause harmful effects in the blood cells of water drinkers.

I urge support for this amendment, which will prohibit the EPA from formulating a rule about the effects of drinking water containing low levels of radium before our water utilities spend millions on what could be a nonexistent problem.

Congress asked for a risk assessment before. Evidently we must insist on this study again.

Mr. Chairman, I urge support of this amendment.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, this amendment, obviously, is a fairly important development in this bill and it takes the form of what most people would refer to as a rider, legislative rider. The consequences of the amendment are not clear, intended or unintended consequences. There just does not seem to be enough information available right now, at least for this Member, to make a determination as to whether or not this is a good idea or a bad idea, whether it helps or hurts the bill.

I know some other Members have expressed some concerns about this; not any clear opposition to it but just concerns about what this will eventuate for EPA and for our communities.

The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) has shown some real sincere concern for his communities. I have been addressed by some of my communities about the fact that some of these regulations the EPA lays on the communities are expensive; it puts a huge burden on them and I understand those concerns.

What I would ask, and I would be happy to yield time to the gentleman for debate purposes, to ask if he would consider withdrawing this amendment with the thought that as we go into conference there might be a way to address this issue in a less restrictive way, possibly some report language, something to that effect.

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

Mr. WALSH. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, let me say I very much understand what motivates my colleague, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA), to offer this amendment.

I have not the foggiest idea whether the standard being proposed or even contemplated by the agency is the correct one. My problem is that I have stood many times on this floor and resisted congressional efforts to, on the basis of a very short debate, reach what, in essence, is a scientific conclusion to prohibit an agency charged with protecting public health from taking whatever action they think is necessary to protect the public health.

It seems to me the best way to approach things is to try to work together and go to the agency and to insist informally that they produce hard evidence that what they are doing makes sense.

My concern with the gentleman's amendment goes to simply one word: prohibit. I do not know enough to either prohibit or to encourage what they are doing, and I would urge that the gentleman follow the advice of the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH). I think that is the most constructive way to try to work together to get the right answer. None of us want to see municipalities or anybody else have to incur expenses that are not necessary. Even though in this instance it is my own State, I don't feel comfortable in, in essence, making a legislative judgment about a scientific matter until we ourselves know what we are talking about.

At this point, the gentleman from Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) may be comfortable in assessing what the agency is doing, but I know this Member is not.

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

Mr. WALSH. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Chairman, I thank the chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I agree with both the chairman of the subcommittee and my colleague, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY). I do not know what the correct level of radium in the water should be.

However, I should point out to the Members that at one point the EPA was saying that level should be 20 pico Curies, which is a measurement of radio activity in water. Now they are coming by to the various communities saying that level should be five.

Well, Congress some years ago in 1996 asked them for a study and to give us some hard evidence. The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) says we should have some hard evidence so we can make that decision. I agree totally with that statement. We already asked for that and the EPA has not been forthcoming. Yes, they did the study on radon and they linked the radium standard to a radon study, which is totally inappropriate.

So I agree with the chairman that hopefully we can work on some report language. I was told just a few hours ago that now the EPA was not going to

issue this regulation, this rule, in fiscal year 2000 anyway.

My information coming to the debate on this was it was going to be later in the year 2000; and later in 2000, in my book, could be August, could be September, could be before the fiscal year. So if, in fact, it is true that this rule is not going to come down before the year 2001, I think the amendment can be withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) has expired.

(By unanimous consent, Mr. WALSH was allowed to proceed for 2 additional minutes.)

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Chairman, if in fact the rule is not going to be promulgated until the year 2001, clearly that would give the EPA an opportunity to provide for a study, one of the two studies that I think I cited or any other study so they can come before Congress and say now the level should be five, 7½, 10, or whatever it ends up being and we will abide by that, but we do not have that before us.

So hopefully between now and the conference committee on this bill we can at least ask, gently ask, the EPA would they please do the study that the Congress asked for in 1996, so the other communities involved can finally make a judgment.

Mr. Chairman, with the understanding that we are going to work together on some type of language, I would withdraw the amendment.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) for his wisdom and for his willingness to work with us on this issue. I think it is the proper approach; and we will work together on it, and I appreciate it.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Kleczka-Sensenbrenner amendment. This amendment would prohibit the EPA from using funds to promulgate a final rule on drinking water standards for radium that is not based on sound science. In 1991, the EPA proposed a standard for radium in drinking water of 20 pico curries per liter (pCi/L). However, the EPA now intends to mandate a far more stringent level of 5 pCi/L. This apparently arbitrary restriction was recommended before proper scientific evidence to support it was gathered.

To defend this restriction, the EPA cites a study on airborne radon by the National Research Council as supporting evidence that radium in drinking water beyond 5 pCi/L may have negative health effects despite the fact that the authors of this study state that their work did not consider the effects of carcinogens other than radon, including radium. Promoting regulations that are not based on sound science is becoming a pattern at the EPA. The Agency has mandated that parts of the country use reformulated gasoline, including gasoline with the additive MTBE. MTBE pollutes ground and surface water supplies rendering it unusable for drinking water. Recently, a National Research Council report found that oxygenates, including MTBE do little to clean up our air. An EPA Blue Ribbon Panel found that MTBE is seriously damaging our nation's water. Judging by these reports, the EPA has done serious damage to our water, while doing very little for our air. That's bad science.

The EPA has often supported the need to regulate before the science is complete, arguing that the risk of doing nothing is too great even when the cost of their proposals is incredibly high. In the global climate change debate, the EPA supports proposals based on shaky science would cause gasoline prices to rise by 50 cents a gallon and household energy costs to rise $900 to $1,000 a year according to the Wharton Econometric Forecasting Association.

Similarly, if promulgated, the EPA's revised radium rule would be incredibly costly. A water utility in both my District and Congressman KLECZKA's District estimates that it would cost $70 million to build and operate a facility to comply with the 5 pCi/L restriction. The cost for the new facility would be passed on to utility consumers. This water utility estimates that its rates may need to be raised to four times their current level. The cost-hike will hurt businesses and families alike. Average homeowners may see their water utility costs rise $200 to $800 per year.

This is not a problem isolated to Wisconsin. In fact, 25 states have water utilities that are above the 5 pCi/L level. The costs that this rule would impose on my district would be duplicated many-fold across the country.

The EPA should closely study the direct human health implications of radium in drinking water before imposing such a costly regulation. This amendment will provide time for the EPA to conduct these necessary tests. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the amendment, knowing full well I will be back next year.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, I rise to engage the chairman in a colloquy if he would do so.

I appreciate the opportunity to work with the chairman as part of the negotiations on this bill in order to obtain a one-time emergency funding designation for an important project in my district. The Los Angeles County sanitation districts urgently need funds to replace a sewer line beneath the Santa Clara River in my district.

Following the El Nino storms in the winter of 1998, the Federal Emergency Management Agency declared Los Angeles County a disaster area. While the sewer lines have not yet leaked, storm-related erosion in the river bed did cause significant damage to the lines. Further erosions may very well cause the rupture of the lines releasing up to 8 million gallons of raw sewage per day into the Santa Clara River and eventually the Pacific Ocean.

To permanently solve this problem, the sanitation districts have proposed a sound, one-time engineering solution that involves moving the pipelines deeper underground. This proposal is the best solution, both from an engineering standpoint and from an environmental standpoint as well.

Unfortunately, both FEMA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service disagree on the manner to solve this problem, leaving it up to Congress to fill the void and protect both the residents and the environment of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

I appreciate the work of the chairman to date on this legislation and look forward to working with him to obtain a solution to this issue as the legislation moves along in the legislative process.

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

Mr. MCKEON. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) for his comments and his cooperation in this project. I know of his deep concern for the safety and well being of his constituents. We recognize the importance of this project and the need to obtain funding to resolve it before winter storms further damage the sewer line. I look forward to working with the gentleman to see if indeed we can find a solution as this legislation proceeds. I pledge my cooperation with him.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. WEYGAND

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. WEYGAND:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following new section:

SEC. . It is the sense of congress that, along with health care, housing, education, and other benefits, the presence of an honor guard at a veteran's funeral is a benefit that a veteran has earned, and, therefore, the executive branch should provide funeral honor details for the funerals of veterans when requested, in accordance with law.

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Chairman, I will be very brief. I have discussed this with the subcommittee chairman and with the ranking member as well. As we all know, we have been discussing very important benefits to veterans last night and today, benefits with regard to education, particularly with regard to health care; but perhaps one of the most critical and important benefits to veterans is that that is given to their family and the honor that they give to those veterans at the time of their burial.

We all in this chamber have heard many different stories about the lack of an honor guard at a veteran's funeral when requested. We have heard stories about sometimes they do not show up. Other times we have heard stories where they are actually leaving before the funeral party actually comes to the burial site.

I think it is a disaster and a catastrophe that veterans, after having served and provided us with great service for many, many years, that unfortunately we do not sometimes provide the necessary honor guard at their burial. So I ask that we include this sense

of Congress at the end of the bill. The ranking member and the subcommittee chairman have talked to me about it, and we have crafted language.

I want to, first of all, thank the ranking member's staff for helping us with the language, and also I want to thank the chairman who has agreed to this amendment, I believe, with regard to this language. I also want to thank my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY), who could not be here tonight who is also a cosponsor of this amendment.

□ 1715

This amendment is something that many of the families and veterans are looking for because indeed at their final hour we should not forget them, we should not ever forget the service that they have provided to all of us, and I hope that this will be passed.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, we accept the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. WEYGAND).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MR. EHLERS

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 4 offered by Mr. EHLERS:

At the end of the bill, insert after the last section (preceding the short title) the following new section:

SEC. ____. The amounts otherwise provided in this Act are revised by increasing the amount provided for ''National Science Foundation—Research and Related Activities'', increasing the amount provided for ''National Science Foundation—Major Research Equipment'', increasing the amount provided for ''National Science Foundation—Education and Human Resources'', and reducing each amount provided in this Act (other than for the National Science Foundation) that is not required to be provided by a provision of law, by $156,524,000, $33,500,000, $40,000,000, and 0.354 percent, respectively.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Chairman, the purpose of this amendment is to increase the appropriations for the National Science Foundation. I must begin by commending the subcommittee chairman in dealing with a very difficult budget and commend him for the good work he has done on it. I was opposed to the allocation given to this subcommittee. I felt at the time it was granted that it was far too small, and we would end up with the type of difficulties we have encountered here. It is my hope that during the rest of the appropriations process this allocation will be increased.

What I wish to point out here, and it is extremely important, is the importance of scientific research to the future economic growth of this Nation as well as furthering basic knowledge of our universe and all that it contains. Furthermore, I want to discuss the importance of science and math education in this Nation.

Let me point out some of the problems. I have here a graph which shows that United States funding has been decreasing compared to some other countries. The national nondefense R&D as a percentage of gross domestic product is now lower in this Nation than it is in Japan and Germany, and the rate at which Japan is increasing is greater than our rate. The main difficulty of this is that, as is currently estimated, over half of the economic development of this Nation comes from developments resulting from research in science and technology, and if we do not do this research in science and technology, we are ruining the seed corn for our future economic growth; we are also doing a great disservice to our children and grandchildren by doing that.

Let me give a few examples. The Internet is, of course, one obvious result which rose out of basic research in math, computer science, electronics and physics over the past several decades. Everyone today knows how valuable the Internet is and how it is contributing to economic growth.

Another example is magnetic resonance imaging, which has its roots back in the 1950s when I was a graduate student in physics at the University of California. Today we cannot imagine dealing with many difficult health problems without an MRI machine.

Also consider lasers, again a development based on research done 40 years ago, resulting in a multi, multi-billion dollar industry developed from a small amount of research funding. In summary, we must continue our research efforts if we are going to maintain our economic growth and continue to be a world leader.

Furthermore, the funding for major research equipment has been cut in this budget, and that is very unfortunate because this funding provides the tools with which scientists make discoveries.

Now on to math and science education; that is a sad tale. A few years ago, we completed the third international mathematics science study and found that the United States is near the bottom of all the developed countries in the ability of its high-school graduates to understand and use math and science. Near the bottom! And yet we maintain that we are the leader of the world in science and technology. Our potential for the future is hurt very badly by not having an adequate math and science education system. Once again, the National Science Foundation plays a major role in improving our education, and we have to provide them funds for that.

My amendment does not seek extravagant funding, it simply brings the NSF budget up to the level which has been recommended by the Committee on Science in the authorization bill that it has passed. That is certainly reasonable. However, the appropriation bill before us actually reduces the amount of money going to the National Science Foundation, the first time in decades that the National Science Foundation budget will be reduced. My amendment will bring it up to an appropriate level, and I would very much like to see this amendment adopted.

At the same time, as I have indicated, I recognize the difficulty the chairman of the subcommittee has had in reaching appropriate funding levels for the National Science Foundation. Therefore I do not plan to pursue this amendment at this point, but I would like to engage the chairman in a very brief interchange. My intent is to withdraw this amendment, but I would certainly appreciate it if the chairman would first recognize the worthy direction this amendment outlines.

I know that he would like to increase the funding of the National Science Foundation, and I hope that he can give us assurances that, as we go through the appropriations process, not only in the House but also in the Senate, the conference committee and negotiating with the White House, he will consider this request. I would very much appreciate an expression of support on the part of the subcommittee chairman that he will seek to meet the goals I have outlined in my amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, there is no question that this subcommittee considers National Science Foundation a high priority. Everyone has recognized the difficulties within this bill. One of the difficult decisions we made was to reduce NSF by just 1 percent below the 1999 level. Now that is a cut; there is no question. But no other account in this bill except for VA medical care was treated as well as NSF. In fact, research at NSF was actually increased by $8.5 million relative to 1999.

Now I know that does not comfort the gentleman because he is one of the leaders in the Congress in terms of scientific research. He has been a spokesman and a stalwart for research. This subcommittee understands the plight that we placed NSF in, and I assure the gentleman that this is a priority, that if there is any way as we go through the process that we can provide some additional funds for NSF we will, and we will call upon him to help us to make that happen and to provide us some direction as to where those fund should go.

I cannot make any ironclad assurances other than that he will have our cooperation in the event that that occurs.

Mr. EHLERS. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Chairman, I do appreciate the assurances of the subcommittee chairman. I do want to comment on one factor he alluded to.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) has expired.

(By unanimous consent, Mr. EHLERS was allowed to proceed for 1 additional minute.)

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to comment to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) that the $8.5 million increase he indicated is in the research and related activities line item, and that increase was wiped out by the Nadler amendment which was adopted yesterday. So we are now down to zero increase there; and, in fact, the overall NSF budget, because of the decreases in major research equipment and education and human resources funding, is reduced a net 1 percent in this appropriation bill at this point. I do thank him for his assurances that he will seek to correct this as we go through the process, and I pledge to help him.

Mr. Chairman, on that note, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw this amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

The CHAIRMAN. The amendment offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) is withdrawn.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. TANCREDO

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. TANCREDO:

Page 94, after line 3, insert the following new section:

SEC. 424. The amounts otherwise provided by this Act are revised by increasing the amount made available for ''DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS—Departmental Administration—Grants for Construction of State Extended Care Facilities'', by reducing the amount made available for ''INDEPENDENT AGENCIES—Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board—Salaries and Expenses'', and by reducing the amount made available for ''INDEPENDENT AGENCIES—Environmental Protection Agency—Office of Inspector General'', by $7,000,000, $2,000,000, and $5,000,000, respectively.

Mr. TANCREDO (during the reading). Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Chairman, first of all let me say that it is a tribute to the work of this committee and to the subcommittee and its chairman that it has been very difficult to find the necessary offsets to do what we hope to do in this amendment, and that is to increase the amount for State extended-care facilities program by $7 million. We are, however, proposing to do that, and we do recognize the commitment of the committee, and I want to once again say that it was a very difficult task.

I am not here asking for more money. I recognize fully well that the total bill is a very rich bill considering what he had available to him and considering what we had available to us and what the committee had available to work with. It is our hope to convince both the committee and the other Members of the Congress, of the House of Representatives, that we need to shift the priorities to a certain extent, to a very small extent, totaling again as I said only $7 million into the State extended-care facilities program. These are the nursing homes that we build across the country, and these are facilities that, by the way, are built with State matching funds, so it is a bigger bang for the buck that we get for this.

The President's budget suggested only a $40 million appropriations level. The committee quite appropriately increased that dramatically. In fact, increased it a hundred percent, increased it to $80 million. That is still $10 million below last year's level, and therefore we are concerned. We are concerned because 36 percent of all veterans who are over the age of 65, and that number is expected to increase exponentially over the next 8 years. We are concerned that there are 25.2 million veterans as of July 1, 1998 of whom 19.3 million have served during at least one period defined as, quote, war time, concerned that in 2010 over half of the veterans population will be over the age of 62.

An increasing in age of most veterans means additional demands for medical services for eligible veterans as aging brings on chronic conditions needing more frequent care and lengthier convalescence. A third of all the veterans will undoubtedly put a strain on our Nation's veterans health services. At the current pace of construction, we will not have the necessary facilities to meet veterans extended care needs.

This is a cost share program, as I mentioned, with the State, so money that goes into this account is multiplied by the State's commitment to build and run the facility. Last year, as I mentioned, the House and Senate approved $90 million for the State extended facilities construction program, so this is the present bill. It anticipates a $10 million reduction below that.

In truth, even if our amendment is successful in restoring at least $7 million of the funding approaching last year's level, it still may be not enough to meet the actual need for construction. Unfortunately, we still remain $15 million short of the funding that the State associations of veterans nursing homes say they need to meet construction deadlines.

This amendment will be offset by minor reductions in the funding for various accounts, the EPA facilities management, chemical safety investigations, work salaries, and expenses.

I recognize that in every single, and believe, I want to reiterate the fact that we looked very carefully for places where we could go to offset this. It was very difficult because this is a tight budget, and I fully understand that and commend the committee and the staff for their work. It is nonetheless our hope that we can encourage our colleagues to join in this small way in this very minor adjustment change a priority here that we think is extremely important.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I rise in reluctant opposition to the gentleman's amendment, and I know he has given this a great deal of his attention, it is a high priority for him and his constituency, and, in fact, as I understand it, it is a high priority for the Nation. This is a well thought of project, and this account that he has referred to, grants for construction State extended-care facilities, is a very important account. These are funds that are dear, that everyone across the country is covetous of, and what we have provided is $80 million. That is twice the President's request. President requested 40 million; we put in 80 million. The gentleman is absolutely correct; it is 10 million below last year, but it is a substantial increase over what the President requested.

As I understand it, it is conceivable, given the allocation, that the project that he has supported could conceivably be funded in this allocation. There is no guarantees obviously, but what I would say, cannot support taking these funds out because we would be reducing the EPA Inspector General's office by 17 percent. It is important that we keep an eye on that bureaucracy, and that is the Inspector General's job.

But what I would be happy to do as we go through the process and into the conferences is try to find a way to help the gentleman meet his goal without increasing his funding and thereby cutting funding in the other area of the bill. So, I again reluctantly oppose the gentleman's amendment.

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word and rise in opposition to the amendment.

Mr. Chairman, we have had a lot of worthy causes advanced here by Members today, Members wanting to increase funding in different accounts, recognizing that in most of those instances the committee wanted to raise the money in those accounts, but not being able to do so because of our skinny allocation.

The gentleman from Colorado's amendment is another worthy amendment. State veterans homes are extremely important, and as he points out, the veterans population is aging, and so they will become increasingly important.

So I want to first acknowledge the worthiness of the gentleman's amendment and its purpose.

Let me first say that the committee recognized the importance of this program and increased the funding above the request; I believe doubled it. I think the gentleman indicated that, from $40 to $80 million.

□ 1730

That is not enough. It is not last year's funding. Perhaps as the process goes forward, this will be one of those accounts as we get more money that we can plus up.

But I must say, however worthy the cause is, the offsets are the worst I have seen today, proposing to offset, and the gentleman has reduced his offsets to two now. Offsetting the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board by $2 million is a huge cut. It is a 22 percent cut to the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board's budget.

I had a letter last March from the chairman of this board, this investigation board, which investigates chemical accidents around the country, suggesting that under its current spending levels, that it probably would not be able to continue investigations through the end of the fiscal year. This board, as we need more money for State veterans homes, the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board needs even more money to do its job.

Cutting it 22 percent would be the absolutely wrong thing to do. This is an extremely important mission that the board fulfills. It is having difficulty fulfilling it under its current spending rate, and cutting it would be just disastrous and prevent it from being able to carry out its mission. We do not want to do that, and I am sure the gentleman from Colorado does not want to do that.

The second offset the gentleman proposes is equally difficult. It is an offset to EPA's Inspector General account, a $5 million cut, which is a 12 percent cut to the Inspector General's account.

Now, the Inspector General's office is the office that is responsible for investigating waste, fraud and abuse, which I am sure the gentleman is very much against in agencies. I am sure the gentleman wants inspector generals out there investigating the agencies to ensure that we do not have waste, fraud and abuse, and to ensure, which is the other mission of the Inspector General, that the laws and regulations that EPA is supposed to carry forward are carried forward properly. This is a 12 percent cut to the Inspector General's office. The Inspector General cannot stand a 12 percent cut in their budget.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, while I support the objective of the gentleman's amendment, the offsets are really difficult and, in and of themselves, make the amendment unacceptable. I would encourage my colleagues to vote against it.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this amendment, and I also rise in support of this appropriations legislation.

I want to particularly salute the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) for his leadership in putting together a good bill. It is always tough when you want more money for important programs, and veterans clearly are a priority for this Congress.

I also want to salute the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) for his efforts to provide what will be historically the largest increase in veterans health care funding ever in the history of this country, $1.7 billion in additional funding for veterans health care. I want to salute the chairman for those efforts.

I also want to note why this amendment is so important. I ask my colleagues as you look at this amendment to think about your own States. If your States have veterans homes, if they want to expand, if they need improvements, if they need to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this program is pretty important.

Earlier this year the administration, the Clinton-Gore administration, slashed the funding for State nursing home grants. In fact, they slashed the program by more than half, from $90 million in current funding to $40 million for the coming year. That was wrong. That was bad policy. That is why I appreciate the efforts of the subcommittee to work to restore those funds. But we need to do more.

Last year the funding was $80 million. This year it is $90 million. This amendment would increase the funding by $7 million, would bring it close to the current level of funding.

We note that the current grant program gives States millions in funds to help them expand and build new nursing homes for our veterans. It also helps our States meet compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, with renovations to existing homes, as well as expansion in homes. My own State of Illinois is owed over $5 million in back payments because of the inability to provide the full amount that is necessary.

This is important also to note that there were over 88 applications currently pending, totaling $348 million. With this funding, we will provide $87 million. There is also $240 million in requests for new construction.

Clearly there is tremendous need out there, particularly as the World War II and Korea era veterans reach the age where they require greater health care, many needing nursing home care, this is so important.

I would also like to point out that State veterans homes are pretty good bang for the buck. They provide quality service for our veterans, but also a savings to taxpayers. VA nursing home care or nursing care is about $255 a day for a veteran, but the State homes on average provide services for about $40 per day. Clearly it is a bargain, quality health care at veterans homes for our veterans.

I would also note that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the authorizing committee, along with the State home directors, recommended that we should provide $100 million this year. This helps work towards that goal.

What it means to my home State of Illinois, of course, Illinois is a major State with a lot of veterans. Illinois is in need of expansion of veterans homes. The LaSalle veterans home has a year and a half waiting list. If you think about it, if you have a family member who needs to go into a veterans home, 18 months is a long time to wait to be able to obtain a bed in that nursing home. So clearly funds are needed.

I would also point out not only is Illinois owed $5 million in back payments, but the Manteno veterans home, which happens to be in my district, is still owed back payments for ADA compliance.

There is a need out there. This amendment is a good amendment. It helps restore the funding to the current levels. It is badly needed.

Again, I want to commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) for his efforts and particularly for the historic increase of $1.7 billion in additional new funding for veterans health care. I salute you, Mr. Chairman, for those efforts.

Let us support our veterans. I ask all the Members of this House to take a close look at this amendment. Let us make sure the funds are there to ensure our veterans who need nursing home care have it at the State level. This is an important grant program.

I urge an aye vote. Let us support our veterans. Let us reject the Clinton administration's horrible cuts. Let us restore these funds and help veterans who need nursing home care. Please vote aye. This legislation deserves a bipartisan show of support and an aye vote.

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, first off I would like to commend the chairman for his hard work and the staff. Obviously you all crafted a great bill here. I must rise today in support of this amendment to increase the funding for the veterans state-extended care facilities. These facilities in my opinion are imperative to the mission of providing quality health care to those who dutifully served our country.

These veterans homes are the largest provider of long-term nursing care to our veterans. They enable the Veterans Administration to ensure quality nursing care to veterans that cannot receive proper treatment through any other means. Many of the men and women who served our country are bedridden due to service-related injuries. It is these veterans that the state-extended care facilities will serve.

Not only are these homes, nursing care units and hospitals necessary for proper care, they are also cost effective. If a veteran is forced to go to a private nursing home, the VA will reimburse that home on average $124 per diem. Contrast that with the approximately $44 per diem reimbursement to the State veterans homes for the same care. I think you will agree that for this reason alone we should vigorously support these facilities.

Even with the Tancredo-Weller amendment enacted, we will fall far short of the funding commitment we have made to the States. The Federal Government has agreed to fund 65 percent of the construction costs for the

state-extended care facilities. At this time, many States have already appropriated their share of the construction costs.

Aside from the current $104 million backlog of work due to previous years of underfunding, the Federal Government could be responsible for up to $204 million in additional construction money, if all pending applications are approved. In other words, even with this amendment, we still owe various States across the Nation up to $218 million.

By the rapidly approaching year 2000, there are expected to be approximately 9.3 million veterans over the age of 65. World War II veterans continue to require extensive health care that we are proud and obligated to provide. This country and the VA must be adequately prepared through proper funding to handle the challenge of ensuring the best possible care for the men and women who bravely served this Nation.

This is a similar amendment to the one that I offered last year on this appropriations bill, and it was difficult, I know, for the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) to find the offset, but I commend his efforts for the veterans in his district and across the country. I ask that we strongly support his amendment on the floor.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO).

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 275, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) will be postponed.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to request that the distinguished subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), allow me a few moments that I may engage him in a friendly colloquy regarding this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I would say to the gentleman from New York (Mr. Walsh), for the record, I have been in contact with your staff regarding funding for a wastewater treatment plant in Placer County, which is within my district. Due to an oversight, this project was unfortunately not included in the VA–HUD bill that is now before us.

I would ask that the chairman, as we move forward in consideration of this bill, work to ensure that $1 million in funding be provided for the Placer County wastewater treatment project.

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

Mr. DOOLITTLE. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for his comments. I appreciate the continued interest in this important project in his district in Placer County. I assure the gentleman that we will work very closely with the gentleman to address this funding matter in our conference negotiations.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, I thank the chairman.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, I would ask my distinguished colleague, the ranking member from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), to join me in a colloquy.

Mr. Chairman, it has come to my attention that HUD recently issued a notice of funding availability, NOFA, for the Resident Opportunities and Self-sufficiency program. This program contains a component for service coordinator grants.

For those of you not familiar with service coordinators, they help elderly and disabled residents in public housing get the unique services they require. The program is cost effective and the residents of public housing love the program, as do the housing authorities.

Because of its success, Congress has agreed in the last funding cycle to provide sufficient funds to renew all existing service coordinator programs. Unfortunately, the recent NOFA contains several troubling provisions that seem to defy congressional intent and jeopardize the ability of many public housing authorities to obtain renewal of their service coordinator funding.

Specifically, one provision provides public housing authorities to have to spend 75 percent of their award by August, even though the PHAs only received notice of the grant in April. As a practical matter, it is impossible for any PHA to expend 75 percent of their funds by the first of August, but under the NOFA they must have done so in order to qualify for renewal spending for next year.

Another provision of the NOFA states that the funds will be provided on a first-come-first-served-basis. This provision implies that there are insufficient funds to pay for renewals. Congress has been assured repeatedly by HUD that funds are sufficient to pay for renewal. Therefore, the provision is unnecessary.

After being apprised of congressional concerns, HUD has agreed to make changes to the NOFA. In fact, HUD has assured me that an amended NOFA will be published in the Federal Register in the near future.

I appreciate the alacrity with which HUD has acted on this matter and want to assure public housing residents that this program will be fully funded this year and next.

I know the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) shares my opinion that service coordinators are vitally important and would turn to him for a comment on this issue.

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

Mr. WALSH. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Mr. Chairman, I would first like to commend the chairman for his efforts on the service coordinator issue. I second the gentleman's comments.

Our subcommittee has heard over and over about just how valuable the service coordinator committee program can be for elderly and disabled residents of public housing.

The subcommittee intended that funds appropriated in the fiscal 1999 year for the resident opportunity and self-sufficiency program be used, among other purposes, to renew all expiring service coordinator grants. I share the chairman's concern about provisions of the recent notice of funds availability that could jeopardize those renewals.

□ 1745

I am pleased that HUD has agreed to revise the notice in order to make sure that congressional intent is carried out.

I look forward to working with the chairman and other members of the subcommittee to ensure that adequate funding continues to be provided to allow renewal of these service coordinator grants in future years.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for his comments and his cooperation and help on this matter and so many others as we proceeded through this bill.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

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

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Chairman, veterans across the country will appreciate the efforts of this subcommittee, under the able leadership of the gentleman from New York, for including an historic $1.7 billion increase for VA health care, over and above the Administration's flat line budget request.

This is the largest increase for VA health care, and should be supported by all Members.

The increase the bill addresses that needs that were identified in the President's budget but not funded including $1.2 billion for personnel costs, so that no VA employees will have to be laid off for lack of system-wide funding; $200 million for services to veterans with hepatitis C; $100 million for the first-year cost of providing emergency care for uninsured veterans, and $150 million for long-term health care services for aging veterans.

The chairman read the list of those veterans service organizations that are supporting this bill. I will not repeat that. I would like to take this time, though, to thank the chairman for the very difficult and tremendous job he has done in crafting this legislation, as well as the gentleman from West Virginia.

We should support this unprecedented level of funding in this bill for veterans' health care and commit to working together for next year to

make sure that our veterans are given the quality of health care that they earn and deserve.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. Chairman, the Administration's budget request was criticized on a bipartisan basis.

We should be addressing the shortcomings of that budget on the same bipartisan basis.

The $1.7 billion increase in the bill for VA health care will fulfill our Nation's commitment to veterans.

This level of funding is supported by the:

Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Non Commissioned Officers Association.

Retired Enlisted Association.

The Military Coalition (a consortium of uniformed services organizations representing more than 5 million members) including:

Millitary Order of the Purple Heart.

Jewish War Veterans.

Gold Star Wives.

Marine Corps League.

National Guard Association.

Fleet Reserve Association.

Reserve Officers Association.

National Military and Veterans Alliance (with 20 military and veterans member organizations) including:

Retired Officers Association.

Air Force Sergeants Association.

Catholic War Veterans.

National Association for Uniformed Services.

Korean War Veterans Association.

Unfortunately, some Members are trying to increase funding beyond what is needed this year, and in the process they are dragging some of the veterans' organizations into a very partisan political game of one-upsmanship.

We should not be playing politics with the benefits that are provided by a grateful nation to veterans.

We should support the unprecedented level of funding in this bill for veterans' health care and commit to working together to make sure that next year's budget also provides the funding necessary to give veterans the quality of health care services they have earned and deserve.

I urge my colleagues to vote for the bill.

$1.7 BILLION VA MEDICAL SPENDING HIKE—OCCASION FOR CELEBRATION

Nearly a year ago, a bipartisan group of Congressmen and Senators urged the President to hike VA medical care spending for fiscal year 2000 by 10 percent, up an additional $1.7 billion.

The President proposed instead that Congress freeze VA medical spending. The Congressional Budget Resolution subsequently adopted the recommendations of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees that VA medical care spending should be increased by a record $1.7 billion.

With Congress now set to vote on a Republican proposal to increase VA medical spending by $1.7 billion to an unprecedented $19 billion, some are calling for a still higher figure.

How much funding does the VA need?

What is the foundation for claims that VA administrators ''need'' more than $19 billion to care for veterans?

How much could VA responsibly spend?

These are among the questions underlying a budget debate this year. Those calling for higher funding cite the recommendation of an ''independent'' budget developed by four veterans' organizations, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Although several veterans organizations fully support and applaud the proposed $1.7 billion increase, the ''Independent Budget'' called for adding $3 billion.

In past years, the ''Independent Budget'' has called for multi-billion dollar increases in VA medical care spending.

While Congress has often appropriated more than Presidents have proposed for veterans' medical care, it has never adopted increases of the magnitude proposed by the ''Independent Budget''.

This year, however, with widespread agreement that the cuts required under the President's budget would have devastating results for veterans, it became clear that a spending increase above $1 billion would be needed.

Ironically, advocates who have been totally ineffectual in seeking major funding increases in the past are now unwilling to recognize that a 10 percent, $1.7 billion, funding increase is reason to celebrate, not complain.

In calling late last year for a nearly $3 billion increase in veterans' medical spending, however, the Independent Budget has escaped the close scrutiny given the Administration's budget.

But, just as the President's budget for VA medical spending is totally inadequate, the ''independent'' budget's is bloated.

Among its flaws, the Independent Budget: overstates by $430 million (based on Congressional Budget Office estimates) the cost in FY 2000 of providing emergency care for veterans; overstates by up to $450 million (based on estimates developed by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and recently supported by VA experts) the cost of testing and treating veterans for Hepatitis C, a disease affecting VA patients at higher rates than the general population; and ''double-counts'', or spends twice (as a matter of ''principle'' rather than demonstrated need), projected medical care spending of $555 million in collections from veterans' health insurers.

Adjusting the $3 billion Independent Budget recommendations to eliminate what amounts to cost-padding yields essentially the same funding increase adopted in both the Congressional Budget Resolution and the pending House VA–HUD appropriations bill, an additional $1.7 billion.

Ironically, as some are calling for still higher spending, editorial writers are questioning the need for any increased VA medical spending, given a GAO report suggesting that VA is wasting an estimated $1 million daily operating unneeded hospital buildings.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee just last month approved legislation to encourage VA to mount an ''asset realignment process'', as GAO recommends, to achieve needed mission changes.

GAO itself acknowledges that instituting such changes will take time.

Veterans' health care funding should not be shortchanged in the meantime.

The proposed $1.7 billion increase (to a total medical care budget of $19 billion) is both justified and unprecedented in scope.

It would: allow VA to open new outpatient clinics and treat record numbers of veterans, an estimated 3.6 million (200,000 more than in 1998); remove the threat of layoffs facing at least 8,500 VA health care workers and enable VA to lift hiring freezes on critical job vacancies at many facilities; permit expansion of long-term care services for aging veterans; provide funding for emergency care for veterans who lack any health care coverage; and fund the increased cost of testing and treatment of veterans at risk for Hepatitis C.

Given the projected impact of this record funding level, how does one account for the rhetoric still voiced in support of higher spending?

Some veterans' groups have apparently taken the position that if $1.7 billion in additional funding is good, then still more would be better.

In addition, some Members—ignoring the tradition of bipartisanship which has produced generous benefit programs for America's veterans—have seen the opportunity for partisan advantage in this budget debate.

Rather than helping ensure a record level of funding for veterans' needs, they are politicizing the issue through ''bid-raising'' and unfairly dragging veterans' organizations into a partisan dilemma.

House appropriators have worked hard to give veterans a record funding increase that meets in full the recommendations of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

It's time, though, that we match our earlier bipartisan criticism of the Administration's budget with bipartisan support for this unprecedented increase in veterans' health care spending.

Congress should adopt the $1.7 billion increase needed to reinvigorate the VA health care system.

Members should also commit to working together to make sure that the Administration's next budget provides the funding necessary to give veterans the quality health care they expect and deserve.

The CHAIRMAN. Are there further amendments to the bill?

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, I would just like to conclude by suggesting that there are no further amendments. There is no further business before the body on this bill, other than the final amendment and the final passage vote.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the chairman for the way the Chair has conducted the debate today, and to all the staff who have worked so hard and put in all the hours to help us to get to this point, and to all the Members who participated in the debate.

This is the tip of the iceberg, what we see here today. With all the work that has gone into this on the part of our constituents and our staffs and the Members, I think it is a good product. I am proud of the fact that we have gotten this far.

I thank especially my colleague, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), the ranking member. I have learned a great deal from him through this process, not the least of which is about friendship, honor, and respect. I treasure that relationship and I thank him for his support along the way.

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, I very much appreciate the kind comments of the chairman. I want to compliment him on the way he has handled this bill from the very beginning of the year. He has done an excellent job, as I said at the beginning of my remarks. He is particularly capable and very responsive to the legitimate concerns of the minority. That certainly has been appreciated.

I also want to join the chairman in expressing appreciation both to the

majority and minority staffs, and certainly my permanent staff for the hard work they have done on this bill, without which it would be extremely difficult or actually impossible to move this legislation forward. Again, I appreciate the chairman's considerations.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. TANCREDO

The CHAIRMAN. The pending business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The Clerk designated the amendment.

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 366, noes 54, not voting 13, as follows:

[Roll No. 401]

AYES—366

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Allen
Andrews
Archer
Armey
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldacci
Baldwin
Barcia
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Barrett (WI)
Bartlett
Barton
Bass
Bateman
Becerra
Bentsen
Bereuter
Berkley
Berry
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop
Blagojevich
Bliley
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonilla
Bono
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Bryant
Burr
Burton
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Canady
Cannon
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Carson
Castle
Chabot
Chambliss
Chenoweth
Clement
Clyburn
Coble
Coburn
Collins
Combest
Condit
Cook
Costello
Coyne
Cramer
Crane
Cubin
Cummings
Cunningham
Danner
Davis (FL)
Davis (VA)
Deal
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
DeLay
DeMint
Deutsch
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Edwards
Ehrlich
Emerson
Engel
English
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Ewing
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fletcher
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fossella
Fowler
Franks (NJ)
Frost
Gallegly
Ganske
Gejdenson
Gekas
Gephardt
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gilman
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Goodling
Gordon
Goss
Graham
Granger
Green (TX)
Green (WI)
Greenwood
Gutierrez
Gutknecht
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hansen
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Herger
Hill (IN)
Hill (MT)
Hilleary
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hoeffel
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Horn
Hostettler
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Inslee
Isakson
Istook
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson (CT)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kasich
Kelly
Kennedy
Kildee
Kind (WI)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kleczka
Klink
Kolbe
LaHood
Lampson
Lantos
Largent
Larson
LaTourette
Lazio
Leach
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Lucas (OK)
Luther
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Martinez
Mascara
Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McInnis
McIntosh
McIntyre
McKeon
McNulty
Meehan
Meeks (NY)
Menendez
Metcalf
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Minge
Mink
Moakley
Moore
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murtha
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Nethercutt
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Ortiz
Oxley
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Pease
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Phelps
Pickering
Pickett
Pitts
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Portman
Price (NC)
Quinn
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Regula
Reyes
Reynolds
Riley
Rivers
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Rothman
Roukema
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Salmon
Sanchez
Sanders
Sandlin
Sanford
Sawyer
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaffer
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shows
Shuster
Simpson
Sisisky
Skeen
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Souder
Spence
Spratt
Stabenow
Stearns
Stenholm
Strickland
Stupak
Sweeney
Talent
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Thune
Thurman
Tiahrt
Tierney
Toomey
Traficant
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Visclosky
Vitter
Walden
Wamp
Watkins
Watts (OK)
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Wexler
Weygand
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson
Wise
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn

NOES—54

Ballenger
Berman
Bilbray
Boehlert
Borski
Campbell
Clay
Clayton
Conyers
Cox
Davis (IL)
Delahunt
Dixon
Dooley
Ehlers
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Hastings (FL)
Hilliard
Hobson
Jackson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Kilpatrick
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuykendall
LaFalce
Lee
Lewis (CA)
Markey
McKinney
Meek (FL)
Millender-McDonald
Miller, George
Mollohan
Morella
Olver
Ose
Owens
Packard
Rush
Sabo
Schakowsky
Scott
Sherman
Stark
Stump
Velazquez
Vento
Walsh
Waters
Watt (NC)
Waxman
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—13

Bonior
Cooksey
Crowley
Houghton
Jones (OH)
Latham
Pryce (OH)
Rangel
Rogan
Sununu
Towns
Weldon (PA)
Young (AK)

□ 1811

Messrs. COX, DELAHUNT and SHERMAN and Ms. MCKINNEY changed their vote from ''aye'' to ''no''.

Messrs. HILL of Indiana, PETERSON of Pennsylvania, GARY MILLER of California, and NADLER and Ms. BROWN of Florida changed their vote from ''no'' to ''aye''.

So the amendment was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Chairman, on roll-call No. 401, had I been present, I would have vote "yes."

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will read the last 3 lines of the bill.

The Clerk read as follows:

This Act may be cited as the ''Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 2000''.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2684, the fiscal year 2000 VA-HUD-Independent agencies appropriations bill.

American's students and America's Members of Congress just returned from summer vacation refreshed and renewed and ready to hit the books. Unfortunately in the first week back in class, the House is ready to earn its first grade of F.

If we look at the details of the VA–HUD report card, we can see how bad this bill is.

This bill gets an F for housing programs. It cuts community development block grants (CDBG) by $250 million. These funds are critical in addressing local housing priorities. I'm usually skeptical of block grants, but here is one that has worked wonders to empower local communities to address critical housing needs. We need more CDBG funds, not less.

The bill also fails to provide sufficient funds for section 8 vouchers. Although funding increases slightly, there is a desperate need for new vouchers to provide more Americans with the help they need to house their families.

Not only will new families fail to get additional help in paying for housing, homeless families will see $970 million less in homeless assistance grants.

The bill gets an F for science funding. It cuts National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) funding by over $1 billion. Since the space shuttle and International Space Station take up the majority of funding, these cuts fall disproportionally on science, aeronautics and technology. The bill also cuts $24 million in National Science Foundation (NSF) funding, and fails to include the administration's proposed increase of $245 million. These cuts to basic science research are shortsighted and ill-advised. Our nation's investment in basic research and technology has driven our economic development. This will be even more true in the future, unless we continue to cut these funds, as this bill does. The NSF and NASA have been incredibly valuable and successful and need more support, not less.

This bill gets an F for environmental protection. It cuts the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by $278 million from fiscal year 1999. It cuts environmental research by $15 million. It cuts clean water and air funding, so critical for protecting our nation's resources for future generations, by $208 million. We know that once a natural resource is destroyed, it is expensive, or impossible, to recover. We must invest today, for a clean environment tomorrow. It is just that simple.

The bill gets an F for community service. It eliminates funding for the AmeriCorps program which encourages young people to become involved in their communities. AmeriCorps has

been incredibly successful in providing financial assistance to allow young people to engage in community service all over our nation. More than 100,000 AmeriCorps volunteers have helped to address crime, poverty, and illiteracy. AmeriCorps members have taught, tutored or mentored 2.6 million children, rehabilitated 25,000 homes, immunized 419,000 people, and helped 2.4 million homeless people. This is a program that works.

The bill gets a C− for veterans benefits. This is the only passing grade since keeping our commitment to our veterans was prioritized in this bill. The $1.5 billion increase over last year's appropriations is a good step forward in fulfilling our promises to our veterans. But it is not enough. Our veterans are worried and frustrated, and they have every right to be. The VA health care system desperately needs more funding to provide adequate medical care to our nation's veterans, who have earned it. For too long this Congress has failed to adequately fund veteran's program and benefits, and now the situation is a crisis. Congress must do better for our veterans.

Final grade: F. This bill is a failure. If University of Wisconsin students earned this type of report card, they'd have to retake the test. And that's exactly what the Congress is going to have to do, if this bill passes.

We can do better, and we must do better. This bill falls far short of the needs of our great nation. To shortchange our citizens while we increase defense spending is not the way a great nation ought to behave. I look forward to a day later this year when I can vote for a VA–HUD appropriations bill that can earn a passing grade, or maybe even an A. Today, I must give it the grade it deserves and vote ''no.''

Mr. McCOLLUM. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to voice my opposition to the fiscal year 2000 VA/HUD appropriations act. While I congratulate the committee and subcommittee chairmen on their efforts to add some funding for veterans medical care, and in particular, language to continue a demonstration project in east central Florida which allows the VA to contract with local hospitals to provide inpatient care to veterans, I simply cannot support a bill that does not provide adequate increased funding for our nation's veterans, decimates the NASA program, and terminates the Selective Service Agency.

I was pleased to see the Hinchey amendment, which would have prohibited the VA from using funds to implement or administer the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) system, was defeated. VERA is intended to provide for and equitable distribution of funds for medical care. As a representative from a state that has seen a tremendous increase in the number of veterans seeking care, I can attest to the need for a system that has the dollars follow the veterans. Although the bill would increase funding for veterans, there will be a continued significant shortfall in funding for VA health care and many services are still in danger. According to the Independent Budget presented by AMVETS, the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this increase is $1.3 billion less than what is needed to adequately address the health-care needs of our nation's veterans. We cannot penalize our veterans for the sacrifices they have made by denying them adequate health care. I am committed to working for increased veterans funding, and ensuring that they have the health care they deserve.

NASA has worked very hard to increase efficiency and downsize their programs, while receiving reductions in their budget. Over the past 6 years, they have saved approximately $35 billion relative to earlier outyear estimates, while at the same time increasing productivity. However, the Committee's actions this year cuts $1 billion from fiscal year 1999 levels. This will result in a loss of critical capabilities that are essential to the United States' leadership in space. To quote NASA Administrator Dan Goldin, ''the reductions would severely damage the technology base built over the last five years; NASA's ability to further reduce costs and increase scientific productivity would end. It could also result in the closure of NASA Centers, and the elimination, through forced separations, of unique and critical technical skills uniquely possessed by NASA.''

Mr. Chairman, we're not talking about a program that can continue to safely operate after sustaining this type of cut. I've heard from my constituents of the long hours and extra efforts that NASA employees have contributed to keep our space program operating safely. We cannot expect this dedication if we do not give them the funds that they need. For example, the reduction to Mission Support will wipe out NASA plans to correct critical facility safety deficiencies. This is simply unacceptable.

The space program has a tremendous impact on the State of Florida. In the my district alone, NASA has granted awards estimated at over $6 million over the past year. These contracts have gone to local businesses, the University of Central Florida and Valencia Community College. These partnerships have not only provided students with valuable experience, they have provided growth opportunities for small businesses. If we enact this bill, the cuts to NASA will reverberate throughout the community.

Additionally, the termination of the Selective Service Agency is shortsighted and could risk our national security. I voted for the Cunningham amendment to restore funding for this program, which unfortunately failed. This year, every military service except for the Marine Corps, is faced with recruiting and retention problems. And it does not appear as though this problem will end. Should we be faced with a crisis that would require a return to the draft, it would take more than a year to reconstitute the Selective Service System. This is entirely too much time in the event of a crisis. I cannot support the termination of this important system.

Mr. Chairman, again, I appreciate the efforts by the committee to provide an increase for VA medical care and would like to support this bill. But given the tremendous reductions and inadequate funding levels, I simply cannot vote for this bill. I will work hard to see these deficiencies are corrected in conference.

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Chairman, the House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on the fiscal year 2000 VA–HUD spending bill. Included in this bill is funding for veterans, housing, NASA, and the EPA. While there is an increase in funding for veterans healthcare, I am disappointed that the funding amount is short of the $3 billion requested in the Independent Budget, which was developed by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

As a member on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have sat through testimony about the President's budget, I have sat through testimony about the state of the VA healthcare system, and I have heard about VA's plans to lay off employees. Needles to say, this has not been an encouraging year with regard to veterans healthcare. In my district alone, there are over 55,000 veterans. If funding is not available, my veterans will suffer the consequences. And now, at the end of the fiscal year, I am faced with a choice of voting for a $1.7 billion increase in funding or voting against funding in the hopes that $3 billion will be added. The smaller figure is insufficient, but a step in the right direction. I intend to vote for this bill, but I am disappointed that we are not able to amend this bill so that I could vote for adequate funding for veterans.

Our veterans have served our country well. They don't deserve to go through the annual budget process with the uncertainty that exists. The veterans groups that comprise the Independent Budget are not far off the mark when they state in the introduction of the Independent Budget for fiscal year 2000:

> Veterans' programs, once secure expressions of a Nation's gratitude, are now only line items on the debit side of the government's ledger—items routinely targeted for cutting in the name of fiscal restraint.

We have to stop cheating our veterans.

I will encourage the President to submit a better budget next year. And as I did this year, I will work with my colleagues on the committee to increase funding for veterans healthcare to the amount requested in the Independent Budget.

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, providing for veterans and their families is one of my highest priorities in Congress. The men and women who served in the armed services deserve the gratitude of the entire Nation. But rather than fulfilling our obligations to veterans and ensuring the continuation of benefits and the improvement of veterans' health care, we are letting veterans down. H.R. 2684 fails our veterans. This bill provides $1.5 billion more than fiscal year 1999 funding, and $1.6 billion more than requested by the president—but this is not enough.

The Independent Budget, published by Paralyzed Veterans of Americans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans and AMVETS, demands a budget increase of $3 billion for fiscal year 2000. This is the necessary amount to provide the health care and other services that veterans deserve.

I have met with many Kansas veterans and heard accounts of substandard health care and loss of benefits. Not only are we eliminating treatment, we are rationing the health care we do provide. Veterans have shared their frustration with the state of veterans' health care, describing accounts of VA hospitals delaying and denying services.

These men and women sacrificed for our country. They were willing to give their lives to protect the principles of our Nation. But instead of honoring and providing for our veterans, we are denying them the services they

desperately need. I cannot support this appropriations legislation as it does not fulfill our obligation to our veterans. We cannot let veterans down in their time of need. We must address the alarming state of the VA health care system. We must improve the quality of veterans' health care. We must guarantee the continuation of services. We must not fail our veterans.

In addition, this bill critically underfunds vital HUD programs, including the HOME program and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which has helped state and local governments revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing and economic opportunities, and improve community facilities and services for twenty-five years.

I am proud to represent Kansas City, Kansas, a community that is a leader in developing useful and visionary ideas in the use of CDBG grants to rehabilitate existing housing stock and build new housing. I recently spoke to the mayor of Kansas City, Carol Marinovich, who told me that CDBG and HOME grants are the backbone of improvement efforts in Kansas City, from Peregrine Falcon Development that is building 68 single family homes in former vacant lots to Argentine Recreation Center that was built with a $1 million CDBG grant, providing a center of community to this mixed-income, minority neighborhood. These vital programs, like Section 8 housing assistance, public housing capital assistance, drug elimination grants, homeless programs, fair housing activities, Brownfields cleanup, and housing for persons with AIDS represent a commitment to our communities that this bill does not recognize.

This appropriation cuts the National Science Foundation (NSF) by $274 million, which would undermine the Nation's investment in discovery and education, specifically in the institutions of higher learning in eastern Kansas, which has fueled unprecedented economic growth for the past decade. The funding cut from the NASA science programs jeopardizes U.S. leadership in space and has the potential to decrease research in our colleges as well as close NASA Centers.

My final concern with this bill is its failure to meet Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding levels of 1999, which could lead to excess emissions of as much as 12,000 tons of ozone depleting substances. This would result in a depleted ozone layer and increased cases of skin cancers and cataracts.

For these reasons, I am voting against final passage of H.R. 2684.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2684, the fiscal year 2000 VA/HUD and independent agencies appropriations bill. In July of this year, the House Appropriations Committee completed a ''mark-up'' of the VA/HUD bill rendering deep cuts in funding for veterans, housing and NASA. The overall cuts in these programs will hurt our nation's ability to provide safe, affordable housing, economic opportunities, and health care for veterans. These cuts will also devastate NASA and the Nation's preeminence in space science and exploration. Because of these unacceptable cuts, I voted against this bill in the Appropriations Committee and I will continue to vote against this bill.

If this bill passes, the $1.6 billion in HUD cuts alone will have a devastating impact on families and communities nationwide. Overall, the HUD cuts represent: an estimated 156,000 fewer housing units for low-income families in America at a time when worst case housing needs are at an all-time high; 16,000 homeless families and persons with AIDS who will not receive vital housing and related services; and 97,000 jobs that will not be generated in communities that need them.

The potential impact of the HUD budget cuts on the 15th Congressional District of Michigan, which I represent, are dismal and economic development activity under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will be cut by $250 million from the level enacted in 1999, and $5 million will be cut from the job-generating Brownfields Economic Development Initiative. This means that approximately 97,000 jobs that could be created by these programs will not be. These cuts will impact the creation of approximately 191 jobs in my district. Mr. Speaker there are several communities that still struggle in the slow lane of the Nation's strong economy. The 15th Congressional District of Michigan cannot afford to lose one potential job, nor can it afford to lose the $1,385,000 total it will lose if this bill passes.

Despite a booming economy, the number of families with worst case housing needs (defined as paying over 50 percent of their income on rent) remains at an all-time high of 12.5 million people, including 4.5 million children, 1.5 million elderly, and 3.5 million persons in families on welfare. The cuts in this bill will result in a total of over 128,000 families being denied housing vouchers. 88 of the families being denied housing vouchers as a result of this bill are from my district. We should be expanding rather than cutting the supply of affordable housing for all Americans. If we do not take care of our nation's most vulnerable citizens during economic plenty, when will we open doors for all Americans?

Although the bill increases funding for veterans health care by $1.7 billion, the funding is short of the approximately $3 billion, advocated by most of the major veterans organizations, that is needed to keep pace with the health care needs of veterans. Representative LANE EVANS, ranking Democratic member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, has indicated that he is also in opposition to this bill because of this funding shortfall.

The bill slashes funding for key NASA science programs. It cuts the request for the National Science Foundation (NSF) by $274 million which will eliminate funding for almost 14,000 researchers and science and mathematics educators. The reduction alone will undermine the Nation's investment in discovery and education which has fueled unprecedented economic growth for the past decade.

The bill cuts the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Operating Program and will result in personnel reductions that will hamper efforts to protect public health and the environment, and prevent the EPA from undertaking initiatives designed to improve the quality of the Nation's air, water, and food supply. The bill also cuts $50 million each from the request for the Superfund program and for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program.

Mr. Chairman, I believe these budget cuts will move America in exactly the wrong direction. In this era of unprecedented economic prosperity we should be expanding, not cutting programs that meet our vital needs of housing, economic opportunity, health care for veterans, and our preeminence in space science and exploration.

For these reasons, I vote ''no'' on the VA–HUD appropriations bill.

Mr. LAFALCE. MR. CHAIRMAN, I RISE IN OPPOSITION TO THE VA–HUD APPROPRIATIONS BILL.

First, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Subcommittee Chairman WALSH and Ranking Member MOLLOHAN. They have done the best job they could with an inadequate funding allocation.

Yet, as a result of these funding limits, the bill is bad for housing. It reflects a combination of opportunities missed and promises unkept.

There are 5.3 million families—over 12 million Americans—with worst case housing needs. This includes some 1.5 million elderly and 4.5 million children. Last year, as part of this same VA–HUD bill, Congress authorized 100,000 new affordable housing vouchers for fiscal year 2000, to address this need. Yet, today's bill does not fund a single new voucher.

On any given night, there are almost three quarters of a million homeless Americans. Yet, this bill actually cuts funding for homeless prevention programs—leaving us some $150 million below the funding level of five years ago.

Last year, we enacted historic legislation to reform public housing. Yet, today's bill undercuts that reform effort, by cutting public housing capital repair funds by $500 million, and leaving housing agencies hundreds of millions of dollars short of even covering operating costs.

Overall, virtually every housing program has been cut in this bill—including housing counseling, fair housing enforcement, the HOME program, rural housing, lead paint reduction, and others.

Finally, this bill is inadequate when it comes to economic development. At a time of general economic prosperity, we should be acting to ensure that all communities and all Americans have the opportunity to participate in that prosperity.

Yet, instead of approving the Administration's APIC initiative to leverage billions of dollars in investments in distressed communities, this bill cuts CDBG by $250 million, and also cuts funding for brownfields redevelopment, empowerment zones, and enterprise communities.

We should reject this bill unless funding is restored for these critical programs.

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Chairman: I rise to thank my colleague from New York, Mr. WALSH, for including language in his committee report on this legislation recommending that EPA investigate and promote opportunities for the reuse of industrial packages. I hope that during the conference on the VA, HUD bill, Chairman WALSH will see fit to earmark some modest amount of money for this program, for which there is ample authority under existing law. I am placing in the RECORD my letter to the chairman of the subcommittee in further support of this request.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,
Washington, DC, September 8, 1999.

Hon. JAMES T. WALSH,
Chairman, Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies, Washington, DC.

DEAR JIM: Thank you for including report language in the committee report accompanying H.R. 2684, the FY 2000 appropriations bill for VA, HUD and Independent Agencies, that directs the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to investigate and promote

opportunities for the reuse of industrial packages in order to increase waste reduction and energy efficiency.

Although I appreciate the fiscal constraints that your subcommittee is under, I hope that in conference on this bill you could add report language providing for a lien item set-aside directing EPA to provide ''$1,000,000 to increase waste reduction and energy efficiency through the expanded reuse of industrial packages.'' As Chairman of the Commerce Committee, I recognize the environmental benefits to be derived from reusing industrial packages.

Thank you for your support on this issue and your consideration of this specific request. Please contact me with any questions or have your staff call Jim Barnette at 225–2927.

Sincerely,

TOM BLILEY,
Chairman.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2684, the VA–HUD, and independent agencies fiscal year 2000 appropriations bill. I do so because the bill would drastically cut our efforts to provide the best care to our nation's veterans and the best protection for our environment. But I would like to focus today on the devastation this bill would cause in public housing and urban development programs in our country, and in my congressional district.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented economic boom in our country which is largely the result of the fiscal discipline exerted in Congress when the 1990 and 1993 budget deals were passed. That discipline has produced an era where we now have surplus projections for the next decade and beyond. In this time of unparalleled growth and opportunity, we have a special duty to protect those vulnerable citizens who depend on the federal government for housing assistance.

Worst case housing needs are at an all time high of 5.3 million households today. In my district, a number of owners are considering opting out of the Section 8 program to cash in on the hot real estate market in eastern Massachusetts. Hundreds of seniors living in the communities that I represent are frightened because they have received notices that their landlords are contemplating the termination of their contracts with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Without the money to make fair and reasonable offers to these owners, and to increase the number of elderly assistance housing vouchers, HUD is unable—though not unwilling—to protect these seniors in my district and throughout the country.

In the face of these challenges, what does the Republican majority propose to do for these seniors: nothing. Instead, the majority has proposed a HUD budget that falls $1.6 billion short of last year's level. The bill will not fund a single Administration request for new housing and economic development assistance, which includes the funding of 100,000 new Section 8 vouchers. And the cuts will have a very deep and negative impact in my district—this bill will cut nearly $4 million, 250 fewer jobs, and 440 fewer housing units for low-income families.

At the same time, the cuts will cripple the ability of HUD to assist worthy community development projects in cities and towns in every district. In my district, HUD is an active participant in the redevelopment efforts of the cities of Everett, Malden, and Medford—three older, industrial cities that have joined forces to transform themselves from industrial-age communities to information-age communities with the creation of a telecommunications research and development technology park called TelCom City. HUD recently announced a grant and loan guarantee package for the TeleCom City project to assist these 3 cities to reclaim some of the land at the site that is considered ''brownfields.'' This type of assistance is playing a critical role in the revitalization of these communities.

Mr. Chairman, these cuts are too deep. The Republican leadership should be ashamed to be proposing to dole out huge tax breaks to the wealthy financed on the backs of the most vulnerable citizens in our country—those who depend on housing assistance to keep a roof over their heads, and those living in cities and towns that need a helping hand to achieve their redevelopment goals. I urge a no vote on this bill.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Chairman, I want to pose the same question to my colleagues in the House that I asked a group of veterans in Hoke County, North Carolina.

Name this Country: 1,500,000 active service personnel, 10 standing Army divisions, 20 Air Force and Navy air wings, 2000 combat aircraft, 232 strategic bombers, 13 strategic missile submarines, 232 missiles, 500 ICBMs with 1950 warheads, 4 aircraft carriers, and 121 associated combat ships and submarines.

The audience of VFW veterans, many of them retired military service men and women, had difficulty guessing what country I was talking about. I heard a number of responses—North Korea, Russia, Iraq, and finally someone guessed correctly—the United States.

That is where this nation stands in terms of military strength. That is where we are since 1992 when a liberal president took over our military. The systematic degradation of our armed forces is a disgrace to the men and women who have fought for our country, to our fallen comrades, and to our veterans who stand witness to the dismantling of the military and the VA services they were promised when they entered the military.

I have received letters, phone calls and personal visits, recounting horror stories of the services that veterans get from VA hospitals and medical clinics. Veterans' Administration officials report that an average wait for patients who need to see a specialist is almost 4 months—120 days! They hope to see this waiting period reduced to what they claim an acceptable level—30 days.

I don't know about you, but when I am in pain—I want to do something about it now—not in 30 days and certainly not in 120 days.

Our system is in need of drastic improvements. That is a fact. But cutting funding to the VA and its health care services while the veterans population grows is hurting the men and women who have served our country. You cannot continue to add users of VA services without increasing providers of the health care service. It's simple mathematics.

I commend my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for producing legislation under the tightest of budgetary constraints that demonstrates this Congress' commitment to our nation's veterans. Specifically, I applaud the efforts of committee members to ensure that this bill provides $1.6 billion in additional funding over the insufficient amount requested in the President's budget.

I urge my colleagues to support our veterans by supporting this bill. I am committed to working with other members of Congress to continue to improve upon the services the Veterans' Administration provide in North Carolina and around the country.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my strongest opposition to H.R. 2684, the VA–HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill. As we approach the final stretch of the appropriations process, I would like to be able to support this legislation, which is one of our largest domestic funding bills. Regretfully, I cannot.

In spite of the hard work of my colleagues, Chairman JAMES WALSH and Ranking Member ALAN MOLLOHAN, who did their best under difficult budgetary constraints, this bill makes unacceptable cuts to essential housing, science, space, environmental, and veteran programs.

For example, this bill funds the Department of Housing and Urban Development at $26.1 billion—nearly $2 billion below the administration's request. This translates into cuts in all of HUD's major programs including the Community Development Block Grant program, HOME program, public housing capital assistance, drug elimination grants, homeless programs, fair housing activities, Brownfields cleanup and development, lead-based paint abatement and housing for persons with AIDS.

The residents of L.A. County, where housing demand is more than three times higher than the rest of the nation and rents are at record levels, will be devastated. I have received dozens of letters from service and housing providers in Los Angeles decrying these proposed cuts. They state over and over again that these cuts will severely undermine their ability to serve our homeless veterans and working families.

For example, Los Angeles County's average apartment rent is a startling $982 a month, 19% higher than the national average. This June, Southern California's median home price hit an all-time high of $204,000. These trends are troubling for a number of reasons:

Rising rents means our working families will be forced to double or triple-up, leading to severe overcrowding. In fact, the LA Housing Department estimates that 25% of poor renters already live in overcrowded conditions, many of them having 7 or more people sharing a two-bedroom apartment.

Rising rents also means that many families will be forced to seek cheaper housing inland, leading to longer commutes, more freeway congestion, and more smog.

Rising rents is also bad for business, as it makes it more difficult for growing companies to attract workers, making them less competitive and forcing them to leave the area.

Furthermore, this bill makes unacceptable cuts to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, better known as NASA. The bill butchers NASA's budget by a whopping $1 billion—a 7% cut from last year's level. Programs facing the Republican scalpel include basic research in astronomy, earth science and space science. NASA Administrator Dan Goldin has stated that these cuts will decimate key elements of the nation's space program, requiring the largest restructuring since the end of the Apollo program.

This bill's cuts to NASA will effectively decimate the nation's future space science program, making substantial reductions in the Explorer programs, the Discovery program and

Supporting Research and Technology, all mainstays of university research. Upcoming missions managed by scientists at the University of California campuses will also be impacted, including the Mars Polar Lander mission at UCLA, Extreme Ultraviolet Explorer Observatory at UC Berkeley, and the Triana Satellite at UC San Diego.

The bill also reduces the National Science Foundation's budget by $24 million from last year's level and $275 million less than requested by the Administration. NSF supports basic research that's fundamentally important to all aspects of our lives, from basic biological research to information technology. At a time when we are grappling with the need to improve our schoolchildren's math and science skills, this cut will deprive thousands of teachers the training they need in these very fields.

Basic research is also vital to maintaining this nation's preeminence in science and space exploration into the next century. Our California universities in particular are extremely concerned about the impact of these reductions on university-based research. California receives over 10% of all National Science Foundation's research grants and these cuts will limit the number of grants to promising new researchers to dangerously low levels.

To add insult to injury, Republicans at the last minute restored $400 million to NASA's budget, but at the expense of the AmeriCorps national service program. This cut to AmeriCorps' budget essentially terminates the highly successful domestic Peace Corps. AmeriCorps members—tackling critical problems like illiteracy, crime and poverty—have served nearly 33 million people in more than 4,000 communities. Promoting the American ideals of community involvement, national service and civic participation, AmeriCorps members have taught, tutored or mentored more than 2.6 million children, served 564,000 at-risk youth in after-school programs, operated 40,500 safety patrols, rehabilitated 25,000 homes, aided more than 2.4 million homeless individuals and immunized 419,000 people. Cutting this highly successful program is unacceptable.

Lastly, this bill underfunds medical care for our deserving veterans. Veterans are telling us that this bill is still $1.3 billion below what the Veterans' Administration needs just to maintain current services. While the Appropriations Committee added $700 million to the VA account, they rejected an attempt to restore even more funding. My colleague from Texas, Representative CHET EDWARDS, offered an amendment to increase veterans health care spending by an additional $730 million. Mindful of the need to be fiscally responsible, Mr. EDWARDS proposed to pay for this increase by delaying the proposed cut in the capital gains tax, which is one the prized goodies included in Republican leadership's tax bill. This amendment failed on a party line vote, reaffirming that Republicans prefer to hand out benefits to the rich than provide health care benefits for veterans.

I have no choice but to oppose this draconian bill and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my appreciation of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) leadership in fighting the rising hepatitis C (HCV) epidemic among veterans. It is my view that the VA, Congress, community health leaders, and veterans' service organizations must do even more to ensure that veterans have access to the testing and treatment they deserve.

Today, nearly four million Americans have HCV. But the infection rate among veterans is as much as six times higher than in the general population according to the American Liver Foundation. Recent testing efforts within the VA indicate that nationally 8–10 percent of veterans are HCV positive and in some urban areas it is double that rate.

Alarming as these numbers are, the situation in the Hispanic community is especially serious. In our community, the infection rate approaches six percent among those in their late forties and early fifties and I am concerned that among Hispanic veterans the rate could be even higher. I am particularly concerned that we are seeing the beginning of what will be a steadily increasing number of Vietnam era veterans who test positive for this disease. Nearly one million Hispanic Americans are veterans of military service, several hundred thousand of whom served during the Vietnam era.

Unfortunately, HCV is a silent killer. The disease progresses slowly without symptoms in a majority of patients for two decades or more. Patients with chronic NCV have significantly lower health-related quality of life than healthy individuals. But let there be no mistake about the serious nature of this disease. Untreated, HCV leads to liver failure, cancer, and death. It is now the leading cause of liver transplantation—a procedure that costs upwards of $250,000 if an organ is even available for the patient.

I would like to have seen more funds directed toward veterans' healthcare and I strongly urge the VA to take all necessary steps to ensure that at the local level, every veteran who needs testing and treatment for HCV is able to get it. I applaud the efforts of veterans service organizations and local community health leaders to inform the at-risk members of our communities about the dangers of HCV. I look forward to working with each of these groups in the effort to halt the spread of this epidemic.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Chairman, I rise to register my deep concern about funding levels in this bill.

Our colleagues have already spoken about how deficiencies in funding for Housing and Urban Development programs would have a devastating impact on families and communities nationwide. Overall, the cuts represent an estimated 156,000 fewer housing units for low-income families in America at a time when worst-case housing needs are at an all-time high. Colorado's HUD funds would be cut by $16.56 million, and my district in Colorado would see cuts in HUD programs of $2.58 million from this year's levels. There are still so many Americans who aren't benefiting from our country's unprecedented national prosperity. As Secretary Cuomo has said, ''Now is the time to invest in a brighter future for people and places left behind.''

Some of my colleagues are seeking to boost the budgets of housing and veterans programs by taking funds from NASA, NSF, and other worthwhile science programs. I don't think this is the answer.

In fact, there is no point in trying to shift funds around when the real problem is a severely underfunded bill. The right way to fix this bill is to start over. There is simply no fat to cut from this bill, especially where NASA is concerned.

The cuts made to NASA's budget in the fiscal year 2000 VA–HUD Appropriations bill represent the largest cut to the agency since the end of the Apollo program. Not everything was cut—academic programs, for instance, were increased 6 percent over fiscal year 1999 levels. In particular, the budget for the Space Grant program, which works through the Colorado Space Grant Consortium in my district, was increased to FY99 levels, enabling 15 colleges and universities and thousands of K–12 students throughout Colorado to continue to work together on the Citizen Explorer Satellite.

Overall, however, the bill cuts NASA's funding by $1 billion from this year's levels. Space science programs—which fund the planetary missions, space-based observatories and other spacecraft, as well as research grants to universities and other institutions—have been cut $163 million from this year's levels. These cuts endanger current and future NASA projects like Chandra, which recently sent images of exploding stars and black holes back to earth. Chandra's science instruments and the camera that took these photos are housed in a science instrument module built by Ball Aerospace, based in Boulder, CO.

This bill would also cut NASA funding to space and earth science programs at the University of Colorado. Important NASA-funded programs at CU's Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics, the Center for Astrodynamics Research, and the Center for the Study of Earth from Space, among others, would all see deep cuts under this bill.

This bill also cuts funding for the National Science Foundation by $24 million below fiscal year 1999 levels. As the only agency with the responsibility of supporting research and education in all science and engineering disciplines, NSF funds many important programs. NSF funding represents 67 percent of the overall budget of the world-renowned National Center for Atmospheric Research, based in Boulder. At flat funding for fiscal year 2000, NCAR will receive, in real dollars, an approximate 4-percent cut.

Over the last few weeks, I have received hundreds of letters and calls from Coloradans in my district expressing concern, shock, even outrage over the cuts to science programs in the VA–HUD bill.

Many of these calls and letters are from students, researchers, and employees who would see their work directly affected by cuts in NASA's budget. But many of the letters I have received are from citizens who have no direct interest in NASA's programs. To me, their voices are significant because they point to the fact that science and space are concerns to us all. They understand the importance of continuing our investment in science, technology, research, and learning.

NASA tells us that ''it is entirely foreseeable that this budget will cut off opportunities for the engineers, technologists, and earth and space scientists of the future, losing a generation of researchers who would have taken space exploration and development of cutting-edge technologies into the next millennium.'' I think that about sums it up. We're living in a time of prosperity that has been brought on by technological advances, yet we're not willing to fund the very programs that represent the backbone of this growth and that will continue to fuel it.

Mr. Chairman, the answer isn't to rearrange funding within this bill to suit our various priorities. The answer is to go back to the drawing board and come up with a bill that makes sense. As it stands, this bill isn't up to the task, and I cannot support it.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 2684, the VA–HUD–independent agencies appropriations for fiscal year 2000.

The Republican leadership's fiscal year VA–HUD appropriation fails miserably to protect our nation's veterans. The Republican leadership should be ashamed to offer a bill which slashes funding for the men and women who fought for our freedom. This Republican-led Congress has flat-lined veterans funding for the last four years. As our veterans continue to age, they face more medical emergencies. Unless funding for veterans' health care is significantly increased, services will be cut and essential health care will be denied. If we pass this bill, the message we send to our veterans is that the sacrifices they made for our country are meaningless. Give our nation's veterans what they deserve.

Mr. Chairman, in these times of economic prosperity, our nation has a responsibility to provide adequate assistance to our most vulnerable citizens. This legislation should also be opposed for the devastating cuts that it makes to programs that protect the interests of senior, persons with disabilities, children and the poor. In my district alone over $4,612,000 dollars will be lost as a result of cuts to HUD. This will result in the elimination of a least 215 jobs as well as 401 housing units for low-income families.

If we are to remain committed to the principles of welfare reform and economic development, we must recognize that massive cuts to transitional housing and the elimination of jobs works directly against these higher goals. If we are to consider ourselves advocates for our nation's children, we must know that a $10 million cut to the Lead Hazard Control Grant program puts children's health directly at risk. If we are to confront the needs of persons with AIDS, we must realize that their successful medical treatment requires stable housing. It has often been said that you can tell a lot about a country by how they treat their most vulnerable citizens. I ask, what does this legislation say about the Unite States:?

In addition, it is a travesty that this bill eliminates funding for the AmeriCorps program. This initiative has been a tremendous success in my district. Lower-income children have been given opportunities to work with mentors that they would not have had without this program. These children have been given a chance to learn from an early age how important a quality education is, and to learn lifelong learning skills that will help them become productive members of our society and afford to go to college.

Lastly, NASA and the National Science Foundation have made great strides over the years, and I am disappointed that important science initiatives have been drastically cut. I am concerned that a cut this large will destroy any chance of us becoming the world leader in space and technology endeavors.

I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose the VA–HUD appropriation bill for fiscal year 2000.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, my colleagues Mr. WALSH and Mr. MOLLOHAN and those on the Appropriations Subcommittee have been given an impossible job given the BBA of 1997.

Had the entire budget process been more honest, we would not have the situation that we are in, today. Had the budget process been more honest, Congress probably could have passed this bill before the August district work period.

Instead we are here pitting the NASA scientists against the veterans, against the children who participate in AmeriCorp against the segment in our society who needs help with affordable housing so they are not on the streets homeless. All of these programs are worthy of our support and all contribute to help make our communities more livable.

Some would say that this process helps us set our priorities, others would say that this just shows who is more politically organized.

In reality it is probably a slight demonstration of both, but since this is a political arena it favors the politically organized. Is it any wonder that the federal government spends 14 times more on space exploration than in oceanic research? NASA's proposed budget is $13.85 billion while the two agencies that do oceanic research NOS and NIPHS' budget combined is only $930 million.

I believe Congress should tone down the political nature of budgeting and be in the business of making communities more livable. A livable community is one that is safe, economically secure and one that plans and helps to meet the needs of those less fortunate.

An undeniable part of a livable community is affordable housing. The federal government is key to helping people who cannot otherwise be housed and to assist families in transition from dependent to self-reliant.

At a time when the American economy is booming and the government for the first time in decades is not operating in the red, it makes no sense to cut money from public housing, when for this segment of our community, affordable housing becomes harder to find. But under the present political budget process, the money has to be cut.

In my district, the Housing Authority of Portland operates 2,800 units of public housing in 32 apartments and over 200 single-family sites.

Who are the people that live in our public housing? They are the poor, the elderly and younger people with various disabilities. They are the people who have families who are working hard to learn skills to work at jobs that pay more than minimum wage.

They are precisely the people we want to help even if they are the people who are not politically organized.

They are not the people who will be helped next year by the over three-quarter trillion dollar tax breaks even though many have a very heavy tax burden because so much of their income goes to payroll taxes and sales taxes.

They are the people who will be hurt this year by this bill, because the bill falls short, because the Congress in 1997 got pulled away from the real priorities of the American people.

The non-capital costs of operating those public housing units in Portland last year was paid for with $5.5 million in tenant rents. Yes, tenant rents. This did not cover the costs of the units, an additional $5.1 million was paid by the federal government to help with the operating costs.

There are U.S. citizens across this country who need this type of support. This type of hand up. Without it, there will be 156,000 fewer housing units for low-income families.

It means our homeless population will probably increase by 16,000 people and people with AIDS won't get the help they need to get off the street. It means 97,000 jobs won't be generated for people coming off welfare.

If this bill passes with the present cuts in HUD of $1.6 billion below last year's level, people in Portland will be faced with a 15 percent reduction in operating subsidy this year.

That means Portland could face a loss of $4,670,000. We could lose 529 low income housing units for families.

Livable communities promote safe neighborhoods, economic security, and where there is a good partnership with private institutions and government at all levels to leave the community and the environment better than they found it.

Let's be honest with the American people. Lets not chop away at it each year leaving our elderly, disabled and young struggling families to fend for themselves. Let's not pit our veterans against our seniors or scientists.

An honest budget process will make our jobs easier. Housing shouldn't be a political issue. I think most folks agree that there will always be some people in our society that we will always have to help, and we know we should. For many others help now means the American Dream is achievable tomorrow. All segments of our community deserve our attention and help. This process needs to be changed to promote not just an honest discussion but a more fair and equitable budget.

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of our country's space program. NASA's contributions to the science community are immeasurable, yet its funding is being cut nearly $1 billion for FY 2000.

I am troubled by this cut in NASA's funding. For decades, the United States has been the preeminent leader in space exploration. We were the first to put a man on the moon; we have had a successful space shuttle program; we possess superb satellite technology; and we are about to lead the world in building an international space station. How can the United States continue to be the world leader in space without the proper funding?

The United States has made great strides in scientific research and development as a direct result from NASA programs. We have learned a great deal from our space endeavors, but there is still so much to be discovered.

Our space program has enabled us to view spectacular cosmic events at the far reaches of the universe. We have been able to witness the birth of stars, observe black holes, and map distant galaxies. The United States has also been able to make great strides in medical research through experiments conducted in space. Future experiments that NASA conducts in space might yield information leading to a cure for cancer or heart disease. The possibilities are endless, as long as NASA is fully funded.

NASA has also made important contributions to the United States armed forces with state-of-the-art technology allowing the U.S. to maintain military superiority over the world.

It is regrettable to see NASA's funding scaled back so drastically. The research that NASA conducts is invaluable to both earth and space sciences and its benefits are far reaching. It is imperative that NASA receives the

necessary funding to continue making progress in scientific research and development, space exploration, and universal observation.

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong opposition to this VA–HUD appropriations bill.

Mr. Chairman, veterans hospital facilities around the country are faced with mounting budget shortfalls. Hospitals are being consolidated around the country, including Tennessee, due to a lack of sufficient funds. An insufficient budget means the same inadequate funding for health care, more reductions in full-time employees, and new initiatives without new funding to pay for them. Veterans are growing older and sicker each year. We are approaching a medical emergency. Unless the veteran health care system receives the kinds of increases in funding it needs, critical services will be cut, health care denied, facilities closed and dedicated employees out of work.

Mr. Chairman, quite simply, this pattern has to end. This situation is outrageous. Our veterans have served their country in the noblest of manners. It is now our obligation and duty to take care of them. And in order to do this, we simply need sufficient funding.

I spoke on this floor five months ago about the dire situation our veterans are facing. Despite my best efforts in both the Budget Committee and on this floor, our veterans were left without the increases in funding they so desperately need. In the meantime, this House has found the time to pass a fiscally irresponsible $792 billion tax cut that disproportionately benefits the wealthiest members of our society. This ridiculous tax cut depletes the resources available to our veterans who have already given so much to their country. This is quite simply about priorities: does this House want to improve health care for our nation's veterans or do we want to provide disproportionate tax cuts to the wealthy?

Although H.R. 2684 increases veterans funding, it only goes part way. A broad coalition of veterans groups have called for larger increases, particularly for veterans' health care. An amendment offered by Mr. EDWARDS and ruled out of order by the Rules Committee would have restored some of this critically needed funding. I strongly believe that serving our veterans, who have already made sacrifices to serve our country, should be a top priority in this House. It deeply saddens me that it appears others in this body put a higher priority on giving the wealthiest of our country a break on their capital gains taxes.

It is my hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in opposing this bill. Regardless of which side of the aisle you are on, it is simply wrong to deny our veterans the funding they so desperately need. I hope that we can all agree on the need to provide increased funding for our veterans. I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill and support efforts to increase veterans funding.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Chairman, what are our priorities if we cannot repay those to whom we owe so greatly?

Earlier this summer, against the wishes of the American people, the majority party in this House passed a trillion-dollar tax bill. It helped the rich, big business, and an array of special interests. It promised economic prosperity and a balanced budget. It promised to return budget surpluses that exist only on paper.

I voted against the tax plan for a number of reasons. It was and is my belief that before Congress passes massive tax cuts that benefit the vast majority of Americans in a very minor way, that we first save Social Security, Medicare, and other invaluable programs. We also pay down our national debt. Those should be our priorities and primary duties.

There is one additional duty we should have performed before we passed a massive tax cut. It is a duty to which we are honor bound. That duty, Mr. Chairman, is to provide quality health care to the 26 million living Americans who, at times of great peril to the Nation, risked their lives selflessly for out country. We must provide our veterans with the benefits they were promised and deserve.

Mr. Chairman, we must decide what kind of medical care delivery system best suits our nation's veterans. We must either provided the necessary funds—all of them—to provide quality health care services under our current system, or we must make a radical change to a new system that guarantees that our veterans have access to quality health care. I am willing to support either option so long as our veterans find it acceptable and receive deserved high-quality health care.

What I cannot support maintaining the unsatisfactory status quo or something worse. As a veteran and a Member proud to serve our veterans, I will not support perpetuating a mediocre veterans' health care system. That, Mr. Chairman, is precisely what this bill does. Once again, the President requested a funding level incapable of providing quality service. Once again, the Republican Congress has produced a budget and an appropriations bill that fails to meet the VA's and our veterans' needs.

Mr. Chairman, I listen again and again to veterans in Michigan's 16th District complain about the poor service at VA clinics, excessive waiting lines at hospitals, crumbling facilities, insufficient numbers of qualified medical personnel, and an inability to provide prosthetics, wheelchairs, oxygen tanks, hearing aids, eyeglasses, and other needs. The VA' ability to provide long-term care is still not solved. Funding requests filed a decade or more ago, like in Allen Park, Michigan, go unfulfilled. The VA will again be asked to further streamline bureaucracy, improve efficiency, and get a bigger bang for the buck. But inadequate funds will be made available.

Mr. Chairman, you know who loses if we pass this bill today and maintain the status quo. It is the veterans and the country they served.

Veterans, veterans' service organizations, and Members of Congress from both parties have continually insisted that if the VA is to maintain its current level of medical services, an additional $3.2 billion would be needed in FY 2000. The bill before us provides less than half that needed amount. It puts a shin plaster on a cancer. At a time when our veterans' long-term care needs are greatest, it slashes funding to state extended care facilities, the one type of long-term care venture that has been of moderate success. It also fails to provide any funding for tobacco-related illnesses.

I also would like to note my displeasure at the party-line decision made by the Rules Committee. The action of the Rules Committee and the rule itself are a great disservice to our veterans. They prevent the House from having an honest debate on the Edwards-Evans-Stabenow amendment, which would have provided an additional $730 million veterans' medical care. To offset the cost of this meaningful piece of legislation, the Edwards amendment would have delayed the implementation of the proposed Republican cut in the capital tax by one year.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot support this bill, and I am ashamed that again this year Congress will fail in its task of providing quality medical care to our veterans. We all owe our veterans a debt of gratitude. It is time to pay our debt.

Mr. HOBSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the fiscal year 2000 VA, HUD, and independent agencies appropriations bill. This bill before us is a good bill which takes care of our nation's veterans, addresses critical housing needs, protects the environment, and invests in science and technology research. At the same time, this bill demonstrates to the American people that Congress has kept its commitment to balance the federal budget. Many tough decisions were made to ensure that the government lives within its means and Congress keeps its promise to the American people.

However, Mr. Chairman, despite these tough decisions, we have provided our veterans with a $1.7 billion increase. This means veterans will receive the medical care they deserve through medical centers and facilities like community based outpatient clinics. Countless veterans in my district have spoken to me about how much they appreciate having a clinic in their community rather than having to drive two or more hours for outpatient care. I'm proud to say that Congress, not the President, is making sure more community clinics are opened for veterans across the country.

Mr. Chairman, this bill also meets the crucial housing needs of low income, senior, and disabled populations. Section 8 and section 202 programs have been fully funded. Additionally, this bill protects the environment by increasing money for state and local environmental programs. This money will not stay in Washington but will be distributed to important state revolving funds for the protection of our natural resources.

Also, I want to express my support for critical funding of research and technology programs. NASA is paving the way for aeronautics and space technology into the next century. Congress must continue to support this research in a fiscally responsible manner.

Finally, I would like to commend Chairman WALSH and Ranking Member MOLLOHAN for their leadership. They have done a fine job producing a responsible and fair bill and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Chairman, this Member rises today to express his support for H.R. 2684, the Veterans (VA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Independent Agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year 2000. First, this Member would like to thank the distinguished Chairman of the VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee (Mr. WALSH), the distinguished Ranking Minority Member (Mr. MOLLOHAN) and all members of the subcommittee for the important but difficult work they did under the tight budget caps imposed in 1997.

Once again, this subcommittee undoubtedly has struggled to complete the tough task of allocating limited resources among many deserving programs. As a member of the House Banking Committee, the committee with jurisdiction over Federal housing programs, this

Member is very interested in how funds are appropriated in this area. Although there are numerous deserving programs included in this funding bill, this Member would like to emphasize five points.

First, this Member, in particular, would like to comment favorably upon the treatment of some housing programs. Section 8, section 184, section 202, and section 811 programs probably were funded as adequately as we can under the budgetary restraints. In particular, this Member commends the $6 million appropriation for the section 184 program, the American Indian Housing Loan Guarantee Program, which he authored. This seems to be a program with excellent potential which, this Member notes without appropriate modesty in recognizing the support received from many colleagues, is for the first time providing private mortgage fund resources for Indians on reservations through a Federal Government guarantee program for those Indian families who have in the past been otherwise unable to secure conventional financing due to the trust status of Indian reservation land.

Second, this Member applauds the subcommittee for reducing the duplicative efforts of the Federal Government in rural housing and economic development. After a funding level of $32 million in fiscal year 1999 for rural housing and economic development efforts in HUD, the subcommittee appropriated no money in fiscal year 2000 for HUD's rural housing efforts. However, unfortunately, a set-aside of $10 million is still allocated from CDBG for rural housing and economic development.

As a long-term advocate of rural housing during my tenure in the House, this Member nevertheless believes that we need to be careful of duplication and waste of financial resources in the efforts of the Federal Government's programs for rural housing and economic development. The United States Department of Agriculture, through their Rural Development offices, has housing and development staff located throughout each state. We do not need to hire new HUD ''community builders'' to duplicate their work as suggested by the administration.

Third, however, this Member would like to emphasize his concerns about the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provisions in this Act. The CDBG Program is proposed to be cut from a funding level of $4.750 billion in fiscal year 1999 to $4.5 billion for fiscal year 2000, a reduction of $250 million. This Member would like to certainly support the restoration of funds for CDBG to the fiscal year 1999 level in the conference committee. The CDBG program not only is valuable to the larger entitlement cities, it gives assistance to those communities under 50,000 through state administering agencies. It is a government program with minimal overhead and bureaucracy.

Moreover, the CDBG program has provided invaluable dollars to cities and rural communities for such things as affordable housing, public infrastructure, and economic development. Specifically in Nebraska, CDBG dollars have recently been used in rural counties to meet their recent hurry-up demand for the development of important comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances as a result of concerns over the placement of mega-sized hog production factories.

With regard to CDBG, this Member is pleased to commend the subcommittee on reducing the overall set-asides by $266.5 million as compared to last year. This Member has testified at the subcommittee level that the expenditure of the maximum amount of CDBG funds should be left to the allocation of the state and eligible entitlement governments as compared to selected set-aside programs.

Fourth, this Member would also express his opposition to the elimination of the funding for the AmeriCorps Program, as contemplated by this appropriations bill. The funding for the AmeriCorps Program should be restored in the conference committee.

Lastly, this Member is aware of HUD's concerns with the reduced level of this subcommittee's appropriation. However, it is important to note that overall Congress is providing more than $26 billion for housing and community development across the country, an increase of $2 billion from the fiscal year 1999 mark. Moreover, 18 new HUD program initiatives deserve a thorough review by the authorizing committees before they are launched. According to the General Accounting Office, HUD has requested more than $700 million for these ambiguously defined, and in some cases-questionable, new initiatives. This Member definitely believes we place an emphasis on funding proven current programs instead of understanding a wide variety of new initiatives, many of which lend themselves to the use of discretion for political rewards.

Because of the necessity to fund important housing and community development programs and despite the reservations expressed, this Member would encourage his colleagues to support H.R. 2684, the VA, HUD, and independent agencies appropriations bill.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the chairman, the ranking member, and their staffs for all the hard work that they put into crafting this bill under what were very difficult circumstances. As a new member of the subcommittee, I appreciated the collegial and bipartisan manner in which the chairman managed the committee.

However, I think we all recognize that the initial allocations given to our subcommittee were wholly unrealistic. Because of this unreasonable allocation, the subcommittee has had to make deep cuts in several programs that if signed into law, would prove devastating. In particular, the bill we are debating today cuts NASA funding by $1 billion, thereby endangering our nation's research and technological edge. It cuts vital HUD programs by $1.6 billion below last year's levels. In addition, the bill does not include any of the administration's request for new housing and economic development assistance such as APIC (America's Private Investment Companies) that could substantially improve the quality of life in many of our communities.

For these and other reasons, Mr. Chairman, I must reluctantly oppose final passage of this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the efforts by the subcommittee to address some of these funding shortfalls by raising our initial allocation during the full committee markup of the bill. I am especially pleased that the full committee increased funding to NASA by $400 million. However, much more needs to be done. While the increase of $400 million to NASA is an improvement to the previous $1.4 billion cut, the total funding for NASA remains intolerably low. In addition, given the fact that this increase comes at the expense of the AmeriCorps program, it is a certainty that the President will veto the bill.

Mr. Chairman, it's sad that little more than one month after the 30th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing, we are debating such massive cuts to NASA.

Neil Armstrong's first step may have been one giant leap for mankind, but the step that we are about to take would be one giant leap backwards for America. NASA technology has been an engine for economic growth in America—creating jobs, building entirely new industries, and improving our standard of living.

This Nation's previous investment in NASA yielded a research and technology capability without peer.

NASA's research helps solve society's most difficult problems. Through the ground-breaking research of our NASA scientists, we have improved the health of an aging public, helped our military ensure our national security, and protected our environment without damaging our industries.

Mr. Chairman, let's talk about the harmful effects of the bill as it relates to NASAO Dan Goldin, the NASA Administrator, says these reductions will decimate key elements of the Nation's space program.

Mr. Goldin said that these cuts would force the closure of one of three NASA Centers, resulting in significant layoffs. These cuts will be felt by the families of the men and women who will lose their jobs as a result of this bill.

This kind of budget might even reduce the flight safety of future shuttle missions, and the loss of morale will cause NASA to lose some of its most talented people.

Mr. Chairman, NASA has come too far and worked too hard for us to allow this to happen. Since 1994, NASA has made more budgetary sacrifices than almost any other Federal agency. At the same time, NASA has increased its productivity and efficiency; delivering on Dan Goldin's promise of ''faster, stronger, cheaper.'' These proposed cuts are not the way that Congress should reward the success of the American patriots at NASA who work everyday in the Nation's interest. America looks to us to build on the progress that has been made, not to destroy the very foundation upon which it rests. NASA is an American treasure—unique in the history of the world—and we must fight to sustain it for our future.

In a period of unprecedented prosperity, we should be looking for ways to deepen our investments in scientific research, bringing new and substantial economic development to many of our nation's struggling communities, as well as providing adequate resources for our nation's veterans who have so patriotically served our country. Instead, this bill moves our nation in exactly the wrong direction by making deep cuts in many vital programs.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I regrettably must oppose the bill that is before us today and urge my colleagues to do the same. I look forward to working with the chairman and the ranking member to improve this bill as this process moves forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Are there further amendments to the bill? If not, under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD) having assumed the chair, Mr. LATOURETTE, 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. 2684) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, pursuant to House Resolution 275, he reported the bill back to the House with sundry amendments adopted by the Committee of the Whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment? If not, the Chair will put them en gros.

The amendments were agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR. OBEY

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

Mr. OBEY. In its present form, Mr. Speaker, I certainly am.

□ 1815

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. OBEY moves to recommit the bill, H.R. 2684 to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions to report the bill back to the House promptly in a form that ensures compliance with the section 302(b) allocation using Congressional Budget Office scorekeeping conventions to avoid sequestration of billions of dollars in discretionary spending in vital federal programs including the national defense, the National Institutes of Health, veterans medical care, and education and environmental programs, among many others.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, this bill pretends to spend $19 billion on veterans health care, $3.6 billion on National Science Foundation, $17.4 billion on housing, and $7.3 billion on environmental protection. But to make this bill eligible for consideration on the House floor it contains a phony $3 billion cut in the Tennessee Valley Authority that the congressional Budget Office and OMB both agree saves not one dime.

That means that, in the end, unless $3 billion in real savings are found, the law requires every item in this and every other appropriation bill to be sequestered; or, in plain language, to be cut by $3 billion. That would mean defense would be cut by $1.5 billion, veterans would be cut below the amount in the bill, and science would be cut further below the amount in the bill.

This motion simply tells the committee to find a real $3 billion offset rather than the phony TVA offset which is now contained in the bill. Unless the committee produces a real offset, we will cause real reductions in veterans health care, in health and education programs in the budget, in environment, in defense, in science and virtually every other function of the government.

Mr. Speaker, so far this year we have seen several bills which use CBO scoring, then we see one other bill which simply uses what is called directed scoring. In other words they order the scorekeeper to tell us how much money the bill will be estimated to spend, which hides almost $10 billion. And we see other bills that pretend they meet the budget requirements by labeling items as emergency expenditures. This one is the most dangerous of them all because it actually will produce sequestration, or cuts in other programs, including the programs in this bill, of almost $3 billion.

The way to avoid those unnecessary actions is to support this recommittal motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) opposed to the motion?

Mr. WALSH. I am, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. The Committee on the Budget has supported our 302(b) allocation and the provisions in the bill which kept us within that allocation. We do not believe, nor is there anything that would lead us to think, that there will be any sequestration of funds.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill. There is no good reason to recommit it to the committee. The committee has worked its will. The House is prepared to vote. This bill contains the largest-ever increase in veterans medical care. It has the support of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Mr. Speaker, this bill strikes a delicate balance that keeps us within our allocation and it keeps us on track to produce a surplus that will benefit our country, helping us to save Social Security and Medicare, to reduce our debt, and to provide all American taxpayers with a well-deserved tax cut.

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

There was no objection.

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

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

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 207, noes 215, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 402]

AYES—207

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Baird
Baldacci
Baldwin
Barcia
Barrett (WI)
Becerra
Bentsen
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop
Blagojevich
Blumenauer
Bonior
Borski
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (PA)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Carson
Clay
Clayton
Clement
Clyburn
Condit
Conyers
Costello
Coyne
Cramer
Cummings
Danner
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Deutsch
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Dooley
Doyle
Edwards
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Forbes
Ford
Frank (MA)
Frost
Gejdenson
Gephardt
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green (TX)
Gutierrez
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hastings (FL)
Hill (IN)
Hilliard
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hoeffel
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
John
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind (WI)
Kleczka
Klink
Kucinich
LaFalce
Lampson
Lantos
Larson
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Luther
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Martinez
Mascara
Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McCarthy (NY)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McKinney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Menendez
Millender-McDonald
Miller, George
Minge
Mink
Moakley
Mollohan
Moore
Moran (VA)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Phelps
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Reyes
Rivers
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Rush
Sabo
Sanchez
Sanders
Sandlin
Sawyer
Schakowsky
Scott
Serrano
Sherman
Shows
Sisisky
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Spratt
Stabenow
Stark
Stenholm
Strickland
Stupak
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor (MS)
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thurman
Tierney
Traficant
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Velázquez
Vento
Visclosky
Waters
Watt (NC)
Waxman
Weiner
Wexler
Weygand
Wise
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn

NOES—215

Aderholt
Archer
Armey
Bachus
Baker
Ballenger
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Bartlett
Barton
Bass
Bateman
Bereuter
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bliley
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bono
Brady (TX)
Bryant
Burr
Burton
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Canady
Cannon
Castle
Chabot
Chambliss
Chenoweth
Coble
Coburn
Collins
Combest
Cook
Cox
Crane
Cubin
Cunningham
Davis (VA)
Deal
DeLay
DeMint
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Doolittle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Ehlers
Ehrlich
Emerson
English
Everett
Ewing
Fletcher
Foley
Fossella
Fowler
Franks (NJ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Ganske
Gekas
Gibbons

Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gilman
Goode
Goodlatte
Goodling
Goss
Graham
Granger
Green (WI)
Greenwood
Gutknecht
Hansen
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Herger
Hill (MT)
Hilleary
Hobson
Hoekstra
Horn
Hostettler
Hulshof
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Isakson
Istook
Jenkins
Johnson (CT)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Kasich
Kelly
King (NY)
Kingston
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kuykendall
LaHood
Largent
LaTourette
Lazio
Leach
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
LoBiondo
Lucas (OK)
Manzullo
McCollum
McCrery
McHugh
McInnis
McIntosh
McKeon
Metcalf
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Morella
Myrick
Nethercutt
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nussle
Ose
Oxley
Packard
Paul
Pease
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pickett
Pitts
Pombo
Porter
Portman
Quinn
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Reynolds
Riley
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roukema
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Salmon
Sanford
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaffer
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Skeen
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Spence
Stearns
Stump
Sweeney
Talent
Tancredo
Tauzin
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thornberry
Thune
Tiahrt
Toomey
Upton
Vitter
Walden
Walsh
Wamp
Watkins
Watts (OK)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—12

Cooksey
Crowley
Houghton
Latham
Linder
Pryce (OH)
Rangel
Rogan
Sununu
Towns
Weldon (PA)
Young (AK)

□ 1838

Mr. KINGSTON and Mr. COX changed their vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The question is on the passage of the bill.

Pursuant to clause 10 of rule XX, the yeas and nays are ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 235, nays 187, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 403]

YEAS—235

Abercrombie
Aderholt
Archer
Armey
Bachus
Baker
Ballenger
Barcia
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Bass
Bateman
Bereuter
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bliley
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bono
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (TX)
Bryant
Burr
Burton
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Canady
Cannon
Castle
Chabot
Chambliss
Chenoweth
Coble
Collins
Combest
Condit
Cook
Cox
Crane
Cubin
Cunningham
Danner
Davis (VA)
Deal
DeLay
DeMint
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Doolittle
Doyle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Ehlers
Emerson
English
Everett
Ewing
Fletcher
Foley
Forbes
Fossella
Fowler
Franks (NJ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Gekas
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gilman
Goode
Goodlatte
Goodling
Gordon
Goss
Graham
Granger
Green (WI)
Greenwood
Gutknecht
Hansen
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Herger
Hill (MT)
Hilleary
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Hooley
Horn
Hulshof
Hunter
Hutchinson
Hyde
Isakson
Istook
Jenkins
Johnson (CT)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Kaptur
Kasich
Kelly
King (NY)
Kingston
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kuykendall
LaHood
Largent
LaTourette
Lazio
Leach
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Lucas (OK)
Maloney (CT)
Manzullo
Mascara
McCarthy (MO)
McCrery
McHugh
McIntosh
McKeon
Metcalf
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Mollohan
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murtha
Myrick
Napolitano
Neal
Nethercutt
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nussle
Ose
Oxley
Packard
Pease
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Phelps
Pickering
Pickett
Pitts
Pombo
Porter
Portman
Price (NC)
Quinn
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Regula
Reynolds
Riley
Rivers
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roukema
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Saxton
Scarborough
Serrano
Sessions
Shaw
Shays
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shows
Shuster
Simpson
Skeen
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Spence
Spratt
Stearns
Strickland
Stump
Stupak
Sweeney
Talent
Tancredo
Tauzin
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thornberry
Thune
Thurman
Tiahrt
Upton
Visclosky
Vitter
Walden
Walsh
Wamp
Watkins
Watt (NC)
Watts (OK)
Weller
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson
Wise
Wolf
Young (FL)

NAYS—187

Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Baird
Baldacci
Baldwin
Barrett (WI)
Bartlett
Barton
Becerra
Bentsen
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop
Blagojevich
Blumenauer
Bonior
Borski
Boswell
Brady (PA)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Carson
Clay
Clayton
Clement
Clyburn
Coburn
Conyers
Costello
Coyne
Cramer
Cummings
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Deutsch
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Dooley
Edwards
Ehrlich
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Ford
Frank (MA)
Frost
Ganske
Gejdenson
Gephardt
Gonzalez
Green (TX)
Gutierrez
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hastings (FL)
Hill (IN)
Hilliard
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hoeffel
Holt
Hostettler
Hoyer
Inslee
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
John
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind (WI)
Kleczka
Klink
Kucinich
LaFalce
Lampson
Lantos
Larson
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lofgren
Luther
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Martinez
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McInnis
McIntyre
McKinney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Menendez
Millender-McDonald
Minge
Mink
Moakley
Moore
Morella
Nadler
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Reyes
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Rush
Sabo
Salmon
Sanchez
Sanders
Sandlin
Sanford
Sawyer
Schaffer
Schakowsky
Scott
Sensenbrenner
Shadegg
Sherman
Sisisky
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (MI)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Stabenow
Stark
Stenholm
Tanner
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Toomey
Traficant
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Velazquez
Vento
Waters
Waxman
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Wexler
Weygand
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn

NOT VOTING—12

Cooksey
Crowley
Houghton
Latham
Miller, George
Pryce (OH)
Rangel
Rogan
Sununu
Towns
Weldon (PA)
Young (AK)

□ 1855

Mr. MCINNIS and Mr. SHADEGG changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PORTUGUESE ASSEMBLY PASSES RESOLUTION DEALING WITH RECENT EVENTS IN EAST TIMOR

(Mr. POMBO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute, and to revise and extend his remarks, and include therein extraneous material.)

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce into the RECORD a resolution that was recently introduced and passed unanimously by the Portuguese assembly dealing with the recent events in East Timor, and I would like to briefly state one part of that resolution.

It is impossible for the international community and particularly for the U.N. to allow the steadily worsening situation to continue for one more day without jeopardizing their own credibility.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have all heard about what is going on in East Timor right now, and it is time for the U.S. Congress for the United States to act.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. POMBO. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO) for yielding.

He and I were privileged to meet today with an all-party parliamentary delegation from Portugal. The people of Portugal ought to be commended for taking such a strong moral lead in trying to prevent the continued mass slaughter of innocent people in East Timor, and I wish our Government and