

country in purifying our water and making it pure. The gentleman from New York has provided appropriate funding for that purpose as well.

In addition, Housing and Urban Development has some wonderful programs. There are some that need cleaning up, but there are some wonderful programs in HUD.

Michigan, in particular, through its Michigan State Housing Development Authority, has done a great deal to provide low-income home ownership opportunities for the people of our State, particularly in my area where we have some faith-based organizations which have developed to take advantage of both MSHDA and HUD funding and have done a magnificent job. I want to especially mention Habitat for Humanity and a local homespun organization we have, the Inner City Christian Federation. The latter has been phenomenally successful.

We have done better at providing home ownership opportunities for low-income individuals than almost anywhere in this country. They are totally dependent on the HUD and MSHDA funding.

I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Chairman WALSH) and the members of the committee for their good work. I urge adoption of the rule and passage of the conference report.

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

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me remind my colleagues that this rule is customary for the consideration of appropriations conference reports.

Further, the conference report itself is the product of bipartisan cooperation between the President and the Congress. The White House worked with the conference committee to ensure that its priorities were funded, and the President agreed to the provisions in the bill that ensure its fiscal responsibility.

This bill contains many good things that I know my colleagues can support, including the largest increase in veterans health care spending in a decade, increased funding for numerous housing programs, restored funding for important science programs in NASA, and funding for emergencies and disasters that matches the President's request.

All of this, and still the conference report maintains our commitment to a balanced budget while keeping Social Security off limits. We made the tough decisions. We prioritized, and we have a good work product to show for it.

I can congratulate the gentleman from New York (Chairman WALSH) and all the conferees who made this process work.

I urge support for the rule and the legislation.

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

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report to accompany 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, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

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

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2684, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 328, I call up the conference report on 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, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 328, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of October 13, 1999, at page H9983.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

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

Mr. Speaker, it is a terrific day to be here, I think, with the results that we have. It has been a remarkable process beginning back in the spring, the hearings over these many, many different and, by definition, sundry departments, lots of priorities with competing needs. I think that the process worked its way through in a very nonpartisan fashion. Mostly, the competition is between the Departments within the bill.

We had wonderful cooperation from the minority. Specifically the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee, was very, very constructive and very, very helpful all the

way along, not only in helping us establish priorities, but in getting votes to pass the bill as we first came through the House. I owe him a deep debt of gratitude. He had a very difficult personal period at the same time, and he just kept moving forward with us. Without him, we could not have been successful. So I thank the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN).

I also thank his staff and my staff who worked so well together, and also the members of the Senate, Senator BOND who chaired the conference, and Senator MIKULSKI, the ranking Democrat from the Senate.

We felt that, by working out the issues amongst ourselves before we sat down and discussed these issues with the White House, we would be in better shape to bring the priorities together. That is what we did.

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We had pretty much a consensus legislative position, and then we sat down with the White House and asked them what their priorities were, and it worked fairly well.

The bottom line here is that this bill provides total discretionary and mandatory spending of \$93.1 billion, which includes disaster relief of \$2.4 billion and also includes the largest-ever increase for veterans' medical care, and also an increase of \$2 billion for section 8 housing vouchers.

The bill nets out at \$257 million dollars below our budget authority allocation. It also comes out \$2 million below our budget allocation for outlays. I think that is a remarkable achievement considering the fact that we met all of the Congress's priorities, including the House and Senate and also the White House's priorities.

We increased VA medical care \$1.7 billion above the President's initial request, bringing the total to \$19.6 billion. That account is fully offset.

I would like to thank the gentleman from Arizona (Chairman STUMP), the chairman of the full committee, as well as Members, including the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN) on our subcommittee who worked so hard on the veterans' issues.

Regarding HUD, which is the largest part of this subcommittee bill, it preserves the taxpayers' substantial investment in existing affordable housing stock by increasing public housing operating subsidies and modernization funds above the President's request.

We felt very strongly that, with the huge investment that we have in public housing and while there are other options, including section 8, we need to take care of the existing housing stock and protect that investment. That we have. I thank the White House for coming forward and providing an additional offset so that we could increase operating subsidies by \$135 million.

Operating subsidies are at \$3.138 billion, as I said, an increase of \$135 million. And the capital improvement account is \$2.9 billion, an increase of \$345