

have worked with local governments and housing authorities to provide needed rental assistance statewide.

I joined my Democratic colleagues on the Senate Banking and Housing Committee in writing to Chairman BOND and Ranking Member MIKULSKI, asking them to fund additional Section 8 vouchers and restore the Community Builders program during their negotiations with conferees from the House of Representatives. I am pleased that Chairman BOND and Ranking Member MIKULSKI were able to secure funding for an additional 60,000 Section 8 vouchers. The VA-HUD Appropriations Conference Report also reiterates the need for Community Builders in HUD to help bring important HUD programs to an increasing number of Americans.

This legislation will help address the affordable housing shortage in my state of South Dakota. Currently, South Dakota families in need of housing assistance spend an average of 9 months on a waiting list for current Section 8 vouchers. While not helping all of those in need, the additional Section 8 vouchers contained in the VA-HUD Appropriations Conference Report will begin to shorten the time it takes for low-income families to receive much needed assistance.

Community Builders will also be able to continue to work with South Dakota communities to increase access for affordable housing. In the past, Community Builders worked with the Northeastern Council of Governments in South Dakota to spread information to several northeastern counties on the services that HUD provides, and how to access these services. Community Builders have facilitated FHA loans for the construction of affordable homes in Rapid City, while also helping the Sioux Empire Housing Partnership become a HUD-approved housing counseling agency. The Community Builder program has begun to address the housing needs in historically underserved communities, including the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Community Builders have enabled tribal leaders to better utilize HUD's programs to the benefit of one of the most poor populations in the nation.

I would like to thank Chairman BOND and Ranking Member MIKULSKI for improving the VA-HUD Appropriations bill despite the strict budget constraints the committee faced. I believe it is a wise investment in our country's future when we ensure that our working families have adequate housing, and I look forward to continue working with my colleagues to find ways to help South Dakota families and families across the nation address their housing needs.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I support the conference agreement on appropriations for fiscal year 2000 for the departments of Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and other independent agencies.

I thank Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BOND for their hard work and com-

mitment to providing adequate health care for our veterans and housing for our citizens.

The conference agreement provides \$19 billion for veterans health care, \$1.7 billion more than the President requested. I am pleased that Congress has made a commitment to take care of our veterans. I do wish that we had agreed to Senator WELLSTONE's amendment to provide \$20.3 billion, but I believe that our nation's veterans will be cared for under this legislation.

Mr. President, I am very pleased that housing needs will also be addressed with this legislation. First, the agreement provides a much needed 60,000 additional Section 8 vouchers. A far greater need for vouchers exists in California, let alone across the nation. But this is a much acknowledged vital step in the right direction towards addressing the housing needs for the poorest of Americans. Second, public housing, Housing for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA), and homeless assistance programs will all experience an increase in funding. Third, the agreement also provides additional tools for preserving existing affordable housing. Specifically, HUD will be provided with significant new legal authority to address the Section 8 "opt-out" crisis—including longer contract renewal terms. Last, the agreement exhibits strong support for HUD's Community Builder program. This program has been a key component of HUD's re-invention efforts and is working. I received numerous letters from elected officials and nonprofit organizations throughout California expressing support for the Community Builder program and am grateful that the conference committee agreed to reinstate earlier cuts to the program.

The conference agreement also addresses other key areas, such as the environment and space exploration and research. The Environmental Protection Agency will receive \$7.59 billion to carry out its important functions. The National Aeronautical and Space Administration is funded at \$13.65 billion. I am pleased that the conferees agreed to restore the drastic cuts in NASA programs that were in the House version of the bill.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I call for the yeas and nays on the VA-HUD appropriations conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on agreeing to the adoption of the conference report accompanying H.R. 2684, the VA-HUD appropriations bill. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) is necessarily absent.

I also announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) is absent because of family illness.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber who desire to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 328 Leg.]

YEAS—93

Abraham	Enzi	Lugar
Akaka	Feinstein	Mack
Allard	Fitzgerald	McConnell
Ashcroft	Frist	Mikulski
Baucus	Gorton	Moynihan
Bennett	Graham	Murkowski
Biden	Gramm	Murray
Bingaman	Grams	Nickles
Bond	Grassley	Reed
Boxer	Gregg	Reid
Breaux	Hagel	Robb
Brownback	Harkin	Roberts
Bryan	Hatch	Rockefeller
Bunning	Helms	Roth
Burns	Hollings	Santorum
Byrd	Hutchinson	Sarbanes
Campbell	Hutchison	Schumer
Chafee	Inhofe	Sessions
Cleland	Inouye	Shelby
Cochran	Jeffords	Smith (NH)
Collins	Johnson	Smith (OR)
Conrad	Kerrey	Snowe
Coverdell	Kerry	Specter
Craig	Kohl	Stevens
Crapo	Landrieu	Thomas
Daschle	Lautenberg	Thompson
DeWine	Leahy	Thurmond
Domenici	Levin	Torricelli
Dorgan	Lieberman	Warner
Durbin	Lincoln	Wellstone
Edwards	Lott	Wyden

NAYS—5

Bayh	Kyl	Voinovich
Feingold	McCain	

NOT VOTING—2

Dodd	Kennedy
------	---------

The conference report was agreed to. Mr. BOND. I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GORTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES—S. 2990

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to H.R. 2990, the Chair now be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. GORTON) appointed Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. GREGG, Mr. FRIST, Mr. HUTCHINSON, Mr. NICKLES, Mr. GRAMM, Mr. ENZI, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. DODD, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. ROCKEFELLER conferees on the part of the Senate.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, in light of the agreement, there will be no further