

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, THE JUDICIARY, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006—Continued

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, we are back on the Treasury-Transportation-Housing and Urban Development bill. The minority Member, my partner, Senator MURRAY, and I are ready to do business. I understand we are waiting for final negotiations from both sides on the potential two votes that we hope will be ready to be put forward early this afternoon. As soon as we know something about that and can reach an agreement, we will advise all Senators.

In the meantime, the Kennedy amendment on minimum wage is pending. We expect there will be an alternative amendment which will be proposed, and that will be voted on right after or right before the Kennedy amendment.

We ask all Members who have an amendment they want to file to please bring it in, and we hope we can work it out with them. If it is something that can be accepted, we would like to do so because we need to finish this bill—the sooner the better.

The leaders have advised us that we will be in this week and weekend until we finish the bill. My personal preference would be to finish it this week and not on Friday afternoon or Saturday.

It would be very helpful if they would bring in those amendments. Very shortly, we will be conferring with leadership on both sides to establish an agreed-upon deadline for filing all first-degree amendments.

I thank the Chair.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the chairman of the subcommittee and urge all of our colleagues to bring their amendments to the floor. As I stated last night, the chairman of the subcommittee was in a good mood. We had a great baseball game last night, from his viewpoint, for all of us who stayed up to watch the final home run. I think he is amenable to talking to anyone who would like to bring their amendments today. I would suggest our colleagues get that done. I think we all want to finish this bill, most importantly because we need to go to conference on this bill. We are again operating under a continuing resolution. There are many serious issues affecting our investment in housing, our investment in the FAA, in transportation, highways, as well as many other issues that are within this bill. We have a lot of work ahead of us in terms of getting this to conference and working out our differences with the House.

I urge my colleagues to bring their amendments to the floor. We are going to be talking about a time agreement fairly soon. If Members want their issues addressed, they need to bring them to the floor.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask that the pending amendment, the Kennedy amendment, be temporarily set aside.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2079

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I have another technical amendment to offer at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND] proposes an amendment numbered 2079.

Mr. BOND. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: Ensures that PHAs will receive adequate funding for section 8 project-based vouchers)

On page 295, line 6, strike “or HOPE VI vouchers” and insert in lieu thereof: “, HOPE VI vouchers or vouchers that were not in use during the 12-month period in order to be available to meet a commitment pursuant to section 8(o)(13) of the Act”.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, this is rather technical, but it has to do with public housing authorities and their ability to use future Section 8 vouchers on project-based assistance needs. As many know, in the past public housing was constructed when the assistance was tied to the project rather than to an individual. That enabled the public housing authority or other entity to get financing to build the units and then receive the income from the Federal housing assistance.

Right now, there is a process for refining the allocation of Section 8 vouchers to public housing authorities so they do not have unused Section 8 vouchers. That has been a good thing because that means the money for housing assistance goes to those who most need it. However, the problem arises when public housing authorities need to put aside or shelve some of the needed Section 8 certificates or vouchers allocated to them in order to provide a basis of funding for construction of additional housing.

In some areas—I know in my State and across the country—we can hand out all of the Section 8 vouchers we want for people needing housing assistance, and they do not do much good because there is not housing available. So we have to have the flexibility for the public housing authorities to take some of the vouchers allocated to them and say: We will commit them to this project in order to build the housing we need.

This amendment includes funding for the projected use of Section 8 project assistance needs of public housing agencies. Normally, for developing housing within the project-based assistance, PHA would shelve the needed vouchers for the 1- to 3-year development timeline for an assisted project. Under the current approach for funding vouchers designed to assure that there were no Section 8 certificates wasted, the projected funding needs related to project-based vouchers would not be funded, thus removing the incentive or the ability to develop Section 8 housing, regardless of need.

We believe this amendment will ensure that the planned use of project-based vouchers is funded without prejudice, thus allowing the local public housing authorities in communities across the country to develop project-based assisted housing where there is not otherwise housing needed for the people who are homeless, who need better shelter in the area.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we are in agreement on this amendment. It simply will clarify for the purposes of distributing funding from Section 8 housing assistance. Public housing authorities would not be penalized for shelving vouchers temporarily to develop a longer term project. This is a fairness issue, and we are all in agreement. I urge its passage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2079) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. I move to reconsider the vote.

Mrs. MURRAY. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. I thank all of my colleagues. If any colleagues have compelling statements related to this issue which may be important in their States, we are happy to have those added to the RECORD with this vote. Again, we await the arrival of others with amendments on which we can work.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

A NEW ENERGY FUTURE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I recently returned to Illinois and traveled across the State. It is interesting to me that there is one pervasive issue that you run into in every corner of my State and that is the cost of energy,