

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER
AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 176

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 176.

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

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2829 and that I may include tabular material on the same.

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

There was no objection.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that, during consideration of H.R. 2829 pursuant to House Resolution 517, the Chair may reduce to 2 minutes the minimum time for electronic voting under clause 6 of rule XVIII and clauses 8 and 9 of rule XX.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 517 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2829.

□ 2054

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2829) making appropriations for financial services and general government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes, with Mr. HASTINGS of Florida in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. REGULA) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I'm pleased to present, Mr. Chairman, and my colleagues, the first Financial Services and general government appropriations bill to the House. This is my first time as chairman, and it has been an honor and a privilege.

The subcommittee held multiple hearings this spring to explore the

issues facing agencies funded through this bill. As the hearings progressed, a common theme emerged in my mind for improving these agencies. It became clear that the subcommittee needed to work to bring government closer to the people, to better fit its services to their needs.

The American people expect and deserve the best services their governments can offer. For example, with respect to the Internal Revenue Service, we, as a subcommittee, addressed the fact that the IRS needs to be fair and evenhanded in whom it audits. We also ensure that the IRS works to provide real assistance to the taxpayer who cannot afford the services of an expensive accountant.

We want the Election Assistance Commission to help promote the use of voting machines in student and school elections as an educational tool. Because these are our future voters, we must do this. We felt that government must do more to protect our consumers, and so we have directed the Federal Trade Commission to examine identity theft with an eye toward ending this hurtful crime.

We directed the Consumer Product Safety Commission to strengthen its consumer product monitoring capabilities. We have also increased funding for the community development financial institutions to help expand the availability of credit, capital and financial services to underserved communities throughout the Nation.

I feel that through funding initiatives and congressional guidance contained in this bill, government will be more responsive and more proactive on behalf of the American people whom it serves.

The total funding recommended by the bill is \$21.4 billion. This funding level is tight. While the bill is \$1.9 billion above the fiscal year 2007, it is \$243 million below the President's budget request.

It was a challenge to reduce funding from the requested level for two reasons. First, most of this bill, over 80 percent, funds basic administrative accounts, such as the salaries of the Treasury employees who are managing the Nation's finances. These accounts cannot be reduced without reducing the most basic government services.

Second, there were a number of holes in the President's budget that needed to be filled. This bill increases funding for programs where we believe money will be well spent and will benefit, for example, disadvantaged communities or small businesses. These are important priorities that needed to be addressed.

To summarize, this bill includes \$12.3 billion for the Department of the Treasury. Within this amount, \$11.1 billion is for the IRS, a \$550 million increase above fiscal year 2007, and \$52 million above the President's request. This increase includes more money than requested for taxpayer services and the IRS Taxpayers Advocate Office.

The bill also includes \$100 million for the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund's program to increase economic development and financial opportunities for folks living in disadvantaged communities.

The bill includes \$722 million for the Executive Office of the President, of which \$460 million is directed to the Office of National Drug Control Policy and its programs. This includes increases for the Drug Free Communities grants program, and the High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program, which are critical efforts in the war on drugs.

This bill, however, rejects the 31 percent increase to the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign requested in the President's budget. Recent studies have called in question the effectiveness of the campaign, and it does not make any sense to give this program the substantial increase requested in light of these questions. The recommendation reduces funding for the campaign by \$6 million from last year to \$93 million this year.

The judicial branch will receive \$6.3 billion, which is \$278 million above 2007, but \$254 million below the request. While this is a reduction to the requested level, we believe that the amount in the bill will be sufficient to fund all necessary operations and staffing levels for the judiciary.

Programs related to the District of Columbia will receive \$648 million, including \$309 million for the District of Columbia court system. Within this figure, the bill assumes an increase in the reimbursement for attorneys who defend indigent clients so that their compensation rate is closer to the rate for defense attorneys practicing before Federal courts.

□ 2100

This will help ensure fair and just representation for these defendants. The bill also includes funding for the D.C. public schools, the Tuition Assistance Grant program, the Water and Sewer Authority, construction of a forensic lab, and other critical items requested by the D.C. Government.

General provisions for the District of Columbia are fewer in number and have been changed based on our discussions with the D.C. government.

My basic principle is that the Federal Government should not dictate to the city how to manage its own affairs or spend its own money. Therefore, you will find that we have removed or changed riders that have been in past bills that closely prescribed to the city what it should or should not do. In some cases, I would actually like to go further than this bill goes. But I consider the changes we made to be first steps toward eliminating some of the restrictions Congress has placed on the District.

Let me take this opportunity, as an aside, to mention that my ranking member, Mr. REGULA, has been excellent also on this issue. He, like I, believe that since the District of Columbia has a new mayor and an exciting