

standard of our friends in Washington of a heavy-handed government mandate, this amendment achieves the goal of building green without stifling innovation for new and improved green building standards.

I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, because it will take our friends who are Democrats if we are going to pass this, to please support this commonsense fix to the legislation.

Another aspect of this legislation which requires improvement is the elimination of HUD's current authority to award demolition-only grants, which would prohibit the demolition of unsuitable public housing without the replacement of those units. Mr. Speaker, clearly there may be instances when demolition-only grants are appropriate; for instance, when public housing authorities may have already assembled a financing package to fund redevelopment and replacement housing activities, but are lacking the funds for the demolition itself.

Additionally, because of their age and denigration, it is certainly possible that some distressed public housing sites would not be viable candidates for redevelopment. There are lots of places in this country where something was built 15, 20, 30, 40 years ago that might not be easily accessible to the modern conveniences of today. And these sites, though only partially occupied or completely vacant, because they put a demand in a particular area, would be excluded. In these instances, other forms of housing assistance such as section 8 vouchers may be more appropriate in a community than public housing.

To address this flaw in the legislation, I have introduced an amendment to allow HUD to retain this commonsense authority, rather than trying to tie their hands by taking some of the options that had previously been available to them off the table.

For their part, HUD has noted that these grants have provided housing authorities with resources to raze, or to tear down, distressed developments and relocate impacted families. The result is a cleared site that more readily attracts Federal or private resources for the revitalization of the property. I encourage all of my colleagues to once again support this commonsense amendment to allow HUD to retain the flexibility to respond to individual cases, particularly in those cases where a public housing authority does not even have a HOPE VI renovation grant, leaving it with fewer options in revitalization in its most distressed or otherwise not as easily used sites.

Mr. Speaker, in the last five budget proposals to Congress, this Bush administration has advocated the elimination of the HOPE VI program, citing the completion of the program's mission and ongoing inefficiencies within the programs. These programs have been assessed by the administration's objective Program Assessing Rating Tool, what is called PART, which has

deemed HOPE VI to be not performing, inefficient, and more costly than other programs that serve the same population. In addition to these fundamental problems, the PART assessment notes that "the program has accomplished its stated mission of the demolition of 100,000 severely distressed public housing units."

I include a copy of this assessment as well as a Statement of Administration Policy on this matter for insertion into the RECORD.

**PROGRAM ASSESSMENT: HOPE VI—SEVERELY DISTRESSED PUBLIC HOUSING**

The HOPE VI program revitalizes distressed and obsolete public housing, usually replacing it with less dense housing combining a mixture of public and privately owned housing. The program awards grants through a competitive process to State and local public housing agencies for this activity.

**NOT PERFORMING: INEFFECTIVE**

The program is more costly than other programs that serve the same population. It also has an inherently long, drawn-out planning and redevelopment process.

The program has accomplished its stated mission of demolishing 100,000 severely distressed public housing units.

The program coordinates effectively with related programs in designing a comprehensive program to improve the community.

We are taking the following actions to improve the performance of the program:

Implementing changes to complete projects more quickly. The average time to complete a project after award is being reduced from 8 years to 7 years with further improvement anticipated.

Reducing the average cost per unit of the project. (The average grant award has been reduced from \$30 million to \$20 million to improve project management.)

Terminating the program since it has completed its mission. The remaining balance of over \$2 billion will be spent during the next several years to complete funded projects.

**STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY—H.R. 3524—HOPE VI IMPROVEMENT AND REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007**

(Rep. Waters (D) CA and 8 cosponsors.)

The Administration is strongly committed to providing safe, decent, and affordable public housing to those citizens least able to care for themselves and recognizes the contribution made by the HOPE VI program toward the revitalization of public housing. However, because the program has proven over time to be less cost-effective and efficient than other public housing programs, the Administration strongly opposes H.R. 3524, the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2007.

HUD has awarded \$5.8 billion in HOPE VI revitalization funds to public housing agencies through the end of 2007. While the majority of the funds have been used to promote neighborhood revitalization, \$1.3 billion remains unspent. The program's complex planning and redevelopment process has resulted in significant delays in the execution and completion of projects, with the average HOPE VI project taking 7 years to complete. Additionally, some public housing authorities lack the capacity to properly manage their redevelopment projects. The Administration believes that sufficient program funds remain available to allow HUD to properly oversee the completion of existing HOPE VI redevelopment projects but does not believe that additional funds should be authorized or appropriated for this pro-

gram. Indeed, the last five Administration Budgets have proposed to terminate the program in favor of more efficient and cost-effective programs. The Administration's first priority is to place HUD's principal programs, housing approximately 4 million low-income households, on sure footing. In fact, the President's FY 2008 Budget proposed approximately \$28 billion for that priority.

The Administration also strongly opposes provisions of H.R. 3524 that mandate one-for-one replacement of any public housing unit that is demolished or disposed of under the HOPE VI program. It is not feasible in many communities to provide mixed-use development, including one-for-one replacement of public housing units, on the location of the demolished public housing project. Further, acquisition of additional land in the surrounding neighborhood for use in implementing a one-for-one replacement strategy may not be possible. Even if such land were available, costs to acquire and develop it would be expected to increase the cost of each HOPE VI unit.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support these commonsense amendments that I have spoken about today on the floor which we believe will better the bill, in some cases keeping the good parts that had been in and other parts allowing flexibility. We believe that, in fact, this can be a wonderful bipartisan agreement that we could reach today. However, we would ask that all of our colleagues support the Neugebauer, Sessions, King, and Capito amendments.

I also encourage every Member of this body to oppose this rule until the Democrat majority provides us with the open rule process that we were promised over a year ago. I ask all of my colleagues to vote "no" on the previous question and on the rule.

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

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on the previous question and on the rule. 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**

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3524, and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

**PERMISSION TO REDUCE TIME FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING DURING CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3524**

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that, during consideration of H.R. 3524 pursuant to House Resolution 922, the Chair may reduce to 2 minutes the minimum time