CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EXTENSIONS ACT, 2011

SPEECH OF
HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM
OF MINNESOTA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, December 21, 2010

Ms. McCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 3082, a continuing resolution that would fund federal government operations on a temporary basis through March 4, 2011. Regrettably, one of the last votes of the 111th Congress has become the first vote of the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I take seriously my annual responsibility to assess funding priorities, perform oversight, and allocate federal dollars where they are most needed and will make the greatest impact. Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues in the House and Senate are choosing to abandon this important work. They are blocking action on a fiscal year 2011 funding package that would respond to the current needs of the American people and make critical investments in our communities.

Due to Republican obstruction, the House is forced to consider this appropriations measure, which places the Federal Government on auto-pilot for two months. All difficult decisions are being delayed until another day. Critical federal agencies including the Federal Aviation Administration and Department of Defense are being subjected to enormous—and avoidable—uncertainty. And the uncertainty created by this short-term, continuing resolution goes far beyond Washington. Every state and community across the country will be debating whether they are able to move forward with critical investments, such as the Central Corridor Light Rail in Minnesota.

This temporary appropriations measure underfunds critical priorities in every area of American life from education and agriculture, to transportation and energy. It is inexusable to withhold necessary investments in the American economy while adding to the deficit with tax cuts for the wealthiest in our society. But that is exactly what Congress is doing this month as a result of the reckless game of brinkmanship my Republican colleagues are playing with the American people.

CLARIFYING FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY TO PAY FOR STORMWATER POLLUTION

SPEECH OF
HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, December 22, 2010

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3481, a bill that would clarify Federal responsibility for stormwater runoff from buildings, facilities, and lands owned or operated by the Federal Government. This common sense bill ensures that the Federal Government maintains its equitable responsibility for stormwater pollution runoff originating or emanating from its property.

I applaud the outstanding work of the sponsors of this legislation, the distinguished Senator from the State of Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), as well as the sponsor of the House companion for this bill, the Delegate from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), for their efforts to move this legislation so quickly to the President’s desk.

Madam Speaker, simply put, this legislation clarifies that Federal agencies and departments are financially responsible for any reasonable Federal, State, or locally-derived charges for treating or otherwise addressing stormwater pollution that emanates from Federal property.

Existing section 313 of the Clean Water Act states that “Each department, agency, or Instrumentality of the Federal Government shall be subject to, and comply with, all Federal, State, interstate, and local requirements ... including the payment of reasonable service charges.”

Unfortunately, over the past few months, Congress has learned of several Federal agencies, including some here in the Nation’s Capital, that have made the determination that stormwater management fees are “taxes” for which the agencies have claimed sovereign immunity and have refused to pay.

This has left several State and local municipalities with the financial responsibility of addressing ongoing sources of pollution to the nation’s waters that any other private business, landowner, or homeowner would otherwise be responsible for paying.

Polluted runoff from urban areas is the fastest growing source of water pollution in America. As urbanization increases, impervious surfaces such as highways, roads, parking lots, and buildings replace non-impervious surfaces that absorb stormwater.

Runoff from impervious surfaces is a central cause of pollution for the nation’s waters, and is estimated to be the primary source of impairment for 13 percent of rivers, 18 percent of lakes, and 32 percent of estuaries in the U.S. These are significant figures, especially given that urban areas cover only 3 percent of the land mass of the country.

Even here, in the Nation’s Capital, pollution from stormwater runoff poses a significant challenge to the quality of local receiving waters, and negatively impacts the overall environmental health of the Chesapeake Bay.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, stormwater runoff from urban and suburban areas is “a significant source of impairment to the Chesapeake Bay.” According to Agency statistics, 17 percent of phosphorus, 11 percent of nitrogen, and 9 percent of sediment loads to the Bay come from stormwater runoff.

In addition, chemical contaminants from runoff can rival or exceed the amount reaching local waterways from industries, federal facilities, and wastewater treatment plants.

Several states and municipalities, including the District of Columbia, have taken aggressive action to address these ongoing sources of pollution.

Yet, when a significant percentage of property owners take the position that they cannot be held responsible for their pollution, it places a greater financial burden on our States, cities, communities, and local-ratepayers, and makes it less likely that significant reductions in stormwater pollution can be achieved.

I urge all Members of the House of Representatives to support this important legislation, which clarifies Federal responsibility for stormwater pollution runoff originating or emanating from Federal property.
on the proportion of stormwater emanating from the facility and used to pay (or reimburse) costs associated with any stormwater management program.

This is a simple effort to clarify, again, that the Federal Government bears a proportional responsibility for addressing pollution originating from its facilities, and should remain an active participant in improving National water quality and the overall environment.