

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution authorizing use of the rotunda of the Capitol for Members to greet and receive His All Holiness Bartholomew, Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church. I commend the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS] for introducing this measure which I was pleased to cosponsor, along with many of our colleagues.

We rarely have the occasion to receive individuals of such high character and moral standing as His All Holiness; and when we receive them, we should do so in a manner befitting their rank and title.

Accordingly, I believe reserving the rotunda on the morning of October 21, 1997, for this occasion is highly appropriate, and it is hoped that all of our Members will avail themselves of the opportunity to greet and receive the Patriarch, who is one of the world's great spiritual leaders and the 270th Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. He is also a great environmental leader.

His All Holiness is a man of peace who has worked tirelessly to bridge the differences that have sometimes troubled relations between our two friends and NATO allies, Turkey and Greece. As the head of the Orthodox denomination which has close to 300 million congregants worldwide, including millions in North and South America, His All Holiness is looked to for guidance as the principal spiritual leader by many of our fellow citizens.

Accordingly, I urge our colleagues to approve this resolution permitting the use of the rotunda for this important legislation.

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PAPPAS].

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. NEY] for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 134, which was introduced by the distinguished gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS], a national leader in the effort to raise awareness of issues of concern to the Greek American community and the Orthodox religion.

Mr. Speaker, House Concurrent Resolution 134 would allow the use of the Capitol rotunda for a ceremony where Members of Congress could greet and receive His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew. Patriarch Bartholomew is leader to over 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide and many millions here in the United States, a religious leader who resides in Istanbul, once referred to as Constantinople, at the ecumenical patriarchate under some very difficult conditions at times.

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Patriarch Bartholomew's visit comes only a few months after the visit of the late Mother Teresa. Having participated in Mother Teresa's visit, I was moved by her presence and felt blessed

to be in attendance. It was an honor to meet someone who has done so much to advance the cause of Christ and to "love even the least of these."

Patriarch Bartholomew is similarly a person who is outspoken in his views. He believes in protection of religious freedoms, combating human rights abuses and protecting the vulnerable, born and unborn. As the 270th successor to the Apostle Andrew, His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew has been very active in seeking spiritual renewal within the Orthodox Church as well as opening lines of communication between all Christian denominations and other religions.

As such, I am very proud to join with my colleagues in supporting this resolution to make available the Capitol Rotunda to this religious leader who has opened up so many hearts and souls to the good mission of the Orthodox Church. I look forward to his visit next month and urge all my colleagues to participate in his visit. Many of us are excited about this visit as are many of my constituents.

Again, I would like to commend the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS] on all his hard work to move this matter forward as well as this Congress for considering this important resolution.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 134 which, as you know, would authorize the use of the Capitol rotunda for an address by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Earlier in the year, I signed a letter to Speaker GINGRICH with over 40 other members of the Hellenic Caucus requesting that the Patriarch have the opportunity to address Congress during his October visit. I consequently signed on as a cosponsor of House Concurrent Resolution 134 when it was introduced just a few months ago and am naturally very pleased to see this bill on the floor today.

On a related front, I hope to see H.R. 2248, another bill concerning His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, on the floor soon. This bill would authorize the President to present a Congressional Gold Medal to the Patriarchate—an honor from this body that I believe he richly deserves.

Mr. Speaker, His All Holiness Bartholomew is one of the world's most important religious leaders. As the Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, he is the 270th successor of the almost 2,000-year-old Christian Center founded by Apostle Andrew. In this capacity he serves as the spiritual leader of some 300 million people worldwide. He is also one of the world's most outspoken champions for religious freedom and human rights.

In a recent interview with Time magazine Patriarch Bartholomew provided some insight on the direction he wants to steer the Orthodox Church. "The Ecumenical Patriarchate," he said "wishes to remain only a church, one which is free and respected by everybody. We have lived side by side with Muslims and Jews, and we have developed trusting relationships with both. It is our belief that Orthodox Christians have a special responsibility to East-West rapprochement."

These are, of course, the types of sentiments that are surely going to be reiterated by

Patriarch Bartholomew, and well received by Congress, in October. Indeed, I know many of my colleagues are well aware of the struggles the Eastern Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul has had in exercising its faith free of persecution from the Turkish Government. To date, Patriarch Bartholomew has had no success in persuading the Turkish Government to reopen the Orthodox Church's theological school on Halki. The school was closed by the Turkish Government 25 years ago. It's closure, Mr. Speaker, has prevented the church from preparing new generations of religious leaders.

I am proud to have joined with many of my colleagues in the 104th and 105th Congresses in support of legislation calling on the administration to use its influence with the Turkish Government to help secure religious freedom for Orthodox Christians in Turkey. To that end, I very much look forward to Patriarch Bartholomew's visit and to working with him to pursue religious freedom in Turkey and across the world. I think it is extremely appropriate to make our Capitol available for this purpose and urge all my colleagues to support this resolution.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. NEY] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 134, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

HOUSING PROGRAMS EXTENSION ACT OF 1997

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 562) to amend section 255 of the National Housing Act to prevent the funding of unnecessary or excessive costs for obtaining a home equity conversion mortgage, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 562

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Housing Programs Extension Act of 1997".

TITLE I—SENIOR CITIZEN HOME EQUITY PROTECTION

SECTION 101. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the "Senior Citizen Home Equity Protection Act".

SEC. 102. DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS; PROHIBITION OF FUNDING OF UNNECESSARY OR EXCESSIVE COSTS.

Section 255(d) of the National Housing Act (12 U.S.C. 1715z-20(d)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in subparagraph (B), by striking “and” at the end;

(B) by redesignating subparagraph (C) as subparagraph (D); and

(C) by inserting after subparagraph (B) the following:

“(C) has received full disclosure of all costs to the mortgagor for obtaining the mortgage, including any costs of estate planning, financial advice, or other related services; and”;

(2) in paragraph (9)(F), by striking “and”;

(3) in paragraph (10), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”;

(4) by adding at the end the following:

“(11) have been made with such restrictions as the Secretary determines to be appropriate to ensure that the mortgagor does not fund any unnecessary or excessive costs for obtaining the mortgage, including any costs of estate planning, financial advice, or other related services.”

SEC. 103. IMPLEMENTATION.

(a) NOTICE.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall, by interim notice, implement the amendments made by section 102 in an expeditious manner, as determined by the Secretary. Such notice shall not be effective after the date of the effectiveness of the final regulations issued under subsection (b).

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall, not later than the expiration of the 90-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, issue final regulations to implement the amendments made by section 102. Such regulations shall be issued only after notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the provisions of section 553 of title 5, United States Code (notwithstanding subsections (a)(2) and (b)(B) of such section).

TITLE II—TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND SECTION 8 RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROVISIONS

SEC. 201. PUBLIC HOUSING CEILING RENTS AND INCOME ADJUSTMENTS AND PREFERENCES FOR ASSISTED HOUSING.

Section 402(f) of The Balanced Budget Downpayment Act, I (42 U.S.C. 1437aa note) is amended by striking “and 1997” and inserting “, 1997, and 1998”.

SEC. 202. PUBLIC HOUSING DEMOLITION AND DISPOSITION.

Section 1002(d) of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Additional Disaster Assistance, for Anti-terrorism Initiatives, for Assistance in the Recovery from the Tragedy that Occurred at Oklahoma City, and Rescissions Act, 1995 (42 U.S.C. 1437c note) is amended by striking “September 30, 1997” and inserting “September 30, 1998”.

SEC. 203. PUBLIC HOUSING FUNDING FLEXIBILITY AND MIXED-FINANCE DEVELOPMENTS.

Section 201(a)(2) of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996 (as contained in section 101(e) of the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-134)) (42 U.S.C. 1437l note) is amended by striking “fiscal year 1997” and inserting “fiscal year 1998”.

SEC. 204. MINIMUM RENTS.

Section 402(a) of The Balanced Budget Downpayment Act, I (Public Law 104-99; 110 Stat. 40) is amended in the matter preceding paragraph (1) by striking “fiscal year 1997” and inserting “fiscal years 1997 and 1998”.

SEC. 205. PROVISIONS RELATING TO SECTION 8 RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) TAKE-ONE-TAKE-ALL, NOTICE REQUIREMENTS, AND ENDLESS LEASE PROVISIONS.—Section 203(d) of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Develop-

ment, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996 (as contained in section 101(e) of the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-134)) (42 U.S.C. 1437f note) is amended by striking “and 1997” and inserting “, 1997, and 1998”.

(b) FAIR MARKET RENTALS.—The first sentence of section 403(a) of The Balanced Budget Downpayment Act, I (Public Law 104-99; 110 Stat. 43) is amended by striking “fiscal year 1997” and inserting “fiscal years 1997 and 1998”.

TITLE III—REAUTHORIZATION OF FEDERALLY ASSISTED MULTIFAMILY RENTAL HOUSING PROVISIONS

SEC. 301. SECTION 8 PROJECT-BASED ASSISTANCE CONTRACT RENEWAL AUTHORITY.

Section 211 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997 (42 U.S.C. 1437f note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by inserting “or 1998” before the semicolon at the end; and

(2) in subsection (b)(4)(A), by inserting after “fiscal year 1997” each place it appears the following: “or 1998”.

SEC. 302. MORTGAGE RESTRUCTURING DEMONSTRATION FOR FHA-INSURED MULTIFAMILY HOUSING.

Section 212 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997 (42 U.S.C. 1437f note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(3)(B), by inserting “or 1998” before the semicolon at the end;

(2) in subsection (h)(1)(B), by striking “fiscal year 1997” and inserting “fiscal years 1997 and 1998”;

(3) in subsection (h)(1)(F)(ii), by striking “fiscal year 1997” and inserting: “fiscal years 1997 and 1998”; and

(4) in subsection (k), by striking “50,000 units” and inserting “100,000 units”.

SEC. 303. MULTIFAMILY HOUSING FINANCE PILOT PROGRAMS.

Section 542 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992 (12 U.S.C. 1707 note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(5), by inserting before the period at the end of the first sentence the following: “, and not more than an additional 15,000 units during fiscal year 1998”; and

(2) in the first sentence of subsection (c)(4)—

(A) by striking “and” and inserting a comma; and

(B) by inserting before the period at the end the following: “, and not more than an additional 15,000 units during fiscal year 1998”.

SEC. 304. HUD DISPOSITION OF MULTIFAMILY HOUSING.

Section 204 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997 (12 U.S.C. 1715z-11a) is amended by inserting after “owned by the Secretary” the following: “, including the provision of grants and loans from the General Insurance Fund for the necessary costs of rehabilitation or demolition.”

SEC. 305. MULTIFAMILY MORTGAGE AUCTIONS.

Section 221(g)(4)(C) of the National Housing Act (12 U.S.C. 1715(g)(4)(C)) is amended—

(1) in the first sentence of clause (viii), by striking “September 30, 1996” and inserting “December 31, 2005”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new clauses:

“(ix) Subject to the limitation in clause (x), the costs of any multifamily auctions under this subparagraph occurring during any fiscal year shall be paid from amounts in the General Insurance Fund established under section 519.

“(x) This authority of the Secretary to conduct multifamily auctions under this subparagraph shall be effective for any fiscal year only to the extent or in such amounts that amounts in the General Insurance Fund are or have been approved in appropriation Acts for costs of such auctions occurring during such fiscal year.”

SEC. 306. INTEREST REDUCTION PAYMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH SALES OF SECTION 236 MORTGAGES HELD BY HUD.

Section 236 of the National Housing Act (12 U.S.C. 1715z-1) is amended—

(1) in the first sentence of subsection (b), by inserting before the colon at the end of the first proviso the following: “and when the mortgage is assigned or otherwise transferred to a subsequent holder or purchaser (including any successors and assignees)”;

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) by inserting “(1)” after the subsection designation; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(2)(A) The Secretary may continue to make interest reduction payments to the holder or purchaser (including any successors and assignees) of a mortgage formerly held by the Secretary upon such terms and conditions as the Secretary may determine. In exercising the authority under the preceding sentence, upon cancellation of any contract for such interest reduction payments as a result of foreclosure or transfer of a deed in lieu of foreclosure, any amounts of budget authority which would have been available for such contract, absent cancellation, shall remain available for the project for the balance of the term of the original mortgage upon such terms and conditions as the Secretary may determine.

“(B) The Secretary may exercise the authority to make payments under this paragraph (i) only with respect to mortgage loans under this section which, at the time of the Secretary's assignment or other transfer, have a total amount of unpaid principal obligation of not more than \$92,000,000, and (ii) only to the extent or in such amounts as are or have been provided in advance in appropriation Acts.

“(3) Notwithstanding subsection (i)(2) or any other provision of law, in connection with the sale of mortgages held by the Secretary, the Secretary may establish appropriate terms and conditions, based on section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or another appropriate standard, for determining eligibility for occupancy in the project and rental charges.”

SEC. 307. ASSIGNMENT OF REGULATORY AGREEMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH SALES OF MORTGAGES HELD BY HUD.

Section 203(k) of the Housing and Community Development Amendments of 1978 (12 U.S.C. 1701z-11(k)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(7) ASSIGNMENT OF REGULATORY AGREEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH SALE OF MORTGAGES.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and upon such terms and conditions as the Secretary may prescribe, the Secretary may, in connection with the sale of mortgages held by the Secretary, provide for the assumption of all rights and responsibilities under the regulatory agreement executed by or for the benefit of the Secretary. Such assumption shall further provide for the regulatory agreement to be so assumed by any successor or assignee of the initial assuming entity. Such regulatory agreement shall continue to be binding upon the mortgagor and its successors and assignees.”

TITLE IV—REAUTHORIZATION OF RURAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

SEC. 401. HOUSING IN UNDERSERVED AREAS PROGRAM.

The first sentence of section 509(f)(4)(A) of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1479(f)(4)(A)) is amended by striking "fiscal year 1997" and inserting "fiscal years 1997, 1998, and 1999".

SEC. 402. HOUSING AND RELATED FACILITIES FOR ELDERLY PERSONS AND FAMILIES AND OTHER LOW-INCOME PERSONS AND FAMILIES.

(a) **AUTHORITY TO MAKE LOANS.**—Section 515(b)(4) of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1485(b)(4)) is amended by striking "September 30, 1997" and inserting "September 30, 1999".

(b) **SET-ASIDE FOR NONPROFIT ENTITIES.**—The first sentence of section 515(w)(1) of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1485(w)(1)) is amended by striking "fiscal year 1997" and inserting "fiscal years 1997, 1998, and 1999".

SEC. 403. LOAN GUARANTEES FOR MULTIFAMILY RENTAL HOUSING IN RURAL AREAS.

Section 538 of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1490p-2) is amended—

(1) in subsection (q), by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following:

"(2) **ANNUAL LIMITATION ON AMOUNT OF LOAN GUARANTEE.**—In each fiscal year, the Secretary may enter into commitments to guarantee loans under this section only to the extent that the costs of the guarantees entered into in such fiscal year do not exceed such amount as may be provided in appropriation Acts for such fiscal year.";

(2) by striking subsection (t) and inserting the following:

"(t) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There are authorized to be appropriated for each of fiscal years 1998 and 1999 for costs (as such term is defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974) of loan guarantees made under this section such sums as may be necessary for such fiscal year."; and

(3) in subsection (u), by striking "1996" and inserting "1999".

TITLE V—REAUTHORIZATION OF NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM SECTION 501. PROGRAM EXPIRATION.

Section 1319 of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4026) is amended by striking "September 30, 1997" and inserting "September 30, 1999".

SEC. 502. BORROWING AUTHORITY.

Section 1309(a)(2) of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4016(a)(2)) is amended by striking "September 30, 1997" and inserting "September 30, 1999".

SEC. 503. EMERGENCY IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM.

Section 1336(a) of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4056(a)) is amended by striking "September 30, 1996" and inserting "September 30, 1999".

SEC. 504. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR STUDIES.

Subsection (c) of section 1376 of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4127(c)) is amended to read as follows:

"(c) For studies under this title, there are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 1998 and 1999, which shall remain available until expended."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO] and the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO].

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, S. 562, the Housing Programs Extension Act of 1997, will provide security and peace of mind for senior citizens seeking to obtain an FHA-insured reverse mortgage. In short, this legislation gives the Department of Housing and Urban Development authority to issue regulations protecting senior homeowners from being charged excessive or unnecessary fees in the reverse mortgage application process.

I should say here, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Housing and Urban Development supports not just this provision, but, as I understand it, the entirety of this bill.

According to a HUD investigation earlier this year, seniors applying for reverse mortgages were being charged up to 10 percent of the total loan amount for estate-planning services from third-party service providers. In some cases this amounted to as much as \$10,000 for simply driving homeowners to the bank and sitting with the applicants during discussions with the lender.

Mr. Speaker, seniors use these funds for assistance with medical expenses, critical home repairs, groceries and other everyday living expenses. Charging senior citizens \$10,000 for services that are essentially free is truly an abomination.

In response to these allegations, I, along with members of the minority, including the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY], introduced H.R. 1297, the Senior Homeowner Reverse Mortgage Protection Act, earlier this year with the support of the administration. H.R. 1297 was included in the manager's amendment to H.R. 2, which passed the House with strong bipartisan support last May.

Mr. Speaker, last Congress we extended the FHA-insured reverse mortgage program until the year 2000. The program has helped make the American dream of home ownership a continued reality for more than 20,000 seniors who might otherwise be forced to sell their homes because of the rising costs of living associated with aging.

Reverse mortgages allow seniors who are house rich but cash poor to tap into the equity in their homes for much needed assistance with everyday living expenses. For many, the program provides seniors with the opportunity to remain in their own neighborhoods, close to family and friends instead of being forced to live in nursing homes.

Mr. Speaker, it is profoundly disturbing that such a valuable tool for our Nation's most vulnerable population has been jeopardized by such practices. This legislation will prevent these activities and will ensure that the reverse mortgage proceeds will go toward sustaining the quality of life of seniors across America.

Mr. Speaker, the committee amendment to S. 562 will also extend certain noncontroversial public housing reform measures for 12 months. The committee amendment originally extended these provisions for 6 months, but at

the request of the minority, the legislation will extend these measures for a full year.

During this Congress and the last Congress, these public housing reform measures have been enacted annually through the appropriations process. These interim reforms are set to expire in only a few weeks, on September 30, 1997. A short-term extension measure from the authorizing committee, therefore, is necessary for the House and Senate to complete a conference and enact permanent public housing reform.

Mr. Speaker, since the 103d Congress we have been working hard to systematically and systemically reform our Nation's public housing programs. In the last Congress both the House and Senate passed comprehensive public housing reform legislation. Unfortunately, we were unable to complete a conference on the two bills before recess. In the 105th Congress, this Congress, the House passed comprehensive public housing reform last May by a vote of 293 to 132. Senate passage of comparable legislation is anticipated in the next few weeks. A conference is fully expected with a conference report to be completed early in the second session.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation also extends the existing section 8 multifamily housing demonstration program for 1 year to prevent any disruption to tenants or owners of section 8 developments while we continue to pursue a permanent solution to the problem of expiring section 8 contracts.

I will say that even if we could come to an agreement tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, with the Senate on this provision, it would probably be at least 1 year to 18 months before regulations were in place. This demo extension is needed and is supported by the administration as well as the National Leased Housing Association and other stakeholders. I want to repeat it is supported by the administration and other stakeholders.

Finally, the legislation includes a number of housekeeping measures, including a number of multifamily housing reforms at the request of the administration, a 2-year extension of rural housing programs and a 2-year extension of the National Flood Insurance Program, both of which will expire at the end of this fiscal year unless we take action now.

Mr. Speaker, these extensions are critical to avoid a destabilization of the marketplace and to ensure the continuity of service to needy Americans. In particular, in regard to the National Flood Insurance Program, if we fail to extend the program's borrowing authority, we risk being unable to serve devastated families that are affected by natural disasters. FEMA Director Witt indicated to me earlier this month, as a matter of fact only a couple of days ago when he called me at home, that without the extension of borrowing authority, FEMA would be forced to turn away families in the

event of a significant disaster. We do not want that result. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, reluctantly I rise in opposition to S. 562 and urge my colleagues to vote against it. I was surprised to learn, although I was a few minutes late for the beginning of the opening statement of the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO], that he indicated that the administration supports this.

The fact of the matter is I talked to Secretary Cuomo over the weekend. He indicated he was very strongly opposed, not to the provisions that pertain to the Senior Citizen Home Equity Protection Act, but he as well as the White House have all indicated to me that they are very much opposed to the addition of the extenders plus the mark-to-market provisions that are contained in this bill.

I think it is important to recognize that while I do not believe the White House or that HUD or would we take much issue on the extenders on various provisions that both the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO] and I have talked about and agree in most of the provisions that we are talking about here, the real problem comes with the containment of the mark-to-market provisions.

There are two major problems with the bill. First, I would like to point out to Members that we should not be deceived by the title, the Senior Citizen Home Equity Protection Act. I am an original cosponsor of that legislation in the House which would provide important protections against scam artists who bilk senior citizens by charging them excessive fees for reverse mortgage equity loans for services which HUD provides as a matter of course.

The Senate has already passed the bill, and the right thing to do would be to take up the Senate bill without modifications or additions. If the majority party were doing so today, it would pass overwhelmingly, and we could have it on the President's desk this week for enactment into law.

Instead the majority party is playing games, adding on provisions that the Senate will never take up, in effect delaying the final passage of this important consumer protection bill for senior citizens.

Instead S. 562 has been modified to include many other provisions. While most of these are reasonable, we in the minority believe that one provision will undermine efforts to reach final agreement on critically needed mark-to-market legislation.

This is an issue which we in the minority simply disagree with the majority party in the House. We Democrats strongly support the Senate bipartisan

mark-to-market proposal which was included in both the Senate reconciliation and the VA-HUD appropriations bills. We Democrats want to include that bill in the VA-HUD conference report, but we are opposed by the same House Republicans who do not support the bill.

In fact, the Senate bipartisan mark-to-market bill is essential to provide an orderly transition to market-based section 8 rental payments. This is necessary to preserve affordable housing and to protect low-income families and seniors from displacement.

Also, the Congressional Budget Office has scored the Senate bill as saving an additional \$500 million. Including this in the VA-HUD conference report would allow us to spend \$500 million more on critical priority areas like education, health care and housing. But instead, today we are being called upon to reject the mark-to-market proposal and instead pass a continuation of the demonstration program. It is simply the wrong approach.

Finally, I would like to respond to the claim that it is important to pass this bill to reassert the authority of the authorizing committee, the Committee on Banking and Financial Services. This is a curious claim indeed. First, I would like to point out that the Committee on Banking and Financial Services itself has not even considered the bill that we are voting on today. Second, I would like to point out that most of the provisions of the bill are not new authorizing legislation, but simply a continuation of existing policy or appropriations riders.

Finally, with regard to the mark-to-market approach, we have been debating this issue in the Congress for years, but we have never held a committee markup. It is understandable why Senate Republicans and Democrats alike are frustrated with our lack of progress and have moved on their own. It is time to send a bill to the President.

In conclusion, I would urge my colleagues to reject this bill. It will not speed up the final enactment of senior citizens' home equity protections, simply because the Senate will refuse to take up the language if it is included with these extenders and the mark-to-market legislation. All it will do is impede the progress of the critical mark-to-market approach. It is the wrong bill, the wrong process, and I urge a "no" vote.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. Leach], the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services.

Mr. LEACH. I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, let me say there are several aspects of this bill before us. One is an issue of sheer compassion, the whole precept of whether senior citizens should be preyed upon and

whether profiteering should occur with regard to a very responsible Federal program which is applicable in a limited number of circumstances, the so-called reverse mortgage. The second relates to a series of issues of extenders that are part of this bill and what is perceived to be a delaying tactic on the minority side.

I think it fair to ask the gentleman from Massachusetts, what extender does he object to? I say this because all of these provisions were dealt with in a bill that came out of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services called H.R. 2, or they are in current law. And so my concern is what precise extenders does the gentleman object to?

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LEACH. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. For the sake of the record, I would just like to point out to the gentleman that neither title III, title IV nor title V were included in the legislation the gentleman is referring to, No. 1.

No. 2, I do not really have a problem with a lot of the extenders. I tried to pass a message along to the office of the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO] saying that if he wanted to include the extenders but exclude the mark-to-market approach, that I would be happy to support this bill today.

What we are trying to get at here is the gentleman knows because he was, I believe, at a meeting last week where he understands that Senator MACK simply is not going to allow this legislation to be taken up. Why do we not just mark up the mark-to-market legislation, separate that out and go ahead and pass these protections on for the senior citizens?

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Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I would simply say the gentleman gave an opening introduction in which he objected to the extenders. So there is no misunderstanding, the minority has no objection to the extenders. They only object to the mark-to-market provisions. The mark-to-market approach, which is a fairly subtle thing in terms of the public perspective, is simply an extension of an ongoing program.

Now, the question then becomes, what are we doing with the larger issue for which there are certain differences with the other body? The gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO] has very thoughtfully introduced a very comprehensive bill. It is in the public record. We have modest differences with the other body on two large issues, both of which, however, are in the context of which there is 95 percent agreement on approach. It is the intent of the House side to be very forthcoming in negotiations with the Senate on these issues. What we are attempting to pass today is by no means intended to be delaying. It is intended to take care of extenders that must occur this

month, and also to take care of a very compassionate issue.

So I would only say to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY] that we have some very minor concerns about a given Senate approach in the mark to market. We will negotiate with them very straightforwardly, very reasonably, with the intent of protecting the U.S. taxpayer and the public interest, and no other intent or any other motivation whatsoever.

In so doing, we hope to come out with a better protective taxpayer approach than has simply been endorsed by the other side today. But there is nothing in this proposal that is designed to do anything except advance what must be done this month under law and to take care of an approach, if there is no agreement that can be reached with the Senate. But we have total desire to reach agreement with the Senate. The chairman of the subcommittee and the chairman of the full committee are very committed to resolving this issue in this Congress and if at all possible, in this session.

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute to respond to the statement by the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. LEACH]. I would like to point out while he suggests that the mark to market issue is some minor issue that is not out there in the public purview, that does not mean that it is not by far and away the most important issue that we are talking about here. It is fully half of the housing programs of this country.

What we are talking about is whether or not we are going to cost the taxpayers of this country an additional \$500 million this year. I would suggest to the chairman of the full committee that there is in fact a substantive reason for doing this, and that is that it will take away from the impetus to get this bill passed.

You have a bipartisan approach that has passed in the U.S. Senate. All it requires is for us to move this bill in the Committee on Appropriations and get this thing done. While we sit and dawdle and dither, we end up costing the taxpayer millions and millions of dollars.

This is simply a tactic to throw in what is not an issue that is in the public view, it is out of the public view, but if you shove this into this bill, what will end up occurring is we will cost the taxpayer money. We will do it without ever showing them the light of day as to what has happened, and it will give a great deal more credence to the ability of the chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity to then gut the protections for the poor that will be contained in the bill. That is the ultimate objective of what is occurring here today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself two minutes for the

purpose of entering into a dialog with the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY].

Let me begin by saying that I believe deeply that this demonstration program needs to be extended. I think even if we were to come to an agreement tomorrow with the Senate, and I think the chairman of the full panel has explained what our position is, we would still need, because of regulations and rules, there would be a time between 12 and 18 months before we would get an actual program in effect, in which we would need this extension.

I hear the gentleman from Massachusetts has no intention of going along with that, and these other reforms and extensions are so important at this point. We cannot allow the flood insurance program to lapse, we cannot allow these extenders to lapse, and we need to protect seniors to the point where I am wondering if I made a unanimous consent request to delete the sections that are offensive to the gentleman from Massachusetts, if that would win his support of the rest of the provisions of this measure?

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LAZIO of New York. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, it would indeed. I very much appreciate the chairman's willingness to provide that kind of compromise and I look forward to working with the gentleman on the mark to market issue. I think there are a number of extenders, and I just wanted to let the gentlemen know as well as the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. LEACH], know that I know the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER] and others have had concerns about rural housing programs and a number of other extenders.

I did try to communicate to the chairman's office that we would be happy to work with the gentleman on those noncontroversial extenders, and I appreciate the offer that the gentleman has made here on the floor.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LAZIO of New York. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation to the gentleman for doing this. I would urge the next time, to the gentleman, work this out before the gentleman ruins my afternoon.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me hold my tongue.

MODIFICATION TO MOTION OFFERED BY MR. LAZIO OF NEW YORK

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that S. 562 be amended to strike sections 301 and 302 from title III.

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

There was no objection.

The text of the modification is as follows:

Modification offered by Mr. LAZIO of New York.

Beginning on page 6, line 5 strike out sections 301 and 302 and renumber succeeding sections accordingly.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER], my friend and colleague on the Committee on Banking and Financial Services and the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 562, as amended, and urge my colleagues to vote for this important measure. I thank the gentleman for his work on the legislation, his initiative, and this Member also felt that the comments of the gentleman from Iowa, the chairman, should have been compelling when he discussed the motivations and objectives of the legislation. But I am glad to see we seem to have arrived at an arrangement here which while it will not satisfy everybody, nevertheless permits, for example, the extenders to go ahead.

Mr. Speaker, as the title of the bill implies, this measure protects senior citizens, one of the Nation's most exploited populations, from unscrupulous financial service providers.

Recent years have seen the development of truly innovative financial tools to assist our aging population. Among these is the reverse mortgage. This product rewards seniors for exercising financial prudence by allowing them to have access to the equity they have built up in their homes without taking out a new first trust mortgage.

Unfortunately, as mentioned a few moments ago, unscrupulous financial planners sometimes have been gouging seniors with inappropriate fees for information which is otherwise available free of charge.

This measure authorizes the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to take appropriate actions to restrict unnecessary and excessive costs associated with reverse mortgages. The authority should enable HUD to maintain the reverse mortgage as a valued tool in financial planning for seniors, and protect them from being exploited unwittingly.

In addition to the important protections provided to seniors, this measure also contains two other important provisions, among others, which this Member supports.

First, the bill extends for two years section 538, the rural rental multifamily housing loan guarantee program. Legislation permanently authorizing the section 538 loan guarantee program passed the House on April 8, 1997, by an overwhelming bipartisan vote. Unfortunately, the other body has failed to consider this legislation for other extraneous reasons, I gather, and, thus, a more modest authorization is included in this measure.

The section 538 loan guarantee program, which this Member authored with lots of help from his colleagues on both sides of the aisle, guarantees repayment of loans made by private lenders to either State housing agencies, nonprofit organizations, or for-profit investors, who build or rehabilitate affordable multifamily rental problems in nonmetropolitan areas. This innovative program is a prudent and cost-effective supplementary program to the traditional expensive Federal direct lending program.

Another provision which this Member supports is a 2-year reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program, which the subcommittee chairman has mentioned, or NFIP. As a member of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, this Member was actively involved in writing parts of the recently enacted NFIP reform legislation under the leadership of the gentleman from New York, Chairman LAZIO.

Therefore, this Member is pleased that the program will continue to operate at least somewhat more effectively for 2 more years until this Congress or some future Congress finally enacts the more fundamental reforms which are certainly needed. Note should be made that a problematic provision included in recent disaster assistance legislation has expired and is not extended by this bill. Specifically, a provision lowering the waiting period on new flood policies from 30 to 15 days has expired, and for the benefit of the American taxpayer it should not be resurrected.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this Member strongly supports this legislation and urges his colleagues and the Members of the other body to approve this measure as soon as possible.

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, if the chairman of committee has no further speakers, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just once again urge all Members to support these important extensions, protection for senior citizens from being ripped off, anti-fraud provisions, protections for public housing in general. This is an important vote for rural housing, for people in flood-prone areas to ensure they have proper protection, and I would urge an aye vote.

Mr. Speaker, I include a section-by-section analysis of S. 562 for the RECORD.

S. 562—SECTION-BY-SECTION

Section 1. Short title

Provides that the name of the Act may be cited as the "Housing Programs Extension Act of 1997".

TITLE I—SENIOR CITIZEN HOME EQUITY PROTECTION

Section 102. Disclosure requirements, prohibition of funding of unnecessary or excessive costs

Amends Section 235(d) of the National Housing Act involving Home Equity Conversion Mortgages insured under FHA, and (1)

requires a full disclosure of all costs related to originating the mortgage and (2) clarifies the HUD Secretary's authority to appropriately restrict unnecessary or excessive costs related to the origination of the reverse mortgage.

Section 103. Implementation

Requires the HUD Secretary to issue expeditiously an interim notice to implement the provisions of the Act. Further provides that the Secretary shall, within ninety days of the date of enactment, issue final regulations, after notice and opportunity for comment.

TITLE II—TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND SECTION 8 RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROVISIONS

Section 201. Public housing ceiling rents and income adjustments and preferences for assisted housing

Extends the public housing ceiling rents authority and the definition of adjusted income under the public housing program, and the suspension of Federal preferences, through September 30, 1998.

Section 202. Public housing demolition and disposition

Extends the suspension of the one-for-one replacement requirement through September 30, 1998.

Section 203. Public housing funding flexibility and mixed-finance developments

Extends the public housing flexible funding and mixed-finance development authorities through September 30, 1998. The flexible funding authority enables public housing authorities to use their modernization assistance under section 14 and their development assistance under section 5 of the 1937 Act for any eligible activity authorized under sections 14, 5, or applicable Appropriations Acts (HOPE VI), and for up to 10% of such assistance, any operating subsidy purpose authorized by section 9 of the 1937 Act.

Section 204. Minimum rents

Extends the minimum rent requirement (requiring minimum rents of up to \$50) through September 30, 1998.

Section 205. Provisions relating to section 8 rental assistance program

(a) Take-One, Take-All, Notice Requirements, and Endless Lease Provisions. Extends suspension of three requirements of the Section 8 program ("take-one, take-all"; 90-day notice requirement; and "endless lease") through September 30, 1998.

The "take-one, take-all" provision of the 1937 Act requires owners who have entered into a housing assistance payments contract on behalf of any tenant in a multifamily housing project to lease any available unit in the project to an otherwise qualified holder of a certificate or voucher.

The 90-day notice provision for the Certificate and Voucher programs require that owners notify tenants 90 days prior to termination of a contract.

The "endless lease" provision requires that owners not terminate tenancy except for serious or repeated violations of the lease, the law, or for other good cause. This section would limit this requirement to the lease term.

(b) Fair Market Rentals. Extends through September 30, 1998, the requirement that the Secretary establish fair market rents for an area, for purposes of the Section 8 program, at a level equal to the 40th percentile rent of rental distributions of standard quality rental units for the area.

TITLE III—REAUTHORIZATION OF FEDERALLY ASSISTED MULTIFAMILY RENTAL HOUSING PROVISIONS

Section 303. Multifamily housing finance pilot programs

Extends through September 30, 1998, two multifamily risk-sharing demonstration programs, with a 15,000 additional unit limitation for each. Multifamily risksharing with qualified financial entities was authorized by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992 (Section 542). The program enables HUD to enter into risk-sharing partnerships to provide rental housing through two pilot programs for qualified financial entities and for qualified housing finance agencies, and allows FHA to support the multifamily housing market through traditional and new products.

Section 304. HUD disposition of multifamily housing

Enhanced Authority for HUD Disposition of Multifamily Housing. Section 204 of HUD's FY 1997 appropriations Act gave HUD permanent authority to manage and dispose of HUD-owned multifamily properties and mortgages held by the Secretary on such terms and conditions as HUD determines, notwithstanding any other provision of law. Clarifies that the authority to manage and dispose of HUD-owned properties includes the provision of grants and loans from the General Insurance Fund for the necessary costs of rehabilitation or demolition.

Section 305. Multifamily mortgage auctions

Extends the authority to auction mortgages insured under Section 221 of the National Housing Act through December 31, 2005. The current authority expired at the end of FY 1996, and unless extended, HUD will be forced to take assignment of any mortgage where the mortgagee elects to assign such mortgage to HUD. As a result, HUD will incur the financial costs of servicing these mortgages until they are sold in a competitive sale. In addition, extending HUD's ability to auction mortgages prior to assignment allows the mortgage to remain in private hands and avoids payment of a claim against the FHA fund. Costs of the auction activity would be paid from multifamily credit subsidy.

Section 306. Interest reduction payments in connection with sales of section 236 mortgages held by HUD

Provides HUD with limited authority to sell a certain percentage of section 236 mortgages under the National Housing Act with the interest reduction payments contract intact. In this way, the payments would remain available to the project to assist with affordability of the units, support rehabilitation (if any), and increase the selling price of the mortgage. The authority under this provision is limited to an amount of loans which in the aggregate shall not have an unpaid principal balance in excess of \$92,000,000, and exercise of the authority shall be subject to prior approval in an appropriations Act.

Section 307. Assignment of regulatory agreements in connection with sales of mortgages held by HUD

Permits HUD to provide for the assumption of all rights and responsibilities under the regulatory agreement when it sells a HUD-held mortgage. The provision would enable HUD to reduce staff time associated with assets which have already been sold.

TITLE IV—REAUTHORIZATION OF RURAL HOUSING PROGRAM ACT OF 1997

Section 401. Housing in underserved areas program

Amends Section 509(f)(4)(A) of the Housing Act of 1949 to extend its authorization for

two additional fiscal years, from fiscal year 1997 to fiscal year 1999. This program provides a set-aside out of Sections 502 (single-family), 504 (Repair Loans and Grants), 514 (Farm Labor), 515 (Multifamily Housing) and 524 (site loans) for projects in underserved counties as defined by the Housing Act of 1949.

Section 402. Housing and related facilities for elderly persons and families and other low-income persons and families

(a) Authority to Make Loans. Extends Section 515(b)(4) of the Housing Act of 1949, the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to make loans, for two additional fiscal years until September 30, 1999. Section 515 provides for multifamily housing loans.

(b) Set-Aside for Non-Profit Entities. Extends Section 515(w)(1) of the Housing Act of 1949, providing for a certain level of funding to be set-aside for non-profit entities, for an additional two fiscal years until September 30, 1999.

Section 403. Loan guarantees. For multifamily rental housing in rural areas

Amends Section 538(q) of the Housing Act of 1949 by inserting a new provision establishing that the Secretary may enter into loan guarantee commitments under this section only to the extent that the costs of the guarantees entered into in a fiscal year do not exceed the amounts provided for that fiscal year in appropriations Acts.

Amends Section 538(t) to extend authorization for loan guarantees made under this title until fiscal year 1999.

TITLE V—REAUTHORIZATION OF NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Section 501. Program expiration

Amends Section 1319 of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to extend the Act for two additional years until September 30, 1999.

Section 502. Authorization of borrowing authority

Amends Section 1309 of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to extend the borrowing authority until September 30, 1999.

Section 503. Emergency implementation of program

Amends Section 1336(a) of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to extend the expiration date until September 30, 1999.

Section 504. Authorization of appropriations for studies

Amends Section 1376(c) of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to extend funding authorization for appropriations, in such sums as may be necessary, for studies conducted under the relevant title of the Act, for each of fiscal years 1998 and 1999.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Senior Citizen Home Equity Protection Act. Senior citizens are one of our Nation's greatest assets. The guidelines set by this bill will help protect seniors from losing the financial independence they have worked all their lives to achieve.

The Senior Citizen Home Equity Protection Act gives the U.S. Department on Housing and Urban Development authority to issue rules to protect seniors from being overcharged while trying to obtain reverse mortgages. This act also requires that the mortgagor receives a full disclosure of all the costs acquired while attempting to attain this type of mortgage.

A reverse mortgage allows senior citizens age 62 or older to borrow money against the equity of their homes and does not require them to make monthly or principal payments. The purpose of a reverse mortgage is to allow

seniors who are "house rich," but "cash poor" to access the equity they have invested in their homes so they may have the money they need to live comfortably on a day to day basis.

If it were not for reverse mortgages, a senior citizen homeowner might have to put their home on the market to cash in on its equity just so they can survive. This would also result in their having no other option but to move into a retirement home, ultimately making them lose the peace of mind and security they had built up in the neighborhoods they used to live in.

Some senior citizens may need our help in protecting the equity which they spent most of their lives in building. That is why I urge my colleagues to join in unanimously supporting the Senior Citizen Home Equity Act.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 562, the Senior Citizen Home Equity Protection Act.

This bill would authorize the Housing and Urban Development [HUD] Department to issue rules to protect senior citizens from being charged unreasonable fees for obtaining reverse mortgages; it reauthorizes for 2 years Federal rural multifamily rental housing development programs and the National Flood Insurance program; it extends for 6 months certain public housing reforms that have been included in appropriations acts the past 2 fiscal years; and it extends for 1 year a section 8 portfolio reengineering demonstration program included in last year's VA-HUD appropriations act.

Maintaining a secure, fair and reliable source of credit for home purchases by senior citizens is very important to me. The service that past generations provided this country is invaluable. Through two World Wars and economic downturns, they stayed the course and kept this country on track to become the economic, social and political success that it is today.

This bill will provide security for seniors who for whatever reason want to purchase a home.

On the behalf of the residents of the 18th Congressional District I am in full support of this bill and would like to urge my colleagues to join me in voting for this measure.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, today we are asked to support a bill which has the Federal Government engaged in the unconstitutional business of further regulating mortgage brokers, extending Federal housing programs—some of which would be extended permanently by this bill—and offering flood insurance programs.

This bill will add new regulations by Government and impose new restrictions on the private sector which provides most of the safe and affordable housing in this country. Such regulations and restrictions raise costs and limit availability of housing for our citizens insofar as such additional costs may ultimately be passed along to the consumer. This bill will further add to the Federal Government's intrusion in the housing market by limiting private sector initiatives to help consumers obtain mortgage loans, and eventually, their own homes.

Second, this bill would make authorization of some programs permanent so that future representatives of the people will not be able to judge the wisdom of these specific programs. To the extent Congress has any constitutional right to legislate in this sphere at all,

certainly, Representatives must have the legal ability to weigh the specific needs of their constituents and make appropriate decisions. Some of these multi-housing programs are mere demonstration projects which have not proved their worthiness. They have, however, proved their cost to the taxpayer with ever-rising tax bills without the corresponding benefits. Government-run housing schemes are less efficient, more costly and limit the private sector's ability to provide the services that the public wants at a price that properly takes into account true economic costs. Even such misnamed "good government" housekeeping provisions merely perpetuate and extend the Government's reach into the private sector and, ultimately, into the wallets of taxpaying Americans.

With respect to Federal flood insurance programs, the constitutional separation of powers strictly limited the role of the Federal Government and, at the same time, anticipated that maintaining the balance between cost, risk, and the benefits of insuring one's property was best reserved—via the ninth and tenth amendments—to State and local governments, or individuals respectively. One can insure oneself against virtually every natural disaster at some policy premium. Determination of whether the peace of mind and other benefits of insurance outweigh the premium for any particular property is not amongst the constitutionally enumerated Federal powers. The private market provision and resulting cost internalization of such insurance premiums will accomplish much toward enhancing macroeconomic efficiency and, at the same time, eliminate the necessity for the national government to overstep its constitutional bounds with governmental "pseudo-insurance."

In addition, this bill did not go through the proper committee process. I am a member of the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services and have not had the opportunity to vote on, amend, improve, or block this piece of legislation. It is in the committee process, where respective Members make it their responsibility to be better versed in that committee's respective issues, amend and hopefully improve bills as they move through the legislative process. Members of the Banking Committee should have had the opportunity to review relevant legislation before it is voted on by the entire House of Representatives.

As a U.S. Congressman, I remain committed to the Constitution which I, only months ago, swore to uphold. This country's founders recognized the genius of separating power amongst Federal, State and local governments as a means to maximize individual liberty and make Government most responsive to those persons who might most responsibly influence it. For each of these reasons, I must rise in opposition to S. 562, the Senior Citizen Home Equity Protection Act.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO] that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 562, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum

is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 562 and that I be allowed to include a section-by-section analysis of the bill.

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

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2016, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 228 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H.RES. 228

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2016) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LINDER] is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. FROST], pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 228 waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration. The conference report for H.R. 2016, the military construction appropriations bill for fiscal year 1998, shall be considered as read. The House rules provide for 1 hour of general debate, divided equally between the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report appropriates a total of \$9.2 billion, which is \$600 million less than was appropriated last year. It is important to note, however, this amount is \$800 million more than the amount requested by the President.

We know that much of this Nation's military housing and on-base housing have deteriorated to substandard con-

ditions, unsuitable for the men and women who serve our Nation. While our Armed Forces deserve the very best we can provide, the current facilities assure that we will not be able to retain the best and brightest in our military.

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This bill addresses the need to improve the quality of life of our military and their families.

Specifically, the bill provides \$3.9 billion for family housing, including funding for new housing and improvements. Regarding improvements in the quality of life that I mentioned earlier, H.R. 216 provides \$32 million for child development centers, \$163 million for medical facilities, and \$3 billion for the operation and maintenance of existing family housing units.

It is also important to note that the conference report appropriates \$857 million for environmental cleanup and \$104 million for environmental compliance.

I hope that we can pass this bill quickly so that there is no delay in cleaning up contaminated sites on our military bases.

This bill achieves our goal of spending taxpayer money more efficiently and where it is needed most. Notwithstanding the constraints we now face after decades of fiscal irresponsibility, H.R. 2016 effectively funds programs that will provide child day care centers and improved hospital facilities. These appropriations guarantee the health and safety of the families and children of our service men and women.

I want to congratulate the gentleman from California [Mr. PACKARD], the chairman of the subcommittee, and the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. HEFNER], the ranking minority member, for their continued bipartisanship. These two men and their committee understand that this is an important bill for the men and women who defend our country.

I urge the House to pass this rule without delay so that we may proceed with the consideration of a conference report that will improve the quality of life, housing, and medical services of our Armed Forces, their families and their children.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and this conference report providing appropriations for military construction in fiscal year 1998. This conference report rightfully retains the emphasis the House-passed bill placed on quality-of-life issues for the men and women of our Armed Forces and their families, and deserves the support of all of the Members of this body.

Forty-two percent of the funds in this conference agreement are dedicated to family housing, including \$900 million for new family housing units and for improvements to existing units

and \$3 billion for the operation and maintenance of existing units. Decent housing for our troops and their families should be one of the highest priorities, and this bill makes a significant continued commitment toward improving the housing available on our military installations around the world.

But improvements are not just for family housing, Mr. Speaker. This conference agreement also provides \$724 million for barracks for single and unaccompanied military personnel. This conference report also includes \$32 million for child development centers and \$160 million for hospital and medical facilities on military installations.

In combination, these items total more than half of the \$9.2 billion recommended in this conference report, amply demonstrating the commitment of this conference on a bipartisan basis to improving the standard of living of the men and women we depend upon to protect and defend our Nation. It is the very least we can do, and I commend this conference report to my colleagues.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER].

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, at the time that the previous question is put I will ask for a vote on it, hoping to defeat the previous question so that we can make in order a resolution at the end of the resolution, adding a new section which would say that before the House adjourns sine die for the first session of this Congress it shall consider campaign finance reform legislation under an open amendment process.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, the purpose of this is to try once again to get the House to consider the important issue of campaign finance reform. We have seen, we have just come through an historic election in this country where hundreds of millions of dollars were raised and spent on behalf of various campaigns, and what we are witnessing now, both in the Senate and soon in the House, are investigations into how that money was spent by both the national committees and the administration and congressional campaign committees.

However, what has become very, very clear in that situation is that there is a dramatic need to overhaul our campaign finance system in this country. Money is now flowing into campaigns that overwhelms all of the limits that originally were placed on Federal campaigns in terms of what individual candidates can take, what individuals can contribute, what organizations, political action committees can contribute. We now see that those reforms are being overwhelmed by the huge influx of soft money into these campaigns.