

places in this building. The reason the Government is shut down is simply because the appropriation bills did not work their way through Congress in a timely fashion and, when they did, they were burdened with special-interest provisions which required the President to veto them, and in several cases were burdened with reductions so savage that, in fact, in the other body they would not even take them up.

So I would simply say that despite all of the hyperbole we will hear tonight, if we want to do something constructive for the people we represent after that debate is finished, we will see something similar to House Joint Resolution 131 brought out so that Government can stay open while we resolve our differences. That is the rational thing to do.

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, just to keep the record straight, we do not deal with mining reform in this bill. We put in, as requested by the administration, a moratorium on the issuance of patents, and this puts a hold on any new giveaways until such time as the authorizing committees deal with the mining.

Let me also point out that we are up over last year on parks, on the Smithsonian, the things that the public enjoys. We make sure they have access to them, that they have an opportunity to use those, the National Gallery and the forests and fish and wildlife, recreation facilities.

We really divided this bill into three categories: The must-do's, the need-to-do's, and the nice-to-do's, and some of the nice-to-do's had to fall out. Why? Because we want to reduce the deficits. It is that simple.

In this bill we are \$1.4 billion less than in 1995 in budget authority. We are \$600 million less in spending, in actual outlays, in fiscal 1996. It was tough, frankly, and the President is saying, "Hey you are not spending enough money." But I do not think it is fair to the young people, to future generations, to borrow money and saddle them with paying for all of the nice-to-do's. Energy conservation, where you fund programs for private companies, maybe it is nice to do. But should we be borrowing the money to pay for these? I do not think so.

I think what the President is saying is his veto message is very simple: "You are not spending enough money." But I believe that the American voters said in 1994, in November, "We want less spending. We want the budget balanced. We want the deficit reduced. We do not want to saddle future generations with our bills." It is that simple.

I have to agree with them. I do not think we should saddle future generations. We took a hard look at every program and said, "How can we manage this a little more effectively?"

The Committee on Appropriations are the managers of Government. They determine how much money should be

expended on various programs, and we said these are nice to do but they are not a value that makes it a good policy to borrow money to pay for them, and certainly I think that we did a responsible job.

I regret that the President did not carefully examine the bill, for example, saying that it provides clear-cutting in the Tongass. Totally wrong. There is not a word about clear-cutting in the Tongass. We reduced the cut, as a matter of fact, from the present level, and I regret that the veto message does not more accurately portray the real facts of this bill and that the American people are denied the benefits.

I would say to my colleagues, vote "yes" on the motion to refer this to the committee.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. REGULA].

The motion was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996—VETO MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 104-148)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following veto message from the President of the United States:

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2099, the "Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996."

H.R. 2099 would threaten public health and the environment, end programs that are helping communities help themselves, close the door on college for thousands of young people, and leave veterans seeking medical care with fewer treatment options.

The bill includes no funds for the highly successful National Service program. If such funding were eliminated, the bill would cost nearly 50,000 young Americans the opportunity to help their community, through AmeriCorps, to address vital local needs such as health care, crime prevention, and education while earning a monetary award to help them pursue additional education or training. I will not sign any version of this appropriations bill that does not restore funds for this vital program.

This bill includes a 22 percent cut in requested funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), including a 25 percent cut in enforcement that would cripple EPA efforts to enforce law against polluters. Particu-

larly objectionable are the bill's 25 percent cut in Superfund, which would continue to expose hundreds of thousands of citizens to dangerous chemicals and cuts, which would hamper efforts to train workers in hazardous waste cleanup.

In addition to severe funding cuts for EPA, the bill also includes legislative riders that were tacked onto the bill without any hearings or adequate public input, including one that would prevent EPA from exercising its authority under the Clean Water Act to prevent wetlands losses.

I am concerned about the bill's \$762 million reduction to my request for funds that would go directly to States and needy cities for clear water and drinking water needs, such as assistance to clean up Boston Harbor. I also object to cuts the Congress has made in environmental technology, the climate change action plan, and other environmental programs.

The bill would reduce funding for the Council for Environmental Quality by more than half. Such a reduction would severely hamper the Council's ability to provide me with advice on environmental policy and carry out its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The bill provides no new funding for the Community Development Financial Institutions program, an important initiative for bringing credit and growth to communities long left behind.

While the bill provides spending authority for several important initiatives of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), including Community Development Block Grants, homeless assistance and the sale of HUD-owned properties, it lacks funding for others. For example, the bill provides no funds to support economic development initiatives; it has insufficient funds for incremental rental vouchers; and it cuts nearly in half my request for tearing down the most severely distressed housing projects. Also, the bill contains harmful riders that would transfer HUD's Fair Housing activities to the Justice Department and eliminate Federal preferences in the section 8, tenant-based program.

The bill provides less than I requested for the medical care of this Nation's veterans. It includes significant restrictions on funding for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs that appear designed to impede him from carrying out his duties as an advocate for veterans. Further, the bill does not provide necessary funding for VA hospital construction.

For these reasons and others my Administration has conveyed to the Congress in earlier communications, I cannot accept this bill. This bill does not reflect the values that Americans hold dear. I urge the Congress to send me an appropriations bill for these important priorities that truly serves the American people.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.
THE WHITE HOUSE, December 18, 1995.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The objections of the President will be spread at large upon the Journal, and the veto message and the bill will be printed as a House document.

MOTION OFFERED BY MR. LEWIS OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. LEWIS of California moves that the message, together with the accompanying bill, be referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] for the purposes of debate only, and yield back 30 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS].

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I regret that the committee finds itself at this point in receipt of the President's veto of this very important measure. It clearly reflects a considerable disservice to the President on the part of his staff, who obviously have misinformed him regarding the work of the conference committee that presented this bill and sent it to the President's desk.

It is very apparent that they have not been straightforward regarding the variety and mix of the efforts the committee went through. The conference met on November 16 of this year. In the midst of that conference, we met with the President's representative, Mr. Panetta of California. During that discussion, Mr. Panetta indicated to the conferees that the President was likely to veto this bill unless the bill had \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion more in allocation. So it was apparent that the President does not like the allocation that this committee received.

Presuming that there was no additional money available to the committee, it was clear that we would not be able to meet all of the President's targets as we allocated the money that was available to us. The President's representative indicated to the members of the conference that he really believed it was likely that \$2 billion or more would be forthcoming from somewhere. The implication was that that money would come from a reallocation of what Mr. Panetta kind of assumed would be a veto of the defense measure. As we all know, the defense bill became law, and that appropriations availability did not come to our subcommittee.

So there was nowhere to move in terms of many of the areas the President is concerned about. At that point in time, over a month ago, we said to Mr. Panetta and anybody else who would listen, "Please, tell us what you would do from your perspective with these allocations to make this bill better. Please, help the President come to

the desk or come to the table and talk with us about these very important programs."

First, I think it is important for us all to revisit one more time: This bill represents in excess of \$80 billion of expenditure, important programs that involve areas such as VA medical care, significant programs like EPA, all of the country's housing programs.

□ 1845

They also provide the funds for NASA and those programs the President is concerned about that relate to our international partnership with the Russians and others as we explore space, for example, very difficult and competitive allocations.

We urged the President's people to come to the table. He suggests that one of the problems with this bill is that there is not adequate funding, and, indeed there is no funding, for the national service programs, namely AmeriCorps. That program under the President's proposal would increase by some 300 percent over 3 years, and yet the program has had no evaluation to this point. Clearly, programs that work well deserve support. Programs that have not been evaluated at least ought to be evaluated before their funding is expanded.

It would appear that much of the President's objection to this bill involves his desire to expand the funding for the Environmental Protection Agency. If that is the case, we are willing to listen to the President's case. We simply ask him to come to the table. We have only got so much money to go around in this bill. If we are to shift money as we send it back to conference, to EPA, where does it come from? Would the President suggest it should come from veterans' medical care? If so, let the President step up to the table and say so. Money is not going to suddenly appear from nowhere.

It is also very apparent that the President has been misled relative to what this bill contains as it relates to EPA and EPA legislation. Literally we have stripped from this bill most of the serious contentions that flowed around riders as the bill left the House. There are four pieces of legislative language in the bill; three of them involve language that has been in a bill in the past that has been acceptable to the administration. It is very clear that the President is really objecting to this bill because there is not enough money here. As my colleague from Ohio said in the previous bill, the President seems to want to go forward with business as usual. He actually believes that we can tap the till, spend money we do not have, and go on blithely forward suggesting that future generations will pick up the tab when it is their turn.

Mr. President, this is the bill that begins the point where we move toward balancing the budget in a 7-year period. You have made that commitment. No other bill has more discretionary

spending that can be impacted in a way that makes sense for the American public and the American taxpayer. We are asking you, Mr. President, to reevaluate this, come to the bargaining table, tell us what your priorities are, and we are more than willing to work with you. I must say the time frame is very narrow and the window for cooperation is closing quickly. Mr. President, we are looking for your leadership. We would hope that your people would move away from the rhetoric and come to the table and bargain in good faith.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, when this bill was on the floor approximately a week or 10 days ago, we said to the House at that time that it was the intention of the President to veto this bill. At that time I enumerated the various reasons that the President has specified as to why he would veto this bill, and this morning when the President vetoed this bill, he enunciated many of the very same reasons that I had stated when I told the House that this bill was going to be vetoed.

It is true that allocation is a very real part of the reason that the President has vetoed this bill, and the fact that sufficient money has not been prioritized and put into those areas of the bill that the President is particularly concerned about in terms of his own priorities for the American people.

But all of the rationale for his vetoing this legislation cannot be attributed to the allocation alone. I think it is very important for us to take just a few moments to understand what the President has said with reference to his reasons for vetoing the bill.

In his message he said, "The Republican Congress has shut down the Federal Government because they have not passed a budget for this year and because they want to make the price of opening the Government up my acceptance of 7 long years of unacceptable cuts in health care, education, and the environment; in research and technology, cuts that are not necessary to balancing the budget, and would have an adverse effect on our way of life and on the strength of our economy."

He said further, "It is wrong for the Congress to shut the Government down just to make a political point the week before Christmas. It is unfair to the American people and unfair to the public employees." The President said, "This is a season of peace and it should be a season of cooperation, not rancor or threats. The Congress should reopen the Government." He is ready to work with them to balance the budget in a way that reflects our values, and that is consistent with the resolution to which we both agreed when the Government was reopened a few weeks ago.

He says in his veto message, "I say again when I said a few weeks ago I

would work with the Congress to balance the budget in 7 years, that the Congress commit to a budget that protects the environment. These bills I veto today I do so because they do not meet that test. For 25 years leaders of both parties have recognized that our party is stronger when we control pollution and protect public health. Environmental protection is not, or at least it never has been until now, a partisan issue. It is an American issue. It is an American issue outside Washington. The Republicans in this Congress have attempted to roll back decades of bipartisan environmental protection." The President said "It is wrong, and I cannot permit it to happen."

He said, "They have sent me legislation that would give our children less clean drinking water." He doesn't say anything about money there. He says "legislation that would give our children less clean drinking water, less safe food, dirtier air. If I sign these bills, I would be condemning more than 10 million children under the age of 12 to living near toxic waste sites that might not be cleaned up for years. Therefore, in the interests of our children, I am vetoing these measures, because they would cripple these kinds of environmental protections."

The President goes on and cites many other substantive reasons why he has vetoed this legislation, so I do not think it is fair to castigate the reasons for the veto here by referring to the allocation alone as being the principal reason for the vetoes.

The President has some very substantial reasons, those of which I have enumerated here. I think that it is important for the House to understand that we could have avoided this veto by forcing the subcommittee to take the kind of action the President has requested that they take so he would not have had to veto this legislation. Now that he has had to veto it, pursuant to that, I think we have to accept the fact that it is important for us to commit this bill back to the appropriations subcommittee and alter the bill in such a way that it can go to the President for his signature.

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTON], the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rose a little while ago with an air of incredulity that the President vetoed the Interior bill, and now I have to echo that incredulity. I am just astounded that the President chose to veto this bill, because, as I understand the gentleman's statement, the President did not engage the gentleman or any of the members of the subcommittee to any substantive degree about the details of this bill.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LIVINGSTON. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is absolutely correct. I was astonished to have a personal conversation with the President's representative, Mr. Panetta from California. I talked to him on the phone about the details of this bill several weeks ago. It was very apparent that he and/or the President had not addressed the details; that Mr. Panetta came to our conference meeting and it was apparent they were looking for another \$2 or \$3 billion for this bill to come out of nowhere.

That money was not forthcoming. The President clearly has either not had a chance to come to the table or has been misled by his advisers.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the President's position through apparently Mr. Panetta, his chief of staff, is that there is not enough money for this bill. I would like to carry that forward. We have been through the budget allocation process. We have assessed what it will take for the discretionary budget to meet the targets so that we can hit that balanced budget by the year 2002.

Mr. LEWIS of California. That is correct?

Mr. LIVINGSTON. The President has signed on to the principles of a balanced budget by the year 2002 as recently as 6 weeks ago and signed that continuing resolution, which said that he approved of a balanced budget target by the year 2002, scored by the Congressional Budget Office. Just tonight, we saw an overwhelming vote from Republicans and Democrats alike, 351 Members out of 435 voted overwhelmingly to ask the President to live up to his commitment to that balanced budget by the year 2002.

This is the first step. This bill makes the most major contribution to that balanced budget. Without this bill, one cannot get there, is that right?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, the chairman is exactly on target. The fact is that this is one of the major pools of discretionary money. The entire bill involves some \$80 billion of spending, over \$60 billion of it discretionary. We are never going to get to a pathway of 2002 and balancing the budget unless we restrain spending within that discretionary pool. The President's people know that. It is a shame they have not given the President the opportunity to evaluate what that means in terms of a balanced budget.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, the President is in effect saying "I am for a balanced budget by the year 2002," and I love his use of the word "values," he uses that a lot, "but the Congress has to live up to my values," whatever those are.

But the point is that the President is saying, "I am for a balanced budget, but do not make any cuts, and if you do make any cuts, I do not like that

one, and I do not like that one, and I do not like that one, but I am for a balanced budget."

Now, what in effect he is saying is he is for the status quo. He is a stalwart of the status quo. He is for trying to keep the bureaucracy in place. He is for keeping all of the spending that was assessed by the last Congress, the Democrat Congress, in place, locked in, with duplication, inefficiency, heavy spending, heavy taxes that he imposed on the American people 2 years ago. He really does not want any change. Am I wrong?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I would say to the chairman, I must say that I believe that if some of us could ever get in a room and sit down and talk to the President about the details of a bill like this and show him the importance of impacting this discretionary spending if we are going to balance the budget, that we could get him to respond.

I know he is very busy and has lots to do, but we are now at the point where the rubber meets the road. We are either going to balance the budget or not. This bill is critical to that, and the President has yet to come to the floor.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, if I recall correctly, the gentleman has protected veterans benefits beyond what they were last year.

Mr. LEWIS of California. The gentleman is exactly right. The veterans medical care programs, the one account that is higher in 1995 in this bill by some \$400 million, now, that raises the critical point: If the President wants us within our allocation to increase the Environmental Protection Agency, for example, where would one take the money? Perhaps he would suggest VA medical care. But please come to the table and show us your priorities. It is impossible for us to change this bill without some reasonable input.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Of course, the President says he does not want to take it out of NASA.

Mr. LEWIS of California. He does not want to take it out of NASA. I am sure he does not want to cut VA medical care. Where do we take the money?

Mr. LIVINGSTON. That is the critical question. Unfortunately, I think where we are is that the President simply has not come to the table to tell us where he would take it from.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, let me just say, a number of the agency heads have been extremely forthcoming. Henry Cisneros, in the housing program, has worked closely with us. Dan Goldin in NASA has been very helpful. We have heard little from EPA. For example, everybody knows that the Superfund is broken and we are spending billions of dollars over years in Superfund getting almost no results. Yet we have not heard a thing from the Secretary regarding the way she would fix the Superfund.

It is time for the President's people to be serious about governing and come to the table.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I know that the gentleman does not have energy conservation in this bill, but I have to say that I was interested that one of the reasons for his vetoing the Interior bill was because it did not provide enough of what he thought were key energy conservation projects, that is, corporate welfare or pork projects for big corporations to provide energy saving initiatives that have not worked for the last 20 years, and at the same time his Energy Secretary flies around the world with an entourage of as many as 150 people, wasting taxpayers dollars. It is all illustrative of a point that comes home to me in watching this process at any rate from fairly up close, that the President is not serious about negotiating. He is only serious about rhetoric.

□ 1900

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman that it is very important that we get the Government back to work. We need the President at the table. We are willing to work with him, and I certainly hope this discussion helps with that.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the gentleman for working very hard. In fact, this was a very difficult bill. This bill was not easy to pass, as the gentleman well knows. We had differences with the Senate. We have had differences among ourselves, Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, and the gentleman worked hard to get this bill in such a form as to meet all of the concerns of Members of Congress, or at least most of the concerns, so that we got a majority in both houses.

And then the President vetoes this bill without putting his own input into the confection of the bill. It is just astounding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY], the distinguished ranking minority member of the full Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I have said on more than one occasion that the worst mistakes one can make in this town is to believe one's own baloney. I hope that the two friends of mine who just spoke do not believe their own baloney because it is baloney.

The fact is the President made very clear that he would oppose this bill because it did not meet his standards in terms of a balance in funding, and it also did not meet his standards in terms of keeping special interest provisions off the bill.

The President made clear that he was not going to accept a 22-percent reduction in funding for environmental pro-

tection and he made very clear that what he wanted was a different allocation between the subcommittees so that we can, in fact, fulfill the commitment that all of us signed on to when we supported the last continuing resolution.

Despite all of the talk today by Members of the majority party about a balanced budget in 7 years, that talk reminds me of Ronald Reagan in the old movie "King's Row." After Reagan woke up in the hospital, his legs had been amputated, and he said, where is the rest of me? My question is where is the rest of my colleagues? They are talking about the need for a balanced budget in 7 years, but they are forgetting that the other half of the deal was that Congress would agree that that balanced budget must protect future generations, it must ensure Medicare solvency, reform welfare and provide adequate funding for Medicaid, education, agriculture, national defense, veterans and the environment.

I do not know which dictionary my colleagues use most of the time, but I would doubt that anybody's dictionary would allow one to conclude that we have adequately protected the environment by cutting back by 22 percent the funding that we are providing in this bill for environmental protection.

Now, Members can say all they want about veterans health care, but the fact is that veterans health care is funded at a level \$213 million below the amount in the original House bill, and that House bill was brought to us by the Republican majority; and yet they had \$1,500,000,000 more to deal with in the conference than they had in the original House bill.

It just seems to me that on its face those numbers demonstrate that the majority party is not meeting the commitment it signed on to when it passed the continuing resolution. That is why the President is vetoing the bill and that is why he should have vetoed the bill.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional requests for time and I reserve the right to close.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California [Ms. PELOSI].

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank our distinguished ranking member for giving me this time and for his leadership on the committee.

I rise today to talk about why we are where we are today. Many of my colleagues know by now that there are three bills in play, the balanced budget bill that we have been talking about for over a period of time, the continuing resolution, and the appropriations bill.

We also know that we would not be here today if we had come to agreement on our appropriations bill. That disagreement has necessitated a continuing resolution. Our Republican colleagues have tied the balanced budget bill to the continuing resolution, and that is why we are here. But if we had

our work done, if we had come to agreement on the appropriations bill, there would be no need for a CR. We could debate the values of a balanced budget bill without the pressures of all of these other legislative tactics.

The distinguished gentleman from Louisiana, and I am sorry he is not here right now, the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations said in his colloquy with the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], that the President did not agree with our budget because it does not agree with his values, whatever they are. Well, the gentleman is distinguished, and I know in the heat of the discussion sometimes an impression comes across that is less than distinguished, and I think that remark was. Because the President, and we all share the value of providing for our children's future, and the President has been very specific in terms of what his disagreement is and what his values are in this budget negotiation. That is to protect Medicare and Medicaid; that is to protect the environment; that is to protect education, the defense budget, veterans and agriculture. It has been said over and over and over again.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think the President has made very clear what his values are for our country and very clear what his values are in this negotiation. The environment is one of the important issues that the President values.

I want to reiterate what some of my colleagues have said and reference the President's veto message when he says that he vetoed the bill because the bill includes a 22-percent cut in requested funding for the Environmental Protection Agency, including a 25-percent cut in enforcement that would cripple EPA's efforts to enforce laws against polluters.

What this does is make it less safe for our children in terms of clean air and clean water. If there is one thing that parents cannot do for their children it is to control the environment around them, the physical environment around them. If there is one thing that Government can do, it is to enforce environmental laws. That is something we cannot do for ourselves. We can adopt good environmental habits and contribute to protecting the environment, but the polluters never stop polluting under the honor system. We must have a Federal role and a Federal participation to protect the environment.

So I thank the President for using the veto on this message. As we all know, veto means I forbid. I thank the President for forbidding this Congress to make the air less clean and the water less clean that our children have to breathe and drink.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. LOWEY].

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding me this time.

□ 1915

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening in very strong support of the President's veto of the Republicans' devastating cuts in environmental protection and housing programs.

This bill is one of the more glaring indications of the extremist, anti-environmental policies of the Republican majority.

We should not be here having this debate. We should have funded the EPA, Housing and Veterans Program 2½ months ago. But the Republican leadership insists on adding extremist provisions, and I applaud the President for having the courage to reject them.

How anyone who is truly committed to ensuring clean water and clean air can, in good conscience, stand before the American people tonight and support this bill is more than I can fathom.

This bill is an attack on our natural resources and the environmental health and safety of the American people, plain and simple.

This bill cuts the Environmental Protection Agency by more than 20 percent, but that's only the tip of the iceberg: The Devil is in the details:

A 30-percent cut in loans to States that help keep raw sewage off our beaches and out of our rivers,

A 45-percent cut in funds that provide critical assistance to local communities to keep drinking water safe, a 20 percent cut in the program that cleans up hazardous waste sites, a complete termination of the EPA's authority to stop toxic dumping in wetlands and a 27-percent cut in EPA enforcement activities—that means the environmental cop will not be on the beat. So much for getting tough on crime.

In the area I represent, Federal loans are critical in helping clean up Long Island Sound and preserve the purity of the New York City water supply. And yet this bill cuts more than \$750 million from these funds to the States.

There is no denying that these environmental rollbacks will cripple the EPA's ability to protect the quality of our air and water and because of their insistence on these extremist provisions, the Government is now shut down—less than 1 week before Christmas.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, what is the time situation here?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] has 2 minutes and the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] has 2 minutes and the right to close.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the other side allegations that the President is not interested in balancing the budget. The President clearly, in his veto message today, answered that. Here is what he said in his message.

He said:

I am vetoing the bills not only because of the impact they have on the environment we leave our children, but also because of other

things that they do that violate our values. They completely eliminate the National Service Program, which has been very successful, broadly supported by people across partisan lines in communities all across America. They cut innovative programs for economic development in our cities, the areas which have been left most untouched by the economic recovery of the last 3 years. They cut health care for veterans.

None of these things, the President says in his message, are necessary to balancing the budget.

Then, lastly, with reference to the whole question of medical care, I think it is important for us to listen to what the President said. He said the bill provides less than I requested for the medical care of this Nation's veterans. It includes significant restrictions on funding for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs that appear designed to impede him from carrying out his duties as an advocate for veterans. Further, the bill does not provide necessary funding for V.A. hospital construction.

Now, obviously, the President has addressed these things which he deems to be values which he, as the President of the United States, has a responsibility to carry out.

Finally, the President says this:

This bill does not reflect the values that Americans hold dear, and I urge the Congress to send me an appropriations bill that has these important priorities that truly serve the American people.

That is the responsibility the President has to the American people. He has today exercised that responsibility. It is certainly incumbent upon the Congress to follow the direction given by the President of the United States.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of our time to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY], our whip.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the committee and I commend the ranking member. He is, indeed, an honorable man and is trying to protect his values.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Wisconsin, the distinguished ranking member of this committee, said he did not know what kind of dictionary we used. I would just challenge him to go look up the word "truth." There is a lot of stuff going on around here that has a hard time meeting that definition in the dictionary.

The President is telling the American people that the Congress has shut down the Government and we have not done our work; that he wants to balance the budget, but because of his values he is having a hard time agreeing with Congress and what bills he is being sent. If the President was so concerned with the balanced budget or the Government shutting down, he should have signed the first balanced budget in 26 years. Twenty-six years. He vetoed it.

The President vetoed the Interior appropriations bill. The Interior Department hires 133,800 employees.

He could have opened up all the parks, all the monuments, by signing this bill.

He vetoes this bill that employs over 293,000 employees, and if we combine the two, that is 426,800 employees that could be going to work right now, being paid, and those offices would be open.

Mr. Speaker, we have done our work. We worked all year long putting these bills together and bringing them to the floor under the auspices of balancing the budget by the year 2002. But the President is like a procrastinating Christmas shopper. He has not thought about balancing the budget or these appropriations bills all year long, and here at the last minute, a week before Christmas, he decides he wants to be involved in the process.

We are at a crucial time in our history. On one hand, the President's values want to spend more money in Washington. On our side, we think we ought to empower the family, stop the credit card, and provide empowerment for the local and State government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Without objection, the previous question is ordered.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS].

The motion was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the veto message of the President to the bill, H.R. 2099, and that I might include tabular and extraneous materials.

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

There was no objection.

FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

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Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Appropriations be discharged from further consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 131), a clean CR to extend the existing CR to January 26, to authorize the 2.4 percent military pay raise to be effective January 1, and to eliminate the 6-month disparity between COLA payment dates for military and civilian retirees in fiscal 1996, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the guidelines consistently issued by successive speakers, as recorded on page 534 of the House Rules Manual,