

year is going to be to reform eligibility standards for health care. We strongly believe that Congress should not cut funding for V.A. outpatient clinics while unobligated balances remain in a program such as AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps pays so-called volunteers to perform services that millions of Americans already do without seeking any financial reward.

In fiscal year 1994, volunteers contributed a total of over 14 million hours of their time over 92,000 regularly scheduled volunteers. Of the 20,000 AmeriCorps volunteers in the field today, over one-fourth are working in either Federal or State agencies. This is not a priority, Mr. Chairman. This is not even volunteerism.

Mr. Chairman, as I said at the onset, I believe the Stump-Solomon amendment, along with the gentleman from Florida [Mr. YOUNG] and the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], presents a simple choice for Federal spending priorities. I believe this choice is crystal clear, and hope all Members will support our veterans over AmeriCorps, and also will support this amendment to final passage.

Current statutory requirements dictate a counterproductive bias in favor of costly inpatient treatment for veterans.

Cutting VA outpatient construction would be a tremendous setback to the Veterans' Affairs Committee's policy initiatives favoring a more rapid shift to outpatient care.

We strongly believe Congress should not cut funding for VA outpatient clinics and medical equipment while unobligated balances remain in a program such as AmeriCorps.

AmeriCorps pays so-called volunteers to perform services that millions of Americans already do without seeking any financial reward.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service [VAVS] is in its 48th year of service to this Nation's hospitalized veterans in VA health care facilities.

In fiscal year 1994, VAVS volunteers contributed a total of over 14 million hours of their time mostly from 92,534 regularly scheduled volunteers.

It is hard to think of a better example for America's youth than this program of true volunteers performing services to our veteran's without the expectation or need for financial reward.

AmeriCorps targets the same population group for its members as the military services, and they both use educational benefits as a major incentive.

In testimony before the House National Security Committee on March 7, 1995, the Marine Corps stated that in fiscal year 1994, the Marines did not achieve their enlistment contracting goals for recruiting.

For the first quarter of fiscal year 1995, all services failed to meet requirements for new enlistment contracts.

DOD's awareness and attitude study is the measurement tool for estimating the propensity of American youth to join the military.

Fiftysix percent felt AmeriCorps and other programs were better ways to get money for college than joining the military.

AmeriCorps is hurting military recruiting, and will be a much larger problem for recruiting if it is allowed to expand.

Rather than promoting American's desire for smaller and more efficient government, AmeriCorps is channeling its participants into Federal and State bureaucracies.

Of the 20,000 AmeriCorps volunteers in the field today, over one-fourth are working in Federal or State agencies.

This is not a priority.

This is not volunteerism.

Mr. Chairman, as I said at the outset, I believe the Stump-Solomon amendment presents a simple choice for Federal spending priorities.

I believe the choice is crystal clear and hope all Members will support our veterans and vote for this amendment.

ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING STUMP-SOLOMON AMENDMENT TO RESTORE VETERANS PROGRAM CUTS WITH AMERICORPS REDUCTIONS

Paralyzed Veterans of America.
AMVETS.
Air Force Association.
Air Force Sergeants Association.
Association of Military Surgeons of the US.

Association of the US Army.
Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Service, Inc.

Chief Warrant & Warrant Officers Association of US Coast Guard.

Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the US.

Fleet Reserve Association.
Jewish Reserve Association.
Marine Corps League.
Marine Corps Reserve Officers Association.
Military Chaplains Association of the USA.
National Association for Uniformed Services.

National Guard Association of the US.
National Military Family Association.
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association.
Naval Reserve Association.
Navy League of the US.
Non Commissioned Officers Association.
Reserve Officers Association.
The Retired Enlisted Association.
The Retired Officers Association.
US Army Warrant Officers Association.
US Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association.

United Armed Forces Association.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. STUMP. I am happy to yield to the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON].

Mr. SOLOMON. I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Chairman, we know what this amendment does. As the former ranking member on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for a number of years, I can say that these outpatient clinics, especially with the aging veteran population we have in America, will save this Government money in the long run.

The reason we are taking the offsets from the National Service Corps is because of something that happened on this floor 2 years ago, when the National Service Corps legislation first came to the floor. I offered an amendment at that time which would not allow the funds for the National Service Corps to come out of the 602(b) allocations of the Department of Veterans Affairs, HUD, and independent agencies. Instead, they would come out of

the education and labor 602(b) allocations, as it should be.

I was assured by the Democrat then-chairman of the Education & Labor Committee that my amendment would be supported in conference, and it would stay there is the legislation. Unfortunately, when that bill went to conference, the chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor did not support my amendment. It was dropped.

What we are doing today, Mr. Chairman, is sort of a get-even. What should have been done 2 years ago is going to be done today. Once this amendment is adopted, it means that any future funding for the National Service Corps whether funding the corps is good or bad, and I think it is bad—veterans programs will not compete with the National Service Corps for Federal funds at a time when the existing appropriated funds for veterans barely cover the health benefits of those citizens.

On top of undermining military recruiting, ruining the true spirit of volunteerism, creating a new and costly bureaucracy, and serving less than one-half of 1 percent of the population, this National Service Program will steal the funds from veterans' hospitals, veterans' families, and veterans' benefits.

That is what I said 2 years ago. That is exactly the problem we are correcting today. That is why Members should support this amendment here today with a unanimous vote of this Congress.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] is recognized for 15 minutes, and controls the time under his unanimous-consent request.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 6 minutes.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. LEWIS of California. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Chairman.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

I want to make a point of order that the gentleman's unanimous consent to have 15 minutes was not acted upon, because I yielded to him 5 of my 15 minutes.

The CHAIRMAN. Subsequently the Chairman put the request for unanimous consent and there were no objections.

The gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] is recognized for 15 minutes, and controls 15 minutes.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida for his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Chairman, does that mean that the 5 minutes that I yielded to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY], we can recapture that for our side?

The CHAIRMAN. That would certainly be the case.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I would like to explain the situation that we are in. We have heard two Republican speakers now talk about how outrageous it is that the contract with veterans is being broken by this legislation.

I want to point out, it is the gentleman's side of the aisle that tried to break the contract. They produced a bill which cut veterans' programs by \$200 million. Democrats did not. Those folks did.

We then tried to correct it in the Committee on Appropriations. We offered an amendment that would have restored a number of programs, including full restoration for the veterans' programs. Every single Republican in the Committee on Appropriations voted against that restoration.

Now they are out here trying to pose for political holy pictures with the veterans, and trying to pose as the great defenders of the American veterans.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OBEY. No, I will not. I would like to finish my statement. I have had a tough time getting this time. You will have your time.

Mr. OBEY. As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, Mr. Chairman, what we now have is Republicans desperately trying to climb back on board in support of veterans' causes. So now what they have first done is to preclude the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] from offering her amendment to restore the veterans' program, and then what they have done instead is to have the gentleman from Florida [Mr. YOUNG] now offer an amendment which restores the funds that the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. MONTGOMERY] wanted to get protected last week. But what you are doing now, you had to look and find a place that was the single most insulting place for the President that you could find—to restore the funds—and that is what you have done, by going after AmeriCorps.

Mr. Chairman, I see a Republican gentleman shaking his head here. It is too bad. I can remember when the President, regardless of party, was regarded as "Our President," not "your President." It is really too bad when I see the lack of respect on the floor of this House for the institution, of the presidency, or other political institutions.

What we have now at stake is: instead of looking for ways to reach accommodation with the President, the Majority party is looking for a way to find the most insulting possible way to restore the funds for veterans, while sticking it to the President of the United States on the program that is

one of his highest priorities. There is a Republican gentleman here nodding his head, saying yes, that is what they are trying to do.

That, Mr. Speaker, is in my view cynical. I regret it, but I would suggest that the Members of this side of the aisle be a good deal bigger in their response to this issue than we are getting from that side of the aisle. I think we ought to accept this amendment, recognizing full well that there are extreme partisan motivations behind it, but also indicating that we will not let those extreme partisan motives get in the way of our trying to stick to the deal which we made with veterans to support these programs.

therefore, I am going to support this amendment, even though I think that it is a lousy choice which they have given us. The gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] would have given us a much better choice because she would have taken it out of the nice fat NASA budget which could well sustain a hit. But no, that involves pork in Members' projects, in Members' districts, again. Therefore, they do not want to take it out of pork. They want to take it out of the White House's political hide.

I think President Clinton is big enough to absorb it. I think we are, too. I would urge that Members support the amendment.

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OBEY. I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Chairman, I have worked for years and years with the gentleman from Arizona [BOB STUMP], who has the best interests of the veterans at heart, an honorable man, and the gentleman from Mississippi [SONNY MONTGOMERY], who has been a pillar for the veterans in this country for many, many years.

I would just like for somebody to tell me, we talked about priorities, why did this program in the first place come under the axe for the rescissions? What was the rationale that was used to cut these programs for the veterans, that forces us into this situation, into a political situation? Why did it not have a higher priority than to be under the Rescission Act to start with?

Could anybody answer that question for me?

Mr. OBEY. The gentleman will recall when this issue was before the committee, that at the time of these cuts it was being admitted fully on the Republican side these cuts were going to finance their tax cuts. What they wanted to do was gouge veterans in order to free up their nice big tax giveaways for corporations and the folks who are making more than \$100,000 a year.

Now the heat has gotten too bad and they want to run for cover a little bit, but they still want to do it in a very partisan way. I think that is regrettable, but I do not think we should let that stand in the way of restoring funding for veterans' programs.

Mr. HEFNER. I thank the gentleman, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BUYER].

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Chairman, I do remember being on the House floor and yielding to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] in the past, and it was with great disappointment to hear that he would consider it rude to request the return.

I would say to the gentleman from Wisconsin, about partisanship, these cuts of \$206 million, I remember he was the former chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. It was that 1993 budget, that tough vote that occurred on this floor that only passed by one vote, that cut \$2.5 billion out of veterans' programs.

Therefore, do not be coming to the House floor and saying "Gee, what is going on right now?" The President's budget that he just sent to us cuts an additional \$3 billion, so President Clinton is personally responsible for \$5.5 billion in cuts in veterans' programs.

So I would say to my colleagues on this side that now all of a sudden want to bash on this side, read the budget. If you read the budget and read the fine print, look on page 128 and come back and talk with me.

Mr. Chairman, let me say, first, why these things need to be restored. They need to be restored because we want to bring the VA into the 1990's. You do that by moving to the outpatient clinics. It is very, very important that we do that.

Why AmeriCorps? I do not know about this political stuff that is going on now. I am speaking as someone who has knowledge with regard to the military.

That knowledge with regard to the military, Mr. Chairman, when those of us that talked about the AmeriCorps and the problems it is going to have upon a volunteer military, if you support a volunteer military, then you want to be very careful about the pool from which we recruit. It impacts upon the propensity of those who are in the pool from the age of 18 to 25, and what impact it has.

If there is another program out there that gives benefits that far exceed that of the Montgomery GI bill for a 2-year enlistee who completes his or her term, they are eligible for \$2,960 per year. Compare that to AmeriCorps, 2-year service, educational benefits, 1 year, they will receive \$4,725 per year plus health care.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute and 30 seconds.

Mr. Chairman, I would simply point out that the gentleman may squawk all he wants about the President's budget. The bill we have before us is H.R. 1158. The name that is on the front page, the sponsor of that bill, is the gentleman from Louisiana, one Mr. LIVINGSTON. Last time I looked, he was not President. He is the Republican

chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

He is the fellow sponsoring the bill making the recommendation to cut veterans by \$200 million.

The subcommittee recommendation, came out of the HUD Subcommittee. The chairman of that subcommittee is the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS]. Last time I looked, he also was not the President. He was the Republican chairman of the subcommittee who recommended \$200 million in veterans' cuts.

Mr. Chairman, let us be straight, here, folks. You can talk all you want about some other vehicle, some other bill. The fact is, you are the ones who are recommending cutting veterans. Now you are running like scared rabbits to change it. I do not blame you. This should not be here in the first place.

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Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], the distinguished ranking member of the HUD subcommittee.

Mr. STOKES. I thank the distinguished ranking member of the full Appropriations Committee for yielding time to me.

Mr. Chairman, let me say that I want to associate my remarks with his remarks in the well a few moments ago. The rule that we are proceeding under today really points out the real hypocrisy of what we now see in terms of this amendment. As was stated by the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY], at the full Committee on Appropriations I offered the amendment which would have restored the full \$206 million to the Veterans account.

Just as he stated, the vote in the full committee was 29-22 defeating my amendment, strictly along party lines. All the Republicans voted against restoring the money to the Veterans account. All of the Democrats voted for it.

Yesterday I appeared before the Committee on Rules. I once again asked for permission to make my amendment in order. The gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] appeared there, also asked the Committee on Rules to make my amendment in order to be able to restore all the funds to the Veterans account. We presented a budget-neutral amendment, and yet that amendment was not made in order.

It is interesting that we come to the floor now and the Republicans now want to restore this funding. The problem is and the hypocrisy of it is shown in the fact that they want to take it from AmeriCorps, which is a program which is part of the national effort to engage Americans in community-based service while in exchange for this service making funding available for educational opportunities for those persons making a substantial commitment to service.

I do not think that our Nation's veterans really want the Congress to deny these young people these opportunities

just because of the shortsightedness that we see here today. In fact, it is interesting that AmeriCorps funding is available to veterans organizations to complement their efforts to serve their Members. This includes a wide range of support services.

While I will vote for the amendment, I just think that it points up the hypocrisy that is occurring on our floor here today.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM].

(Mr. MCCOLLUM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chairman, I rise to support this amendment that restores funding, among other things, for Orlando's VA clinic.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the amendment offered by Mr. STUMP and Mr. YOUNG of Florida to H.R. 1158, fiscal year 1995 emergency appropriations for disaster relief, and rescissions. This amendment calls for a restoration of the \$206.1 million in cuts to the Department of Veterans Affairs. To offset this cost the amendment would rescind an additional \$206.1 million from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The restoration of monies to the Department of Veterans Affairs for medical construction projects and supplies is in the best interest of our American veterans and taxpayers. We cannot afford to neglect these needs. In Florida alone, where the veteran population is presently growing at the net rate of approximately 3,000 per month and where we have the oldest median aged and the most disabled veterans in the nation, the proposed outpatient clinics are sorely needed.

The six proposed outpatient clinics affected by the rescission in H.R. 1158 represent the shift on the part of the VA from expensive, inefficient hospital care to cost-effective, efficient outpatient clinic care. In Orlando, in particular, the savings to taxpayers would be substantial where we could consolidate three separate facilities presently operating and paying annual rents totaling \$405,000.00 per year.

What the Stump amendment calls for is to replace the VA rescissions is an additional cut in the Corporation for National and Community Service by \$206.1 million. The major program in this Corporation is AmeriCorps which is little more than another federal jobs program. Just last year, taxpayers paid over \$24.8 billion on 154 such employment and training programs. The average cost of a single AmeriCorps "member" to the taxpayer is \$30,000.00. Touting a goal of promoting volunteerism in this country, it probably does more to undermine this very worthy aim by paying people to do something millions of people already do without financial reward.

Mr. Chairman, I would ask that serious consideration be given to the priorities we set. Ours should certainly be the American veterans. And this is in the best interests of both our veterans and our taxpayers.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS].

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Stump-Solomon amendment to H.R. 1158.

This rescissions bill goes a long way toward bringing some fiscal responsibility to the Federal Government. The cuts made in H.R. 1158 exemplify the Republicans' commitment to downsize the Government and reduce our national debt. I fully support the efforts to rescind appropriated funds as a step in the right direction.

However, the rescission of moneys allocated to the Department of Veterans Affairs for the health administration and for construction of ambulatory care facilities is a mistake. There are many other programs far more deserving of spending cuts than medical care for America's veterans.

I commend Chairman STUMP and Chairman SOLOMON for their amendment. They understand that the VA provides services absolutely essential to the well-being of our Nation's Veterans. Their amendment recognizes the importance of VA programs and prompts the right question: Which is more important, medical care for veterans or AmeriCorps—a multi-million dollar boondoggle that pays young people for an activity they used to do out of a sense of the common good.

As one who offered an amendment before the Rules Committee that would have done the same thing as Stump-Solomon—with the one difference that it would have offset the VA restoration with funds from the Environmental Protection Agency's construction budget—I lend my support to this worthy amendment. America's veterans deserve at least this much.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOX].

(Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, I am proud to rise in support of the amendment offered by Chairman STUMP and Chairman SOLOMON to restore vital veterans' funding.

The proposed rescission of \$206 million from Veterans Affairs will take away the VA's ability to construct six desperately needed outpatient clinics. These outpatient clinics would improve access to vital, cost-effective care in areas where more than 1.2 million veterans reside. The cuts in VA medical funding would hurt the VA medical population, which, as compared to the general veterans population, is more often single, older, disabled, and form a minority group.

The proposed rescission also cuts \$50 million from medical equipment funding in the VA health care system, which has a backlog of \$800 million in essential medical equipment purchases. The VA is already deferring maintenance and renovation projects to sustain current operations.

It is our duty to provide those who fought to defend our freedom with the services of a grateful Nation. It is a shame that we would even consider delaying much-needed repair, construction, and medical services to our veterans. I call upon my colleagues to support the Stump-Solomon amendment in order to restore essential funding to our veterans health care system. A yes vote on this amendment is

the only way to honor our commitment to those who served their country in time of need.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BATEMAN].

(Mr. BATEMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BATEMAN. I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the amendment, and I strongly support its adoption. My project in Hampton, VA, has been 10 years in its formulation and is desperately needed.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to discuss the proposed rescission of vital construction projects at six veterans medical centers. These projects are extremely important and should have their funding restored by this committee.

One of those projects, an outpatient facility at the VA medical center in Hampton, VA, represents the culmination of 10 years of planning and would replace two buildings constructed around 1910. The Hampton center was established in 1870 as the southern branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers and is one of the oldest VA medical centers in the country. Working in outdated buildings with make-shift accommodations, the VAMC Hampton provided service to more than 171,000 outpatients in 1993. The space available is only half that needed for such a workload. The personnel perform exemplary service given the conditions, however, significant delays often occur because hallways and lobbies serve as waiting areas and work flow is inefficient. In many cases, veterans must visit different buildings sprawled across the center's 85 acres for various services. Often, because of their age those buildings cannot accommodate the handicapped patients who need treatment.

As I stated, the center has been planning a clinical addition for more than 10 years. The final plan, which was approved by the VA central office and funded in the fiscal year 1995 VA/HUD appropriations bill, would replace the two outdated buildings mentioned earlier and provide for a new building able to accommodate the workload the center must handle. The addition would be connected to the main hospital and would house all outpatient functions. This project is essential for the VAMC Hampton to be able to continue to provide high quality medical care to the growing veteran community in the Hampton Roads area.

Mr. Chairman, I am troubled by the fact that the Appropriations Committee eliminated the Hampton clinic and five other badly needed facilities simply because they were included in President Clinton's health care reform plan and are therefore thought to be of dubious merit. That is simply incorrect. These critical projects were taken out of the politics surrounding health care reform as part of a bipartisan effort to ensure that we considered them on their own merits. Let me submit to my colleagues that an overwhelming majority in both chambers specifically authorized each of these outpatient clinics. It makes no sense to revisit that wise decision now.

I recognize that we need to reduce Federal spending, but how can anyone come to this

floor and say to veterans, "I know you fulfilled your promise to the government and people of the United States but we just can't fulfill the promises we have made to you." The veterans of our country deserve better.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS].

Mr. BILIRAKIS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Chairman, today I rise in strong support of the Young-Stump-Solomon amendment to H.R. 1158.

Since coming to Congress, I have repeatedly supported efforts to cut Federal spending and I will continue to do so. But as a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I was extremely disappointed that the Committee on Appropriations rescinded \$206 million from the Department of Veterans Affairs' fiscal year 1995 budget. Over the years, increases in Federal spending on veterans programs have not kept pace with increases for other programs. Consequently, the needs of our veterans exceed the VA's available resources. These rescissions will only magnify the problems currently confronting the VA health care system.

The proposed rescission eliminates construction funds for six VA outpatient clinics—two of which are in my home State of Florida. Florida already lacks the resources needed to adequately care for its veterans population. As a result, I frequently—too frequently—hear from veterans who are not able to receive treatment at VA medical facilities. In addition, every year, thousands of veterans travel south to spend the winter in Florida. These "snowbirds" place an extra burden on an already overtaxed system.

The elimination of the Tampa/Orlando and Gainesville ambulatory care centers means that once again Florida's veterans will be forced to forgo badly needed treatment. How can I tell the veterans of my district—brave men and women who just by serving put their lives on the line in service to their country—that they are not entitled to adequate health care?

In addition to the devastating effect these cuts will have on Florida, I am also concerned because of the long-term impact they will have on the overall VA health care system. Like the private sector, the VA is shifting from more expensive inpatient care towards ambulatory care in outpatient facilities. In fiscal year 1994, the VA had 26.3 million outpatient visits.

This shift to outpatient care would provide better health care to a larger number of veterans for the maximum return on funding dollars. Unfortunately, the six construction projects eliminated in the rescission bill are ambulatory care centers which are intended to improve medical care access to areas where more than 1.2 million veterans reside.

These are exactly the types of projects the Veterans' Affairs Committee has urged the VA to build. The cuts also undermine priority committee legislative initiatives for VA eligibility reform. We must give greater priority to ambulatory care projects to improve service to veterans on a more cost-effective basis.

H.R. 1158 also cuts \$50 million in unobligated funds from medical equipment funding.

The VA health care system already has an \$800 million backlog of essential medical equipment purchases due to chronic underfunding. In fact, VA medical facilities are diverting their medical equipment funding to pay for current operations—sacrificing the future to pay for the present. Additional cuts are unjustified.

The Stump-Solomon amendment offsets the restoration of the VA funding by cutting back a lower priority program—AmeriCorps. Why should we reduce funding for AmeriCorps?

The purpose of that program is to promote national and community service. AmeriCorps participants are not volunteers but federally funded employees. Full-time AmeriCorps volunteers will receive a \$7,400 annual stipend, plus \$9,450 toward payment of higher education debts over 2 years.

Over one-quarter of the 20,000 AmeriCorps personnel in the field today work directly for Federal or State bureaucracies. Another 2,934 volunteers are assigned to State government agencies and State-funded agencies.

There are already at least 23 existing volunteer programs throughout six Federal agencies at a cost to taxpayers of \$1.3 billion. Currently \$575 million is appropriated for AmeriCorps and the program plans to spend another \$8 billion over a 5-year period. During a time in our Nation's history when Congress is even contemplating cuts in veterans programs, AmeriCorps is a costly and unnecessary expense.

The women and men who answered the call to duty deserve more than empty gestures and rhetoric about their service. Their life threatening sacrifices must be rewarded at a level beyond whatever else this Congress determines to be valuable. Whatever else, our veterans should come first. We cannot forget those who sacrificed for our Nation's security.

I urge my colleagues to vote for the Stump-Solomon amendment.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARR).

Mr. BARR asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARR. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this amendment in support of our veterans.

Mr. Chairman, it is an honor to stand here today and support this vital amendment. After receiving the 1995 rescissions list I was deeply troubled to find that over \$206 million was targeted for cuts from the Veterans Administration budget. Mr. Chairman, this rescissions package is about priorities, and there are few more important than our veterans who have served our country so honorably.

It is the obligation of Congress to protect the rights and services of our veterans. I personally have the greatest respect for those who sacrificed so much to insure America's freedom. This amendment is an important step because cutting \$156 million in funding for six new V.A. outpatient clinic projects and \$50 million from V.A. medical equipment funding is not in the best interests of America's veterans or taxpayers.

It is shameful for the current White House administration to send a budget to the Congress with \$8 billion in AmeriCorps spending and nothing to address Veteran's eligibility requirements. The administration's budget fails

to address the dire situation our VA hospitals are currently facing.

Mr. Chairman, AmeriCorps is nothing more than another Federal make-work program. Last year, taxpayers forked over \$24.8 billion on 154 different employment and training programs. We do not need yet another Federal jobs program. With 20,000 participants in 350 projects around the Country, AmeriCorps is larger after just 5 months than the Peace Corps at its height.

This is a critical time for veteran's services. The V.A. is doing its part to provide more efficient and cost-effective service through shifting from more expensive inpatient care toward ambulatory care in outpatient facilities. V.A. cuts also undermine priority Committee legislative initiatives for V.A. eligibility reform.

Again Mr. Chairman, this rescissions package is about priorities, and when the decision is between the veterans of this nation and a pet pork project, the decision is easy. Our veterans must prevail and these funds must be restored.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO].

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Chairman, I think it is critical that we restore funding for much needed VA outpatient clinics so that I will vote for this outrageous amendment. But I find it unconscionable that this amendment off-sets this restored funding by making further cuts to the already hard-hit national service program. It is appalling that this amendment forces us to choose between serving our veterans and providing college education for our children and needed services to our communities and a program, national service, that is working all over this United States. This is nothing more than a pointed and a personal attack on the President of the United States, and I want to say to the American public that the pawns in this game are the 20,000 young people who will be sent home in the middle of their year of service.

The offset in my amendment would have made a cut of just 1.4 percent in the NASA budget rather than this 72 percent cut in the national service budget. But thanks to the Republican gag rule, I could not offer my amendment on the floor of this House, the people's House, so that we have been gagged at every step of the way, and that is wrong.

Let me tell my Republican colleagues that the veterans are not likely to forget that you cut \$206 million from their projects, and neither will the young people of this country or their parents forget what you have done to their children today.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume to respond to the gentleman.

It is very important for the House to understand where we come from regarding this specific proposal for re-funding the veterans programs that were formerly set for some rescission. The fact is that AmeriCorps is a program that began in 1994. At that point

in time, the President funded the proposal at \$365 million. The following appropriations year, before the young people involved were even in place, it was raised by \$210 million, more than a 50 percent increase.

The President would have us in the 1996 year take the program up to \$800 million. Shortly it would be another billion-dollar program. During all of this time, the program has not been evaluated indepth. There is little question that it is time we begin to stop this process of creating a brand new idea, a whim of somebody's, putting it in place and watching it go to billions and billions of dollars over the years.

There is no doubt at all as we review this program it may deserve some funding, but indeed it deserves careful review before we go down this pathway.

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LEWIS of California. I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. HEFNER. I am all for this amendment for the veteran. I asked the question while ago, and the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] answered it for me. I wanted you to answer it. Why was the program cut in priorities? Why was it cut to start with?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Reclaiming my time, if the gentleman had been on the floor earlier, we did explain that in some depth.

Mr. HEFNER. Would the gentleman explain it again?

Mr. LEWIS of California. I will be glad to respond. The fact is that our veterans programs involve approximately \$38 billion of spending across the country. Many of us are concerned that within those medical services, many of our veterans are disserved. They receive inefficient service, they stand in lines, they are not being treated in those programs the way they should. The only way to get above that is to shake the programs at their foundation. So all we did out of a \$38 billion program was to suggest a cut of \$200 million so that we could take it to conference to discuss these programs further. It was clearly the intent of the committee to review those programs in depth. It is about time the new minority recognized that these programs have not worked nearly as well as they should in the past. And that was the reason, to take the programs to conference and evaluate how we can do the job better.

Mr. HEFNER. Good story, JERRY. Stick with it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MICA].

Mr. MICA. Mr. Chairman, something is really wrong when we as a Congress have provided better benefits to illegal immigrants than we have to people who have served this country, people who have fought and sacrificed for this country. Something is wrong when benefits for a volunteer program are more important than medical assistance for our veterans. We have cut our

programs across this country and we need to direct our priorities at this time to those veterans who have served this country. I speak in strong support of this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, something is wrong when we as a Congress have provided better benefits to illegal immigrants than to people who have served, fought and sacrificed for this country. Something is wrong when benefits for a volunteer program are more important than medical assistance for our veterans.

Today, we propose a cut in a volunteer program that has pay and perks. Today, we have tough choices. Today, in central Florida we have over 150,000 veteran patient visits to a veterans outpatient clinic that was designed for 50,000.

Now the VA Administrator is threatening to abandon plans to continue the conversion of our former Naval Training Center Hospital to a veterans outpatient clinic. Now we have a choice: benefits to our veterans or benefits to volunteers.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, make tough choices today and support our veterans and their well-deserved medical services.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY].

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to point out that if we are talking about how these projects actually get evaluated, if we are talking about real pork that is in these bills, let's talk about where this \$206 million is getting spent. The VA requested 11 projects for \$206 million. Only five got funded. Somehow three projects that were not even included on the list got put in in the conference.

The first one in the district of the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. STUMP] came in, it was not ranked, the VA when they did the arithmetic said it was worth \$25 million, and \$41 million got put in the conference committee.

The second one in Tennessee was not even listed as one of 67 projects, got put in in the conference committee in the district of a high-ranking member of the Republican Party.

The third in Kansas, in Mr. DOLE's State, was ranked No. 18 and mysteriously moved up to No. 3.

You talk about pork. The pork is in this bill.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume in responding one more time to one of my colleagues who to say the least was somewhat outrageous in his excess. The fact is that the rescission that was proposed initially essentially said that the House-passed appropriations bill from last year was the bill we wanted to support. The rescissions involved add-ons on the Senate side. If there was pork involved, perhaps it was Senate pork. But indeed we decided to eliminate the Senate adds so that we could have a healthy discussion in conference with the Senate. There is no doubt that as we go forward with this

\$38 billion in spending, if we will shake up departments like HUD, like Veterans, there is little question that we can improve the way we deliver these services to Americans across the country.

If the gentleman from Massachusetts is satisfied with the way many veterans are served by standing in lines half the day, then the gentleman is welcome to that satisfaction. It is my view that it is time we shake these departments in a fashion that causes them to pay attention to those we want to serve as human beings, not just as people with numbers on their forehead.

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

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will rise informally in order that the House may receive a message from the President.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THOMAS) assumed the chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will receive a message.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Edwin Thomas, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE AND RESCISSIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1995

The Committee resumed its sitting.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER].

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the amendment, but opposed to the choices.

Greek history gives us the term pyrrhic victory, meaning that one army found against another and won but was so weakened by the time that it won that it could not go on to fight other battles.

This choice pitting veterans programs which we need to fund, and I will support, and I hope we accept this amendment, pitted against AmeriCorps, which does not have pork, which is at the grassroots, which Speaker GINGRICH signed a letter supporting AmeriCorps, a program run out of the University of Notre Dame last year.

We should not be pitting these programs against each other. Why not cut the CIA's \$28 billion budget \$206 million? Why not section 936 of the Tax Code? Better choices should be in order.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER].

Mr. FILNER. I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to substitute for the amendment the restoring of the full \$206 million for the Veterans budget without any offsetting cut.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair has no amendment in writing.

Mr. FILNER. Do you want to force us to choose between—

Mr. SOLOMON. Regular order, Mr. Speaker. Let's get some order around here.

Mr. FILNER. I have the time.

The gentleman from California [Mr. CUNNINGHAM] wants to force us to choose through his objection between the veterans and service opportunities for our young people.

□ 1630

I think this is hypocrisy.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's unanimous-consent request was out of order. The gentleman is recognized for debate only.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, there is obviously a new game being played in Washington. It is called bait and switch. The rules are simple. Propose massive and irresponsible budget cuts and then 2 weeks later stand up in front of the TV cameras and claim you are fighting to restore the very cuts you have initiated.

I am tired of this hypocrisy, Mr. Chairman. We should not be having choices between our veterans and our opportunities for our young people.

Regular order in this Nation is not being followed by this budget.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. SOLOMON. I have a parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Chairman, if Members are going to be yielded 45 seconds at a time, are they not supposed to stick to the 45 seconds and not carry it to a minute and one-half?

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. SOLOMON. Then let us abide by the rules of the House.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield three-quarters of a minute to the gentleman from Puerto Rico [Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ].

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Chairman, I move to restore the rescission of \$206 million for veterans affairs, but I question the wisdom of trying to take the money away from a program that is a yearly program, an expenditure program. When we take \$206 million out of AmeriCorps we are actually taking \$1 billion away in 5 years.

I think the reasonable proposal was made here by the gentlewoman from Connecticut who proposed that capital expenditure programs be substituted by another capital expenditure program in NASA for projects that have not even been authorized.

I ask the leadership of the other side of the aisle to reconsider on their conditions. It is unfair to take a capital expenditures program and offset it with expenditures in the regular pro-

gram because it is 5 times in 5 years the savings that you take.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. MONTGOMERY].

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, I say to my colleagues whether they like it or not this is a raid on veterans programs. And what concerns me is later on the budget will be coming out; how much are they going to cut the veterans programs? How much is the appropriations going to come back and cut veterans programs gain?

I reluctantly will support the amendment, but I do not think this is the right way to do it. I asked for a clear amendment earlier and I did not get it, so I thank the gentleman for giving me this time.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] has 1 minute remaining and the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] has 1 minute remaining.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself my remaining time, and I would simply say this in closing: I urge Members to vote for this amendment. But I would also urge Members to recognize the cynical situation that is presented to us by the majority party. The fact is that it is their party who proposed the \$200 million cut in veterans funding in the first place. They have now chosen to prevent us from restoring that money by going to a more benign source such as the bloated NASA budget. Instead they want to go after the domestic volunteer program.

It is a lousy choice but I think the record is clear that the Democratic Party intends to keep its commitment to veterans no matter what the political machinations on the other side of the aisle.

I urge support for the amendment, misguided though half of it is.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] has expired.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield the final 45 seconds to the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BUYER].

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, the last comment of the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] was probably the most correct one. This is an issue of policy. Do not allow politics to overtake policy and try to think of other reasons. I am one who gave the suggestion that this should be taken out of AmeriCorps.

Listen to some of the testimony before the Readiness and Personnel Subcommittees of the House National Security Committee.

The Marine Corp Sergeant Major testified that for the first time since 1980 the Marine Corp missed its fiscal year 1994 recruiting goals.

If we look at DOD's fall 1994 Youth Attitudes and Awareness Survey, after hearing about AmeriCorps, 47 percent