

years to the Federal Government in Washington. It is wrong, and it is immoral, and it is demagogic to suggest that we can help the children of America by raising their taxes and increasing a new layer of bureaucracy in Washington.

AMERICA NEEDS CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Mr. MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, a few minutes ago I objected to agreeing to taking up the Suspension Calendar for tomorrow. The reason I did so is not because I object to the bills that were on the Suspension Calendar; I did so because I object to business as usual in this House, especially when business as usual means that week after week this House comes back to little or no business that is important to the American public.

We come back not for the budget, we come back not for children's health care, and most importantly, we come back not to deal with campaign finance reform. Yet every day the American public have new revelations given to them about the White House, about Congress, about the Senate, about the House of Representatives, about people with enough money getting access that no other American can possibly conceive of having, with powerful Members of the House and powerful Members of the Senate offering access for money, offering the ability to sit on inside councils for money, offering the ability to talk to Cabinet officials for money. It has got to stop.

Today we see in The New York Times an overwhelming majority of Americans want the corrosive, corrupting campaign finance system changed, but they do not believe that Congress is serious about it. We are going to continue to object to this kind of do-nothing agenda and an agenda that fails to respond to the needs of the public on campaign finance reform.

PASS "SAFE" FOR A SAFER AMERICA

(Mr. ACKERMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, it seems inconceivable that convicted felons, including those who have committed violent crimes using guns, could get out of prison and could, under the law, buy guns yet again. I raise the question, who is being protected by this law, convicted felons, or law abiding citizens?

Each year since fiscal year 1993 we in Congress have stopped funding this guns for convicted felons program. However, this is insufficient, because as the law is still on the books, even

unfunded, felons can go to court and regain their firearm privileges.

To stop this from happening, we should eliminate the guns for convicted felons program outright.

Today, along with the gentlewoman from Maryland [Mrs. MORELLA] and the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MCCARTHY], I am introducing the Stop Arming Felons Act, or the SAFE Act. The Ackerman-Morella-McCarthy legislation will eliminate guns for convicted felons altogether. It sends a clear message that we should make it harder, not easier, for criminals to have access to weapons.

The Stop Arming Felons Act is bipartisan and has 32 original cosponsors, and I urge all of my colleagues to act in the interest of this country and let us stop arming convicted felons.

CORRECTIONS CALENDAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOODLATTE). This is the day for the call of the Corrections Calendar.

The Clerk will call the bill on the Corrections Calendar.

CORRECTION TO NURSE AIDE TRAINING

The Clerk called the bill (H.R. 968) to amend title XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to permit a waiver of the prohibition of offering nurse aide training and competency evaluation programs in certain nursing facilities.

The Clerk read the bill, as follows:

H.R. 968

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

SECTION 1. PERMITTING WAIVER OF PROHIBITION OF OFFERING NURSE AIDE TRAINING AND COMPETENCY EVALUATION PROGRAMS IN CERTAIN FACILITIES

Section 1819(f)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-3(f)(2)) and section 1919(f)(2) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396r(f)(2)) are each amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B)(iii), by inserting "subject to subparagraph (C)," after "(iii)"; and

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

"(C) WAIVER AUTHORIZED.—Clause (iii) of subparagraph (B) shall not apply to a program offered in (but not by) a nursing facility in a State if the State—

"(i) determines that there is no other such program offered within a reasonable distance of the facility,

"(ii) assures, through an oversight effort, that an adequate environment exists for operating the program in the facility, and

"(iii) provides notice of such determination and assurances to the State long-term care ombudsman."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read for amendment.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendments recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means.

The Clerk read as follows:

Committee amendments, page 2, line 12, strike "(iii)" and insert "(iii)(I)."

Page 2, line 14, insert "(or skilled nursing facility for purposes of title XVIII)" after "nursing facility."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CAMP] and the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. KLECZKA] will each control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CAMP].

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 968, a bill introduced by the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. EHRlich]. The gentleman's legislation would amend the Social Security Act to permit a waiver of the prohibition of offering nurse aide training and competency evaluation programs in certain facilities.

As chairman of the Speaker's Advisory Group, it was my pleasure to work with Congressman EHRLICH and the minority ranking member, the gentleman from California, Mr. WAXMAN, and the rest of the minority members and majority members of the committee to expedite consideration of this Corrections Day legislation.

This bill was favorably reviewed by the Speaker's Advisory Group and is fully supported by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. The advisory group was able to work with the Speaker and the committees of jurisdiction to bring this bill to the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is particularly well suited to be considered here under the Corrections Day procedure as we are doing today. Despite the good intentions of the nurse aide training legislation of the 1980's, certain aspects have created significant problems with its implementation.

The 1987 reconciliation bill instituted training standards for nurse aids working in long-term care facilities. Under existing law, nursing facilities which are subject to an extended survey are prohibited from offering facility-based nurse aide training and competency evaluation for a period of up to 2 years.

As an unintended consequence, a nursing home that is subject to a review is not allowed to have a nurse aide training program at their facility, even if the care provided by the nurse aide is unrelated to the review itself.

This bill would waive the prohibition on nurse aide training programs if the State determines there is no other training program within a reasonable distance of the facility. The State must also assure that an adequate environment exists for operating a program.

Nurse aide training programs are vital to health care delivery. Our current law, however, is particularly burdensome in rural areas which face difficulties recruiting nurse aids. It does not make sense that these very nurse aide training programs are improving patient care as rural providers find it increasingly difficult to recruit nurse aids.

This legislation is technical in nature, has strong bipartisan support, and was scored by the Congressional Budget Office as having no budgetary impact.

Mr. Speaker, this is a straightforward, bipartisan bill that corrects an inefficient and burdensome law. This targeted bill will lead to improved health care in rural areas like the Fourth District of Michigan which I represent. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 968.

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

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, first, let me say that the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CAMP] has adequately explained the bill. This is a correction bill.

Back in 1987, we passed the legislation on nurse aide training. I think in this one area we went too far. This bill provides States with the flexibility to continue needed nursing aide training, even though the home itself might be under some type of a review. I would ask all of my colleagues to join the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CAMP] and myself in supporting this needed legislation.

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

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. BURR].

Mr. BURR. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Committee on Commerce which also has jurisdiction on this bill and as a cosponsor of the bill, I am pleased to speak in support of this very important legislation.

H.R. 968 would permit the continuation of nurse aide training and the competency evaluation programs in certain nursing facilities. Under existing Federal law, a nursing facility may lose its ability to offer facility-based nurse aide training and competency evaluations for reasons that are unrelated to the quality of the program itself.

This unintended consequence of the current law arises when a facility has unrelated operational deficiencies which are being corrected by the facility. As a result, nursing facilities, particularly those in rural communities, are prevented from conducting the training and evaluation that is an integral part in providing quality nursing care and preventing staff shortages.

□ 1430

This legislation would revise the current law. The bill would permit the continuation of nurse aide training and competency evaluation programs in affected facilities under certain circumstances. In order for a facility to continue its training and evaluation programs, the State would have to, one, make a determination that no similar program is in existence within a reasonable distance of the facility; two, conduct oversight activities to ensure that an adequate environment ex-

ists for operating the program in the facility; and three, provide notice of such determination to the State long-term-care ombudsman.

This noncontroversial measure was recently reported by the Committee on Commerce on March 12 by voice vote. In addition, the Committee on Ways and Means reported the legislation by voice vote on March 13. I am pleased to say that the bill also has the support of the administration and will have no budgetary impact on the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation sends an important message to the American people that Congress is listening, listening to their concerns about burdensome Federal regulations and taking action to address their concerns. H.R. 968 achieves this objective by eliminating unnecessary and burdensome regulations, a goal that Members on both sides of the aisle have endorsed.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important piece of legislation. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 968.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BROWN].

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 968. The Committee on Commerce has acted on this bill twice, first in September 1996, and then in March 1997. This legislation is also supported by the administration and was proposed by the President and Vice President through the reinventing government initiative in 1995.

Nurse aide training programs play an important role, not only by preparing students to care for patients, but also by helping to meet the patient's needs in staffing health care facilities. The failure to make these changes for training programs could have dire consequences in terms of a nursing facility's ability to provide quality care for its patients. This bill will allow certain facilities to continue nurse aide training programs, particularly in rural and other areas which lack training alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, I recommend we pass this bill today.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. EHRLICH].

Mr. EHRLICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise as chief sponsor of the bill. I want to thank a number of people for their support and cooperation; the gentleman from California [Mr. WAXMAN] has been wonderful to work with in respect to this piece of legislation. I also congratulate the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CAMP], the chairman of the corrections day committee, a very important committee. I am sure we will be bringing a lot of pieces of legislation to the floor in the 105th Congress, and I thank my friend and colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. BURR] from the Committee on Commerce.

Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. H.R. 968 prevents the termination of certain

training programs where the reason for the termination is an operational deficiency unrelated to the quality of the program, and where no alternative training program exists within a reasonable distance.

In this regard it is vitally important for rural America that the nursing home provisions of the Reconciliation Act of 1987 instituted training standards for long-term facility nurse aides, requiring a minimum of 75 hours of training for these aides. These requirements, among others, must be met in order for nursing facilities to be eligible for payment by Medicare and Medicaid.

However, these current Federal nursing facility laws often deprive nursing facilities of the ability to provide in-house training. The law allows approval of these training programs to be denied due to problems in the facility unrelated to the training program, and in this regard makes no sense.

Once a program is terminated, the facility becomes ineligible as a training site for 2 years, even after the facility has corrected its alleged deficiencies. The current restriction makes it difficult to recruit nurse aides, especially in rural and other areas which lack training alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, many nursing homes rely on their own nurse aide training programs to certify nurse aides with basic nursing skills and personal care skills. Because long-term care providers are funded primarily by Medicare and Medicaid, they are at an economic disadvantage in competing for labor. On-site training programs serve as an excellent recruitment tool by providing nursing career opportunities for entry level personnel.

Finally, the presence of these nurse aides to a nursing home staff ensures that the residents receive high-quality personal care and also allows the nursing staff to focus more on the delivery of quality medical care. To compromise this ability to provide the highest level of care possible brings about the very result Congress intended to avoid: a threat to the quality of long-term care provided to our Nation's senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I thank everyone associated with this bill.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOODLATTE). Pursuant to the rule, the previous question is ordered on the amendments recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means and on the bill.

The question is on the committee amendments.

The committee amendments were agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and (three-fifths having voted in favor thereof) the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 968, the bill just passed.

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

There was no objection.

SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM the PRESIDENT

Sundry messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 4 of rule XV.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken after debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules, but not before 5 p.m. today.

RURAL MULTIFAMILY RENTAL HOUSING LOAN GUARANTEE EXTENSION ACT OF 1997

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 28) to amend the Housing Act of 1949 to extend the loan guarantee program for multifamily rental housing in rural areas.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 28

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 "Rural Multifamily Rental Housing Loan Guarantee Extensions Act of 1997".

SEC. 2. 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 new paragraph:

"(2) ANNUAL LIMITATION ON AMOUNT OF LOAN GUARANTEE.—In each fiscal year, the Secretary may enter into commitments to guar-

antee 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 new subsection:

"(t) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated for each fiscal year 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.";

(3) by striking subsection (u).

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, today I rise in support of H.R. 28, the Rural Multifamily Rental Housing Loan Guarantee Extension Act of 1997, a mouthful, but a very important program which was introduced by the gentleman from Nebraska, Mr. DOUG BEREUTER. I want to say at the outset, without the leadership of DOUG BEREUTER we would likely not be here today. This was largely his concept, a concept that he has fought hard for, and it also is a reflection of the fact that poverty does not end at the boundaries of our urban areas or even our suburban areas; that in fact poverty and substandard housing is also very much a rural issue.

I also want to thank the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. LEACH], who happens to be with us also here today, and the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY], for their extraordinary help and assistance to bring this bill to where we are right now.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 28 will permanently authorize a rural housing multifamily program that leverages private sector dollars with Federal loan guarantees in order to provide low-income housing in rural areas in an efficient manner. The Rural Loan Guaranty Program originated in the 103d Congress where the House passed fiscal year 1995 authorization language and appropriated \$1 million in budget authority. Although the authorization bill was not enacted, the Agriculture Appropriations Act for fiscal year 1995 left the program with appropriations or budget authority without a program authorization.

During the last Congress, Mr. Speaker, Congress passed and the President signed the Housing Opportunity Program Act of 1996 which provided the fiscal year 1996 authorization of appropriations. For this year we are in a similar quandary, and in fiscal year 1997 appropriations should result in \$1.2 million in budget authority, leveraging approximately \$20 million in loan guarantees, with no authorization for this year unless this bill moves.

During the first year of this program, there was significant industry and public enthusiasm and support for the concept of guaranteed rental housing loans. For example, during the 30-day fiscal year 1996 open application season, there were 49 applications from 24 different States requesting a total of approximately \$62.5 million in guarantees to help fund about \$85 million in multifamily housing development. The need is out there, Mr. Speaker.

The Rural Housing Service approved 9 requests for about \$14 million in guarantees on almost \$20 million of new construction, resulting in 370 new apartment units.

Furthermore, as compared to the rural multifamily direct loan program where the Government subsidy costs are extraordinarily higher, we are getting good value. This indirect program is only a fraction of the cost. The variety of developments indicates that the program has widespread applicability and that it is flexible enough to meet the differing financing needs of eligible private and private-sector lenders and low-income housing providers.

This program is an example of the type of partnership that should exist between the Federal Government and the private sector, and is necessary to provide and expand low-income housing.

Finally, again, I want to congratulate and commend my colleague, the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER] for his tireless work on this issue to ensure an effective tool and an integral part of our assisted housing mission for rural Americans.

I urge my colleagues to enthusiastically support passage of H.R. 28.

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, first of all, I want to thank my good friend and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, as well as the chairman of the full committee, and I think the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER] has been working on this issue since I first got on the committee over 10 years ago, trying to reform some of the concerns about rural housing and how the Government provides the subsidies in this country.

While I rise today in support of H.R. 28, the Rural Multifamily Rental Housing Loan Guarantee Extension Act of 1997, and I want to extend my thanks to my colleagues for their efforts to deal with this issue, I do want to explain to the Members of the House just how critical the issue of providing housing programs for rural America are.

We have a situation today in this country where we have tended to focus on the issue of urban poverty, but anyone who has taken the time to visit