

Sisisky	Stump	Walsh
Skeen	Sununu	Wamp
Skelton	Talent	Watkins
Smith (MI)	Tanner	Watts (OK)
Smith (NJ)	Tauzin	Weldon (FL)
Smith (OR)	Taylor (MS)	Weldon (PA)
Smith (TX)	Taylor (NC)	Weller
Smith, Linda	Thomas	White
Snowbarger	Thompson	Whitfield
Solomon	Thornberry	Wickler
Souder	Thune	Wolf
Spence	Tiahrt	Young (FL)
Stearns	Traficant	
Stenholm	Upton	

NAYS—192

Abercrombie	Gonzalez	Nadler
Ackerman	Green	Neal
Allen	Gutierrez	Oberstar
Andrews	Hall (OH)	Obey
Baesler	Harman	Olver
Baldacci	Hastings (FL)	Owens
Barrett (WI)	Hefner	Pallone
Becerra	Hinchev	Pascarell
Bentsen	Hinojosa	Pastor
Berman	Hooley	Paul
Berry	Jackson (IL)	Payne
Bishop	Jackson-Lee	Pelosi
Blagojevich	(TX)	Peterson (MN)
Blumenauer	Jefferson	Pickett
Bonior	John	Pomeroy
Borski	Johnson (CT)	Poshard
Boswell	Johnson (WI)	Price (NC)
Boucher	Johnson, E. B.	Quinn
Boyd	Kanjorski	Ramstad
Brown (CA)	Kaptur	Rangel
Brown (OH)	Kennedy (MA)	Rivers
Capps	Kennedy (RI)	Rodriguez
Cardin	Kennelly	Roemer
Carson	Kildee	Rothman
Castle	Kilpatrick	Roybal-Allard
Clay	Kind (WI)	Royce
Clayton	Klecicka	Rush
Condit	Klug	Sabo
Conyers	Kucinich	Sanchez
Costello	LaFalce	Sanders
Coyne	Lampson	Sandlin
Cramer	Lantos	Sawyer
Cummings	LaTourette	Schumer
Danner	Lazio	Scott
Davis (FL)	Leach	Sensenbrenner
Davis (IL)	Levin	Serrano
DeFazio	Lewis (GA)	Skaggs
DeGette	Lofgren	Slaughter
Delahunt	Lowe	Smith, Adam
DeLauro	Luther	Snyder
Dellums	Maloney (CT)	Spratt
Dingell	Maloney (NY)	Stabenow
Dixon	Manton	Stark
Doggett	Martinez	Stokes
Dooley	Matsui	Strickland
Edwards	McCarthy (MO)	Stupak
Engel	McCarthy (NY)	Tauscher
Eshoo	McCollum	Thurman
Etheridge	McDermott	Tierney
Evans	McGovern	Torres
Farr	McHale	Towns
Fattah	McHugh	Turner
Fawell	McIntosh	Velazquez
Fazio	McKinney	Vento
Filner	McNulty	Visclosky
Flake	Meehan	Waters
Foglietta	Meek	Watt (NC)
Foley	Menendez	Waxman
Ford	Millender-	Wexler
Frank (MA)	McDonald	Weygand
Frost	Miller (CA)	Wise
Furse	Minge	Woolsey
Ganske	Mink	Wynn
Gejdenson	Moakley	Yates
Gephardt	Morella	

NOT VOTING—5

Brown (FL)	Reyes	Young (AK)
Markey	Schiff	

□ 2051

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed several votes this evening. I ask unanimous consent that my statement be inserted in the RECORD imme-

diately after the recorded votes. If I had been here, I would have voted Yes on rollcall 267; Yes on rollcall 268; Yes on rollcall 269; No on rollcall 270; Yes on rollcall 271; No on rollcall 272; No on rollcall 273; Yes on rollcall 274; and No on rollcall 275.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO MAKE CORRECTIONS IN EN-GROSSMENT OF H.R. 2107, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that in the engrossment of the bill, H.R. 2107, the Clerk be authorized to correct section numbers, punctuation, and cross references and to make such other technical and conforming changes as may be necessary to reflect the actions of the House in amending the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today it adjourn to meet at 11 a.m. on tomorrow.

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

There was no objection.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2159, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

Mr. DIAZ-BALART, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-184) on the resolution (H. Res. 185) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2159) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1210

Mr. FATTAH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove my name as a cosponsor to H.R. 1210.

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

There was no objection.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 972

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 972.

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

There was no objection.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 184 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2158.

□ 2055

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2158) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, with Mr. COMBEST in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, all time for general debate had expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

Amendments printed in House Report 105-180 may be offered only by a Member designated in the report and only at the appropriate point in the reading of the bill, are considered read, are not subject to amendment and are not subject to a demand for division of the question.

During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chair may accord priority in recognition to a Member offering an amendment that he has printed in the designated place in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Those amendments will be considered read.

The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment and may reduce to not less than 5 minutes the time for voting by electronic device on any postponed question that immediately follows another vote by electronic device without intervening business, provided that the time for voting by electronic device on the first in any series of questions shall not be less than 15 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word for purposes of making an announcement.

Mr. Chairman, before we get into reading the bill for amendments, I would like to make this announcement about how we have agreed to proceed for the balance of the evening.

First, there will be no more recorded votes this evening. Any votes ordered will be rolled until tomorrow.

We will be reading the bill for amendments. We plan to read for amendments and debate all amendments

through title II at the maximum. We will not read into title III even if we finish the first two titles quickly.

So, any Member with an amendment that will be offered in the first two titles needs to be here tonight. However, we will stop considering amendments no later than 10:30 p.m. even if we are not through with title II.

To summarize, there will be no more recorded votes tonight, and we will consider amendments through title II or 10:30 p.m., whichever occurs earlier.

□ 2100

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will read. The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2158

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following sums are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, namely:

TITLE I

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

COMPENSATION AND PENSIONS

(INCLUDING TRANSFERS OF FUNDS)

For the payment of compensation benefits to or on behalf of veterans and a pilot program for disability examinations as authorized by law (38 U.S.C. 107, chapters 11, 13, 18, 51, 53, 55, and 61); pension benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by law (38 U.S.C. chapters 15, 51, 53, 55, and 61; 92 Stat. 2508); and burial benefits, emergency and other officers' retirement pay, adjusted-service credits and certificates, payment of premiums due on commercial life insurance policies guaranteed under the provisions of Article IV of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940, as amended, and for other benefits as authorized by law (38 U.S.C. 107, 1312, 1977, and 2106, Chapters 23, 51, 53, 55, and 61; 50 U.S.C. App. 540-548; 43 Stat. 122, 123; 45 Stat. 735; 76 Stat. 1198); \$19,932,997,000 to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That not to exceed \$26,380,000 of the amount appropriated shall be reimbursed to "General operating expenses" and "Medical care" for necessary expenses in implementing those provisions authorized in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990, and in the Veterans' Benefits act of 1992 (38 U.S.C. chapters 51, 53, and 55), the funding source for which is specifically provided as the "Compensation and pensions" appropriations: *Provided further*, That such sums as may be earned on an actual qualifying patient basis, shall be reimbursed to "Medical facilities revolving fund" to augment the funding of individual medical facilities for nursing home care provided to pensioners as authorized by the Veterans' Benefits Act of 1992 (38 U.S.C. chapter 55).

READJUSTMENT BENEFITS

For the payment of readjustment and rehabilitation benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by 38 U.S.C. chapters 21, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 39, 51, 53, 55, and 61, \$1,366,000,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That funds shall be available to pay any court order, court award or any compromise settlement arising from litigation involving the vocational training program authorized by section 18 of Public Law 98-77, amended.

VETERANS INSURANCE AND INDEMNITIES

For military and naval insurance, national service life insurance, servicemen's indem-

nities, service-disabled veterans insurance, and veterans mortgage life insurance as authorized by 38 U.S.C. chapter 19; 70 Stat. 887; 72 Stat. 487, \$51,360,000, to remain available until expended.

VETERANS HOUSING BENEFIT PROGRAM FUND
PROGRAM ACCOUNT

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For the cost of indirect and guaranteed loans, such sums as may be necessary to carry out the program, as authorized by 38 U.S.C. chapter 37, as amended: *Provided*, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended: *Provided further*, That during fiscal year 1998, within the resources available, not to exceed \$300,000 in gross obligations for direct loans are authorized for specially adapted housing loans.

In addition, for administrative expenses to carry out the direct and guaranteed loan programs, \$160,437,000, which may be transferred to and merged with the appropriation for "General operating expenses".

EDUCATION LOAN FUND PROGRAM ACCOUNT

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For the cost of direct loans, \$1,000, as authorized by 238 U.S.C. 3698, as amended: *Provided*, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended: *Provided further*, That these funds are available to subsidize gross obligations for the principal amount of direct loans not to exceed \$3,000.

In addition, for administrative expenses necessary to carry out the direct loan program, \$200,000; which may be transferred to and merged with the appropriation for "General operating expenses".

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION LOANS PROGRAM
ACCOUNT

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For the cost of direct loans, \$44,000, as authorized by 38 U.S.C. chapter 31, as amended: *Provided*, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended: *Provided further*, That these funds are available to subsidize gross obligations for the principal amount of direct loans not to exceed \$2,278,000.

In addition, for administrative expenses necessary to carry out the direct loan program, \$388,000, which may be transferred to and merged with the appropriation for "General operating expenses".

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN HOUSING LOAN
PROGRAM ACCOUNT

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For administrative expenses to carry out the direct loan program authorized by 38 U.S.C. chapter 37, subchapter V, as amended, \$515,000, which may be transferred to and merged with the appropriation for "General operating expenses".

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
MEDICAL CARE

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary expenses for the maintenance and operation of hospitals, nursing homes, and domiciliary facilities; for furnishing, as authorized by law, inpatient and outpatient care and treatment to beneficiaries of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including care and treatment in facilities not under the jurisdiction of the Department; and furnishing recreational facilities, supplies, and equipment; funeral, burial, and other expenses incidental thereto for beneficiaries receiving care in the Department; administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, real prop-

erty acquisition and disposition, construction and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department; oversight, engineering and architectural activities not charged to project cost, repairing, altering, improving or providing facilities in the several hospitals and homes under the jurisdiction of the Department, not otherwise provided for, either by contract or by the hire of temporary employees and purchase of materials; uniforms or allowances therefor, as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5901-5902; aid to State homes as authorized by 38 U.S.C. 1741; administrative and legal expenses of the Department for collecting and recovering amounts owed the Department as authorized under 38 U.S.C. chapter 17, and the Federal Medical Care Recovery Act, 42 U.S.C. 2651 et seq.; and not to exceed \$8,000,000 to fund cost comparison studies as referred to in 38 U.S.C. 8110(a)(5); \$16,958,846,000, plus reimbursements: *Provided*, That of the funds made available under this heading, \$565,000,000 is for the equipment and land and structures object classifications only, which amount shall not become available for obligation until August 1, 1998, and shall remain available until September 30, 1999. *Provided further*, That funds under this heading shall be available for medical examinations required for benefits claims under title 38, United States Code: *Provided further*, That of the amount made available under this heading, not to exceed \$5,000,000 shall be for a study on the cost-effectiveness of contracting with local hospitals in East Central Florida for the provision of nonemergency inpatient health care needs of veterans.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. OBEY

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. OBEY:

On page 7, line 6, after "\$16,958,846,000," insert "(increased by \$48,000,000)".

On page 57, line 7, after "\$321,646,000" insert "(decreased by \$60,000,000)".

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, let me first say that I regret very much that I am offering this amendment under these circumstances. But for anyone who happens to be watching, either Members or anyone else, on C-SPAN, I am afraid what they are witnessing is another step in the gradual destruction of the ability of this House to conduct rational debate.

What is now happening is that amendments of substance will be debated with virtually nobody in the room. Members will then be called upon as the first order of business tomorrow to vote on those amendments, not having heard them, not having even had the opportunity to watch them from their offices on their TV screens. They will walk in blind and we will be asked, "What is in this? Oh, I don't get it." And within about a minute they have to make up their minds. I think it is a further debilitating of this House, but there is not a whole lot that I can do about it.

Mr. Chairman, let me simply explain what this amendment is. This amendment accomplishes two important objectives. First, it deletes funding for an unauthorized, unbudgeted construction project that appears to be premature at best. Second, it increases funding for veterans' medical care.

There are four veterans' services organizations, the DAV, AmVets, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and VFW that each year jointly produce an independent budget for veterans' programs. This year's independent budget estimates are that \$18.044 billion is necessary for medical care in fiscal 1998 just to maintain current services. So the committee recommendation is \$17.56 billion, assuming VA medical facilities can keep third-party reimbursements, which are being dealt with in another bill before this Congress.

Those recommendations in the committee are almost \$500 million less than the current services amount and \$2 billion below the optimum level. So basically what I am trying to do is to add the funding in this amendment to increase that account slightly.

To pay for the increased veterans' medical care, we cut \$60 million that the committee has recommended for a windstorm simulation center to be constructed at the Department of Energy's Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory.

There are many questions raised by the manner in which this project has been considered. Let me simply list a few. First of all, the funds were not requested by the administration. The latest statement of administration policy indicates funds should be redirected to higher priorities.

Second, the project is not authorized, either for the Department of Energy or for FEMA;

Third, the split authority between FEMA and DOE on the project makes it a classic case for mismanagement;

Fourth, the project meets six of the seven criteria of the "porkbusters coalition" as to items that should qualify for viewing as pork;

Fifth, there have been no hearings on the project;

Sixth, the company that operates the Idaho lab for the DOE is the same company that is currently in a major dispute with the government over another construction job at that lab. It seems that the contractor, Lockheed Martin, is \$150 million over the amount that they were supposed to reach on a fixed price contract. They now want the government to change the terms of that contract to bail them out.

Seventh, there has been no peer review at all for this project. Indeed, there has not been any review at all. The American Association of Wind Engineers has raised serious concerns about the construction and operation of this facility. In addition, although the contractor has indicated that \$34 million is all they can use in 1998, the committee recommendation is for \$60 million.

Next, the \$60 million is just a down payment. The total is estimated to cost about \$181 million. I would also point out that FEMA has indicated its support for the proposal, only to be contingent upon establishment of a broad coalition of financial support. Yet, to date, the industries with poten-

tially the most to gain from this facility, the insurance industry and the home builders' industry, have not contributed one dollar.

I would also point out that 2 years ago the Department of Energy had a major study on the future of the national labs. This project flies in the face of nearly every important recommendation made by the so-called Galvin report. I would also point out that this year a draft report was prepared by a DOE working group, which is chaired by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy for Procurement.

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

(By unanimous consent, Mr. OBEY was allowed to proceed for 5 additional minutes.)

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, they recommended this lab lose its status as a federally funded research and development center, a condition that allows it to receive government contracts on a noncompetitive sole source basis.

I am aware that the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has indicated his intention to offer an amendment that would require authorization before those funds can be spent, but I would submit that that device is merely a ruse. The amendment contains a kick-out clause. It is only operative until April 1, 1998. If the project is not authorized by that time, the limitation comes off and the money can still be spent.

Mr. Chairman, I would say that in addition to that, it is not even clear that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has jurisdiction over this matter. A good case can be made that the Committee on Science is more properly the House committee with authorization oversight.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, I would simply urge my colleagues to support this amendment. I would suggest that if Congress is to add money above the budget, we ought to be doing so for cash starved programs like veterans' medical care, and not for questionable, unauthorized, premature pork projects like this windstorm simulation center.

Mr. Chairman, this operation started out to be a quite different operation. It started out to be a center to evaluate earthquakes. It did not get quite the review that they wanted, and so now the contractor has simply said: "Well, if we cannot get the money on an earthquake simulation project, we will move it over and we will design a windstorm operation." That is what they have done.

Mr. Chairman, no one suggests that this work does not need to be done, but before it needs to be done this project needs to be peer reviewed. We need to know we are getting what we pay for. It just seems to me that until we do, we ought to simply put this money where it is needed the most, which is in the veterans' medical care budget.

If the House adopts this amendment, I will offer a conforming amendment in

the FEMA portion of the bill to delete the proviso earmarking \$60 million for the wind facility.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would simply close and suggest that at the appropriate time tomorrow, the House would do well to adopt this amendment.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, I rise with a good deal of sympathy for the amendment presented by my colleague, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY]. But I would suggest to him that there are a number of questions that I still have in my head that cause me to resist this amendment.

I can remember our discussions time and time again about horrendous costs that the country is facing relative to disaster circumstances. In the time I have been chairman of this committee, FEMA has received some \$10 billion.

One of the areas that is difficult, that we do not have a handle on, does deal with wind damage. One way or another we have to try to do the right things. None of these things seems to be perfect, but we have to try to do the right thing in terms of wind mitigation.

Mr. Chairman, as I look at the gentleman's amendment, I know his purpose is directed at this wind simulation center, but really he just affects one of the accounts within FEMA by reducing that, but that does not prevent them from going forward with the wind tunnel.

In an attempt to respond to the very questions that the gentleman has in mind, I have been in discussion with the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER], and frankly, I am not sure who really has the appropriate jurisdiction, here or there, because those battles on the authorizing side are considerably more difficult than ours.

But having said that, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER], some discussion, responded by saying, "I would present an amendment where I think we are going to have an authorization that goes forward that would essentially delay this until we have more time to talk through the very questions that the gentleman is discussing."

I do not really think we have any differences here, so I would urge the gentleman to at least reserve at this point and see if we cannot figure out a way to begin marching our way down the path where that makes sense, with the cost of wind damages. And clearly the gentleman can tell from what I am saying here that I do not have the answers either, but we need to begin to seek them in a serious way.

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I do not have any problem whatsoever with the way the gentleman is running this subcommittee. But I would simply observe that, as I said earlier, if this amendment is adopted, then under the rules

the next amendment that I would be able to offer will indeed eliminate the earmark for the wind tunnel, which is what the amendment is designed to attack.

Mr. Chairman, I would also say that if we really want to do something about protecting the Federal Treasury from the cost of disasters, in my mind what we ought to do is to require States to join an experience-rated self-insurance program, so every time there is a disaster States do not come to Uncle Sam with their hand out; that they can simply, on the basis of their own experience, do just as we do in workmen's compensation and prepay for disasters, so every time a disaster comes we do not have to call up Uncle Sam and jimmy the budget.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, I do understand where the gentleman is coming from. But the fact is, one more time, that is an authorizing question, and they ought to be working their way through that without any doubts. I think the gentleman knows that the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] and I are struggling with the bill in no small part because over 85 percent of our bill is unauthorized. So we struggle along, at best. I want to address this problem. I do not want to do it pell-mell, but at the same time I do not want to cut off avenues that are important.

I must say, one of the things that is disconcerting here is, because the gentleman and I have such a fine working relationship, up until now the ranking member and his staff have given me amendments ahead of time so I can talk these things through. It must be that he slipped over this technically some way.

Mr. OBEY. If the gentleman will continue to yield further, let me explain that, Mr. Chairman, I was in a Labor-HEW markup all day. I was here all day yesterday working on Labor-HEW, expecting that others on the gentleman's side would also be here. They were not. So today our Labor-HEW mark was extended. I never dreamed that we would be getting to this point in the bill today, given the other legislation we had before us. I expected to give it to you before we had it tomorrow.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, if it had not been for the very fine bipartisan work the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] and I had been involved in, we would not have moved very quickly, so we even contributed to this very positive development.

□ 2115

In the meantime, Mr. Chairman, there is little doubt that the country knows that disaster costs have been horrendous over the last several years. I think also all of us in the House know that when the next disaster occurs, we are going to come together as Americans and respond.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] has expired.

(By unanimous consent, Mr. LEWIS of California was allowed to proceed for 5 additional minutes.)

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to take very much time, but I would say that there is little doubt the next time a disaster comes along, that the Congress will come together, reflecting the American people's view that we ought to help people in disaster circumstances.

But having said that, there is no doubt that we need to do work internally to try to mitigate against these disasters. We are doing it in building codes in earthquake sectors. Clearly the wind problem is a very, very serious problem we need to seriously move in the direction of addressing, trying to find some answers that mitigate against these costs.

Those efforts are not going to be perfect in their initial stages. I would hope that we would work closely with our authorizers and encourage the authorizers to do the work as we make this effort to hold down the costs.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman will continue to yield, why on Earth, if this facility is to be funded by the Government, should it be funded in a manner that allows them to seek sole source contracts with no competition and why should this not be peer reviewed? And if it is so important, why is FEMA resisting providing money for it without that kind of proper review?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I frankly cannot answer the question. I do not know the technical side of how they went about putting it together, this process that relates to a contract. But I do know that this is apparently a facility that would be built on land that the Department of Energy owns and they would see it used for this purpose, and end up with free land. There is a need that is very real and apparently there are personnel in the region that could be very responsive to the challenges of this particular facility.

But I am sure the process is not perfect, and one of the reasons that one of the authorizing chairmen will be presenting an amendment is he wants time to step back and take a look at some of these questions. I think they are very appropriate questions.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

(Mrs. Meek of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong opposition to the Obey amendment. It certainly goes against my grain to go against a person of the caliber and capability of the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY]. I truly regret having to oppose my own ranking member, because I do believe he is one of the best representatives in this body. And I know that he has the best of intentions. However, in this case I think my ranking member is wrong.

First of all, I do not think he has walked in the shoes that I have walked in since I have been in this Congress and personally experienced the need for help with disasters, particularly disasters that wipe out the life of your constituents.

Our House Committee on Appropriations has included in this bill funding for the construction of a full size wind damage testing facility. The gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] says we should cut out these funds.

I say and I appeal to the Congress to keep them in because we need this facility. In 1992, Hurricane Andrew was the single most natural disaster ever to hit the United States. Powerful, devastating, it plowed right through the south end of Dade County, FL. It utterly destroyed a huge portion of my congressional district.

I want to say to the Congress, my district has not yet regrown and it has not yet come back from this devastating disaster. I remember vividly the hundreds of homes in my community that literally blew apart in Hurricane Andrew. There was just no estimate of the destruction and of the force of this hurricane. As a matter of fact, according to the people at the Homestead Air Force Base, there was a tornado strength wind within this hurricane. So the desperation, if Members could see the lives of these thousands of men and women and children who were left homeless because of Hurricane Andrew. I spent my first 2 years in this Congress working to try to make this community whole again.

And this Congress has helped me do that. Mr. OBEY was one of the ones who helped me do it. But they still are not whole yet. The gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] can tell you that 5 years later I am still working on problems created by Hurricane Andrew.

All three of these things are extremely costly. One, winds from the big, big storms, hurricanes and Nor'easters, kill people and they destroy homes. Two, we know these storms are going to come and we can plan and prepare for them. And, three, they are extremely costly.

That is why we need this wind testing facility. That is why I am appealing to the Congress to take this out of the realm all the time of numbers and utility and philosophical vents, but to think about what it has meant to people, to destroy this community, the entire community. Most of people from this community have moved north. They will never come back to this southernmost area. And therefore, the economy has gone down and the social fabric of the lives of these people has been destroyed.

We need a wind testing facility. With proper research and testing, we can minimize wind damage and destruction. Thousands of insurance companies went under because of this storm, because no one had the facility to know that this storm would be that devastating to this area.

By testing different types of housing and construction techniques and materials under actual hurricane wind conditions, we can design and build homes in ways that will minimize the danger to human life and minimize the cost of these natural disasters. This can be done ahead of time so that we will know what to expect when we have hurricanes and natural disasters.

We need to take action now. We do not need to put this off, because it has been put off too long. If you ask anyone in Florida or in Georgia, or out there in the West where all of these natural disasters have occurred, you will find out that it is time for it now.

We need to be able to develop the knowledge. This knowledge is so important to keep our constituents' homes from blowing a part. That is what this wind testing facility is all about. This is not just common sense. It is dollars and cents. I repeat, it is not just common sense; looking forward to test this facility ahead of time is dollars and cents.

The amount of money at stake here, it is just staggering. It belies one's imagination to realize the cost associated. Hurricane Andrew alone resulted in losses that exceeded \$25 million, and those were just the losses that they have been able to account. I am still coming back to the Congress, I am still coming back to FEMA asking them to forgive in many instances the big costs that grew up with this.

No doubt my colleagues remember that 5 years ago the House voted for a disaster relief bill of \$8 billion in Federal aid to help my community get back on its feet. We can pay a little now or pay a lot later.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK] has expired.

(By unanimous consent, Mrs. MEEK of Florida was allowed to proceed for 30 additional seconds.)

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I want to appeal to the House to please vote for this wind testing facility. It will save lives and it will also save money.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I am always hesitant to follow my colleague from Florida. It is almost like being against motherhood to do so. But I want to speak in favor of the amendment that has been put forward by the ranking member.

I think what we have here is a comparison. On the one hand we have a proposal to add \$48 million in this amendment to the veterans' health services program which everyone understands is needed, where we have people and we have made a promise to our veterans that we were going to provide them with health care in their lives, particularly when we have so many of our World War II veterans who are at an age when they are in need of health care. So that \$48 million on the one hand is replacing monies that are otherwise below, added to funding

which is otherwise below what is needed to keep the funds at the level of services that are presently there.

On the other hand we have a very questionable kind of an expenditure for this wind simulation center. The \$60 million reduction which we have been talking about is just stage one, phase one of a construction program for this wind simulation center, the sum total of which is going to be \$181 million, and all of it is going to come out of FEMA, and apparently from all indications there is not a single cent that has yet been put into this from any of the industries that might be a part of it.

Now, it was not in the President's budget. It was not even requested by either the Department of Energy or by FEMA. So here we have an uncooked idea, a half-baked idea being put in in place of adequate funding for veterans' health care services.

Now, I would like to mention the testimony of the gentleman who is the head of the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, his testimony before the Committee on Science, which I served on in the previous Congress as a minority member, the statement by W. John Denson. He pointed out in his testimony that the INEL maintains critical technology skills for nuclear operations, nuclear safety and nuclear waste management. The INEL is a multiple purpose laboratory supporting all the missions of the department. The INEL has been designated by DOE as the lead lab for research and development for EM mixed waste. They also lead the national programs for spent nuclear fuels management and national low level waste management.

Now, I say this because what that says is that the mission of the particular DOE laboratory is far from the proposed area. And to follow up on that, we have had a lot of testimony in the 104th Congress before the Committee on Science about this question of just how we were to use our energy laboratories. The GAO study asked experts on energy policy and former DOE executives, including several of the previous Secretaries of DOE, their views on it, and they by a substantial majority said that we should not be taking on missions at the DOE laboratories that are beyond the missions of DOE itself.

Then we have the Galvin Commission that was mentioned by one of the previous speakers, a major commission to look at the future of alternative futures for the Department of Energy national laboratories. They strongly expressed their concern about expanding the laboratories' industrial R&D beyond the existing DOE missions.

I quote from their work: The current industrial partnership activities of the laboratories are unfocused and invariably lead to add-ons. As in this case, an add-on. The Galvin Commission made three specific recommendations. In two of those cases this kind of a project is in direct contradiction to the recommendations. Their recommendations that are contradicted are that

government-funded technology transfer industrial competitiveness activities should be focused on industries and areas of technology that contribute directly to the DOE primary missions in national security, energy and environment.

The second recommendation, that competitive selection and more rigorous technical and merit review, namely peer review, which has been mentioned on several occasions by external experts, should be applied broadly within the department's cooperative research and development agreement.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. OLVER] has expired.

(By unanimous consent, Mr. OLVER was allowed to proceed for 2 additional minutes.)

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, let me just point out here that Citizens Against Government Waste, which held a number of hearings, a group that was invited to a number of hearings to put a focus on government waste during the 104th Congress, had put forward 7 criteria on which to judge what might be considered waste.

Their criteria included cases where the request was made by one chamber of commerce; where it was not authorized; number three, where it was not competitively awarded, not peer reviewed, in essence; four, where it was not requested in the President's budget; five, greatly exceeds the President's budget or the request of the previous year's funding; and, six, had not been the subject of congressional hearing. Six out of the seven, this project violates.

So what I think here, let me go back and just reiterate, what we are comparing is a \$48 million increase in veterans' health services to fulfill a promise that we have made to our veterans for a continuation of their veterans' health programs, versus a program, a proposal which is at best not ready for this stage, where it is meant as a partnership, there is no industry portion in the partnership. The money all would come out of a budget from an agency, namely FEMA, which did not request the money at all and which has written at least to the Senate chairman of the subcommittee on VA-HUD to indicate that they have serious questions about this.

□ 2130

And, Mr. Chairman, I will ask to submit this letter into the RECORD during the whole House section of this session.

Mr. Chairman, I would hope the amendment would be adopted.

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

Mr. OLVER. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I would simply like to make one additional point.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. OLVER] has expired.

(On request of Mr. OBEY, and by unanimous consent, Mr. OLVER was allowed to proceed for 2 additional minutes.)

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman continue to yield?

Mr. OLVER. I will continue yielding to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, the argument has been made that this research needs to be conducted. I am sure the gentleman would agree that no one questions that. Certainly I do not question that.

The question is, why should this research proceed under conditions which enable the contractor to obtain sole source noncompetitive contracts? Why should it proceed when there has been no peer review to determine whether or not this is the right way to proceed? Why should we proceed when a large number of universities and many people in the scientific community have expressed their concern that they will not be able to use the simulator because of the costs associated with this contract?

It has been suggested, for instance, that a number of insurance companies have gone bankrupt because of other disasters. Why then should the insurance industry not do as FEMA wants it to do, namely to share in the cost of producing this research facility? Certainly if they will gain millions of dollars in saved claims from its research, they should be willing to help finance it.

I would simply say in very frank terms what this is a nice arrangement by one State which has working arrangements with several other universities, but the taxpayers' interests are not protected because of the way this research project is being designed. It will be very convenient for Lockheed Martin, the contractor, but not for anybody else, as far as I know. And it seems to me under those circumstances, this ought not to proceed until we have the proper peer review processes built in.

I would suggest also that with the veterans health budget being some \$500 million short of current services, it is not even a close call as to where this money is needed the most.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. OLVER] has again expired.

(By unanimous consent, Mr. OLVER was allowed to proceed for 1 additional minute.)

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the House for yielding the additional minute.

I think the answers to the ranking member's questions, the answers to those whys, is that they really should not proceed until all of those conditions are met. In truth, we do need to have that kind of research done. But it ought to be done in a case where it is clearly cofunded by industry as well as by the government, and in a situation where it is peer reviewed and where there can be a broad participation in that research.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, when Hurricane Fran swept across North Carolina, thousands of homes were severely damaged or destroyed. More than a million people lost their electricity for 5 days and many lives were lost in the process.

Lost too by families in my State were dreams and memories. The devastation and suffering caused by the swath of destruction was tremendous.

We must do more to protect citizens in advance of storms. We cannot afford to be reckless with the lives of our citizens and with their homes.

In the last 2 years, four major hurricanes have caused 57 deaths and \$40 billion in damage, but we do not have to sit back and let nature take its course. Today, we will vote on a measure to help protect both homes and lives from hurricanes.

This measure will save billions in tax dollars and countless lives. Supporting the Partnership for Natural Disaster Reduction/HomeSaver Project is critical, Mr. Chairman, to saving American homes and lives. Our goal should be to prevent disasters, not just to manage them or respond to them.

Hurricane season is beginning to approach, and this year it is predicted to be worse than ever. For us not to take preventive measures would be highly irresponsible.

Before there is indeed another Hurricane Fran happening in some other State, I urge my colleagues to support the Partnership for Natural Disaster Reduction/HomeSaver Project. It is the right thing to do. It is the responsible thing to do and also, Mr. Chairman, it is the safe thing to do.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY].

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote, and pending that, I make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 184, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will read. The Clerk read as follows:

In addition, contingent on enactment of legislation establishing the Medical Collections Fund, such sums as may be derived pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 1729(g) shall be deposited to such Fund and may be transferred to this account, to remain available until expended for the purposes of this account.

MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH

For necessary expenses in carrying out programs of medical and prosthetic research and development as authorized by 38 U.S.C. chapter 73, to remain available until September 30, 1999, \$267,000,000, plus reimbursements: *Provided*, That of the funds made available under this heading, \$20,000,000 shall

be for medical research relating to Gulf War Illnesses afflicting Persian Gulf Veterans.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. TIAHRT

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. TIAHRT:

In the item relating to "DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS—VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION—MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH", after the first dollar amount (the aggregate), insert the following: "(increased by \$25,000,000)".

In the item relating to "DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS—VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION—MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH", after the second dollar amount (the Gulf War illness research earmark), insert the following: "(increased by \$5,000,000)".

In the item relating to "INDEPENDENT AGENCIES—CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE—NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS OPERATING EXPENSES", after the first dollar amount (the aggregate), insert the following: "(reduced by \$200,000,000)".

Mr. TIAHRT (during the reading). Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Kansas?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Chairman, I am here tonight to address the priorities within this bill. The amendment I offer would dedicate an additional \$25 million to the Veterans Administration's Medical and Prosthetic Research Account to dramatically increase the level of research which the VA is doing on the illness which is affecting thousands of American veterans who served this country in the Persian Gulf war.

This year the Veterans Administration is dedicating a mere \$3.6 million to the research of the illness which our Gulf War veterans are suffering from. To pay for this very necessary research, the amendment would partially eliminate funding for the AmeriCorps program and direct it towards this much-needed research.

First, let me address why this amendment is necessary. The fiscal year 1998 VA-HUD Appropriations Act contains \$267 million for the VA's medical and prosthetic research account. In the Committee on Appropriations an earmark was added which directs \$20 million of this current appropriation to be spent on Gulf War research. This pays for and expands the current research into Gulf War illness. However it comes at the expense of other important research being done by the VA, such as Diabetes Centers of Excellence, Centers for Rehabilitation Medicine, and the VA's ability to retain high quality physicians. It just takes from one pocket, cutting important research, to put in another. This solves one problem yet, unfortunately, creates many more.

Mr. Chairman, this amendment would remedy the problem completely.

This amendment presents a question of priorities. We should do what is more important, expanding the very minimal research which the VA is doing on the illnesses our gulf war vets are experiencing and living with daily, or continuing paying for healthy young people to volunteer for public service jobs.

Before we make our decision, let us examine the facts. This is difficult when discussing the gulf war illness. The problem is we cannot define it conclusively, treat it, or explain exactly how it is caused. The VA itself has said, "Currently, there is no evidence of a single unifying illness to explain the health problems of all gulf war veterans." Without much-needed research, these veterans will continue to suffer, and we do not have the answers to our gulf war illness questions.

We do know that the Department of Defense has confirmed that 27,000 American soldiers could have been exposed to chemical agents in the Persian Gulf. Separately, the CIA has estimated as many as 120,000 could have been exposed.

I can also tell my colleagues what some of our gulf war veterans are experiencing. Like U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. David Janda. He is a 35-year-old father of three from Hutchinson, KS. He suffers from blinding headaches, a blistering rash which he has had for 6 months, chronic diarrhea and joint pain. Or Kenny Schwartz of Great Bend, KS, who endures stabbing pain in his left eye, stiffness in his joints which make him unable to walk, memory loss and scarring rashes. Their doctors can neither diagnose nor effectively treat these symptoms.

To date, 90,000 Persian Gulf war veterans have contacted the VA's gulf war registry and reported symptoms which are consistent with how the Journal of the American Medical Association has described gulf war illness: fatigue, joint pain, gastrointestinal complaints, memory problems, emotional change, impotence, and insomnia.

This is the Veterans' Administration current response: \$3.6 million of research funding this year. That is \$133 for every American veteran we know of that has been exposed to chemical agents in the gulf.

On the other hand, we have AmeriCorps. This year we are spending \$402 million on the AmeriCorps program. That is \$19,000 in Federal funding for every one of the over 20,000 AmeriCorps paid volunteers.

This chart shows the discrepancy, Mr. Chairman; \$133 per veteran being spent on research for gulf war illness versus \$19,000 spent for every paid volunteer.

AmeriCorps pays recruited volunteers to perform public service jobs. It also provides \$7500 for living expenses and \$4,725 for an educational award. They also get health coverage and child care. Our \$19,000 a year paid volunteers have lobbied the government, worked as low level Federal bureaucrats, and built hornos, which are

ovens built from dirt and grass that were originally used some 4,000 years ago.

Two recent audits by the GAO and a report from AmeriCorps' own Inspector General have found serious inefficiencies and mismanagement. In addition, Arthur Andersen has tried to audit AmeriCorps twice, and found the books too much of a mess to even perform an audit, yet we are asking to continue funding AmeriCorps at the current level while ignoring the illness of our Gulf War veterans.

I cannot go back to Kansas and tell David Janda and Kenny Schwartz that we can only muster \$133 per veteran to investigate what is making them sick and how to treat it, yet we have \$19,000 to pay a paid volunteer to offer a healthy youngster that lives next door to these veterans.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] has expired.

(By unanimous consent, Mr. TIAHRT was allowed to proceed for 1 additional minute.)

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Chairman, this is a very important amendment. I ask every Member of the House to consider what they believe our priorities should be, and I am hopeful that we will place our highest priority on the current and future health of the men and women who fought and served for freedom in our country.

Caring for veterans who fought for America's freedom and security is a necessary function of our Federal Government. Paying healthy AmeriCorps volunteers is simply not. I ask Members to please not turn their backs on the veterans who so faithfully served this country in the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Chairman, I submit for the RECORD two reports on the subject of my amendment:

TIME TO END THE TROUBLED AMERICORPS

On April 27-29, 1997, with Independence Hall as a picturesque backdrop, over 2,800 delegates from across the country, including governors, mayors, private-sector leaders, and representatives from leading foundations, gathered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the Presidents' Summit for America's Future. With President Bill Clinton and former President George Bush as honorary co-chairmen, this gathering was called to examine a topic that hardly could be more important: the future of volunteerism in the United States, and especially how the voluntary sector can aid America's children.

The great 19th century French observer of American politics, Alexis de Tocqueville, noted that what made America great was the tendency of its people to form voluntary associations to meet community needs. Whereas Europeans looked with docility to government to solve problems, Americans learned self-reliance and the ability to look beyond individual self-interest through cooperation in voluntary organizations. In this century, however, as government programs—particularly human services programs—have usurped much of America's traditionally voluntary domain, both the country's civic fabric and the character of its individual citizens have changed for the worse.

The Presidents' Summit gave Americans a chance to pause and reflect on how commu-

nity needs could best be met. The increasingly widespread appeal of the conservative message on the need to re-limit government led President Clinton himself to declare that the "era of big government is over." Now America's civil society and corporate community have been called in to deal with the problems created by the failure of federal programs. Over the past few months, *Newsweek* has devoted a portion of its "Periscope" page to the many corporations that have agreed to make major contributions of goods or services as part of the effort to meet these needs. LensCrafters, for example, has agreed to provide free eye care for one million needy people, and the National Restaurant Association has agreed to hire 250,000 youngsters in the next five years.¹

But for all the fanfare and national press attention surrounding the Presidents' Summit—as well as the bipartisan images and goodwill it generated—there is reason to believe that it may serve less to foster a vision of a healthy voluntary sector free of unwarranted government intervention than to promote further charitable dependence on federal resources. The Presidents' Summit was largely the brainchild of former Senator Harris Wofford (D-PA), Chief Executive of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). In congressional testimony, Wofford declared that the CNCS, along with the Points of Light Foundation (another federally funded entity designed to promote volunteerism²), "is working . . . in initiating and planning the Summit to promote the goals of the National and Community Service Act, the mission of the Corporation, and the vision set forth in the Corporation's Strategic Plan."³

The CNCS helps oversee administration of the AmeriCorps program, President Clinton's "domestic Peace Corps," the largest extension of the federal government in recent years. Ever since its creation in 1993, AmeriCorps has been mired in controversy. Two recent independent audits of the program by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), the semiannual report of the Corporation's own Inspector General, and two audits by the nationally renowned Arthur Andersen accounting firm all have found serious evidence of cost overruns and mismanagement. Despite these problems, however, and despite a continuing inability to correct them, the Corporation has benefited from large amounts of good publicity, thanks in part to what one critic has called the "camera-ready smiles of young 'volunteers'" whose efforts made good news copy.⁴ In an era in which balancing the federal budget has become a national priority, the CNCS has requested \$546,500,000 for fiscal year (FY) 1998—an increase of 36 percent over the \$400 million appropriated in FY 1997.

Not only was the Philadelphia summit choreographed in part by AmeriCorps, but its proceedings offered a rousing endorsement of this very troubled program. Despite the good publicity for AmeriCorps that the Summit may generate, Congress should view the request for increased AmeriCorps funding with considerable skepticism. In this age or re-limiting government, the American public and its elected representatives should reject the very premise upon which AmeriCorps rests: that the federal government has an important activist role to play in guiding the voluntary sector in the United States.

WHAT IS AMERICORPS?

One of Governor Bill Clinton's key platform stands in 1992 was a call to create a federal program that would help individuals meet the high costs associated with acquiring a college education in exchange for community service. As President, Clinton saw

¹Footnotes at end of article.

his vision implemented through the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. The Act created the CNCS, which helps administer the "largest national and community service program since the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s."⁵

Over the past four years, AmeriCorps has grown from a mere pilot program to include more than 24,000 people participating in more than 430 programs across the country.

These programs focus primarily on four areas: education, the environment, public safety, and human services. Since 1993, despite the fact that Washington spends \$1.3 billion annually to promote volunteerism through 23 other federal programs, more than \$800 million has been appropriated to pay for 100,000 participants in CNCS's major program, AmeriCorps*USA.⁶ Full-time AmeriCorps participants work a minimum of 1,700 hours per year, receiving in turn a \$7,460 stipend and an education award of \$4,725 in the form of a college tuition voucher or credit to repay a past student loan.

In his 1995 State of the Union address, President Clinton praised AmeriCorps as "citizenship at its best." In Philadelphia, the President announced his intention to expand the program in two ways:

First, he wants to create a "citizen army" of one million volunteer literacy tutors to shore up the failed public school system in the United States. Rather than hold public schools accountable for teaching basic skills, his plan would cost taxpayers at least \$2.75 billion and rely heavily on coordination and instruction by 10,000 new AmeriCorps "tutor coordinators."⁷

Second, the President wants to expand AmeriCorps by 33,000 volunteers over the next five years by teaming with private organizations that would be responsible for paying the paid volunteers' living stipends while taxpayers still pay the cost of their college scholarships.⁸

AMERICORPS' TROUBLED BEGINNING

Early on, the Clinton Administration hailed AmeriCorps as the "paradigm of reinvented government." In truth, under the leadership of CNCS's first CEO—Eli J. Segal, chief of staff for the 1992 Clinton-Gore campaign—AmeriCorps offered a case study of how not to run a federal agency. Although AmeriCorps claimed that its mission was to promote the voluntary sector, at least 2,800 of its first 20,000 "volunteers" were assigned directly to federal agencies and departments, most notably the Departments of Agriculture and Justice, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Legal Services Corporation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Even though AmeriCorps claimed that its mission was nonpartisan, it offered millions of dollars in grants to numerous activist groups, including ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), the National Council of La Raza, and the Council of Great City Schools, an organization devoted to the "advancement of education in inner-city public schools through public and legislative advocacy."⁹ Despite Segal's repeated denials that AmeriCorps grant money helped subsidize ACORN's political activities, the Corporation was forced to defund ACORN in July 1995 after an Inspector General's report found incontrovertible evidence that the supposedly independent affiliate awarded a grant by AmeriCorps was, in fact, part and parcel of ACORN's political operations. Another AmeriCorps grantee in Denver also engaged in political advocacy at taxpayers' expense and was stripped of its federal funds.¹⁰

But the most devastating news under Segal's tenure was not the presence of "volunteers" in federal agencies, or the use of

federal tax dollars for political purposes: It was the audit of 93 AmeriCorps programs released by the GAO in July 1995. Segal had promised that the "cost [per AmeriCorps volunteer] will be \$17,600."¹¹ The GAO revealed that the cost to field a participant was \$25,800 for non-federal agency grantees and \$31,000 for federal agency grantees.¹² In other words, although AmeriCorps promised that cost per service hour by volunteers would total \$6.43, the GAO found that the real cost was \$15.85 per hour—and up to \$19.81 per hour when time for non-service AmeriCorps activities was included.¹³ Whereas President Clinton repeatedly had cited AmeriCorps as evidence that the government could work in partnership with the voluntary sector and private enterprise to promote volunteerism,¹⁴ the GAO found that taxpayers were paying 93 percent of the costs—79 percent directly from the federal till.¹⁵

NEW EVIDENCE THAT AMERICORPS DOES NOT WORK

In summer 1995, Segal resigned as AmeriCorps' CEO, to be replaced by Harris Wofford. Wofford began his tenure by seeking bipartisan support for AmeriCorps. Partly because of the July 1995 GAO audit, Wofford promised to end the policy of "paid volunteers" in federal agencies, to reduce the Washington-based bureaucracy, and to seek a direct private-sector match for each dollar contributed by the federal government.

Wofford's promises for reform and his affable style, combined with President Clinton's newfound popularity in the polls, saved the program from almost certain extinction. Yet one and a half years into Wofford's tenure, AmeriCorps still seems to be plagued by many of the same problems that Segal faced. A new GAO report reveals that AmeriCorps costs too much, has difficulty retaining problem participants, and is not attracting the significant private-sector involvement that program supporters had sought.¹⁶

The GAO sampled 25 AmeriCorps programs and uncovered some disturbing trends:

AmeriCorps fails to retain participants in its programs. The dropout rate for paid volunteers is 39 percent, nearly twice what the CNCS had predicted in November 1994.¹⁷

AmeriCorps is failing to gain significant private-sector resources for its programs. Officials at the Corporation for National Service have boasted repeatedly that the presence of government funding would help "leverage" private contributions. Yet median private-sector support for AmeriCorps programs that were sampled was only 17 percent; 83 percent of the funding comes directly from the taxpayers. This is not surprising when one considers that at least 180 of the Corporation's 430 projects in FY 1996 provided funding to government programs.¹⁸

Despite the CNCS's claim that 90 percent of participants would use their educational awards, only 54 percent of those eligible for these awards actually have used them. The low percent of educational awards used suggests that many AmeriCorps members either are not planning to attend college or are not recent college graduates saddled with loans to pay. The *Des Moines Register*, for example, reports that "nearly one in five AmeriCorps workers in Des Moines already has a college degree, and more than half in the program are 26 or older."¹⁹ The presence of so many non-student age AmeriCorps members led one observer to conclude that the "program that was sold as the domestic equivalent of the Peace Corps has already turned out to more closely resemble the abysmal failure of the Comprehensive Education and Training Act."²⁰ AmeriCorps was sold to Congress as a program to help young people pay for college, not as another federal jobs program in addition to the over 160 that already exist.

One AmeriCorps program, the Casa Verde Builders Program, cost the taxpayers \$2,448,053. Only 23 of the 64 individuals enrolled as Casa Verde AmeriCorps members completed the program; the cost of taxpayers: over \$100,000 per participant. Moreover, only four participants have used their educational awards; to cost to taxpayers: more than \$600,000 per award.

Another AmeriCorps program examined by the GAO, the Educational Conservation Corps, cost taxpayers \$1,732,000. Of the 97 participants, 58 earned an educational award. So far, only 20 have used their awards; the cost of taxpayers: \$86,000 per award in administrative costs plus \$4,725 per award.

The Appalachian Service Through Action and Resources program cost taxpayers \$632,240. Twenty-two participants completed the program and earned educational awards. The cost to taxpayers (assuming that 90 percent of Appalachian Service members use their awards): \$31,612 plus \$4,725 per award.

Local AmeriCorps programs are not the only problem. The management techniques at CNCS headquarters are the focus of continuing congressional scrutiny. An October 1995 audit of CNCS books by Arthur Andersen indicated serious accounting weaknesses, leading the firm to declare that the books were "unauditable." A follow-up study by Andersen concluded that the Corporation's "internal controls were not adequate for an independent auditor to perform an effective and efficient financial statement audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards for fiscal years 1994 and 1995."² The same study concluded that these shortcomings "potentially preclude an audit" of FY 1996 books. Most shockingly, as of December 1996, the CNCS could not account for \$38 million in AmeriCorps funding. Despite repeated requests by Representative Peter Hoeskstra (R-MI), Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO), Chairman of the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, AmeriCorps has yet to provide conclusive evidence that the Corporation's financial statements for FY 1997 can be audited. What is particularly disturbing about the financial fiasco at AmeriCorps is that the program was created and administered entirely during the "re-inventing government" era.

WHY AMERICORPS IS UNNECESSARY

Wholly aside from the numerous failures that have occurred in the administration of AmeriCorps, there was no objective reason to create the program in the first place. As one of its supporters concedes, even "AmeriCorps' friends aren't sure exactly what it does."²² For several reasons, any role for the federal government in the voluntary sector is both unwise and counterproductive:

The voluntary sector in the United States is fundamentally healthy. According to Independent Sector, 89.2 million Americans offered unpaid voluntary service in 1993. Since 1981, the number of hours that Americans volunteer has risen dramatically from 12.7 billion to 19.5 billion.

AmeriCorps' paid volunteerism has discouraged—and will continue to discourage—real charitable involvement. Only programs that cannot generate sufficient community support need to look to Washington for funding. AmeriCorps already turned many of the major charitable nonprofits in the United States—Habitat for Humanity, the Red Cross, and the YMCA—away from the task of raising funds in the private sector toward lobbying Congress for more AmeriCorps funding.

Healthy charities with strong community support look to their neighbors, not the federal government, for financial support and volunteers. When genuine needs must be met, Americans band together with their neighbors to achieve common goals. AmeriCorps distorts the principle of local accountability for charitable groups. The great strength of America's philanthropic sector is its flexibility in responding to the country's social needs. This flexibility arises from a network of community-based voluntary organizations, not from a federally sponsored make-work administration. A far better way to help these organizations to succeed would be to allow taxpayers themselves to take tax credits for contributions to the charities of their choice.²³

Like all government programs, AmeriCorps costs too much. Considering its stipends and tuition awards, members receive approximately \$7.13 per hour, exclusive of the medical benefits and child care available to certain eligible participants. But the real cost per participant hour is far higher, depending on the particular grantee program. The total federal, state, and local costs of this program amount to an average of \$18.26 per hour—the equivalent of almost \$38,000 per year.

AmeriCorps' record of achievement has come under question. A 1997 Working Paper on AmeriCorps written for Independent Sector, itself sympathetic to the program, notes that, for 70 percent of the AmeriCorps programs it studied, the presence of AmeriCorps members did not produce quantitative results "over and above what the agencies were mandated and ostensibly funded to provide." Among the "reasons for concern and reflection," AmeriCorps' vaunted ability to leverage volunteers from local communities turned out to have been overstated; researchers found only a "modest 3.5 percent increase in hours volunteered by genuine volunteers."²⁴

AmeriCorps is an extremely costly way to help families pay for college. The \$26,700 cost for a single participant estimated by the 1995 GAO study would pay for Pell Grants for approximately 18 students. Assuming the Casa Verde program's cost of nearly \$100,000 per participant, 67 low-income students could have received Pell Grants.

President Clinton has declared that AmeriCorps aims to help young people who perform public service pay for college. In his 1996 State of the Union address, the President boasted that "AmeriCorps has already helped 70,000 young people to work their way through college as they serve America."²⁵ In fact, if only 54 percent of AmeriCorps' "grantees" are using their educational awards, the program should have helped approximately 37,800 with college tuition payments. By the time of the Philadelphia summit, the President had corrected his figure downward from 70,000 to 50,000.²⁶

AmeriCorps seeks to create a cadre of devoted liberal activists. One of the reasons for creating national service, according to the program's intellectual godfather, Professor Charles Moskos of Northwestern University, was to revitalize the Democratic Party. In its first few years, AmeriCorps has offered grants to dozens of organizations like ASPIRA of New York, the New Jersey Public Interest Research Foundation, the North Carolina Low Income Housing Coalition, the Legal Service Corporation, the National Council of La Raza, and the Northern Virginia Urban League. Congressional investigators also are examining why one high-ranking political appointee at the Corporation for National Service—former Los Angeles City Council Member Michael Woo—used Corporation stationery and resources to set up a meeting between Democratic Party

fundraiser John Huang and Asian-American business owners in Los Angeles.²⁷

When given the choice between cutting funding for AmeriCorps or other programs such as veterans' benefits, even the President's closest congressional allies—House Minority Whip David Bonior (D-MI), Representative David Obey (D-WI), and Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY)—had no choice but to cut \$206 million from AmeriCorps' funding for FY 1996.²⁸

The President's plan to expand AmeriCorps by 33,000 volunteers over the next five years by teaming with private organizations that would be responsible for paying the AmeriCorps living stipend while taxpayers covered the cost of the college scholarship will increase federal involvement in the philanthropic sector unnecessarily. Growing numbers of charitable institutions will become dependent on the federal government, designing programs to receive taxpayer-funded subsidies through AmeriCorps.

The President's planned literacy initiative will do little to improve our failing public schools. An additional \$2.75 billion on top of the nearly \$302 billion the federal government alone spends on education will not teach American students the basic skills they are not learning now.²⁹ Pumping more money into a failed system or drawing on the efforts of tens of thousands of well-intentioned volunteers will not compensate for the inadequacy of the country's schools.³⁰

CONCLUSION

The Presidents' Summit in Philadelphia has drawn further attention to one of the oldest traditions in the United States: voluntary community service. Nearly 90 million Americans volunteer annually, offering 19.7 billion hours of service. These efforts are essential to rebuilding American civil society now that the "era of big government is over."

The end of the era of big government, however, should not be seen as an excuse to boost President Clinton's controversial AmeriCorps program. A recent General Accounting Office study revealed that AmeriCorps continues to be plagued by high dropout rates and high costs. In short, the federal government has no business paying people to volunteer.

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Director, Government Reform Project

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Research Assistant

FOOTNOTES

¹For a list of these and other commitments made by corporations and nonprofit organizations in conjunction with the President's Summit, see <http://www.philanthropy.com/volunt.dir/13commit.htm>.

²The FY 1997 appropriation for the Points of Light Foundation was \$6,000,000.

³Harris Wofford, "Testimony Regarding FY 1998 Appropriations for the Corporation for National Service," Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, March 11, 1997.

⁴John P. Walters, "Five Questions for AmeriCorps' Board of Directors," Memorandum to Conservative Reformers, New Citizenship Project, February 24, 1995. The authors of this report wish to acknowledge their intellectual debt to John Walters's work.

⁵U.S. General Accounting Office, National Service Programs: Role of State Commissions in Implementing the AmeriCorps Program, February 1997, p. 1.

⁶*Ibid.* See also Mark Wilson, "AmeriCorps," in Scott A. Hodge, ed., *Balancing America's Budget: Ending the Era of Big Government* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1997), pp. 302-304. Other federal programs designed to promote volunteerism include the Service Corps of Retired Executive Association and the IRS Tax Counseling for the Elderly Program. Several federal programs designed to promote volunteerism that pre-dated the creation of the CNCS were incorporated into its ranks, including the Foster Grandparents program, Literacy Corps, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America).

⁷Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, "Briefing by Bruce Reed, Director of Domestic Policy Council," April 25, 1997; available at <http://docs.whitehouse.gov/white-house-publications/1997/04/1997-04-25-bruce-reed-briefing-on-service-summit.text>.

⁸Under the President's plan, no interest would accrue on student loans during the period of service. The White House estimates that the loan deferment program, which it wishes to include in the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, would cost approximately \$7 million per year for 12,000 participants. See Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, "Press Briefing by Bruce Reed, Eli Segal and Diane Fortuna," April 27, 1997; available at <http://docs.whitehouse.gov/white-house-publications/1997/04/1997-04-27-reed-and-segal-briefing-at-volunteer-summit.text>. See also Warren P. Strobel, "Clinton Makes a Pitch for Volunteers," *The Washington Times*, April 29, 1997, pp. A1 and A12, and President Bill Clinton, "Remarks at Volunteer Summit," April 28, 1997, available at <http://docs.whitehouse.gov/white-house-publications/1997/04/1997-04-28-remarks-of-presidents-at-volunteer-celebration-event.text>.

⁹John P. Walters, "AmeriWaste," Memorandum to Conservative Reformers, New Citizenship Project, September 26, 1995.

¹⁰See James F. Hirni, "AmeriCorps: A \$575 Million Boondoggle," *Heritage Foundation Issue Bulletin* No. 212, September 14, 1995, p. 5.

¹¹MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, March 27, 1995.

¹²Cornelia M. Blanchette, Associate Director, Education and Employment Issues, U.S. General Accounting Office, "National Service Programs—AmeriCorps/USA—First-Year Experience and Recent Program Initiatives," testimony before Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate, May 21, 1996, p. 3.

¹³John P. Walters, "A Devastating Audit of AmeriCorps: The \$23 Per Hour Per Hour 'Paid' Volunteer," Memorandum to Conservative Reformers, New Citizenship Project, July 12, 1995.

¹⁴President Bill Clinton, "Remarks on Responsible Citizenship and the American Community," July 6, 1995; available at <http://docs.whitehouse.gov/white-house-publications/1995/07/1995-07-06-presidents-georgetown-speech-on-responsibility.text>.

¹⁵U.S. General Accounting Office, National Service Programs—AmeriCorps/USA—Early Program Resource and Benefit Information, GAO/HEHS-95-222, August 29, 1995, pp. 30-31; cited in Wilson, "AmeriCorps," p. 452.

¹⁶GAO, National Service Programs: Role of State Commissions in Implementing the AmeriCorps Program.

¹⁷Letter from Representative Pete Hoekstra and Senators Christopher Bond and Charles Grassley to the Honorable Harris Wofford, March 13, 1997, p. 1.

¹⁸Corporation for National Service, AmeriCorps Program Director, available at <http://www.cns.gov/pro-dir.html>.

¹⁹Mary Hill, "Too many insiders getting AmeriCorps jobs?" *Des Moines Register*, February 2, 1996, p. 1.

²⁰Jason Lewis, "For the Good of Taxpayers, Unload Pricey AmeriCorps 'Volunteers,'" *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, August 7, 1996, p. A11.

²¹Corporation for National Service, Office of the Inspector General, Report No. 97-09, December 9, 1996.

²²William Raspberry, "Invisible Volunteers," *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1997, p. A21.

²³On the charitable tax credits in the Talent-Watts-Flake Community Renewal Act, see Christine Olson, "The American Community Renewal Act of 1997," *Heritage Foundation Issue Bulletin* No. 229, March 19, 1997.

²⁴John Messer, "Disparities Between National Service Outcome Measures and Goals: Core Susquehanna AmeriCorps: A Case Study," 1997 Independent Sector Spring Research Forum, Alexandria, Va., 1997.

²⁵President Bill Clinton, State of the Union speech, February 4, 1997; see also speech by President Clinton to the American Council on Education, February 24, 1997.

²⁶Clinton, "Remarks at Volunteer Summit," April 28, 1997.

²⁷James Rowley, "AmeriCorps Questioned on Jobs," *Associated Press*, April 28, 1997. Mr. Woo received a salary of approximately \$95,000 per year as Director of AmeriCorps' Western Regional Cluster.

²⁸John P. Walters, "Pull the Plug Already," Memorandum to Conservative Reformers, New Citizenship Project, October 20, 1995.

²⁹Amy Call, ed., *Budget Bulletin* No. 6, Majority Staff, Committee on the Budget, U.S. Senate, 105th Cong., 1st Sess., March 3, 1997; cited in Nina H. Shokriai and Dorothy B. Hanks, "School Choice

Programs: What's Happening in the States," Heritage Foundation F.Y.I. No. 138, April 21, 1997, p. 1.

³⁰See Robert W. Sweet, Jr., "Don't Read, Don't Tell: Clinton's Phony War on Illiteracy," Policy Review: The Journal of American Citizenship, No. 83 (May-June 1997), pp. 38-42.

IMPACT OF PRESIDENT'S FY 1998 BUDGET REQUEST FOR \$28 MILLION CUT IN VA RESEARCH

The president's FY 1998 budget request proposes a 10.5% cut in the VA research appropriation. If enacted by Congress, this cut would reduce FY 1998 funding for VA research to \$234 million, down from an FY 1997 appropriation of \$262 million. A cut of this magnitude—15% if the effect of inflation is included—will require VA to make significant changes in the program and future plans including:

Reinvigoration of VA's Career Development Programs, as recommended by the Research Realignment Advisory Committee (RRAC), will be delayed indefinitely. For the third year, VA will not be able to initiate any new Career Development awards. See attached Graph 1. Cut: 15 career development awards at a cost of \$2.5 million.

Plans for new research centers of excellence will be terminated or delayed indefinitely. Cut: 9 centers at a cost of \$10 million. These include:

Two Epidemiology Research and Information Centers designed to provide VA with much needed epidemiology research capacity

Three new competitively selected Diabetes Centers of Excellence

Two new Centers for Rehabilitation Medicine focusing on sensory loss and traumatic brain injury

A new, competitively selected Health Services Research and Development Center of Excellence

Phasing out one of four existing Environmental Hazards Research Centers

Three hallmark cooperative studies expected to have a far reaching impact on medical care will not be funded. Cut: \$3 million.

A substance abuse research initiative related to nicotine and smoking behavior

Two cooperative studies comparing surgical and medical treatments for heart disease

Other steps required to accommodate the remaining \$10 million of the \$28 million cut: 15-20 new health services research and development programs will be delayed.

VA will sharply decrease its investment in developing medical practice guidelines, reducing its ability to determine the most cost effective methods of delivering high quality care in the network environment.

Ten percent of existing investigator-initiated projects will be terminated. The number of funded projects will decrease from 1666 in FY 1997 to about 1400 in FY 1998. See attached Graph 2 for the impact on the number of Medical Research Service projects alone. This will lower funding opportunity for VA researchers to an all time low of less than 15%—only 1 out of 8-10 approved projects will be funded.

Administrative support for research offices located at VA medical centers will be reduced by 10-15%.

Reduced funding opportunity will affect VA's ability to attract and retain high quality physician investigators for careers in VA. Considering that 75% of VA researchers are physicians who provide medical care for veterans, the potential impact on VA's ability to provide the high quality care associated with academic/research facilities may be significant.

FOVA recommends full restoration of the funds cut in the president's request, plus \$18 million in new funding for an FY 1998 appropriation of \$280 million.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to this amendment.

First, let me address the amendment of the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] by way of the discussions that the gentleman and I have had both in the full committee as well as this evening on the floor.

Initially, in the full committee, there was a good deal of discussion about the reality that there are some problems with some AmeriCorps programs operating in the country, but also there are portions of the AmeriCorps Program that are working very, very well. For example, the forestry services going on in my district. AmeriCorps volunteers have done a rather phenomenal job.

Essentially, the gentleman from Kansas was saying to me, I think, that we need to raise a flag that says if there are programs here where taxpayers' dollars are not being spent well, then we either ought to stop that or, indeed, we should try to find a way to improve it. So his amendment essentially raises that flag by taking half of the AmeriCorps funding proposed in this bill and putting it in an area of funding within veterans medical research that is very, very critical.

Now, beyond my comments about AmeriCorps, let me say this about the gentleman from Kansas, a new member of the Committee on Appropriations. There is not a member of our committee who has more effectively brought forward the importance of the Persian Gulf syndrome problem, the reality that literally tens of thousands of veterans are facing circumstances that the medical community seems to know a lot less about than they should know.

As of this moment, as a direct result of his work, through a number of appropriation subcommittees, I am not sure exactly what the figure is, but we are pushing something close to \$100 million that is directed along a channel that will have us evaluating in intensive form the Persian Gulf syndrome.

□ 2145

And that concern about those veterans who served is very well-taken and very, very important.

Further, I want to say that while earlier I was personally going to consider just wiping out the AmeriCorps funding because we know at the other end of this, before we get through conference, before we get a signature from the President, AmeriCorps is going to be funded. The gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] is mixing the best of public policy with the best of reality around here in terms of his amendment. It is very helpful to the process, and because of that I would suggest to the Members that the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] has made a very good point and should get their support.

Mr. NEUMANN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words. Mr. Chairman, I rise to support the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT], my good friend, and his amendment.

This is really about priorities of spending in our government. It is about two programs. And the idea behind AmeriCorps, the idea of helping college students, is certainly an idea that most Americans would support. The idea of encouraging volunteerism is certainly an idea that most Americans would support. But when we start talking about the concept of paying people to volunteer, somehow we lose something in the translation. Once you receive a paycheck for doing something, you are no longer a volunteer.

This program is currently costing \$19,000 per student that it is attempting to help, and I would suggest that the cost is out of line. I would also suggest that the accountability is just plain not there in the program.

We then look at a second program and we have to ask ourselves, which program is it more important that we spend the money on? We then look at our Persian Gulf war veterans and the illnesses that they are facing and how much research money is being spent to solve the problems facing our Persian Gulf war veterans.

And we have to conclude, as I think this body will when we vote on this amendment, we have to conclude that our priorities here are wrong. Paying people to volunteer, even if the work that they are doing is good and important, is certainly not as important to our Nation as finding the root cause of the Gulf War syndrome that is affecting so many of our veterans in our Nation today.

I rise to support the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT], my good friend; and I sincerely hope this body makes the right decision and passes this amendment.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, this amendment once again places an issue before Members of the House regarding two very important areas of concern, I think, of Members of the House. Certainly all of us support veterans' programs in a great respect and admiration for what veterans have done for this country. And many of us, such as myself, are veterans.

At the same time, we recognize that there is a very real need for programs such as AmeriCorps, which happens to be a program that the President of the United States places a great deal of priority on. In fact, I have before me a statement of administration policy which was received by us today, in which the President states that "the administration understands that an amendment may be offered to terminate the Corporation for National Community Service. The administration would oppose any amendment to terminate the corporation, as well as any amendment that would eliminate the corporation's AmeriCorps grant program. Were any of these actions be incorporated into the final bill presented to the President, the President's senior

advisors would recommend that he veto the bill." The President goes on to speak to other aspects of the national service program.

This is a bill that, as we have already stated on the floor earlier today, has been a very difficult bill to craft. It is one that the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and myself and other members of the subcommittee spent a great deal of time putting together, and we hate to see it in any manner jeopardized by any type of threat of a veto.

But I think it is important to look at what some of the accomplishments of the AmeriCorps Program have been. Just in the 1995-1996 program year, AmeriCorps has trained, supervised or recruited more than 300,000 volunteers; they have taught or tutored more than 500,000 children; built 1,200 houses; rehabilitated 4,700 houses and apartments; immunized 64,000 people; planted more than 200,000 trees; restored more than 3,000 miles of shoreline and river banks; cleaned up 3,500 neighborhoods; enrolled 85,000 students in after-school programs. They have counseled more than 100,000 people in violence prevention; established more than 3,000 public safety patrols; provided 1,100,000 people with health care information; provided 32,000 people with employment-related services.

So AmeriCorps is not about volunteerism; it is really is about service. AmeriCorps has strengthened, not weakened, traditional volunteer activities. More than 3 out of 5, 61 percent of AmeriCorps members have completed 1,700 hours of service and earned education awards. An additional 17 percent earned partial education awards. Only 22 percent earned no award.

One measure of success for the program is the percentage of AmeriCorps members who earned the education awards. Nearly 4 out of 5, 70 percent of AmeriCorps members have earned education awards. Just recently the U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution supporting AmeriCorps.

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

Mr. STOKES. I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the ranking member's recitation of the accomplishments of AmeriCorps. I think all of us recognize in the start-up cost it was high, and it was an important new program with this administration. Obviously, there is a high premium on it. I think the program is working.

I would say that this amendment presents a dilemma for many of us. But I think the impetus is clear. I do not know, and I appreciate the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the chairman, has provided and pointed out that there is nearly \$100 million for review and research of gulf war syndrome.

Whether there is a program for the extra \$50 million, I do not know. But, obviously, if there was, I would suspect that the Committee on Appropriations would have processed those requests

and considered it. In fact, there are many quarters in this Federal Government, unfortunately, where they still seem to be in a state of denial with regard to that.

And I appreciate our friend, the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT], has taken the initiative to try and lead in providing adequate funding. But the bottom line is this: This takes \$200 million from the program, a program that is working, a program where these funds are necessary, where they are helping in a variety of ways. I think it has met its promise.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO] has expired.

(On request of Mr. STOKES, and by unanimous consent, Mr. VENTO was allowed to proceed for 2 additional minutes.)

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman would continue to yield, this eliminates and takes away the opportunity for young people to provide service. And I might say that while they get some modest compensation and recognition, that it is nowhere accorded the right.

Now in a different era, a different time many could take off a year and volunteer for service and do a variety of things and get low compensation or no compensation. But that is not the era we are working in today, in terms of people maybe have the altruism but they do not have the economic wherewithal.

And this program provides and lets people provide that type of volunteer service; and believe me, it is volunteer service when they postpone their vocational plans for those 2 years. So I rise in opposition to this amendment.

I think it is the wrong way to go. I think if we need money for the gulf war vets and the syndrome and the problems there, I would be happy to stand up here with the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], my colleague, the ranking member, and support it, but not on the basis that is being offered in this amendment.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. STOKES. I appreciate the comments of the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO].

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

I would like to make a couple of comments, one in response to the statement of the ranking member with regard to the President of the United States. His comment was in regard to elimination of the program. The amendment offered by the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] is a reduction of the present program, so he is not offering the amendment to eliminate the present program.

One is, you have to cross a threshold whether or not you eliminate the AmeriCorps as a program. I think the President gets himself in this oxymoron about paid volunteers. He ought to get away from the word "volunteers" in the AmeriCorps program

and just sign up and said, yes, he believes in service and we want to pay these individuals for these efforts and service which have normally gone to volunteers, and he should get himself away from this oxymoron and the attacks on the program.

I really do not care for the particular program. In response to the comments of the gentleman about the type of program and all the good which it has done, I also have to think about from 1993 to 1994 it was reported that 1,200 of the paid AmeriCorps "volunteers" worked at the Department of Agriculture, 525 worked in the Department of Interior, 210 worked in the Department of Justice, 135 in EPA, 60 at the National Endowment of the Arts; a total of 2,800 were working at Federal entities.

So that was pretty stunning to me when I discovered that. Also to think that the AmeriCorps spent \$1.7 million to a PR firm to work on their image. So when I think about priorities dealing within the restraints of a budget agreement, this is very disappointing in fact to me.

The GAO recently, I know the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] referred to the \$19,000 figure, the GAO estimates the total compensation given to each volunteer. I should not perhaps even call them volunteers because those that work in the AmeriCorps program do not want to be called volunteers, they want to be called members. So each member, it is \$26,000. This figure has increased per cost to \$33,000 when AmeriCorps' high dropout rate is factored in. That is a heavy price.

So when the gentleman talks about the promise of AmeriCorps has been achieved, all right, at what cost? And then you say of this \$33,000 per, what could we spend those monies on better with regard to how many Pell Grants could you get out of that \$33,000, or other things? And you are right, somebody mentioned this is about priorities.

So when I think about the issue of the gulf war illness, I do want to entertain a question to the chairman if I could for a second. Earlier he mentioned about \$100 million has now been appropriated for Gulf War illness. I am a little confused as to this amendment, if we are adding more moneys or replenishing accounts.

If the gentleman would explain to me, I yield to the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS].

Mr. LEWIS of California. I appreciate the gentleman yielding. And when the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] first raised this question effectively in our full committee, we were talking about \$20 million; and it came to our attention that there was some \$30 million within the Subcommittee on National Security, at least \$10 million in Labor-HHS. If there is an add-on here, that is additional.

But I must say, I do not know all the accounts because I have not had a chance to go through those in the last

few days. But there is a growing level of funding in which this issue and this problem is being recognized, and it is a direct result of the work that the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] is about.

Mr. BUYER. Reclaiming my time, so what you have earmarked, these monies will help replenish accounts which take away from other funding requirements?

Mr. LEWIS of California. If the gentleman would continue to yield, either they are earmarked funds out of research moneys, for example, there is already DOD money, a pool of money, and they designate some. We designated a portion out of research moneys in this bill, et cetera.

Mr. BUYER. When you compare this year's budget compared to what the President sent you, did the President reduce his VA research budget?

Mr. LEWIS of California. If the gentleman would yield further, yes, the President did. And as a result of our work, we have beefed it back up and there is significant adjustment upward in the research budget.

Mr. BUYER. And you plused up the budget over and above last year's number even though the President reduced his VA research?

Mr. LEWIS of California. If the gentleman would continue to yield, by \$33 million over the President.

Mr. BUYER. Let me thank the chairman for having done that.

I would share with the Members with regard to the gulf war issue, whether it has been in the military health delivery systems or in the VA, it has been very difficult to focus them on this issue. We voted here not long ago on the issue of national defense. We spent millions and millions of dollars, whether it is to buy tanks, we can debate over B-2 bombers, we debate a lot of things about military equipment, hummers and a lot of other things, but when it comes time to taking care of those have borne the risk of battle, we need to also step up to the plate and take care of these veterans.

There are many, in fact, who are suffering from multiple types of illnesses, multiple causations, which is very difficult for us to understand, for the family members. I applaud the gentleman for his amendment, and I ask that all the Members support this amendment.

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

I rise in strong support of the AmeriCorps and wonder in terms of the statement of the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT], who introduced the amendment, where he said that there was \$3.6 million allocated, appropriated, in this bill with his chart for Persian Gulf veterans. Let me assure my colleagues that according to the report put together by the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], our distinguished chairman, and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES], the ranking member, on page 16 it says, and I

quote, "The bill includes earmarking \$20 million," not \$3.6 million.

□ 2200

"The bill includes language earmarking \$20 million of the funds made available for medical research relating to Gulf War illnesses afflicting Persian Gulf veterans."

Mr. Chairman, I strongly believe after reading even more on this topic that we need to make sure that we take care of our veterans, World War II and World War I, Korean, Vietnam veterans and also our Persian Gulf veterans.

Dr. Kenneth Kizer, the VA's Undersecretary for Health, said in his testimony before Congress, "More than 90 research projects are in progress or have been completed, and more than 30 individual projects are being carried out nationwide by the VA and university affiliated investigators."

If we need to do more, and we probably do, let us work together in a bipartisan way to make sure that our veterans are cared for, and I will strongly support that amendment. But let us not pit two very important programs, AmeriCorps and the care and concern and medical necessities for our Persian Gulf veterans, against one another in a very political way.

AmeriCorps in my district is doing some great things. We have an EnviroCorps in Elkhart, IN. It is one of the best AmeriCorps projects in the country. It is doing a number of things, to clean up streams and the environment, to revitalize city neighborhoods throughout our community, to test homes for radon gas, a host of things that would not be done. They are working with the private sector, they are working with volunteers in the community. They are leveraging the resources throughout the community to get things done and help other people.

That is not just in Elkhart, IN. AmeriCorps has given 70,000 Americans a greater opportunity for higher education, taught over 380,000 students, mentored 93,000 youth, tutored 118,000 individuals. They are all across the country, spread out, helping others. I would think that a Republican wants people, as we do, not to just get something free but to do some work for it, that is the concept here, personal responsibility, work in the community and one gets an educational grant, a stipend to go to school. It leverages money, another good idea that we would hope to share in a bipartisan way, Republicans and Democrats.

We leverage the public money with the private sector, helping people build better communities in the environment, education, tutoring, making sure children are inoculated, all kinds of great things going on because of the leverage here at the public level that is spreading out locally to each and every one of our communities. I do not know how one can be against that. I do not know how we can pit two programs that I strongly support against one another.

I guess, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would say this. What are Republicans saying about this program that help young people, that help young people at a time when we really need them getting to college, when the college costs in this country are soaring, how are Republicans responding to this, most Republicans?

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER] has expired.

(By unanimous consent, Mr. ROEMER was allowed to proceed for 2 additional minutes.)

Mr. ROEMER. Gen. Colin Powell says, "AmeriCorps is doing a lot of good things around this country. They are leveraging other volunteers who come in to work with AmeriCorps."

Gov. William Weld, a Republican from Massachusetts, and I quote, "Every taxpayer dollar we spend on AmeriCorps comes back threefold when we add up the value of your innovative ideas, your physical labor and all the skills you bring to the workforce when you finish your education. It is one of the most intelligent uses of taxpayer dollars ever." Ever.

Now, I think that is where the mainstream of the country is. Support programs that insist on personal responsibility, that leverage dollars, that help our young people afford education and build better communities. This is a program, AmeriCorps, that I strongly support. I hope that we can work in a bipartisan way to support both AmeriCorps and our gulf veterans. I do not think that we should try to pit these programs against one another.

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

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman yielding. I would just say that absolutely the gentleman is right. We do not want to pit programs like this against one another. Unfortunately throughout this bill, that is the challenge of the bill. We have program after program that are vital to people, whether it is the poorest of the poor in housing programs or otherwise. One person's mind's eye view of what is enough money for this program versus another creates the difficulty.

I am not at all challenging what the gentleman suggests. I think he also knows full well that, before we get through this process with the other body, the conference, the AmeriCorps funding is going to be there. So indeed it is just a reflection of the discussion this evening that expresses people's viewpoint. It is helpful but it can be carried further than it need be.

Mr. ROEMER. Reclaiming my time, and I respect the gentleman from California, we have all kinds of opportunities around here to make priorities. We had a priority to try to cut 0.7 percent of the intelligence budget the other day. This body did not do that. We had the opportunity to cut B-2 bombers

that the Air Force does not want. This body did not do that.

Let us not pit two good programs against one another that we should be funding when we have got some of these other programs that the Defense Department does not want, a space station that does not work, when we are finding the Mars Pathfinder does marvelous things up in space for \$267 million as opposed to \$100 billion for the Space Station. Let us get our priorities right. Let us support our gulf veterans. Let us support AmeriCorps.

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

Mr. ROEMER. I yield to the gentleman from Kansas.

Mr. TIAHRT. I would suggest that this amendment does exactly what the gentleman is suggesting.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER] has again expired.

(On request of Mr. TIAHRT, and by unanimous consent, Mr. ROEMER was allowed to proceed for 2 additional minutes.)

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Chairman, I continue to yield to the gentleman from Kansas.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Chairman, I think this amendment meets the criteria that he is establishing here. It allows AmeriCorps to move on.

I would like to remind the gentleman from Indiana that AmeriCorps spends about 11 percent of their budget authority. They have been allocated \$1.6 billion from this Congress since its conception. They have only spent about \$300 million. With a reduced budget as suggested here, we are able to achieve both of the gentleman's goals, help the Gulf War veterans who are suffering from this illness and allow AmeriCorps to continue at a reduced size so that they can become more efficient.

Mr. ROEMER. Reclaiming my time from the gentleman from Kansas, what I would say is there are plenty of things we can cut in this budget. Whether it is a Space Station, whether it is a wind tunnel, there are a lot of things that we have to make tough choices on to balance the budget, and we are making them.

I am supportive of a balanced budget, and I voted for that in the historic bipartisan agreement that we brought to this floor. But let us not always go after the programs around here that help people go to school, that help people get a school lunch, that help people get fed that are falling through a safety net. Let us make sure that the Gulf veterans are taken care of, that AmeriCorps, which is working with personal responsibility, is funded, and that we go after some of these programs that are not working nearly as well as these other two good programs.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, in these difficult times when we are trying to balance

the budget and establish the priorities that this body must adhere to because the American people adhere to certain priorities, those priorities will fall time and time again to our veterans, those people who marched off to war and many of them came back with gulf war syndrome. I have a number of them in my district, and my heart goes out to them. I honor them and I respect them, and my priority is with them, because America should keep its word to its veterans. They kept their word with us.

It was Teddy Roosevelt that once said a man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal. I think to increase research and development to \$25 million for gulf war illness research is a top priority. I think it must be done. For too long this country ignored the ravages of gulf war syndrome and ignored that it was a bona fide problem that our soldiers came back home with. Our veterans have earned a square deal. They were promised a square deal. That is not what they are getting with this appropriations bill, unless we adopt the Tiahrt-Chenoweth amendment.

How can we in good conscience spend even a penny on pet projects, as worthy as they may be, while our promises to veterans continue to be broken? AmeriCorps' paid volunteers may work on projects in exchange for pay and scholarships, but what is their contribution in comparison to the sacrifice of our veterans? Veterans who gave up freedom and endured the hardship and bore the separation from loved ones and all too often suffered terrible bodily injury in defense of our freedoms in the gulf war.

I urge my colleagues to take this small step, keep our obligations and our promises to our veterans. Show our veterans that they are as important to us as we and a free America were to them when they gave so much to us. Please support the Tiahrt-Chenoweth amendment.

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

Mrs. CHENOWETH. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, since the gentleman indicated that we ought to put support for veterans ahead of everything else, can I assume that she will vote for my amendment to eliminate the pork project in Idaho so we can add money to the veterans health care budget?

Mrs. CHENOWETH. I am supporting my State and my commitment to my State.

Mr. OBEY. So in that case the veterans will come second?

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Chairman, this is out of order because we are debating another amendment.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I think this debate is an appropriate kind of debate but not

necessarily comparing AmeriCorps with the veterans. I think we all support both.

The irony is that the gulf war veterans may have sons or daughters that are in AmeriCorps, and in fact gulf war veterans may qualify as AmeriCorps volunteers, because it is a totally different program. It has to do with contribution to the community for remuneration and a credit toward, whether it is vocational training or academic training. I happen to represent an area in California, Fort Ord, the former Fort Ord, which still has a military property on it; and in that property, we have the center for the gulf war syndrome calls. Anyone who has been in the gulf war who thinks they may be qualified for benefits, these medical benefits, all of those calls from everywhere they are made in the world come to that building. That building gets them registered and into the process. It is a good process and it is working.

The problem I think we have with veterans and not just gulf war veterans but veterans in general is that we are not allowing for collaboration. If one goes to a veterans clinic, the veterans cannot take their family and children to that clinic. We ought to be able to let them do that. If one is over 65 in this country and he is a veteran, he cannot take himself or his spouse to a veterans clinic. They have to go out to a Medicare process.

The problem for medical care in America for veterans is not just limited in here, and we do not do more by isolating these moneys, by taking them out of a good project and saying we are going to put it in just to research in an isolated area. If we really want to help veterans, gulf war veterans and all, we would do a much better job of collaboration.

Let me tell my colleagues on that same military base are a whole bunch of AmeriCorps volunteers that are helping clean up that base, and they are working with the community based organizations and they are doing a very good job. Yes, they are getting paid. I was a Peace Corps volunteer and I got paid for being in the Peace Corps. There is no free lunch in this process. But they are not getting rich on this.

In fact, the author of this amendment has had six AmeriCorps volunteers in his district, of which four finished. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks who oversaw the program wrote a letter, and I would be glad to give it to the gentleman and submit it for the RECORD if he wants, that says,

Without the assistance of AmeriCorps the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks would not be able to hire these young people lacking the funding to do so. The department can, however, provide raw materials, tools and supervision.

The letter goes on to say,

The AmeriCorps and public would lose the benefits provided to the natural resources and outdoor recreation projects, and the individuals who would have been selected as members would lose valuable opportunities.

□ 2215

It goes on to say: "I hope you will find that you will be able to fully support the continuation of the AmeriCorps as a viable program important to the American people."

This is a letter to Senator BOND, and it is written by Bob Mayers, the Assistant to the Secretary of Operations, appointee of the Republican Governor of the State of Kansas.

Lastly, I think what is very important here is that if we are going to make some tough choices, I think we made it last week, a week before that, when we had a very close vote, and I believe it was, as my colleagues know, half a dozen votes difference on the B-2 bomber, something that the Pentagon has not asked for, something that the Air Force does not want, and we voted to commit ourselves to building nine more. An estimated outlay or total cost in the end is about \$18 billion.

Now if my colleagues want to make choices, and my veterans are just like my colleagues' veterans, they understand these choices. They do not want us to take away programs from their sons and daughters, from their colleagues who may be wanting to go into the AmeriCorps who want to pay off student loans, who want to pay off education. Robbing Peter to pay Paul is, I think, a very injurious proposition, and this is a bad amendment.

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

Mr. FARR of California. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate my colleague yielding. I think the point I am really trying to make here is to suggest to the House that we are all on the same side of this. The fact is my colleague knows and I know before we get through this process of the conference that AmeriCorps is going to have its funding restored, we know that. What has really happened though as a part of the full committee discussion and here, is suddenly there is a different attention being paid to the Persian Gulf syndrome, which the gentleman's district should be very pleased with as well.

So at the end of the process we will raise that to a much higher level of attention; the gentleman's district will like that. But AmeriCorps will be funded at the other end, as my colleagues know. Frankly it is important that the public know that we are all on the same side really in this discussion. And as my colleagues know, we have a tendency to fill all the time that is available regardless of whether we agree or disagree.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Chairman, I think the gentleman's observations are very well made. I just disagree with the author of this amendment that the way of getting there is to rob Peter to pay Paul. I think when we rob an educational account to pay for a medical account we have no gain.

Mrs. Chairman. I include the following for the RECORD.

STATE OF KANSAS,
DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & PARKS
Pratt, KS, October 4, 1996.
Hon. CHRISTOPHER BOND,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR BOND: I appreciate the efforts of yourself, Senator Grassley, and Congressman Lewis to examine the relationship between USDA and the Corporation for National Service regarding the AmeriCorps program. At this time in America, it is critical that government operate ethically and above board, without the intent, act or perception of wrongdoing.

However, as I am certain you will find, the relationship between USDA, CNS and the AmeriCorps projects administered at the state level is reasonable and desirable. This partnership allows rural Americans to perform needed community services for an honest wage and broaden their potentials for the future in the process. When these AmeriCorps members have completed their educations, they will be ready to take their places as productive members of society, with not only the class work behind them, but also the experience earned in the successful completion of their AmeriCorps projects.

Without the assistance of the USDA and CNS, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks would not be able to hire these young people, lacking the funding to do so. The department can, however, provide raw materials, tools and supervision. Important projects underway now, and others that might be completed in the future, would die without being completed. Rural communities would lose the employment options provided by AmeriCorps, the public would lose the benefits provided to the natural resources and outdoor recreation projects, and the individuals who would have been selected as members would lose valuable opportunities. The language proposed by USDA correlates to previous agreements, and fully supports the principles under which AmeriCorps was conceived, while ending the transfer of operating funds from CNS to USDA.

No additional funding is needed to support the AmeriCorps program, and the positive impact it makes is tremendous. I hope that you will find that you are able to fully support continuation of AmeriCorps as a viable program important to the American people.

Sincerely,

ROB MANES,
Assistant Secretary for Operations.

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to this amendment. First of all, I want to just point out as the second ranking Democrat on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs I stand in a back seat to no one in terms of standing up for our Nation's veterans' needs, and while I appreciate the efforts that the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS], the chairman of this committee, has made in terms of standing up for our Nation's veterans in this budget, and I think the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] deserves credit as well, I would like to point out to those Republicans who are beating up on the AmeriCorps program today that according to their own budget agreement that they passed themselves earlier this year, they were \$2,230,000,000 under what this budget does.

So while I appreciate the fact that the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations went back and found \$2 billion, for people to stand up here and make speeches on the floor of the House saying they want to stand up for our Nation's veterans, go look at their own rhetoric, go look at what their budget that they passed did to the veterans of this country. They are the ones who led the fight to cut the veterans programs, and now they stand up here on the House floor and pretend like they are standing up for our Nation's veterans. So in reality what they can do is beat up on AmeriCorps, because what they really want to do is go after President Clinton because he has a program that encourages voluntarism in America.

And that is the truth of what this is all about. This is just plain rhetoric bashing, this is the same old, same old stuff that we hear too much of. In fact, if we are truthful and honest, I think we go back to the original statement of the chairman of the committee. He said some very nice things; I heard him when I was sitting in my office getting ready to offer a couple of amendments on the housing bill that is coming up, and he said some very nice things about the AmeriCorps program. The truth is that of course like every program, we have HUD programs that are well run, we have HUD programs that are not well run; we have programs in the Pentagon that are well run and some that are not so well run. We have some AmeriCorps that are well run and some that are not so well run.

But the truth and the fundamental aspect of this is that there is broad bipartisan support, I believe, for both AmeriCorps as well as for our veterans' programs, and for us to sit here and gratuitously go out and find a way of offering an amendment that can just go and try to bash the AmeriCorps in order to pretend like we are standing up for our Nation's veterans is utter hogwash, and I hope the veterans of this country who are watching this debate listen to the fact that there is \$2.230 billion, that is B's, not M's, billions of dollars that were proposed by the Republicans that were not included because of the work of the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES].

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I too want to rise in opposition to this amendment, and really, I think, there has been a great deal of bipartisan effort on this whole issue of balancing the budget, and I think because of that I am very curious about what is not only represented to be an effort to cut the deficit, but also what I would call bashing and pitting one very deserving group against the other.

Let us make it perfectly clear this amendment eliminates the AmeriCorps program, and for many who have debated it and discussed it, for some reason the involvement of the President

seems to color the value of this program, and I would simply take issue with great respect for the gentleman.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, would the gentlewoman yield on that point that she made?

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. LEWIS of California. It may be that the gentlewoman was not given the information that the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] took up his second amendment rather than the first one. Because of that this amendment takes approximately half of the AmeriCorps funding and puts some of it into veterans programs, and the balance remains, which allows us effectively to go to conference where we know it is going to be restored.

I do appreciate the gentlewoman's position, but I wanted the gentlewoman to know that.

In the meantime, if my colleague will, I wanted to mention to her that we hope to get through this amendment by the time I have committed to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] that we will close down by 10:30, and that is not just for the gentlewoman but for the other Members who are here.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Reclaiming my time, I hope I will be able to capture the time. Mr. Chairman, I do appreciate it, and I did know the amendment that we were discussing, I consider the amendment an elimination of the AmeriCorps for the very reason that when we begin to juxtapose moneys against one other, we are bashing and we are eliminating.

I recognize that this is a modified amendment, but this amendment, the purpose of it is to eliminate AmeriCorps. This has no intent to fund our veterans. This is a purpose of, in fact, causing anguish, causing ugliness in this debate.

Let me simply argue on behalf of the AmeriCorps program and the very valuable things that it does. First, I want to take issue with those who say that there are individuals who are in the AmeriCorps program that do not do their job, that there should be volunteers, that they should not be paid. These are individuals who work very hard in our community and, in fact, are contributing in our community and receiving an education.

I would venture to say that the young men and women who are in the gulf war would support the AmeriCorps, and why would they support it? Because they are the equals of these individuals who have come up to hard times and are now seeking to give to their country, but, as well, taking advantage of an opportunity to be educated and maybe be back in step with helping us to have more peace so that we send less of our veterans or less of our soldiers into places of war.

For example, in Houston the LA Vets is sponsored by our AmeriCorps. What do they do? They help homeless vets. I would think that our veterans would

support the AmeriCorps programs that do that. What else do they do in Houston? The Houston Read Commission, the literacy AmeriCorps that helps to bring about the opportunities for reading in our community; English as a Second Language, a program that is extremely important.

But most of all, I think the dignity of the AmeriCorps participants have been attacked, and I take great offense in that, for these are young men and women who simply want an opportunity.

Yes, this is the President's program and the President's opportunity. But it is not the President's vision. It is America's vision to give young people the opportunity to climb up the rough side of the mountain and, yes, stand on top of the mountain.

I believe that this effort that is being offered to take a few pennies here and a few pennies there for two very good programs is, as I started out in my remarks, an attack on AmeriCorps and an attempt to eliminate AmeriCorps.

I would simply ask the question, if it is going to be restored in conference, why do we not do the right thing and maintain the full funding of AmeriCorps, work in conference to increase the dollars for Persian Gulf research and Persian Gulf illnesses, because I think that is a very valid concern. Why do we not do it that way? The reason why we are not doing it that way is because the real intent of this amendment is to bash AmeriCorps, to eliminate AmeriCorps, and it has nothing to do with anyone's concern about the veterans.

I support any effort to increase funding for veterans, and I would encourage my colleagues to go to the conference committee, work sincerely along with the Senate to increase those dollars, because we are moving along in a well-intentioned manner, which is to balance the budget. I see no reason whatsoever to eliminate these dollars on a very valid program that helps young people do the right thing and achieve their goals and aspirations.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to raise my strong opposition to Mr. TIAHRT's amendment to eliminate AmeriCorps by using the tragic situation created by gulf war illness. If the administration had not taken steps to address the need to recognize disabilities associated with the illness and extended the length of time veterans have to apply for benefits I could see a need to increase funding for that purpose.

This amendment to H.R. 2158 will eliminate AmeriCorps, a much needed program and thus deny the opportunity for many deserving young people to attend college. The program is simple, but it has had a significant impact on the lives of people living in my Houston, TX, district.

In the city of Houston, David Lopez, who was employed as an AmeriCorps member last year, worked to provide the inner city working parents of latch key kids with supervised activity and play. They are not left to their own devices, or worse, to the design of street predators who would lead these young lives in the wrong direction.

For a year of volunteer service with Communities In Schools, David earned a \$4,725 scholarship toward college.

AmeriCorps is the one and only chance for many of its participants to obtain a college education. It has been under attack from the early days of the 104th Congress for being inefficient. The truth is that among the numerous independent studies in the past, including the one by conservative "Chicago School" economists sponsored by three private foundations, confirmed that investments in national service programs are sound, yielding from \$1.54 to \$3.90 for every dollar invested. In fact, a 1995 GAO report concluded that AmeriCorps almost tripled the \$31 million amount Congress directed them to raise by raising \$91 million.

AmeriCorps has played a vital role in communities all over America. The 508,593 students taught, and the 42,381 families left homeless by natural disasters, and the 143,513 individuals provided health care screening at clinics, VA hospitals, and other health-related facilities and focus particularly on children and youth are testaments to the critical role this program plays in the lives of people in need.

I would offer to my colleagues who are in a rush to cut AmeriCorps that if they looked around their districts they may find that AmeriCorps is doing some very amazing things for these few tax dollars.

For example, in the city of Houston, the Collaboration to Help Homeless Veterans uses AmeriCorps members on areas of housing and employment readiness to perform case management activities and help homeless veterans in the Houston area move toward self-sufficiency.

The Houston READ Commission/Literacy AmeriCorps provide literacy training and needed support services while developing community leadership in traditionally disadvantaged locations of the greater Houston area. Educational activities include GED tutoring, English as a second language training, homework assistance, and family literacy instruction.

Teach for America—Houston is another program in the city of Houston which utilizes AmeriCorps members in a project designed to improve the educational achievement of underserved school-age youth by providing students with teachers having diverse backgrounds and strong knowledge of academic content. AmeriCorps members are assigned teaching and leadership roles in inner city and rural public schools.

I strongly oppose any effort to end this program. I would ask that my colleague join me in opposition to this amendment.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, first, I want to thank the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] on the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies bill, a job well done. There are lots of various issues that they have had to work out, and I think they are doing a tremendous job. My admiration goes out to both of them.

I rise, however, in opposition, in strong opposition, to this amendment, a very sincere amendment on the part of the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] but one that I think is very wrong. And I feel so strongly about it I

was almost reluctant to get up because I am almost afraid of what I might say.

I mean I hear people calling it the President's program, and yet the President worked very hard with Republicans to make it a bipartisan program. That is why, instead of it being a national program, one-third of the program is decided nationally, and two-thirds is decided by the States.

Republicans really did a good one on the President, though, because when we allow States to do their programs, they are going to have good programs and bad programs. So instead of having a national program that, as my colleagues know, is pretty good, and no one can find any criticism, we allow States to be innovative. And so they have a number of good programs, but they have some that are not so good. And when AmeriCorps finds out what are the bad programs, they are eliminated. So what we have is some really excellent programs, and we have a few bad ones.

I look in terms of where this money is going. I serve as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Government Reform, and we oversee the Veterans Department along with HUD and the Education Department and HHS, and so on. We have had 10 hearings on gulf war syndrome, and I think I can say with some authority that the problem is not funding of illnesses. The problem is the VA and the DOD failed to recognize the problem in the first place. It was not a money issue.

We are going to spend in the 1998 budget \$20 million earmarked for medical research in the VA HUD bill. We are going to spend \$78 million in DOD budgets. We are going to spend \$10 million in HHS. One hundred eight million is going to be spent on gulf war illnesses in the budget that exists right now.

□ 2230

We have the money there to do the work. The question is, is the VA and the DOD going to spend the money the right way? There we might have debate.

Mr. Chairman, I represent the cities of Stamford, Norwalk, and Bridgeport. I have kids who are hungering to be of service to this country. They are also hungering to get an education. A great Republican principle, I thought, was to not give them something, make them earn it. They earn it. They work at a minimum wage.

Yes, we call them volunteers, even though we call it AmeriCorps. I am a Peace Corps volunteer. I got paid. I was given a stipend at the end, just like these volunteers who are doing service. They are participants, no different than Peace Corps volunteers, but they are working at basically \$4 an hour. When they are done, unlike me in the Peace Corps, when I had money set aside that I could spend on anything, all these individuals can do is spend it on education.

So for me, Mr. Chairman, this was a program that the President reached out to our side of the aisle, made two-thirds of it funded and decided by States, and therefore brought in the possibility that we could have some bad programs, which we are quick to criticize, and did not make it a national program.

Mr. Chairman, I am not going to be asking for a rollcall vote on this issue. I accept the fact that our chairman of this committee is going to try to work it out in conference, and I accept the fact that his logic said that, better to keep some of the program there to be funded and argued with the Senate.

But I just strongly, strongly oppose those on my side of the aisle and maybe a few on the other side of the aisle who have targeted AmeriCorps, because I think they are dead wrong. It has been a tremendous program for my cities in Bridgeport and Stamford and Norwalk. I have kids who are being of service. They are so grateful to be of service, and to know that they can get an education in the process.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I will make a very brief comment. There are two or three Members who plan to speak this evening but who are going to be asking for unanimous consent requests regarding their position, so that we can finish this amendment this evening and go to a vote on the item, and then we will take the balance of Title I up tomorrow.

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

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words. I rise in opposition to the Tiaht amendment. My colleague's amendment gives us terrible options. I support veterans and additional funding for Gulf war syndrome. We should be engaged in expanding AmeriCorps, not in its elimination.

Almost 4 years ago, when Congress created the AmeriCorps program, we expected great things from national service. The Congress expected AmeriCorps to help communities meet their public service needs with real results. We expected AmeriCorps to unite individuals from different backgrounds in the common effort to improve our communities. We expected AmeriCorps to encourage its members to explore and exercise their responsibilities to their communities, their families, and themselves.

Today, almost 3 years after the first 20,000 AmeriCorps members hit the field in over 1,000 communities across the country, the Corporation for National Service and its AmeriCorps program has met every one of these expectations. And in many cases, it's exceeded them.

In my hometown of Houston, TX, 120 AmeriCorps members in the SERVE HOUSTON program serve 1,500 school children daily in partnership with the Houston Independent School District and the YMCA of Greater Houston by providing in-school tutors and after-school programs in 24 title I schools.

Our daily Club Learn and Serve after-school program provides safe and structured activities

for 1,000 children who would otherwise leave school for an empty home or the streets. The program provides reading and homework assistance, cultural activities, and service learning projects where school children learn to serve their own communities.

SERVE HOUSTON receives cash matching support for its AmeriCorps funding from leading corporations including: Shell Oil Co. Foundation, Exxon, Enron Corp., Duke Energy, Arthur Anderson, and El Paso Energy. In addition, it receives strong support from private foundations and individuals. SERVE HOUSTON is truly a public-private partnership.

SERVE HOUSTON generates non-AmeriCorps volunteers to serve the community through its outreach to churches and synagogues, college campuses, and public schools. Nationally, each AmeriCorps member leverages about 12 volunteers and generates 246 volunteer hours.

But AmeriCorps' service in my community does not stop there. The Collaboration to Help Homeless Veterans is involved in several aggressive outreach programs. The AmeriCorps members not only go to shelters and get veterans signed up for services from the Department of Veterans Affairs, but they also go out with mobile units and service those homeless individuals that are under bridges and in the woods. These AmeriCorps members assist our homeless veterans to become self-sufficient by providing educational and vocational support; they help our veterans access medical and social services, and they build working relationships with other service providers.

The decision on whether or not to continue national service will tell us a lot about ourselves. We should put partisan politics aside. Let's work together to continue to provide young people an opportunity to help themselves, as they help our communities and learn service as a way of life.

AmeriCorps has kept its promise to the American people. The Congress should, too.

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

Mr. SAWYER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong opposition to the Tiaht amendment. That notwithstanding, I want to thank the sponsor for the opportunity to clarify the administration's work on AmeriCorps.

Early in the last Congress, there were many Members expressing concerns about AmeriCorps. The critics said that AmeriCorps was plagued by cost overruns. So, AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National Service took the criticisms seriously. They took immediate steps to alleviate the problems. Former Senator Harris Wofford, now CEO of the Corporation for National Service, and Senator CHARLES GRASSLEY announced a 10 point agreement to reform the AmeriCorps program.

That effort made clear, enforceable commitments to contain costs. It also resulted in an increase in the AmeriCorps' private sector match from 25 to 33 percent of program costs.

Then, critics said that AmeriCorps was not fulfilling its commitment to service and voluntarism. As the 10 point agreement included increased collaboration with national non-profits, special scholarships to reward voluntarism and other efforts to increase occasional, or "week-end" voluntarism nationwide, in addition to long-term commitments to service. And in this way, AmeriCorps responded to its critics by increasing its volunteer and service efforts.

Then critics said that the Corporation for National Service was lacking in its financial management standard and quality controls. The Corporation responded by committing to work with its Inspector General and Corporation's auditors, Arthur Anderson LLP and Williams, Adley & Co. to correct its financial weaknesses. Ted Sheridan of the Financial Executive Institute also worked with the Corporation to deal with these problems.

A year later, the Corporation is on the track to be a model of responsible governmental structure. It has hired a full-time Chief Financial Officer and it is in the process of installing a new financial management system. By 1998, it expects to have regular fully auditable financial statements and strict business controls.

Two years ago, critics rallied behind the cry that AmeriCorps was a government program fraught with management and financial problems. But AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National Service responded, and today AmeriCorps is a program of which I believe we can all be proud, critics and supporters alike. Unless of course, fixing the program was never the real goal.

You see, despite its successes, we are still having the debate over funding. That leads me to believe that the motives behind the criticism was never constructive, intended to produce a model government program. Instead, the critics' real goal was simply to defund or at least cripple a program that has been a target of theirs for years, no matter how well it is working today.

If that is the case, and I can hardly see how it could be otherwise, I urge my colleagues to reject this unfortunate amendment and to support a government program that helps to leverage private funds to tackle the difficult problems that face our youth, our communities, and our nation, neighborhood by neighborhood, where real effort can make a real difference in real peoples' lives.

In closing, let me thank Mr. STOKES and Chairman LEWIS for their work on this bill. I take at face value his commitment to restore funding in conference and for this opportunity to clarify the constructive work by so many at AmeriCorps over the past several years.

AUDITABILITY

THE CORPORATION IS STRENGTHENING ITS MANAGEMENT CONTROL SYSTEMS

The Corporation is unique in that it is a new entity comprised of pre-existing federal agencies and commissions and their outdated systems. The Corporation is methodically strengthening its financial management systems to reach full auditability in compliance with the new requirements of the Corporation Control Act, with action completed or in the process of implementation on 97 out of 99 points raised by Arthur Andersen by May 1, 1997. Once that goal is reached, the Chief Financial Officer will move forward on auditing current financial statements.

THE CORPORATION IS STRENGTHENING ITS TRUST FUND SYSTEM

A subsequent report by Peat Marwick, LLP (KPMG) will guide our efforts to strengthen the Trust Fund systems. It pinpoints several weaknesses in the current system—and we've already taken significant steps to begin to address them.

THE TRUST FUND SYSTEM MIRRORS OUR DECENTRALIZED STRUCTURE

Local program directors are directly responsible for certifying Trust Fund eligibility within guidelines set by Congress. Our experience and the KPMG findings indicate

that this reliance on local control requires stepped-up federal oversight to ensure accurate Trust fund records.

THE CORPORATION HAS TAKEN SIGNIFICANT STEPS TO ADDRESS TRUST FUND ISSUES

The Corporation generally concurs with and is committed to a methodical resolution of the issues raised by the KPMG report. To strengthen our Trust Fund systems, the Corporation has already taken several major steps, such as: updating the certification process and incorporated an automatic system rejection process to ensure all documents have been properly approved before Trust Fund accounts are established; freezing grant renewals until accurate certification forms are filed with the Trust Fund; developing systems to improve transactions registers and maintain supporting data; bringing accounting records to a current period; implementing a number of major changes to our segregation of duties within the Trust Fund operation; developing and implementing a revised payment system and an automated interface of those payments to our existing ledger system.

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL, BUT THAT'S NO EXCUSE

Many federal agencies are struggling to meet the new financial management auditability standards. The Departments of Defense, GSA, IRS, even the U.S. Congress. The Corporation is making every effort to meet the new challenges—and has made significant progress.

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

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT].

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GILCHREST) having assumed the chair, Mr. COMBEST, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2158) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, for sundry independent agencies, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and pursuant to the provisions of section 40003 of Public Law 105-18, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following members on the part of the House to the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education: Mr. Martin Anderson, California; Mr. George Waldner, Pennsylvania; and Mr. Jonathan Brown, California.

There was no objection.

COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable James V. Hansen, chairman of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct:

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT,

Washington, DC, July 15, 1997.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I am writing pursuant to Rule L (50) of the Rules of the House, to supplement the original notification by Mr. Cole on June 3, 1997 that he had been served with a subpoena issued by the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

After consultation with the Office of General Counsel, the Bipartisan Legal Advisory Group of the House of Representatives has determined that the subpoena to Mr. Cole is consistent in part and inconsistent in part with the rights and privileges of the House and has directed Mr. Cole to comply with the subpoena to the extent that it is consistent with the rights and privileges of the House.

Sincerely,

JAMES V. HANSEN,
Chairman.

EXTENDING ORDER OF THE HOUSE OF MAY 7, 1997, THROUGH WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 1997

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the order of the House of May 7, 1997, as extended on June 24, 1997, be further extended through Wednesday, July 30, 1997.

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

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the Virgin Islands [Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. SAXTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DAVIS] is recognized for 5 minutes.