

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2684, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the Rule for the VA-HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill. This bill makes significant cuts in critical housing initiatives and will have a devastating effect on basic scientific research in this country.

This legislation is a string of broken promises—promises to provide for those who need a place to live, promises to invest in research and development, and promises to provide quality health care for our veterans. The bill reported by the Appropriations Committee cuts funding for housing programs, cuts funding for basic research and NASA, and does not provide adequate funding for Veterans' health care.

Last year, Congress authorized 100,000 new Section 8 rental vouchers to help families with worst-case housing needs, people who pay more than half their income in rent every month. This bill provides no new funding for this voucher program, denying 100,000 Americans affordable housing opportunities.

The bill cuts \$250 million in funding from the Community Development Block Grant program. Cities and towns across America will be unable to use these funds to create new jobs, invest in new housing opportunities, and revitalize neighborhoods. In addition, the Committee cut \$20 million from the HOME investment partnership program, \$10 million of which is targeted at providing counseling services to first-time homebuyers.

The Committee also cuts funding for the most vulnerable Americans—the homeless. It is estimated that more than 600,000 people are living in shelters and on the streets of this country. Many are families, children, veterans, and victims of domestic violence. Despite the overwhelming need for more shelter beds and supportive services for the homeless, this bill cuts additional funding from the Homeless Assistance grant program.

Mr. Speaker, taking care of Veterans who bravely served our country should be one of Congress's top priorities. After reviewing this legislation, it is quite clear that Republicans do not believe this to be true. While this bill provides an addition \$1.7 billion for Veterans Medical Health Care, it falls far short of the \$3 billion increase necessary to ensure our nation's veterans with adequate healthcare. Without this additional funding, Veteran Health Care centers across the country will be forced to make even greater cuts in existing programs and will be prohibited from implementing additional programs.

NASA and NSF have also taken a huge hit in this bill. By cutting \$1 billion from the NASA program and \$275 million from NSF, the science community has been dealt a serious blow. It is tragic that a country which prides itself on being number one in space exploration and the technological advances will suffer the devastating effects of these short-sight-

ed cuts for years, and possibly decades to come.

The \$1 billion decrease to the NASA budget is the largest cut since the end of the Apollo program! Several programs have been severely reduced or zeroed out, which virtually guarantees their termination. This bill cancels funding for the Space Infrared Telescope Facility, and decreases funding for the Explorer program, Discovery program, and Mars missions support funding for research and technology for space science. At the same time, there are \$122 million in non-requested earmarks within the bill. Existence of these earmarks worsens the impact of reductions to higher priority programs.

By limiting funds, NASA will be forced to make drastic administrative cuts in ten of its centers and will be forced to close at least two centers. No doubt this will translate into several employees being laid off. By decreasing NASA funds, we will ensure the delay in development of the Crew Return Vehicle (CRV) which will subsequently setback the timetable when crew can board the ISS.

Mr. Speaker, to make a long story short, this is a bad bill. It's bad for science; it's bad for Veterans; it's bad for working class families; it's bad for middle class families; and it's bad for seniors. I strongly urge my colleagues to defeat the rule and oppose this bill in its current form.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2488,
TAXPAYER REFUND AND RELIEF
ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. JIM KOLBE

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, I rise with pride to support the conference report on H.R. 2488, which provides a sizable tax cut for the American taxpayers. I am proud to give taxpayers back their money the federal government doesn't need. That's right; the federal government doesn't need it. Surplus means the amount in excess of what we spend. And the federal government has and will have all it needs plus enough to reform Social Security and Medicare and start paying down the debt, and still leave a small amount to return to the folks who are sending their hard-earned dollars to Washington, DC.

Within hours of the announcement of the conference agreement, my office began receiving letters from groups opposing this tax cut. And what are they saying? Don't give the money back; spend more money on my program.

The Minority Leader suggests that the amount we're giving back is too much; that we have to save the surplus so we have money available for entitlement reform.

Didn't he hear that we're using \$3 to save Social Security and Medicare, to fund programs and to pay down the debt, for each \$1 we are giving back to the taxpayers?

President Clinton says he'll talk about giving a tax cut after we provide for Medicare, debt reduction and federal spending.

Didn't he hear? This bill gives \$3 of the surplus to Social Security, Medicare, government programs, and debt reduction for every \$1 of

the surplus that it leaves with the taxpayer. Makes one worry about what he has in mind for federal spending. Is he thinking about more and bigger government programs?

Mr. Speaker, American taxpayers have been paying and paying and paying. The typical American family pays more in taxes than on food, clothing and shelter combined. Our tax burden from all government is the highest since we were financing a world war in the 40s. In fact, without this tax relief bill, the average American household will pay \$5,307 more in taxes over the next 10 years than the government needs to operate.

We have a good economy; unemployment is at record lows. We don't need more government. We do need to scrutinize programs and divert dollars from ineffective and wasteful programs to areas that need additional funding. But we don't need to increase the size of government.

Individuals have the right to choose how to spend their money. They can choose to tutor their kids, or replace a furnace or air conditioner, or help an elderly parent, or support a favorite charity, or even save it for their own retirement. They shouldn't have it taken from their paycheck before they even see it so that government can use it to fund yet another program.

One administration official called these taxpayers selfish.

I call the groups who want to spend more of the taxpayers' money selfish.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill. Let's return a small share of the surplus to the taxpayers. It belongs to them.

THE NATIONWIDE GUN BUYBACK
ACT OF 1999

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the Nationwide Gun Buyback Act of 1999 (NGBA), providing federal funds to local jurisdictions to engage in gun buyback programs like the successful program conducted by the District of Columbia last month. Under the bill, funds would be distributed through the Justice Department after evaluation of proposals, and added weight would be given to jurisdictions with the greatest incidence of gun violence. The NGBA would require that a jurisdiction certify that it is capable of destroying the guns within 30 days, that it can conduct the program safely, and that an amnesty appropriate for the jurisdiction will be offered. Not only individuals, but groups such as gangs could take advantage of the buyback provisions to encourage street gangs to disarm themselves.

This bill is necessary because, despite the extraordinary demonstrated success of the gun buyback program in the District, local jurisdictions have no readily available funds for similar programs. The District was forced to find money on an ad hoc basis and ran out of funds despite many residents who still desired to turn in guns. Initially, the District conducted a pilot program using funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Confronted with long lines of residents, the Police Department then took the program city-wide, using drug asset forfeiture funds. Even

so, after using \$290,000, the city ran out of funds, but not of guns that could have been collected. The guns were a "good buy" but hard-pressed jurisdictions, especially big cities, should not have to rob Peter to pay Paul when it comes to public safety. The federal government can play a unique and noncontroversial role in reducing gun violence by providing the small amount authorized by my bill, \$50 million, to encourage buybacks efforts where they can be helpful.

The District's gun buyback leadership needs to be taken nationwide because the nation's capital has successfully demonstrated a faster and easier way to get guns where criminals cannot use them and children and adults cannot misuse them. Gun buyback efforts are not new, but the recent, dramatic impact of the District's program has special bi-partisan and natural appeal today because the program is voluntary and requires no change in local laws. My bill has the added feature of skirting the present stalemate in the Congress, where we have yet to pass a gun safety bill. A gun buyback bill is certainly no substitute for gun safety legislation, but my bill is based on demonstrated and successful experience in a number of cities that have achieved voluntary compliance by citizens with local laws.

Families, and especially mothers, have feared guns in their homes, but have not known how to get rid of them. In most jurisdictions, a grandmother petrified that there is a gun in the house cannot turn it in without subjecting herself or her grandson to prosecution. This dangerous unintended result of gun safety legislation is reason enough for gun buyback efforts.

Like tax amnesty, gun amnesty temporarily puts a premium on the ultimate goal. When the goal is taxes, the government puts a premium on getting the amount owned. When the goal is guns, the premium is on getting deadly weapons off the streets and out of people's homes.

The Columbine teen massacre, the Jewish Community Center shootings, and the Chicago area ethnic killings have come together with the urban gun violence that has plagued cities for years. The result is an American consensus for multiple approaches to fight the gun culture. The extraordinary success of the buyback programs in the District and around the country has shown that these programs should now be made readily available to jurisdictions that desire to use them.

In a market economy, efforts to buy back trouble have special appeal. We may disagree on the various approach as to gun violence, but Democrats and Republicans alike can agree to this sensible approach.

I urge my colleagues to support this vital legislation.

IN HONOR OF MAYOR STANLEY J.
TRUPO

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH
OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mayor Stanley J. Trupo of Berea, Ohio, who recently announced his retirement after 12 years of dedicated public service.

Mayor Trupo inherited a city without a strategic vision—and an office without furniture.

Elected in 1987, the new mayor entered his office in city hall to find it empty, save a broken desk chair. Stan immediately went about restoring order to Berea's house. The Mayor's first step was to develop the city economically. The Mayor's efforts translated into Berea's being the site of the Cleveland Browns' headquarters. Under Stan's leadership, Berea became not only a city in which to live, but a city in which to work. His promotion of the city's industrial corridor has brought over 4,000 jobs to Berea.

While the city's business sector has expanded, Berea has remained a community of families. Berea is a city that takes care of its children. Berea public schools form one of the most respected systems in my state. Mayor Trupo's youth diversion program provides guidance to at-risk kids. Trupo projects like the Berea Recreation Center well represent the city's rich community life. The Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds host the county's huge annual fair. Berea Summer Theater entertains crowds at Baldwin Wallace College. With the return of the Browns, parents and children will once again line practice fields, watching their gridiron heroes preparing for the coming season. It is Mayor Trupo's success in moderating Berea's economic development as a city on the move and his hard work to maintain long-standing community traditions that has led to Berea's being named as a White House Millennium City.

Mayor Trupo's work does not end at Berea's borderline. Stan has also served as a trustee on the board of Regional Transit Authority. Stan's time on the board has been marked by an expansion period during which Cleveland-area residents have enjoyed a better level of service than ever before. A White House appointment added a seat on board of the Federal Home and Loan Bank of Cincinnati to Mayor Trupo's long list of responsibilities. The tireless Mayor Trupo served in each capacity with characteristic resolve.

I wish to thank Mayor Trupo for his outstanding service and ask my fellow colleagues to join me in wishing Mayor Trupo all the best as he moves on to new endeavors.

DISAPPROVING EXTENSION OF
NONDISCRIMINATORY TREAT-
MENT TO PRODUCTS OF PEO-
PLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 27, 1999

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, today I voted to extend Normal Trading Relations to the People's Republic of China for another year. I cast this vote reluctantly after much consideration.

Our Nation's relationship with China is one of the most critical issues facing us in the post-cold-war era. This relationship impacts three critical areas: Human rights for the Chinese people; our national security interests in the Asian-Pacific region; and the jobs of working Americans.

As a nation, we have continued to reaffirm a policy of engagement with China in the hope that continued economic ties will span the political and cultural differences that divide us. In

pursuing this policy, we have seen some progress in areas of freedom of speech and worship, but clearly not enough. China has also played a role in trying to diffuse tensions between the United States and North Korea. However, lately it appears our investment in this policy is yielding ever diminishing returns.

China continues to violate numerous bilateral trade agreements, imprisons citizens for their political views and religious affiliations, uses prison labor in manufacturing and performs forced abortions. A startling new development is China's espionage effort to steal our nuclear weapons secrets, its aggressive posture toward Taiwan, and its transfer of missile technology to rogue nations around the globe.

I decided to give our Nation's current policy one last chance to achieve the goal we all share: encouraging China to become a responsible member of the world community. However, I want to be clear that my patience is wearing thin with the actions of the Chinese regime. I hereby give notice that I will not vote for NTR again unless I see a fundamental shift in China's trade, proliferation, and human rights policies.

I believe that our country's policy of engagement has been the right one. And again, I feel that there are signs that progress has been made. However, we cannot wait forever while China continues to take one step forward followed by two steps back. We must constantly re-evaluate whether our NTR policy is indeed providing a catalyst for change, or whether it is merely providing cover for a bully. Unless clear improvements are seen, I will no longer be able to look favorably on most-favored-nation status for China.

A TRIBUTE TO TONY GYNN

HON. RANDY "DUKE" CUNNINGHAM
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution to congratulate and commend my constituent from Poway, California: Tony Gwynn of the San Diego Padres, for his achievements on and off the field.

Mr. Speaker, on August 6, 1999, Tony Gwynn hit the 3,000th base hit of his career. As many baseball fans know, this was not an easy accomplishment. In the history of Major League Baseball, only 22 other ball-players have hit 3,000 or more base hits. This achievement places Tony Gwynn in the pantheon of baseball legends including: Roberto Clemente, Lou Brock, and Hank Aaron.

In 18 seasons, all with the San Diego Padres, Tony Gwynn has been the master of putting the ball into play. In the Padres' 1998 National League Championship season, Tony had almost as many home runs as strikeouts, and struck out looking only three times. His hands are lightning-quick and he's able to wait until the last millisecond before connecting with the ball wherever it is pitched. He goes after the first good pitch he sees and almost always hits it, so he rarely walks. And Tony is renowned for his ability to hit balls through the left side of the infield.

Tony has batted over .300 in 17 of those seasons and in the strike-shortened season of 1994, batted an amazing .394. His career batting average is an astounding .338.