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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, October 18, 1999, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1999

The Senate met at 9:15 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, we commit this day to You. By Your grace, You have brought us to the end of another work-week. Yet there is still so much more to do today. There are votes to cast, speeches to give, and loose ends to be tied. In the weekly rush of things, it is so easy to live with "horizontalism," dependent only on our own strength and focused on what others can do for us or with us. Today, we lift our eyes to behold Your glory, our hearts to be filled with Your love, joy, and peace, and our bodies, worn with the demanding schedule of the past week, to be replenished.

Fill the wills of our soul with Your strength and our intellects with fresh inspiration. We know that trying to work for You will wear us out, but allowing You to work through us will keep us fit and vital. Now, here are our minds, enlighten them; here are our souls, empower them; here are our wills, quicken them; here are our bodies, infuse them with energy. You are our Lord and Savior. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SPENCER ABRAHAM, a Senator from the State of Michigan, led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Repub-

lic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). The Senator from Idaho.

GREETING THE CHAPLAIN

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me tell you how comforting it is to have our Chaplain, Lloyd Ogilvie, returning to us in good health and to hear his words and the spiritual guidance he offers the Senate.

We are to happy to have Lloyd Ogilvie back.

SCHEDULE

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, today the Senate will immediately proceed to a vote on the conference report to accompany the VA-HUD appropriations bill. Following the vote, the Senate will immediately resume debate on the campaign finance reform bill, with further amendments to the bill anticipated. Debate on the campaign finance bill is expected to consume the remainder of the day and will continue throughout the early part of next week. However, Senators who intend to offer amendments are encouraged to work with the bill managers to schedule a time for debate on those amendments as soon as possible.

I thank my colleagues for the attention.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 2684, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany H.R. 2684, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies for the year ending September 30, 2000.

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I want to extend my congratulations and thanks to both Senators BOND and MIKULSKI for the conference report they are presenting us today. This bill makes constructive strides toward improving the housing situation for many poor and low income working families.

Though the Chairman and Ranking Member were under extremely tight budgetary constraints, they stood together and worked hard to bring us a conference report which restores important funding. They have presented us with a strong bill that invests in our nation's low income housing stock and continues our efforts to aid struggling communities in their redevelopment efforts.

It is my understanding that this bill moved forward with the support of

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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members from both sides of the aisle. I think that the Chairman and Ranking Member should be commended for this as well. It is notable when legislation receives such even handed, bipartisan support.

Let me highlight a few of the programs that received increased funding in this year's appropriations bill.

It includes 60,000 new section 8 vouchers to be used in our nation's most needy areas. I cannot express how important these new vouchers are to addressing the needs of low income Americans. As the economy soars, so do rents in many metropolitan areas, making it nearly impossible for low income families to afford an apartment. A recent report by the Low Income Housing Coalition shows that in no metropolitan area in this country can a person working at a minimum wage job forty hours a week afford the rent on an average two bedroom apartment.

There are 5.3 million families that HUD classifies as "worst case housing needs." These are families that live in substandard housing or pay more than 50% of their income towards rent. Sixty thousand vouchers will not help all of these families, but they are an important step in the direction of alleviating poverty and will be enthusiastically received by the families that benefit from them.

Also included in this bill is funding for the important mark-to-market plan that will allow HUD to raise section 8 payments to prevent landlords from opting out of the program. In addition, the bill exempts the old preservation deals from restructuring, which saves money and housing. These two provisions are important to preserving affordable housing in our nation's communities.

This bill includes an additional \$50 million to be used for Community Development Block Grants, or CDBG. These funds are used to address the needs of low income neighborhoods in a holistic manner. They have been a resource for renewal and redevelopment in many cities, including Baltimore and other Maryland metropolitan areas, since their creation in 1974. I am extremely pleased to see an increased investment in the hope that CDBG funds can bring needed assistance to many communities across America.

There is also an increase of \$55 million to aid the rehabilitation of disabled elderly housing programs. That includes provisions to provide supportive housing for the elderly, service coordinators in elderly facilities, grants to convert elderly housing into assisted living, and funds for section 8 assistance to be used for assisted living facilities. These levels show that we are committed to our low income senior citizens.

Lastly, I want to highlight the increased commitment to improve the public housing projects that remain. Over the last few years many politicians have pointed to the failing of public housing, but have not provided

the necessary funds to improve those developments. Senators BOND and MIKULSKI's bill takes the important and necessary action of increasing the public housing operating fund by \$320 million. I look forward to seeing and hearing about the new and positive improvements that will occur as a result of this new funding.

I will continue in the years to come to press for an increased commitment to housing programs that serve our nations' working and low income families. Overall, the bill we are presented with today is a good bill, with funding for many vital housing programs.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, in 1997, Congress created the Mark-to-Market program, which was designed to preserve the affordability of low-income rental housing and reduce the long-term costs to the Federal government. The program is designed to restructure the mortgages for HUD insured properties so that they can be supported by market based rents.

Under the Mark-to-Market program, HUD enters into agreements with State and local housing finance agencies, as well as a limited number of private firms, called Participating Administrative Entities or PAEs. The PAEs underwrite and recommend the financial restructuring of these properties. Under the agreement, the PAEs determine rent levels, how much of a new mortgage the property can support with those rents, and how much of a second mortgage HUD will have to hold on the property in order to ensure that the restructuring is economically feasible. The program also allows the housing finance agencies to provide financing for the new first mortgage on the property, even though they have inside knowledge of how the agreement is negotiated and structured.

However, the legislation creating the program recognizes that a conflict of interest can exist where the housing finance agency that is charged with restructuring the mortgage provides financing for the same property. In this situation, HUD is to establish guidelines to prevent conflicts of interest. Despite this provision, the legislation before us today requires the Secretary to approve financing by a HFA under the risk sharing program where the financing meets certain terms and conditions. Under this language, it is possible that the housing finance agency can gain an unfair advantage over other lenders who want to compete to provide financing. This could happen if the housing agency has the opportunity to review all submissions for financing and structure its own proposal so that no other lender can compete. In addition, property owners will have virtually no voice in determining who provides a mortgage on their property if they wish to stay in the program.

It is the intent of this bill, in the interest of all parties, that all lenders be given the opportunity to compete on a level playing field in providing financing. To this end, HUD should exercise

its authority under the conflict of interest requirement and undertake an independent review of the financing proposals. This could be accomplished, for example, by having the housing finance agency submit all lenders' proposed financing packages to HUD and include a statement justifying its position on the recommended financing. This independent review will allow the best financing alternative to be used for restructuring and will allow lenders to compete on a level playing field.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I regret that I must vote against this conference report. Once again, I have the unpleasant task of speaking before my colleagues about unacceptably high funding levels of parochial projects throughout this bill. In addition, the conferees have included several legislative provisions that were not in either bill, nor were these initiatives considered by either the House or Senate before they were summarily added to this bill. Therefore, despite the fact that the bill contains funding for many purposes which I strongly support, I oppose its passage because of these objectionable provisions.

This bill, in total, contains more than \$700 million in low-priority, wasteful, and unnecessary spending. This is an unacceptable waste of the taxpayers' hard-earned money, and I will not be a party to Congress' pork-barrel spending habits.

I very much regret having to oppose a bill that contains critical funding for programs for our Nation's veterans.

I would like to point out that I actively supported adding \$3 billion for veterans medical health care in this year's appropriations bill. I cosponsored several amendments introduced in the Senate, including the Wellstone amendment, which would have provided an additional \$3 billion above the President's VA budget request. Although the Wellstone amendment failed, the amendment proposed by Senators BYRD and BOND, which I also supported, passed overwhelmingly, increasing the total amount of VA funding to \$1.7 billion above the President's request.

I commend the conferees for keeping the \$1.7 billion for essential health care programs for veterans in the conference report. This represents the largest annual increase since the Department of Veterans Affairs was created. Although I sincerely welcome this increase, I will continue to do all in my power to find additional money in the budget to fund veterans health care at an amount that will guarantee a higher, sustainable level of quality health care for all veterans.

It is important to note that the level of earmarks and set-asides in the Veterans Affairs section of this conference report is down from previous years. The total value of specific earmarks in the Veterans Affairs section of the VA-HUD conference report is \$31.3 million, about one third of the amount that was inserted in this section of the Senate-

approved VA-HUD appropriations funding measure.

Certain provisions in this section, however, illustrate that Congress still does not have its priorities in order. For example, it is disturbing to me and many other Senators who stood on the floor of this body to fight for additional funding for veterans benefits to learn that the conferees have agreed to direct some of the critical dollars from veterans health care to fund wasteful projects like the "mothballing" of four historic buildings in Dayton, Ohio.

There are other notable examples of unnecessary items included in the conference report. An especially troublesome expense, neither budgeted for nor requested by the Administration for the past eight years, is a provision that directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue the eight-year-old demonstration project involving the Clarksburg, West Virginia VAMC and the Ruby Memorial Hospital at West Virginia University. Several years ago, the VA-HUD appropriations bill contained a plus-up of \$2 million to the Clarksburg VAMC that ended up on the Administration's line-item veto list—even the Administration concluded that this was truly wasteful.

Like the transportation and military construction funding bills, the VA-HUD funding bill also includes many construction project additions to the President's budget request. For example, the VA-HUD appropriations conference report adds \$1 million for the advance planning and design of the Lebanon VAMC renovation of patient care units and other enhancements for extended care programs. An additional \$500,000 was provided for planning national cemeteries in Atlanta, Georgia; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Miami, Florida; and Sacramento, California. Although all of these areas likely are deserving of veterans cemeteries, I just wonder how many other national cemetery projects in other states were leapfrogged to ensure that these states received the VA's highest priority. This bill directs VA to award a contract for design, architectural, and engineering services in this month for a new National Cemetery in Lawton (Oklahoma City/Fort Sill), Oklahoma and also directs the President's fiscal year 2001 budget to include construction funds for a new National Cemetery in Oklahoma. This is an amazing feat, since this appropriations bill is supposed to provide single-year appropriations, yet is attempting to direct next year's funding, too.

The bill also directs the VA to reprogram \$11.5 million originally appropriated in fiscal year 1998 to renovate Building 9 at the VAMC in Waco, Texas, to instead be used for renovation and construction of a joint venture cardiovascular institute at the Olin E. Teague VAMC in Temple, Texas. This unusual procedure is outside of the established reprogramming process—unfortunately, it sends the message to the VA that the money can

be reprogrammed "as long as the money stays in Texas."

Other VA construction projects—outside the President's original budget request—include: \$3.9 million to convert unfinished space into research laboratories at the ambulatory care addition of the Harry S. Truman VAMC in Columbia, Missouri; \$3 million for renovations of the research building at the Bronx VAMC in Bronx, New York (next door to the prestigious Mount Sinai Hospital); and \$500,000 for preparation of the satellite site to expand the National Cemetery at Salisbury, North Carolina. Some final egregious examples of unrequested, additional spending include the following: the VA is directed to provide \$1 million to the National Technology Transfer Center to establish a pilot program to assess, market, and license medical technologies researched in VA facilities; \$750,000 is provided to continue the VA's participation with the Alaska Federal Health Care Access Network; and Marshall County, Mississippi, Hardin County Tennessee and Letcher County, Kentucky were inserted ahead of other remote areas to become federally funded Community Health Care Centers to provide outpatient primary and preventive health care services to veterans in their home communities. These areas appear to have been added ahead of higher priority communities because their interests were well-represented in the Appropriations Conference.

I am encouraged by the increase in veterans health care funding, and if this title of the bill had been separately presented to the Senate, I would have wholeheartedly supported it, despite the earmarks and set-asides it contains.

This title of the bill contains the funding for many programs vital in meeting the housing needs of our nation and for the revitalization and development of our communities. Many of the programs administered by HUD help our nation's families purchase their homes, assist low-income families obtain affordable housing, combat discrimination in the housing market, assist in rehabilitating neighborhoods and help our nation's most vulnerable—the elderly, disabled and disadvantaged—have access to safe and affordable housing.

When the Senate debated this bill, I highlighted for my colleagues numerous funding earmarks for specific housing proposals and set asides contained in the Senate version of this bill. Unfortunately, I find myself coming to the floor today to again highlight the numerous budgetary violations which remain or were added to this conference report. The list of projects which received priority billing is quite long but I will highlight a few of the more egregious violations.

\$3,000,000,000 to Olympic Regional Development Authority, New York for upgrades at Mt. Van Hoevenberg Sports Complex.

New language inserted in conference providing \$15,000,000 for urban empowerment zones.

\$1,000,000 to the Salt Lake City Organizing Committee for housing infrastructure improvements for the Olympics and Paralympics.

\$1,000,000 to Syracuse University in New York for rehabilitation and community redevelopment of the Marshall Street Area.

Directive language to the Secretary requiring the continuation of providing interest reduction payment in accordance with the existing authorization schedule for Darlington Manor Apartments, 100-Unit project located at 606 North 5th Street, Bozeman, Montana, which will continue as affordable housing pursuant to a use agreement with the state of Montana.

In addition to the numerous budgetary violations which this report contains, I am also concerned about the legislative initiatives which have suddenly appeared during conference which were not contained in the Senate or House appropriation bills. The intent of this legislative language is certainly laudable—providing safe, quality and affordable housing for seniors and the disabled is and must remain a priority for our nation. However, we cannot and should not be passing comprehensive legislation which makes substantial changes to the housing system without allowing both chambers of Congress to debate and provide valuable input to such an important proposal. Certainly, an issue as important as meeting the housing needs of our most vulnerable population, deserves thoughtful deliberation and careful review through the established legislative process and should not be attached at the last moment to a funding conference report. This is not the manner in which we should be implementing meaningful reform intended to benefit the citizens of our nation.

After reviewing the sections funding the Environmental Protection Agency, I find that the conferees continued to run rampant in their pork-barrelling in this section of the bill. There are few areas in this final conference report that clearly indicate the level of parochial actions than those targeted in EPA's budget.

Just last month, the Senate passed a bill providing funding for environmental protection programs, which included \$207 million in unrequested and low-priority earmarks. However, the number of earmarks has seriously inflated in the conference report by \$73 million to a new grand pork total of \$280 million.

I understand that we have critical needs around our country dealing with leaking underground storage tanks, water and wastewater infrastructure, air pollution, pesticide abatement, and other important environmental issues. Many of the projects identified in this conference report are no doubt critical to many communities who are forced to deal with these serious environmental threats.

I do not question their merit at all. I do question the process by which the appropriators have made decisions that prioritize certain projects over many others across our nation in such a blatant and provincial manner. For example, \$1 million is earmarked for the Animal Waste Management Consortium that will benefit the University of Missouri, Iowa State University, North Carolina State University, Michigan State University, Oklahoma State University, and Purdue University to deal with animal waste management. Again, this may very well be important, but there is little background provided in the report to explain the national priority interest of earmarking a million dollars to deal with animal waste management in six specific states.

EPA has an established process by which the agency administers grant and loan programs that are supposed to be awarded on a competitive and priority basis. However, these guidelines are simply thrown out the window when the conferees direct the agency through earmarks and directive language to give priority consideration to various states and projects rather than undergoing a competitive review. Despite stated budget constraints, the conferees found a way to include an additional \$68 million more in wastewater infrastructure funding than previously agreed to by both houses for locale-specific earmarks.

I know first-hand that many of my constituents in Arizona have a great need to improve their water and wastewater systems, but they will be forced to wait in line while other projects are given priority treatment through this conference report.

Clearly, no title of the bill was left unsullied by pork-barrel spending. For the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), there is \$10 million available to the State of California for pilot projects to demonstrate seismic retrofit technology. For the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), this Report also includes earmarks of money for locality-specific projects such as \$3 million for the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, Illinois, \$14 million for infrastructure needs at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and \$10 million for the Regional Application Center in Cayuga County, New York. For example, the National Science Foundation (NSF), there is \$60 million for the Plant Genome Research Program. When will this outrageous pork-barrel spending stop?

The conferees have also included legislative initiatives that were clearly out of scope of the conference. The bill includes a general provision authorizing NASA to carry out a new program to demonstrate the commercial feasibility and economic viability of private business operations involved in the International Space Station. This provision has not had the benefit of consideration in any hearings or public and private industry discussions. It

would seem logical for private sector views to be considered if we hope to attract them to this venture.

The bill also shifts the way NASA will operate both the space station and the space shuttle program. We have already heard from some small companies that this program will put NASA and use of the shuttle for commercial payloads in direct competition. We do not want to stifle the creativity and ingenuity of these small launch companies, nor should we rely upon NASA to provide all the answers to our space problems, especially in the area of commercialization of space. I think NASA has enough problems with the space station, including the fact that it is two years behind schedule and \$9 billion over budget.

Finally, the conferees have included two provisions related to commercial space launch indemnification extensions and insurance and indemnification for experimental vehicles. Neither of these provisions were included in either of the appropriations bills and they clearly fall within the jurisdiction of the appropriate authorizing committees.

The appropriators should abide by the rules and procedures of the Senate and refrain from usurping the power of the authorizing committees, in fact, the rest of the Senate, by including these legislative provisions in a conference report written behind closed doors.

I am gravely disappointed that I am unable to vote for this conference report. This measure contains funding for many critical programs which help provide important resources to our communities. It includes vitally important funding to fulfill our obligation to our nation's veterans, those who fought for the peace and security we enjoy today. Included in this bill is funding for section 202 housing which I know most, if not all, of my colleagues would agree helps meet the needs of America's seniors by ensuring they have homes which are safe, affordable and accommodates the demands of aging. Also included is valuable funding for section 811 which helps disabled individuals have an opportunity to live independently as part of a community in quality and reasonably priced homes.

Because of the egregious amount of pork-barrel spending in this bill and the addition of legislative provisions clearly outside the scope of the conference, I must oppose its passage. I regret doing so because of the many important and worthy programs included in the conference agreement, but I cannot endorse the continued waste of taxpayer dollars on special-interest programs, nor can I acquiesce in bypassing the normal authorizing process for legislative initiatives.

Mr. President, the full list of the objectionable provisions is on my Senate website.

HIGH PRODUCTION VOLUME CHEMICAL TESTING

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I would like to confirm my under-

standing with Chairman BOND regarding the conference report concerning the HPV chemical testing program. My understanding regarding the "agreement" is that it is actually a letter from EPA asking participants in the challenge program to make certain changes, and not in fact an "agreement" to do so. Is that correct?

Mr. BOND. That is correct.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. And is it also correct that by using the word "consistent," the conferees did not intend or imply that the test rule must be the exact equivalent of the voluntary part of the program in terms of the actual testing requirements?

Mr. BOND. That is correct.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I thank the Senator.

WARRIOR HOTEL EDI PROJECT

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I understood that the conference report was supposed to contain the following language concerning an economic development initiative item approved in the FY 99 VA-HUD Appropriations measure: "The description of the Warrior Hotel EDI project in the FY 99 HUD-VA Appropriations report is modified to the following: \$1 million for the restoration of the Warrior Hotel in Sioux City, IA, to be used for adult day care and other services or uses consistent with the revitalization of the Central Business District". Unfortunately, this language was inadvertently left out of the report.

Mr. BOND. The Senator from Iowa is correct, the language was inadvertently left out of the FY 2000 conference report and it was our intention to have the language included.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I concur with the remarks of Chairman BOND and Senator HARKIN.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I offer my strong support for the fiscal year 2000 VA-HUD Appropriations Conference Report and am pleased to join my Senate colleagues in passing this important piece of legislation today. Rural America, and my state of South Dakota, is in the midst of an affordable housing shortage crisis. According to reports, 5.3 million Americans pay more than 50 percent in their annual income to rent or living in substandard conditions. This is unacceptable for a society as wealthy as ours, and we must make real progress now to improve housing conditions for all Americans.

Although I supported the VA-HUD Appropriations Bill on the Senate floor last month, I was disappointed that the bill failed to provide additional Section 8 rental assistance for the thousands of American families that desperately need it. Additional Section 8 rental assistance, like that proposed by the President, would have allowed 321 families in South Dakota to receive Section 8 vouchers to help them afford adequate housing. In addition, I objected to the elimination of the Community Builders program in the original bill. In South Dakota, Community Builders

have worked with local governments and housing authorities to provide needed rental assistance statewide.

I joined my Democratic colleagues on the Senate Banking and Housing Committee in writing to Chairman BOND and Ranking Member MIKULSKI, asking them to fund additional Section 8 vouchers and restore the Community Builders program during their negotiations with conferees from the House of Representatives. I am pleased that Chairman BOND and Ranking Member MIKULSKI were able to secure funding for an additional 60,000 Section 8 vouchers. The VA-HUD Appropriations Conference Report also reiterates the need for Community Builders in HUD to help bring important HUD programs to an increasing number of Americans.

This legislation will help address the affordable housing shortage in my state of South Dakota. Currently, South Dakota families in need of housing assistance spend an average of 9 months on a waiting list for current Section 8 vouchers. While not helping all of those in need, the additional Section 8 vouchers contained in the VA-HUD Appropriations Conference Report will begin to shorten the time it takes for low-income families to receive much needed assistance.

Community Builders will also be able to continue to work with South Dakota communities to increase access for affordable housing. In the past, Community Builders worked with the Northeastern Council of Governments in South Dakota to spread information to several northeastern counties on the services that HUD provides, and how to access these services. Community Builders have facilitated FHA loans for the construction of affordable homes in Rapid City, while also helping the Sioux Empire Housing Partnership become a HUD-approved housing counseling agency. The Community Builder program has begun to address the housing needs in historically underserved communities, including the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Community Builders have enabled tribal leaders to better utilize HUD's programs to the benefit of one of the most poor populations in the nation.

I would like to thank Chairman BOND and Ranking Member MIKULSKI for improving the VA-HUD Appropriations bill despite the strict budget constraints the committee faced. I believe it is a wise investment in our country's future when we ensure that our working families have adequate housing, and I look forward to continue working with my colleagues to find ways to help South Dakota families and families across the nation address their housing needs.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I support the conference agreement on appropriations for fiscal year 2000 for the departments of Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and other independent agencies.

I thank Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BOND for their hard work and com-

mitment to providing adequate health care for our veterans and housing for our citizens.

The conference agreement provides \$19 billion for veterans health care, \$1.7 billion more than the President requested. I am pleased that Congress has made a commitment to take care of our veterans. I do wish that we had agreed to Senator WELLSTONE's amendment to provide \$20.3 billion, but I believe that our nation's veterans will be cared for under this legislation.

Mr. President, I am very pleased that housing needs will also be addressed with this legislation. First, the agreement provides a much needed 60,000 additional Section 8 vouchers. A far greater need for vouchers exists in California, let alone across the nation. But this is a much acknowledged vital step in the right direction towards addressing the housing needs for the poorest of Americans. Second, public housing, Housing for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA), and homeless assistance programs will all experience an increase in funding. Third, the agreement also provides additional tools for preserving existing affordable housing. Specifically, HUD will be provided with significant new legal authority to address the Section 8 "opt-out" crisis—including longer contract renewal terms. Last, the agreement exhibits strong support for HUD's Community Builder program. This program has been a key component of HUD's reinvention efforts and is working. I received numerous letters from elected officials and nonprofit organizations throughout California expressing support for the Community Builder program and am grateful that the conference committee agreed to reinstate earlier cuts to the program.

The conference agreement also addresses other key areas, such as the environment and space exploration and research. The Environmental Protection Agency will receive \$7.59 billion to carry out its important functions. The National Aeronautical and Space Administration is funded at \$13.65 billion. I am pleased that the conferees agreed to restore the drastic cuts in NASA programs that were in the House version of the bill.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I call for the yeas and nays on the VA-HUD appropriations conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on agreeing to the adoption of the conference report accompanying H.R. 2684, the VA-HUD appropriations bill. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) is necessarily absent.

I also announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) is absent because of family illness.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber who desire to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 328 Leg.]

YEAS—93

Abraham	Enzi	Lugar
Akaka	Feinstein	Mack
Allard	Fitzgerald	McConnell
Ashcroft	Frist	Mikulski
Baucus	Gorton	Moynihan
Bennett	Graham	Murkowski
Biden	Gramm	Murray
Bingaman	Grams	Nickles
Bond	Grassley	Reed
Boxer	Gregg	Reid
Breaux	Hagel	Robb
Brownback	Harkin	Roberts
Bryan	Hatch	Rockefeller
Bunning	Helms	Roth
Burns	Hollings	Santorum
Byrd	Hutchinson	Sarbanes
Campbell	Hutchison	Schumer
Chafee	Inhofe	Sessions
Cleland	Inouye	Shelby
Cochran	Jeffords	Smith (NH)
Collins	Johnson	Smith (OR)
Conrad	Kerrey	Snowe
Coverdell	Kerry	Specter
Craig	Kohl	Stevens
Crapo	Landrieu	Thomas
Daschle	Lautenberg	Thompson
DeWine	Leahy	Thurmond
Domenici	Levin	Torricelli
Dorgan	Lieberman	Warner
Durbin	Lincoln	Wellstone
Edwards	Lott	Wyden

NAYS—5

Bayh	Kyl	Voinovich
Feingold	McCain	

NOT VOTING—2

Dodd	Kennedy
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The conference report was agreed to. Mr. BOND. I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GORTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES—S. 2990

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to H.R. 2990, the Chair now be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. GORTON) appointed Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. GREGG, Mr. FRIST, Mr. HUTCHINSON, Mr. NICKLES, Mr. GRAMM, Mr. ENZI, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. DODD, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. ROCKEFELLER conferees on the part of the Senate.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, in light of the agreement, there will be no further