

I have a motion to instruct that simply would remind the conferees on behalf of the House of our deep concern about the young people in the D.C. area and to focus our energies to represent the House's position on a number of education matters, in particular, and by example, the appropriation for St. Coletta's.

Mr. Speaker, in that regard, I yield as much time as he may consume to my colleague from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) to say a few words about this important appropriations.

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAAH), the ranking member for yielding the time.

We are all aware of the incidents of mistreatment and abuse of persons with mental retardation in the District of Columbia. There are horrible stories. We have read these in the Washington Post, describing an education system for those with special needs that is dominated by for-profit companies just going through the motions. These companies are in the business of covering up mistreatment rather than working to correct it.

Today, I stand before the House with a solution to this unspeakable problem, St. Coletta's School, a non-profit in Alexandria serving children and adults with cognitive and multiple disabilities from the D.C. metro area. St. Coletta currently serves 120 students between the ages of 4 and 22 years. These students are mentally retarded, autistic, suffer from multiple disabilities; and the majority have secondary disabling conditions such as blindness, deafness, social and emotional problems, cerebral palsy, and other physical impairments.

Mr. Speaker, 80 percent of those students are from Washington, D.C. Thirty-five percent of these D.C. students are in foster care or third-party placements due to abuse, neglect, abandonment or death of parents. An additional 30 percent of the D.C. students live with only 1 parent or extended family members.

Recognizing the desperate need in D.C. for these vocational, therapeutic, behavioral and family support and case management services, St. Coletta's of Greater Washington, Inc., is expanding its program to further serve the unmet needs of this D.C. community.

St. Coletta plans to purchase and renovate a facility to bring its already existing day program to more D.C. residents. The new facility will accommodate approximately 150 D.C. students and provide vocational and functional life-skills training, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and behavioral management services.

Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG), the chairman; and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAAH), the ranking member; for supporting St. Coletta's expansion project in the House D.C. bill and hope that more can be done for this project in

conference. This is an investment that we cannot afford not to make.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have no disagreement with the suggestion the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAAH) is making. I think the whole idea of the gentleman's motion is to, in fact, do what it is we have already done in the bill. The administration, the OMB, have weighed in. They are, in fact, supportive of this move; and so I have no disagreement at all.

I would also like to comment briefly on the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), who does bring up I think something that we should all look at very, very close, that is, St. Coletta's. He makes remarks that I think coincide with mine because I too have met with the folks from St. Coletta's, and so we join in addressing that issue and promoting it in the fashion that we think it should be, and I believe that from what I can sense here we should have a good conference.

We are close on a number of issues, but we are close enough I think on the money issue to redeem and bring this to resolution; and so with that, unless the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAAH), the ranking member, wants to express an opinion.

Mr. FATTAAH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman from Michigan yield for just 1 second?

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. I am glad to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. FATTAAH. Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) and thank him for his leadership and cooperation and, of course, the full committee chairman and ranking member, their guidance, as we have moved through this process. I am anxious to go to conference and finish our work for the year; and I believe that the motion to instruct and, moreover, the committee's work product is a great foundation from which the House could proceed in a conference; and I would be remiss not to also thank the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) for her leadership and urgings as we have walked down this road towards the D.C. appropriations.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I am willing, of course, to accept what was mentioned. I want to also briefly say that the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAAH), while thanking me, should also get thanked from me because he has done, I think, a great amount of work to bring this about. We use this word bipartisanship a little loosely; but frankly, we are on the same page in almost every respect; and when we have an occasional disagreement, it is not a disagreement. It is worked out.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to applaud and salute the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAAH) and thank him for working as a team to bring this about.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAAH).

The motion was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees: Messrs. KNOLLENBERG, ISTOOK, CUNNINGHAM, DOOLITTLE, SWEENEY, VITTER, YOUNG of Florida, FATTAAH, MOLLOHAN, OLVER and OBEY.

There was no objection.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2620, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 279 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 279

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2620) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 279 is a standard rule waiving all points of order against the conference report to accompany H.R. 2620, the Fiscal Year 2002 Veterans Affairs, and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report provides yet another example of a carefully crafted, bipartisan product from our Committee on Appropriations that maintains fiscal discipline, while addressing some of our Nation's most pressing needs.

It takes care of our veterans; addresses the Nation's critical housing

needs; helps to protect and preserve our environment; invests in scientific research; and continues the exploration into space.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH); the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), the ranking member, and all the members of the Committee on Appropriations for their hard work and dedication.

The conference report maintains our commitment to our Nation's veterans who selflessly placed themselves in harm's way so we may enjoy the very freedoms which we so cherish.

□ 1145

With November 11, being Veterans Day, fast approaching, our Nation's veterans deserve our thanks, but more importantly, they deserve and have earned the benefits provided in this conference report.

This year the VA-HUD appropriations bill provides an additional \$1 billion over last year's increase for Veterans Medical Health Care, bringing the total to \$21.3 billion. And I am proud to inform my colleagues, and more importantly our veterans, that we have increased Veterans Medical Health Care by \$4 billion over the course of the last 3 fiscal years.

The bill increases Veterans Medical and Prosthetic Research yet again by \$20 million and provides an extra \$128 million over last year's funding level for the Veterans Benefit Administration to expedite claims processing, which is a big problem.

Mr. Speaker, along with providing for the needs of our veterans, this legislation targets important resources towards the challenges faced by our urban communities and populations to provide adequate housing to help the most vulnerable folks in our society. Low-income families will benefit through this bill's investment in the Housing Certificate Program, which provides funding for Section 8 renewals and tenant protection.

A \$1.7 billion increase over last year's funding level will allow for the renewal of all expiring Section 8 contracts and provides needed relocation assistance. A total of \$15.6 billion is provided for this important program in fiscal year 2002. This includes \$140 million to fund some 26,000 new Section 8 vouchers. This housing assistance is critical in helping families who are trying to lift themselves up and improve their lives.

Other needed housing programs that help our elderly, people with AIDS, and the disabled also receive increases above last year's funding levels in this conference report.

The report also provides important resources to preserve and protect our environment for the next generation to enjoy. It targets funding with an emphasis on State grants to protect the water we drink and the air we breathe.

The State Revolving Fund for Safe Drinking Water is increased by more than \$25 million from last year's level,

the Clean Water State Revolving Fund is funded at \$1.35 billion, equal to last year's level, and, finally, State Air Grants are increased \$8 million over last year.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report also maintains our commitment to the exploration of space and the improvement of science. I am pleased to say that the National Science Foundation is increased by some \$363 million above fiscal year 2001. This represents the largest NSF budget ever, and will go a long way to help foster scientific discovery, promote basic research, as well as increase scientific education.

NASA also receives an increase that will bring total funding to \$14.8 billion. It fully funds the Space Shuttle operations and maintains our commitment to the International Space Station. This will enable the United States of America to continue our superiority in space exploration and aeronautical research.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this conference report provides the Federal Emergency Management Agency with \$2.2 billion for disaster relief to help some of our Nation's hardest-hit communities, much needed in this time of our Nation's crisis.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good conference report and it deserves our support. It takes a responsible path towards addressing our Nation's most pressing needs and priorities. I urge all my colleagues to support this straightforward, noncontroversial rule, as well as this must-do piece of legislation.

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) for yielding me the customary half-hour, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my strong support for the work performed on this bill by the chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and the ranking member, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN).

This is a critical bill for many of our constituents. It directs funding for our Nation's veterans, addresses important housing concerns, protects the environment, and invests in science and technology research.

Specifically, the conference report increases Veterans Administration health care funding by over \$1 billion, money that will go towards eliminating much of the VA's backlog of veterans' claims.

Moreover, the measure furthers our commitment to doubling the National Science Foundation budget to invest in science and technology to secure American competitiveness into the future.

The bill authorizes \$700 million in HUD Community Development Block Grant funding to New York State to provide grants to the New York City

businesses damaged or affected by the attacks of September 11.

My colleagues will also be pleased to know that the bill establishes a new, higher standard for arsenic levels in public drinking water, raising the standards from 50 parts per billion to 10 parts per billion.

I also want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for the increase in funding in HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control. Fifty of my colleagues signed a letter to the committee requesting this increase, because many older houses and apartments still contain lead-based paint.

Research shows that children with elevated blood levels are seven times more likely to drop out of school and twice as likely to fall behind their peers in language acquisition. In my district of Rochester, New York, 37 percent of the children tested have more lead in their blood than the Center for Disease Control and Prevention considers safe.

Over the past decade, HUD has worked with local governments and agencies to increase the number of lead hazard control programs. However, millions of housing units remain contaminated with lead-based paint. To further reduce lead paint health hazards, the fiscal year 2002 HUD budget receives a \$9.8 million increase over fiscal year 2001, bringing the total to 109.8 million. These funds will be distributed through competitive grants to entities who agree to match the Federal grant. So, combined with the private-sector funding, it supports a 10-year strategy to eliminate paint hazards in 2.3 million private housing units occupied by low-income children.

Included in this request is a set-aside of \$10 million to continue the Healthy Homes Initiative, which helps to develop, to demonstrate, and promote cost-effective preventive measures to correct multiple safety and health hazards in the home that can cause serious disease and injuries to children.

There are lots of other programs in the bill that I could highlight for my colleagues, but I will save that for Chairman WALSH and Ranking Member MOLLOHAN, but let me say I support both the rule and the underlying bill.

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

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG), my distinguished colleague and a member of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and I thank the chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and the ranking member, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) for the great work that they have done to produce this conference report and, in effect, to produce this bill.

I would also like to thank Frank Cushing, who works under a great deal

of stress, but does it very, very well, and all the staff that has done so remarkably well to produce this bill that we have, this conference report that we have in front of us today. None of it would be possible without their dedication, their expertise, and the long hours. I salute their work.

I just want to highlight a few of the provisions in the bill. The bill provides an extra \$128 million to help the Veterans Benefits Administration to expedite claims processing. The veterans of America do not deserve to suffer the lengthy waits they do now to receive the benefits that they deserve. The extra funding is an important step forward in cutting these wait times.

I would also like to thank the chairman, the ranking member, and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) for working with me to improve a pilot housing program in my district. This has amplification potential with districts around the country. The program is providing a viable and cost-effective housing alternative for the aging population, and I am pleased that it will continue.

I want to note also there is a \$363 million increase in funding for the National Science Foundation. The NIH and CDC get much of the publicity when we talk about medical and scientific advances. But few of those advances would be possible without the basic research that is conducted by NSF. I am pleased that these and other funding priorities in the bill will be signed into law when this conference report lands on the President's desk.

Chairman WALSH is to be saluted for crafting this piece of legislation under some very difficult circumstances. He and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) have worked tirelessly with our colleagues in the other body to forge a fiscally responsible bill in a bipartisan spirit.

So, Mr. Speaker, this conference report is the fruit of the effort, and I urge adoption of the rule and the conference.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I commend and congratulate the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) for their outstanding leadership and work on this bill.

I rise in support of the rule and in support of the conference report. I am particularly pleased that the report funds renewal of Section 8 contracts due to expire in 2002, and that it funds 25,900 new rental vouchers.

I am disappointed by the elimination of the Drug Elimination Grant Program, but understand that these programs will be funded from increases in public housing operating subsidies.

I am also pleased that programs for the elderly get a small increase, and that housing programs for the disabled are positively impacted. I had hoped not to see any decreases in funding for

distressed public housing and the empowerment zones.

I am gratified, Mr. Speaker, to know that we are increasing funding for Veterans Administration programs, and I trust that this means that our VA hospitals and services in the Chicago area will not have to experience drastic cuts in programs and services, and that we do not have to continue the talk of the possibility of closing the Lakeside Veterans Administration Hospital.

I commend the committee for increasing by 9.5 percent programs for the homeless and a 7.5 percent increase to help meet the housing needs of persons with AIDS and their families.

Mr. Speaker, these are indeed difficult times, and these are definitely times where there are going to be unmet needs. However, in spite of that, the committee has done a good and outstanding job and has a good product. I commend them for their efforts, for their astuteness, and for the balance which they have displayed.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), my distinguished colleague and the chairman of the VA-HUD Committee on Appropriations. We all take our hats off to him for his hard work, as well as to the ranking member, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN).

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio for yielding me this time. She has now helped us guide this bill through the House for the third time, and she does a marvelous job. I would also like to thank her opposite number, my neighbor, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), for the courtesies extended to the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), myself, and our subcommittee. Thanks also to Chairman DREIER, who quickly guided us through the Committee on Rules and turned us loose.

We think we have a very good bill. There are a number of compromises within the bill, but there are also, I think, some fairly important policy statements that we make. We allocated precious resources to the priorities that were expressed by the House and the Senate, and I will deal more with the details when the bill comes before us. But I would urge all Members to support the rule.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and I would like to point out that as this body is preparing to adjourn for Veterans Day, despite some of the comments we have heard, this budget is not a good budget for our veterans and we are not honoring them as we come up to Veterans Day.

I understand that the chairman of the committee and the ranking member have had a certain budget to deal with, and they have done the best they

can. But this Congress just passed a bill which gave \$25 billion in retroactive tax increases to the biggest corporations in this country. IBM will get a check for \$2 billion, GE and Ford will get checks for between \$1 billion and a \$1.5 billion. And what did we do for veterans in this budget? Barely keeping up with inflation. Barely keeping up with inflation.

At a time when the backlog of cases to be adjudicated accumulates at 10,000 a week, this budget will do nothing to clear up that backlog. This budget will not help us cure or find a treatment or a cause for Persian Gulf War illness. It does not take any of the 250,000 homeless off the streets.

□ 1200

Mr. Speaker, it does not shorten the waiting time of months and months that our veterans have to wait for doctor's appointments. This does not honor our veterans, at a time not only when we are approaching Veterans' Day but when our men and women are at war and we will have more veterans and more service-connected problems. We are not sending a signal in the men and women engaged in the war against terrorism when we treat our veterans in this way.

All of the veterans in this country came together to produce The Independent Budget, a budget by veterans for veterans. It outlined the needs that our veterans have. But what does this bill have, \$2 billion less than what this calls for. The final conference report that we are voting on provides less money than either House provided in their resolution. How can a conference report come back with less than each House recommended?

Mr. Speaker, those who are adept at these conference reports will have to explain that to me. We come back with \$2 billion less than our veterans need, less than what each House called for, and yet we are about to go out on November 11 and November 12 and say to our veterans, we support them. We love them.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report does not do the job that our veterans deserve and our new veterans are going to need. This budget again is a dis-honor to our veterans as we approach Veterans' Day on November 11.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member and the chairman of the committee. We realize the trying times that we are in, and I think many of us would have relished the opportunity for these very vital programs to have provided more resources. In fact, I would imagine if we could go back to the drawing boards, we would recognize the enormous needs that these services in this particular bill address.

But let me first of all as we talk about Veterans' Day acknowledge the extra \$128 million that the veterans will get to expedite claims processing. If there is anything in our congressional districts that causes us great concern, it is our veterans coming in attempting to process their claims for needs that are immediate. I believe it is important to overcome that particular need.

In addition, I think it is extremely important that there is an increase in this particular legislation for veterans. I would argue to say that we can always, as I work with homeless veterans, do more for them. I am hoping as we move towards the next session and the next fiscal year, we can reemphasize the needs of our homeless veterans with whom I have worked on a regular basis.

But we are addressing some needs, and whenever I go home and interact with my community, they are always speaking about another issue and that is dealing with housing. I would like to refer to the housing for the Nation's elderly, section 202 which has received an increase, the homeless program which has been fully funded at \$1.23 billion, the housing, the HOPWA program. I might say that we will be working with HUD to ensure that those dollars get to communities that are diverse, that we ensure that those programs are spread throughout, that we are reaching the communities that are impacted. We realize that in the African American community, HIV-AIDS is the one killer in ages 25 TO 44. We need those dollars to be spread in a diverse way. We have community development block grant money, and I am delighted that is there, as well as the Superfund monies which have been funded.

As a member of the Committee on Science, Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, express my extreme disappointment that we have not seen fit to fully fund our Space Station and provide the extra safety and the extra crew module. We fought against this cut, and I am hoping that the administration will see the error of its ways with respect to the Space Station. We have fought long and hard, and in this time the Space Station may become even more valuable. We realize that we have to be fiscally responsible as relates to NASA, but we need to do more.

In Houston, in particular, we are very gratified that the conference has seen fit to focus on beautification. The Heights Association in Houston receiving \$100,000; to focus on recreation, \$25,000 for the Acres Home Citizen Council Recreational Complex that will enhance economic development in that area, create a whole buzz of activity, compete with of course our great sports arenas by going into a neighborhood and focusing, and recognizing that the whole Nation needs to be wired and to put in an intercity area, the home of Barbara Jordan and Nicky Leland, the Fifth Ward Technology Center in cooperation with the Hous-

ton Community College seed money of \$50,000 to help us recognize that economic development technology are interwoven. I look forward to these ideas and these monies moving forward to help build our country and as well build a better quality of life.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the conference report for VA-HUD. The bill funds many important agencies, and much has been said about those agencies, particularly about Veterans' Affairs. But I would like to specifically recognize the hard work of the members of the conference committee for their work in approving funding increase for aeronautics research.

We know that dollar for dollar, investments in aeronautics research pays off. Every aircraft worldwide uses NASA technology, and the research center located in Hampton, Virginia, has been at the forefront of developing these cutting-edge technologies. Engineering principles developed from the past research at Langley have contributed to overall aircraft safety and efficiency, including things like wind design, noise abatement, structural integrity, and fuel efficiency. It is important to remember that these principles were developed 5, 10 and 20 years before they led to improvements in the aircraft we see today.

In recent years, NASA's research has been reduced by about one-third. Reversing that declining trend in aeronautics funding now will enable the aggressive research and technology programs that are needed to lead the United States into the 21st century, as the world's leader in aeronautics and space research, a key cornerstone of our future economic prosperity.

Again, I extend my appreciation to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) and the other conferees for their strong support for the national investments in aeronautics research, and I urge Members to support the conference committee report.

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

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good conference report. It balances a number of very important priorities. It protects our environment and keeps the United States at the forefront of space exploration. It provides needed funding to ensure new scientific discovery and addresses our Nation's critical housing needs.

Finally, it provides for the benefits and assistance of our Nation's veterans that they have earned and that they should enjoy. It is a fitting and timely

tribute as we prepare for Veterans' Day this November 11.

Mr. Speaker, once again our hats should be off to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) and the entire appropriations committee. I urge a yes vote on this rule and the conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2620, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2620, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 279, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2620) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of November 6, 2001, at page H7787.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

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

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to present for consideration of the House the conference report on H.R. 2620, the VA-HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act for 2002.

In the interest of time, I will try to be brief. I would like, however, to begin by saying that this is a good bill. I think the fact that we had a unanimous vote on the rule is symbolic of what is to come. Like those presented in each of the past few years, it is very much a solid, bipartisan effort of the