

human rights abuses. We have got to find a way of getting this legislation down to President Bush. He has already signaled clearly and unmistakably, most recently in a White House ceremony, that he will sign this in a heartbeat. We have got to do this for the next generation and for the generations to come.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for his passion and extraordinary complement of his participation in this and would yield for a moment before we close this Special Order to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON).

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman; and I just want to add, under President Clinton, he established the National Bioethics Advisory Commission, and they said, The commission began its discussions of cloning, fully recognizing that any efforts, any humans to transfer a somatic cell nucleus into an enucleated egg involves the creation of an embryo with the apparent potential to be implanted in utero and developed to term, what they mean by that is a baby, and that is really what this is all about.

Is it a human life? What is going to happen to it? Are we going to create, exploit it and discard it? Are we going to allow them to be manufactured into human beings, the first man-created human in the history of the world?

I say we do not cross that Orwellian line; we draw the line here, the line of morality and ethics and say, no, we do not want to go there.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) for his thoughtful comments today and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS). Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for these men of colossal stature in this institution and in this country to join us.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, as I close, we must decide whether we will master science or be mastered by it. It is the fundamental moral and ethical question of our time. As the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) said, we must prevent human life from becoming a wholesale commodity that is created and consumed.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we must be about the values of the American people, people like Mike and Denice Dora, farmers in Rush County, Indiana, of 15 years, our friends; but they are people who look and open up that ancient book upon which our founders placed so much trust that says, "Remember this and consider, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me."

This debate must center around that conviction, those values; and if it does, we will prevent this moral horror of human cloning at any level, for any purpose, from becoming a reality in American civilization.

MINORITY HOMEOWNERSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, this month was declared homeownership month, and there will be several Members who probably will be joining me. I know that the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) has already submitted her remarks for the RECORD.

Mr. Speaker, over the last few days, the President has been promoting an initiative to increase homeownership opportunities for minorities and reduce barriers. The President's interest and participation is welcome.

Mr. Speaker, those of us in the Congressional Black Caucus have been working hard for years to correct the inequities and eliminate the disparities of housing opportunities for people of color and are pleased that the President has recognized the need for such an effort.

All we can say is WOW. More than a year ago, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation launched an ambitious initiative called With Ownership Wealth, or WOW for short. The President's new plan echoes and amplifies many of our initial goals but may not have realized the objectives we share in common. To the extent the President is joining the lead of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and comprehensive group of sponsors which include the housing financing industry, the insurance industry Realtors and nonprofit organizations, including faith-based organizations, as well as community development organizations, it is indeed a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus and its foundation took the initiative on housing and homeownership opportunities because for too long the dream of homeownership for minorities has been a bit of wishful thinking. We have been working towards making those wishes a reality. More detailed information about the foundation's With Ownership Wealth, or WOW, as we call it, can be found on the Internet, which is www.wowcbcf.org.

Mr. Speaker, representing a district in North Carolina that is not only predominantly rural but also is heavily populated by Afro-Americans and other minorities I welcome the President's stated intention to step up to help create greater wealth in communities where housing needs are so critical. At a minimum, the administration announcement should increase interest of our industry players and minority homeownership acquisition.

That said, I must point out that just as there is a great gap between majority and minority homeownership, so too there is a gap between the President's words or his promise or his in-

tention and his administrative work. The President's announcement this week does not mention that his budget has slashed rural housing programs essentially from the 2002 level, including a 12.4 percent reduction in funds for guaranteeing homes for single-family housing and 11.4 percent cut in the Department of Agriculture direct loan for single family housing and a whopping 47.4 percent for direct loan for rental housing.

□ 1800

There is a significant gap between the promise and the reality. Mr. Speaker, African Americans nationwide have a home ownership rate of 48 percent compared with the majority rate of 73 percent. Politicians of both parties, Democrat and Republican, wax rhapsodically, eloquently. They say great words, great phrases about the American dream. They talk endlessly about the American dream and the right to own a home, and they also talk about the United States being the land of opportunity. For many, yes, but not for all.

It is time that the reality mirrors the rhetoric and the deeds match the words with action. It is time now that we indeed make it a reality that the American dream to own a home is made available not only to those with a lot of money, but also those who have moderate resources should not be denied, or those of African American or other minorities. It should be the right for all Americans to have that.

So I look forward to reviewing the administration's new housing and home ownership proposal and look forward to working with the administration to pass a program to help people really realize the dream. The land of opportunity should mean something more than words, and I hope that the President's promise to reduce the barriers and to make home ownership available for minorities is indeed a reality, and that resources would indeed follow the commitment.

I am pleased to be joined in this special order, home ownership, by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), and I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to, first of all, thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) for her leadership on so many issues. I mean, she has provided outstanding leadership in the area of agriculture and in the area of making sure that there is food for people who are hungry not only here in the United States, but worldwide. And she has certainly been the Congressional Black Caucus's leader when it comes to home ownership. She has provided leadership as we have tried to get our WOW initiative under way, and as a matter of fact, it is pretty difficult to keep up with her in terms of all of the many areas in which she has worked, and it is certainly a pleasure to join with her this evening.

I rise today in recognition, first of all, of Home Ownership Month and appreciate the opportunity to talk about an issue that is important to me and all of my constituents and to all Americans, especially those who share the dream of owning their own home. I am fortunate to represent one of the most diverse districts in the country. I represent many people who are rich, many people who are near rich, some people who are economically well off, the middle class. I represent people who like both the Cubs and the Sox. But I also represent an awful lot of people who are at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder.

I represent 60 percent of public housing in the city of Chicago. I represent people who own their own homes and a lot of people who do not. It is this segment of the American population, those people that rent their living space and want to own their own house, but either feel that they cannot afford to, or do not know how to purchase a house and then turn it into a home.

Home ownership is important for individuals, families, and communities alike. There is no denying the fact that when someone owns their own home, there is a tendency to treat it with tender loving care. They work to increase its value. They cut their lawns, fix their windows, add additions, and take pride. Home ownership is also important to the family. It is a place, it is a refuge, it is a haven.

I shall never forget growing up in this rambling house where my mother had this flower garden out front, and one could wake up early in the morning and walk out on the porch and just breathe in the aroma of all these flowers. Of course, it was also hazardous because you could not touch them, and you had better not step on one, and you certainly knew better than to break one. But it was a haven, as a matter of fact.

For most Americans, buying a home is the biggest investment of their lives and one of the most meaningful. But for a large number of Americans, especially Americans of minority descent, the American Dream of owning their own home seems like fantasy rather than reality. Minority home-ownership rates are 26 percent lower than home-ownership rates of the majority of Americans. In my own congressional district, African American home ownership is down to 28 percent. In the whole district it is actually 38 percent, and that is a far cry from the 76 percent that one might expect to experience.

But buying a home is not only the best investment for the individual buyer and the community, it is the best investment for the owner's children and the children of the owner's children. It is a way of creating inheritable wealth. And that is why the WOW program is so important, because it recognizes the concept that with home ownership comes wealth.

If you pay rent for 50 years, and you can pay \$1,000 a month for rent for 50

years, and at the end of 50 years all that you have got to show for it is a drawer full of rent receipts; nothing that you can pass on, nothing that you can transfer, nothing that you can call your own, nothing that you can give away. There are some people who like church. So if you do not want to have something that you want to leave to your children or your grandchildren, well, you might want to bequeath it to some institution, some charity that you believe in, some work that you believe in doing. So home ownership provides you with not only a stake, but something to pass on.

I am so pleased that this WOW initiative has been generated by the Caucus. In communities all over America that are represented by African American Members of Congress, this initiative is going. In my own district we have had two extremely successful housing fairs where we have had 700, 800 people come to each one. We have banks and mortgage companies, credit counselors, individuals who are willing to help you clean up your credit, help people understand that there are instances where you can get a house for no money down or little money down. The Chicago Housing Authority has even come up with a plan where people who have Section 8 can purchase homes using their Section 8 certificate. So there are lots of opportunities.

Mrs. CLAYTON. If the gentleman will yield for a moment, I want to emphasize that, because the Section 8 vouchers traditionally have been used for rentals. And more than 2 years ago, the Congressional Black Caucus, in their budget submission, included that as an option.

The House did not accept the CBC's budget, but they recognized the value of that proposal, and the housing bill that was passed on the floor included for the first time an opportunity to use the vouchers that are used by poor people to supplement their rent as a one-time supplement to go towards their down payment. That has added to the great upward mobility of people who are now renting, if they aggregate their annual rent for certain months or a year and use that as a down payment.

HUD is now allowing that to happen because this House, indeed, approved that in the last revision or reform of a housing proposal that this House passed. But it was indeed the Congressional Black Caucus that offered that as a recommendation, and I am pleased that the House accepted that. And I am pleased for the gentleman to tell us that not only is it in the law, but actually people are using it, and that the gentleman is making it known to his citizens and that they are using it.

So I thank the gentleman for reminding us and thank him for his leadership in advising his constituents of that.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Well, it was actually under the gentlewoman's leadership in terms of the experiences people have which give them special insight into problems, situations, and

circumstances. Then, if they can bring those to a place like the Congress and work with other people to put them into action, then we see change.

Now, these individuals, who may have been on public assistance, who may have had to live in public housing, who maybe did not have anything to inherit when they came along, now their children or their grandchildren can have a head start, a beginning. It is a concept. It is value-generating.

My father is 90 years old, and one of the things he wanted to make sure was that he had something to leave. He has a little piece of land. I have been trying to get him to sell it, to use it. It is down in a place that I am sure nobody in my family wants to go. He refuses to do anything other than leave it, so that when he goes, he can say that he left some inheritance to his children. And, of course, I am pleased to be one of them, which means that I will get a little piece of the rock.

But I just want to commend the gentlewoman again.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Well, I thank the gentleman for his leadership, too, and I am glad to know that he has had successful housing fairs and buying fairs and have had more than one. We continue to want to keep pushing, so I know the gentleman will continue to do that, so I thank him very much.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. I will, indeed.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome another fearless leader in many areas, and who has conducted many successful housing activities, including a housing summit. She has been on this case about housing for a long time, as she was in the General Assembly of California as well. I am pleased to have her join us in this Special Order, and I will yield to her.

Ms. LEE. Let me just thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina for this Special Order tonight and also for her leadership over the years and for her mentorship since I have been in Congress with regard to the critical needs of rural housing as well as urban housing.

I want to thank her for her assistance in working with my community, which is one of the least affordable communities, least affordable regions in the country to live, to help us bring affordable housing strategies to Alameda County, Oakland, Berkeley, the East Bay. I thank her for coming to our district to look at what challenges we are faced with.

The unprecedented economic growth in the United States has done very little to relieve the problems of low-income households. While the nationwide home ownership rate is approaching 70 percent, the African American and Latino home ownership rates pale in comparison at a close to probably 46 percent.

Now, in my work as a member of the House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity of the Committee on Financial Services, I am

working with my colleagues consistently on meaningful housing legislation and on a meaningful housing agenda. Of the 3.9 million low-income households to be considered working poor, over two-thirds pay 30 percent or more of their incomes to housing costs, with one-quarter paying over half of their incomes.

In 39 States, 40 percent or more of renters cannot afford fair market rate rent for a 2-bedroom unit, and that is why creating more affordable housing and home ownership should really be our focus.

□ 1815

As we heard earlier, the Congressional Black Caucus continues to support programs that are improving access to affordable housing and homeownership because sound fiscal policy really must leave no one behind. Everyone has a right to decent, affordable housing. That should really be a basic human right.

Recently, President Bush announced a new goal to help increase the number of minority homeowners by at least 5.5 million before the end of the decade. Although this is a great idea and I applaud the President for bringing this to the forefront of our national agenda, the reality is that members of the Congressional Black Caucus have been setting goals for minority ownership for many years. As a matter of fact, our Congressional Black Caucus Foundation initiated the WOW Initiative in 2000. WOW's goal is 1 million African American and minority homeowners by the year 2005.

Many of my colleagues reiterate the importance of not recreating the wheel. I agree. That is why it is hard to understand why the President would recreate an existing program and not fund it. When I say not fund it, creating new funds that we need to establish a down payment assistance program, increasing funding for current home buyer programs, and supporting a national housing trust fund which would use surplus FHA dollars for homeownership and a housing production program in our country.

Consistently, since the Bush administration has drafted budgets, they seem to really negate the promise of homeownership and fair and quality housing. President Bush has cut the HUD budget this year and fights the creation of a national housing production program. Very recently, I believe last year, he cut the drug elimination program which our public housing authorities and tenants need so desperately to live in safe and secure homes.

Today we began the markup of a major housing bill, and the debate was very spirited and very interesting; but in some ways very appalling. Those who really do not believe that the Federal Government should ensure decent and affordable housing for everyone really spoke their minds today. It was very clear that the trillions of dollars

in tax cuts that the Republicans on our committee believe need to be the priority for our country, really do not see that basic housing, affordable housing through a production program makes sense. It makes sense in the sense that it is a job-creation effort. It creates an economic, vital country with the creation of thousands, maybe millions, of jobs in home building. It provides for additional units. Everywhere that I go and every witness who has come to our committee, which we heard about earlier, has said yes, a housing production program is badly needed. The builders, banks, Realtors, faith-based organizations, bar none, Republicans, Democrats, the business community, we all know that a housing production program is sorely needed.

We also tried today to put an amendment in, the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAFALCE) and myself, to say basically a new down payment assistance program for low-income buyers, if the localities and local governments believe this is useful, provide foreclosure assistance and counseling to ensure that those homes that first-time home buyers purchase are secure from foreclosure and basic literacy education with regard to what it means to buy a house is really needed. On a bipartisan vote, we could not get the votes to put that modest amendment into the bill.

I say this tonight because it is so important that we understand and recognize that a decent, affordable home is basic to survival and basic to a family's ability to live the American dream. For many of us, especially for minority communities, homeownership is the only way to acquire any wealth, any equity, in looking at the American dream as a way to finance our children's college education, start a small business, or whatever. It is not the stock market, it is not mutual funds, it is not the financial instruments that those who have money utilize to make money. It is homeownership that we use to really become part of this great society.

I want to thank the Congressional Black Caucus and my colleague from North Carolina for this Special Order tonight. I hope that sooner or later affordable housing becomes a national priority. Education, health care, the environment, our national priorities should be about putting people first. In putting people first, affordable housing, the right to live in dignity, should be basic to our list of priorities.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Maryland who has been a leader on so many issues is going to discuss how he views housing and priorities in this Congress.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and thank the gentlewoman for her leadership. I also thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON).

Every time I think about housing, coming from the inner city of Baltimore, I think about the various new

housing projects that we have been able to come up with and get built in our Seventh Congressional District with Hope VI dollars. Of course Hope VI has had its problems here.

But one of the things that we have noticed in the change, that change of environment does so much for children. So often we look at children and we say, how can we nurture their nature to make them the very best that they can be.

I believe if a child can come home and have a safe place to do their homework and safe place to sleep, a safe neighborhood, a place to play, that lends itself to productivity. It lends itself to them feeling good about themselves.

I think when we look at what is happening, the gentlewoman talked about various things that she was trying to do with various amendments. All of these things show a tremendous amount of sensitivity in an effort to help get people to where they want to go. What happens when a person buys a house, their whole attitude changes. They realize that they can do it. I am always amazed when I talk to people, when I was practicing law and would go to settlement, particularly first time home buyers, at the end of the whole process when you give them the keys, they would look at me and say, This is mine?

That sense of empowerment of what they are doing, and the mere fact that they can come home and say look, we have a house. I think we have to continue the kind of efforts that we are doing. I know so many of us have worked hard to try to lift up people with regard to housing. We are going to continue to do that. I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership. So often when people get to the point where they buy a house, as the gentlewoman said, it is like that initial step to allow them to go and do many, many other things.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) for raising this discussion to another level in terms of the importance of self-esteem and one's dignity with regard to access to decent and affordable housing.

Let me share something very personal. When I was a child, my grandfather in Texas urged us never, ever, ever to rent. If we had to, okay; but he said always try to buy a house. So I grew up in a household with a grandfather who spoke of homeownership as a vehicle to living the American dream.

When I was 19 years old, I was able to buy my first house, and that house cost me \$19,475. Because of that through many, many challenges and difficulties through life, I was able to send my two children through college and start a small business; but it was all because of that one purchase of a young woman, single, on public assistance. I was able to buy a house and move forward from there. I think so many

young people deserve that access so they can do some of the things that they may want to do in life.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, one interesting story, when I think about my mother and father, neither one of them got past elementary school. My father was a laborer and my mother was a domestic. My father had the dream of becoming a homeowner. He found a beautiful house. He is a very prayerful man, and so he took all seven of his kids up to that house with my mother, and we literally kneeled in front of the house and prayed. I kid my father sometimes, I think the police thought we were protesting or something, but he had a dream. He said we would get that house. About a year later, we got the house.

The interesting thing about it, though, is I was only about 10 years old. But to this day, some 40 years later, I still remember the name of the person who sold the house to us, and I also remember the previous owner and the broker. That says a lot. As a little kid, I remember that. And I will never forget going from a 2-bedroom house to a 4-bedroom house. And to have a bedroom where there were only two of us sleeping instead of four of us sleeping.

When we talk about children, it is not the deed, it is the memory that is empowering; and those are powerful memories, just the gentlewoman's are. It is interesting, housing lifts not only you, but generations of you yet unborn. That is very, very special.

While we do things here in the Congress and we wonder whether or not they are having a tremendous amount of impact, the fact is they do have impact and they do affect a lot of people, and they affect people that we will never even possibly see.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for participating and also for his forward-thinking and visionary work on housing, drugs, AIDS, and criminal justice reform, and on each and every issue the gentleman tackles in this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) for this Special Order, and to urge the American people to really wake up in terms of this housing agenda, to know that there are some in Congress who are desperately trying to ensure that we have a national housing trust fund and a national housing production effort so that those who want to purchase a home or rent a home and who need shelter will be able to afford that. Once again, that is basic to a person and a family's human dignity; and they deserve to live the American dream. And for many, it is, quite frankly, becoming a nightmare.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank and commend the gentlelady, my good friend from North Carolina, Rep. EVA CLAYTON, for scheduling this important Special Order to highlight the issue of disparities in housing and homeownership between whites and people of color.

The Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation have

championed the cause of increased opportunities for home ownership for minorities. I am pleased that President Bush is now proposing some steps that will move this cause forward. However, he needs to be doing a great deal more.

None of us can overstate the personal and social significance of private citizens owning their own homes. For generations of Americans, home ownership has been a key element of the American Dream.

Homeownership is more than just the acquisition of property. It is a source of pride and personal achievement.

Homeownership also provides a strong foundation for American families. It promotes good, stable environments where they can thrive.

A home does much more than provide shelter. It's the cornerstone of wealth creation. For most families, buying a home is the biggest investment they will ever make. Building equity in a home allows the owner to pass wealth from generation to generation or use it for other important purposes such as paying for a child's education.

Home ownership is a cornerstone of our economy. According to the Federal Reserve Board, owner-occupied property made up 21 percent of all household wealth in 2000 and more than 71 percent of all tangible wealth.

Housing generates more than 22 percent of our Nation's Gross Domestic Product.

The strength and stability created through individual homeownership radiates throughout our neighborhoods, towns and cities as well. Homeownership unites us in a shared commitment to safer streets, to improved schools, to prosperous local economies, and to community involvement.

The recent economic boom of the 1990's has had a profound effect on homeownership. Today, an estimated 72 million American families—an all-time record high—now own their own homes. These Americans have staked their claim to the American Dream.

For far too many minorities, home ownership remains an elusive dream.

While the homeownership rate for white non-Hispanics reached a record 73.8 percent in the year 2000, the rates for African Americans and Hispanics were significantly lower—47.6 percent and 46.3 percent, respectively.

Wide disparities in homeownership also exist between central city and suburban areas. For example, the rate of homeownership in central cities was about 51 percent in 2000, compared to 74 percent in the suburbs.

Metropolitan areas also have homeownership rates far below the national average. For example, the homeownership rate in New York City was only 34 percent, while it was 49 percent in Los Angeles, nearly 59 percent in Boston, and 56 percent here in Miami.

One reason why minorities and those in the central cities have lower homeownership rates is the fact that they generally have lower incomes than the rest of the population.

For most people, owning a home is a simple matter of math. Households with family income greater than or equal to the median family income had a homeownership rate of nearly 82 percent in the last quarter of 2000. In sharp contrast, the rate for households with family income less than the median family income was only 51.8 percent.

In addition to the disparities in the rates of homeownership according to race and income,

we also must address acute shortage of affordable housing.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition's analysis of the 1999 American Housing Survey data shows that there are approximately 15 million households in the United States who pay more than half of their income for their housing, live in severely substandard housing, or both. The majority of these households—11 million—have extremely low incomes, that is, incomes at or below 30% of the area median.

Because the American Housing Survey only counts people who are housed, to get a true picture of the number of extremely low income households with severe housing problems, we must add homeless families and individuals to this number, an estimated two to three million people.

There are also 14 million very poor households with serious living problems. These include both renters and homeowners, and comprise over 13 percent of all households in the country.

Especially troubling is the fact that there are now 600,000 more households with worst case housing needs than 10 years ago. [Households with worst case needs are defined as unassisted renters with incomes below 50 percent of the local median, and who pay more than half their incomes for rent or live in severely substandard housing].

It seems to me that the promise of America—that you will be able to afford housing and take care of your family if you work hard and play by the rules—is under a quiet but crippling assault today, an assault that falls disproportionately on the poor and people of color.

The current Administration has a history of paying excellent lip service to this important issue, but failing to address it in a real and effective way. While I welcome President Bush's initiative to increase opportunities for home ownership for minorities, he also needs to propose a much stronger HUD budget and increased funding for programs that would substantially increase the supply of affordable housing in this country.

For example, the President's budget calls for a significant cut in the Public Housing Capital Fund. The Public Housing Capital Fund would be cut by a \$441 million when increased set-asides are factored into the equation.

The President's budget freezes funding for HOPE VI grants to local authorities. This program is revolutionizing public housing by replacing high rises or barracks-style projects with new, mixed income, mixed-used communities.

Finally, the Public Housing Operating Fund would receive an increase of \$35 million over FY02, though still short of the combined total that operating fund and the Public Housing Drug Elimination Program received for last year. The Drug Elimination Program remains zeroed out.

Mr. Speaker, this is hardly the housing budget of an Administration that understands the housing needs and housing disparities in this country. Let's be clear, these shortsighted cuts—and others—are necessary to pay for last year's Republican tax cut, which provides most of its benefits to those who needs them least.

There is much more than the Administration can and should do to address the crisis in affordable housing.

I have introduced a bill, H.R. 4205, also known as the Affordable Housing Improvements Act, that will enable communities with serious affordable housing shortages to transfer their unused Section 8 funds to the HOME Program—a program to build new housing for rent or homeownership or to the Public Housing Capital Fund—a program to rehabilitate existing public housing, depending on local housing needs.

As many of you know, every year communities around the country lose Section 8 dollars because federally subscribed voucher payments have not kept pace with rapidly rising rents making it impossible for individuals to use these subsidies. In 2001, HUD recaptured \$1.8 billion dollars in unused Section 8 funds from Public Housing Agencies throughout the nation, including more than \$23 million from the Miami-Dade Housing Authority. This is a scandal and it must be stopped.

My bill would allow local communities to attack their affordable housing problem by allowing them to use these scarce federal resources to improve and construct new affordable housing units in an effort to dramatically improve the nation's affordable housing problems.

Congress also should pass the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act. This legislation would create an affordable housing trust fund from profits generated by the Federal Housing Administration. Over the next seven years, these FHA profits are expected to exceed \$25 billion.

If a portion of the FHA surplus is used to build affordable housing, experts predict that we could triple affordable housing construction next year and provide shelter for more than 200,000 families.

Mr. Speaker, finally, our housing strategy must include measures that will improve the economic well-being of low-income families. This includes raising the minimum wage, expanding the earned income tax credit, improving job opportunities through education and training, and fostering economic development that will create better paying jobs.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend President Bush for finally deciding to follow the lead of the Congressional Black Caucus and the CBC Foundation in championing the cause of increased opportunities for home ownership for minorities. While I am pleased that the White House has finally recognized the importance of this issue to the economic welfare of minorities, it is important to recognize the leadership of the CBC in advancing this issue.

Owning a home is one of the very important markers of success in a person's life. From our Nation's earliest days, homeownership has been the foundation of the American dream. Yet, for too long, the American dream has been unattainable for many low-income, minority families. In many distressed neighborhoods, particularly in this country's urban communities, there is a lack of affordable housing units available to residents. And the costs involved in new construction of residential property in these areas far outweigh the revenue. Thus, homebuilders refrain from building new, affordable homes in low and moderate-income neighborhoods.

A David Broder article in the Detroit Free Press stated that "the shortage of affordable housing is close to the top of people's concerns. And it's mainly in the Federal Govern-

ment that housing is a chronically neglected subject."

Time and again CBC Members have pointed out that Congress is not addressing the affordable housing needs of America's low to moderate-income families. We are pleased that the President is heeding our collective voices. To the President, we say, "thank you" for bringing about greater public awareness to this problem. To the American people, we say, the CBC will be here, as we always have, to ensure that the initiatives the President proposed this past weekend are implemented and that homeownership opportunities increase for all Americans, especially those who so desperately need them.

Through the work of the President, this Congress, and the private sector, we look forward to lower down payments, better education on the purchasing process, and overall affordable housing for all Americans, regardless of race, creed, or socio-economic status.

□ 1830

GOVERNMENT UNABLE TO ACCOUNT FOR \$17.3 BILLION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GRUCCI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I will not take the full hour that has been allotted to me. I will only take 5 or 6 minutes. I came to the floor of the House because 2 weeks ago I had been listening to a radio talk show host in North Carolina. It was actually Jerry Agar at WPTF in Raleigh. He was talking about the fact that he just could not believe a New York Post article that said that the Federal Government had lost \$17.3 billion.

I was just really outraged at the time. I took my car phone and called my office and I said, "Please check this New York Post article. Let's verify what Mr. Agar was saying." Sure enough, what we found out, the New York Post, and not only the Post but also the London Times had both written articles to the fact that based on the Department of Treasury-released report, the 2001 financial report of the United States Government, the report, on page 110, revealed that the Federal Government has unreconciled transactions totaling \$17.3 billion for fiscal year 2001.

Mr. Speaker, I am one of many on both sides of the political aisle that just really thinks this is unacceptable and outrageous that the hard-working American people who pay their taxes and think that we are the public guardian of the American people's taxes, yet the government cannot account for \$17.3 billion.

On June 6, I wrote a letter to Secretary Paul O'Neill. The last paragraph says, "Mr. Secretary, I believe someone must answer to the American people for this loss of tax dollars, and I look forward to your answer regarding these unreconciled transactions." I, quite frankly, hope that by the time we re-

turn after the July 4 break, which will be in about 1 week, or 8 days, and we are out for about 6 days, that when we come back, that I will have an answer from Secretary O'Neill as to where the taxpayers' money totaling \$17.3 billion has gone. If not, then I intend to write the Budget chairman and also the oversight chairman on the Government Operations and ask them to please make an inquiry in behalf of the taxpayers of America.

There are a multitude of reasons why I am alarmed by the fact that this has been lost, again primarily because it is the taxpayers' money. We all know that this is a tight budget year. We have a war on terrorism that is costing about \$1.8 billion a month. We must fight that war and win that war for the American people, and certainly we must be very frugal and wise with the taxpayers' money, and certainly must account to the taxpayer every dollar and every dime that we spend. That is one reason that I am really pushing hard for the Secretary of Treasury to give me an answer to where this \$17.3 billion has gone, because, quite frankly, we have an obligation to the taxpayer, and we have an obligation as Members of the House of Representatives to make sure that we can answer the questions of our constituents about a multitude of issues, and certainly as to where \$17.3 billion has gone.

I use for an example that I have put in a bill, H.R. 3973, that many of my colleagues, both Democrat and Republican, have signed this bill that would help ensure that when a military person is killed, whether it be accidental or it should be in wartime, that the Congress years ago decided that the family should get what is called a death gratuity. Initially it started off at about \$3,000. In 1986, the Congress decided to add 3- to the 3-, which would make it 6-. But on the second \$3,000, the bill was not sent to Ways and Means, so, therefore, there is a tax on the second 3- of the \$6,000 death gratuity that is given to the family of a man or woman in the military.

I am just incensed that there would be any tax on this death gratuity, so I have put a bill in, and again I have got very strong bipartisan support, to eliminate this tax so that when the family receives the death gratuity from the United States Government, there would be no tax to the family.

I use that for an example because, Mr. Speaker, to eliminate this tax over a 10-year period would only cost \$8 million, that is over 10 years, to make sure that the family of the military person that has been killed would not pay a tax on it.

Then I come back to the fact that we have lost \$17.3 billion. My point is to say that I intend to come to this floor at least once a week, and maybe more often than that, to say to Secretary O'Neill, we need as a Congress, not just Congressman WALTER JONES, but we as a Congress, we need an answer so that we can say to our constituents who are