

will tell you, America is great. This is for our service men and women that we pass this in a bipartisan way.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill, H.R. 3365.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the Senate amendments to H.R. 3365.

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

There was no objection.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2559, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 429 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 429

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2559) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes. 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 North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), 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.

The rule waives all points of order against the conference report to ac-

company H.R. 2559, Military Construction Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2004, and against its consideration. The rule provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

This conference report provides funds for all types of construction projects on military installations here in the U.S. and abroad. The projects range from barracks and housing to training ranges and runways.

Mr. Speaker, we are asking a lot of our military today, and our military personnel on active duty know they will be deployed overseas and perhaps on dangerous missions. So we want to provide them a quality of life for themselves and for their families that will allow them to serve, knowing their families will be taken care of with good health care and good housing.

□ 1230

We must honor the most basic commitments we have made to the men and women of our Armed Services. We must ensure a reasonable quality of life to recruit and retain the best and the brightest to America's fighting forces. Most importantly, we must do all in our power to ensure a strong, able, dedicated American military so that this Nation will be ever vigilant and ever prepared.

I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the key areas of the bill. First, \$1.2 billion is provided for troop barracks. This is a \$58 million increase from last year's level. This sends a positive message to our unaccompanied personnel stationed all around the world that their quality of life is a priority. It also provides \$2.7 billion to operate and maintain existing housing units and \$1.1 billion for new housing units. Military families also have a tremendous need for quality child care, especially single parents and families in which one or both parents may face lengthy deployments. To help meet this need, the bill provides \$16.5 million for child development centers.

In conclusion, we have focused our efforts on programs that directly support the men and women in our Armed Forces. We would like to do more, of course. We always have and we will always try to do that. The bottom line is this: With this conference report, we meet the military's critical infrastructure needs and their efforts to improve the quality of life for our men and women in the Armed Forces.

To that end, I urge my colleagues to support the rule and support the conference report.

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my appreciation for the bipartisan work of the conferees, and especially for the leadership of Chairman

KNOLLENBERG and ranking member EDWARDS, whose long service to meeting the needs of our uniformed men and women is well known to all the Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, in June when the House passed its version of H.R. 2559, it was \$41 million less than the President's request and was a \$1.5 billion cut from fiscal year 2003 funding levels. The conference report, while an improvement somewhat over the House-passed bill, is still defective. While it is \$199 million more than the amount requested by President Bush, it still reduces funding overall for military construction by \$1.38 billion from the fiscal year 2003 levels. Mr. Speaker, we simply cannot continue selling our military men and women short.

We have all seen the pictures from Fort Stewart in Georgia where our Guard and Reserves, returning wounded and sick from Iraq, are warehoused in the most miserable conditions. How can we stand on the floor of this House day after day, week after week declaring how much we support our military men and women when the funding providing for family housing in this conference report is over \$400 million less than last year? That total is even worse than what it was in the original House-passed bill. How can we stand on the floor of the House day after day and week after week and say that we are engaged in a long-term struggle against a global enemy and then cut military construction funds by \$600 million from last year's level?

Mr. Speaker, poor facility conditions are not only unsafe, they hamper readiness, contribute to low morale and decrease troop retention. According to the Pentagon, 180,000 of the 300,000 units of military housing are substandard. Sixty-eight percent of our military facilities have deficiencies so serious that they might impede mission readiness, or they are so deteriorated that they cannot support mission requirements. The current reductions in funding for construction in these facility categories means that the rate at which buildings are renovated or replaced has increased from 83 years to 150 years.

Mr. Speaker, I said it in June, and I am going to say it again. This is a national scandal. I keep hearing that since the events of September 11, we live in a changed world. I keep hearing how much we appreciate our Armed Forces, how much we appreciate their sacrifice and their service. Then why do we keep cutting and cutting and cutting the military construction appropriations bill? If we truly appreciate our military men and women, should we not give them and their families decent housing? I keep being told, just wait for next year and the funding will get better. Only it never gets any better. It just keeps getting worse. "Next year" should be now.

This conference report, while a small improvement overall from the House-passed bill, continues to be, in the

words of Chairman KNOLLENBERG, woefully inadequate. This is what happens when our priorities are wrong. This is what happens when we deny our Nation the most basic revenue needed to adequately fund our national priorities. We rob our valiant military personnel of decent homes and facilities. We rob our veterans of their basic benefits. We cut back funding for schools and child care for military families, and we are faced with passing a bill like this.

I call upon the President to include in his fiscal year 2005 budget request a budget figure that genuinely begins to meet the military construction and family housing needs of our Armed Forces. Mr. Speaker, I regret that this is the best that this Congress can do for our military and their families.

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

Mrs. MYRICK. 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.

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PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION
OF H.R. 1829, FEDERAL PRISON
INDUSTRIES COMPETITION IN
CONTRACTING ACT OF 2003

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 428 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 428

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1829) to amend title 18, United States Code, to require Federal Prison Industries to compete for its contracts minimizing its unfair competition with private sector firms and their non-inmate workers and empowering Federal agencies to get the best value for taxpayers' dollars, to provide a five-year period during which Federal Prison Industries adjusts to obtaining inmate work opportunities through other than its mandatory source status, to enhance inmate access to remedial and vocational opportunities and other rehabilitative opportunities to better prepare inmates for a successful return to society, to authorize alternative inmate work opportunities in support of non-profit organizations, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on the Judiciary now printed in the bill. Each section of the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. During consideration of the bill for amendment,

the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), 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, yesterday the Committee on Rules met and granted an open rule for H.R. 1829, the Federal Prison Industries Competition in Contracting Act. Coming from a district that is facing many challenges in the manufacturing sector, I am very pleased to see this bill on the floor today. Federal Prison Industries, FPI, is a depression-era Federal agency that has a special status in the Federal procurement process that forces government agencies to buy from FPI without competition. Over 300 products and services are produced by Federal prisoners that totaled nearly \$680 million in sales to the Federal Government in 2002. Federal agencies are forced to buy these products and services from FPI even though the private sector has proven they can better address the needs of Federal agencies by providing higher quality products, cheaper and faster. I understand that there is concern about prisoners having jobs, et cetera. I have no problem with that. I have always supported that. But we are living in an era where the Federal Government needs to also save as much money as possible when we are looking at procurement, and this is an area we can do that.

This will simply allow the private sector to compete for contracts that are paid for with their own tax dollars. The bill will end the monopoly that FPI holds over all government purchases, including office furniture and textiles. In my own district in North Carolina, I hear from many small business owners who are growing increasingly frustrated with the ongoing challenges of dealing with government procurement when FPI is involved. If this monopoly was ended, these companies could compete on a level playing field. That is all we have ever asked for, is

just a level playing field to provide the government with their products. This bill would help stop the bleeding of jobs from the textile and furniture industries. H.R. 1829 will provide protections for businesses of all sizes, and also the hardworking, law-abiding workers they employ, from FPI's unfair practice.

As a cosponsor of this bill, I would like to commend the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) for sponsoring this fine piece of legislation. As many of you know, this legislation enjoys broad support from a somewhat unusual coalition, including majority and minority leadership, conservatives and liberals, and business and labor groups. To that end, I look forward to a fair, open, and thorough debate on this bill. It is a good bill. I urge my colleagues to support this rule and the underlying legislation.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me the time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1829, the Federal Prison Industries Competition in Contracting Act of 2003. In 1934, Congress established Federal Prison Industries, a government corporation that employs inmates in Federal prisons to produce goods and services for the Federal Government. FPI employs 21,000 inmates in 111 prison factories to manufacture a number of products for the government. Prisoners manufacture such items as clothing, textiles, electronics, fleet management and vehicular components, graphics and industrial products. In return for cheap labor, inmates receive valuable job training opportunities that teach them the necessary skills that may help them become productive, hardworking citizens once they reenter society.

Under current Federal law, FPI is a mandatory source of goods and services for Federal agencies. That means, Mr. Speaker, that any agency that wants to buy at least \$2,500 worth of goods and services must first seek to do so through FPI. If FPI cannot process an order, the agency is then given a waiver to make the purchase from another source.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation seeks to phase out, over a 5-year period, the preference given to Federal Prison Industries in contracts with Federal agencies. Supporters claim that it is unfair to exclusively employ prisoners when small businesses and private firms want to secure contracts with the Federal Government. However, I claim that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. I claim that it is unfair to spend \$587 million tax dollars to dissolve an effective and self-sustaining program.

□ 1245

I claim that it is unfair to obligate an additional \$75 million a year for the