I hope no one confuses my opposition to this bill as opposition to any congressional actions to ensure more Americans have access to affordable housing. After all, one reason many Americans lack affordable housing is because taxes and regulations have made it impossible for builders to provide housing at a price that could be afforded by many lower-income Americans. Therefore, Congress should cut taxes and regulations. A good start would be generous housing tax credits. Congress should also consider tax credits and regulatory relief for developers who provide housing for those with low incomes. For example, I am cosponsoring H.R. 839, the Renewing the Dream Tax Credit Act, which provides a tax credit to developers who construct or rehabilitate low-income housing.

H.R. 1276 distorts the economy and violates constitutional prohibitions on income redistribution. A better way of guaranteeing an efficient housing market where everyone could meet their own needs for housing would be for Congress to repeal taxes and programs that burden the housing industry and allow housing needs to be met by the free market. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to reject this bill and instead develop housing policies consistent with constitutional principles, the laws of economics, and respect for individual rights.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member rises today to express his support for H.R. 1276, the American Dream Downpayment Act. This bill, of which this Member is an original cosponsor, authorizes $200 million in grants to be made available as part of the HOME program to first-time low-income families for downpayment assistance. This important legislation is strongly supported by the Administration and is a priority of the distinguished Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Mr. Martinez).

First, this Member would like to thank the distinguished gentlelady from Florida (Ms. HARRIS) for introducing this legislation. Furthermore, this Member would also like to thank both the distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), the Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, and the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), the Ranking Member of this Committee, for their support in bringing this measure to the House Floor.

One of the main obstacles for families who want to purchase a home is that they do not have the resources for a sufficient mortgage downpayment. As a response to this pressing need, this legislation would provide downpayment assistance grants to more than 40,000 first-time low income families.

The American Dream Downpayment Act would be administered as part of HUD's successful HOME program which currently provides grants to states and entitlement communities (over 50,000 in population) to use for affordable housing. This bill authorizes $200 million in new authorized funds to be used for downpayment assistance by states and entitlement communities. Furthermore, this bill would preserve the flexibility of the HOME program by allowing these states and localities to craft a package of downpayment assistance which meets their specific needs.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, as a Member of the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, this Member strongly supports H.R. 1276, the American Dream Downpayment Act. This Member encourages his colleagues to support H.R. 1276.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, today, the House is considering H.R. 1276, the American Dream Downpayment Act. This important legislation, introduced by Reps. KATHERINE HARRIS and MIKE ROGERS, will help tens of thousands of low-income families to achieve the American dream of homeownership.

The nation's overall homeownership rate is at an all time high of 68 percent. However, the homeownership rate for African-Americans, Hispanic and other non-Hispanic minorities is approximately 49 percent. We can and must do better than this; H.R. 1276 will go a long way in helping to close this homeownership gap.

For many families, the biggest barrier to homeownership is their inability to afford the downpayment and closing costs. While they can afford the monthly mortgage payments, they are unable to save the funds necessary for the downpayment and closing costs needed to purchase their first home. H.R. 1276 addresses this barrier by providing communities across America with $200 million in grants, which is anticipated to help more than 40,000 first-time low-income families to purchase their first homes.

H.R. 1276 will be administered as part of HUD's HOME Investment Partnership Program, an existing program that helps communities increase the availability of affordable housing for families most in need through grants to state and local governments. The American Dream Downpayment Act preserves the flexibility of the HOME program, so that states can tailor assistance to best meet the needs of local citizens.

H.R. 1276 has received the endorsement of: HUD Secretary Mel Martinez; America's Community Bankers; Consumers Bankers Association; Fannie Mae; Freddie Mac; Housing Assistance Council; Manufactured Housing Institute; Mortgage Bankers Association of America; National Association of Home Builders; National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials; National Association of Mortgage Brokers; and National Association of Realtors.

When families own their own home, they become stakeholders in their communities. H.R. 1276 will increase the ranks of stakeholders and bring stability and a new spirit of revitalization to our communities. By helping families purchase their own homes, we can give them the wealth-building opportunity that homeownership provides. Hard-working, low-income families across the country will finally have an opportunity to profit from both the community and economic benefits that come from owning your own home.

In addition to the many benefits for low-income families, homeownership helps to fuel the economy. People who own their homes spend money for home improvements. In fact, the housing industry itself has been one of the few bright spots in the national economy over the last three years.

Passage of the American Dream Downpayment Act represents an important step in closing the minority homeownership gap. I want to again commend Representatives KATHERINE HARRIS, MIKE ROGERS, Chairman NEY and Ranking Minority MAXINE WATERS for their hard work on this important measure and urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the ''American Dream Downpayment Act.'' I thank Congresswoman KATHERINE HARRIS, Congressman ARTUR DAVIS, Congressman MIKE ROGERS and all the members of the Financial Services Committee for their hard work on this important bill.

This legislation, which I am proud to have cosponsored, will help low and moderate income families purchase their first home. As Delaware's governor, I established a Housing Development Trust Fund that helped more than 5,400 low- to moderate-income families become homeowners. I am pleased to support this program which seeks to help more than 40,000 first-time, low-income families achieve their dream of homeownership.

We can be proud of the historic levels of homeownership we have reached in this country, we must also recognize that the number of people who pay more than half of their income in housing is also rising. We need to make our existing government housing programs more efficient and expand them through responsible programs that will help our constituents realize their dreams of homeownership. Equity in a home is the primary asset held by most American families and the best mechanism that families have for wealth creation.

I have maintained a longstanding commitment to affordable housing and expanding homeownership, this legislation is a positive step in furthering that goal. Thomas Jefferson once said the happiest moments of his life were those which he had passed at home in the embrace of his family. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased we are working to bring that sentiment to all Americans and I rise in support of this legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1276, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS REDUCTION PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2608) to reauthorize the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2608

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2003''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

Section 4 of the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 (42 U.S.C. 7701 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(8) The term 'Interagency Coordinating Committee' means the Interagency Coordinating

Committee on Earthquake Hazards Reduction established under section 5(a).

''(9) The term 'Advisory Committee' means the Advisory Committee established under section 5(a)(5).''.

SEC. 3. NATIONAL EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS REDUCTION PROGRAM.

Section 5 of the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 (42 U.S.C. 7704(b)) is amended—

(1) by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

''(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—There is established the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program.

''(2) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.—The activities of the Program shall be designed to—

''(A) develop effective measures for earthquake hazards reduction;

''(B) promote the adoption of earthquake hazards reduction measures by Federal, State, and local governments, national standards and model code organizations, architects and engineers, building owners, and others with a role in planning and constructing buildings, structures, and lifelines through—

''(i) grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and technical assistance;

''(ii) development of standards, guidelines, and voluntary consensus codes for earthquake hazards reduction for buildings, structures, and lifelines; and

''(iii) development and maintenance of a repository of information, including technical data, on seismic risk and hazards reduction; and

''(C) improve the understanding of earthquakes and their effects on communities, buildings, structures, and lifelines, through interdisciplinary research that involves engineering, natural sciences, and social, economic, and decisions sciences.

''(3) INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS REDUCTION.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—There is established an Interagency Coordinating Committee on Earthquake Hazards Reduction chaired by the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (referred to in this subsection as the 'Director').

''(B) MEMBERSHIP.—The committee shall be composed of the directors of—

''(i) the Federal Emergency Management Agency;

''(ii) the United States Geological Survey;

''(iii) the National Science Foundation;

''(iv) the Office of Science and Technology Policy; and

''(v) the Office of Management and Budget.

''(C) MEETINGS.—The Committee shall meet not less than 3 times a year at the call of the Director.

''(D) PURPOSE AND DUTIES.—The Interagency Coordinating Committee shall oversee the planning, management, and coordination of the Program. The Interagency Coordinating Committee shall—

''(i) develop, not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and update periodically—

''(I) a strategic plan that establishes goals and priorities for the Program activities described under subsection (a)(2); and

''(II) a detailed management plan to implement such strategic plan; and

''(ii) develop a coordinated interagency budget for the Program that will ensure appropriate balance among the Program activities described under subsection (a)(2), and submit such budget to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget at the time designated by that office for agencies to submit annual budgets.

''(4) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Interagency Coordinating Committee shall transmit, at the time of the President's budget request to Congress, an annual report to the Committee on Science and the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate. Such report shall include—

''(A) the Program budget for the current fiscal year for each agency that participates in the Program, and for each major goal established for the Program activities under subparagraph (3)(A);

''(B) the proposed Program budget for the next fiscal year for each agency that participates in the Program, and for each major goal established for the Program activities under subparagraph (3)(A);

''(C) a description of the activities and results of the Program during the previous year, including an assessment of the effectiveness of the Program in furthering the goals established in the strategic plan under (3)(A);

''(D) a description of the extent to which the Program has incorporated the recommendations of the Advisory Committee;

''(E) a description of activities, including budgets for the current fiscal year and proposed budgets for the next fiscal year, that are carried out by Program agencies and contribute to the Program, but are not included in the Program; and

''(F) a description of the activities, including budgets for the current fiscal year and proposed budgets for the following fiscal year, related to the grant program carried out under subsection (b)(2)(A)(i).

''(5) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall establish an Advisory Committee on Earthquake Hazards Reduction consisting of non-Federal members, including representatives of research and academic institutions, industry standards development organizations, State and local government, and financial communities who are qualified to provide advice on earthquake hazards reduction. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee shall be considered by Federal agencies in implementing the Program.

''(B) ASSESSMENT.—The Advisory Committee shall assess—

''(i) trends and developments in the science and engineering of earthquake hazards reduction;

''(ii) effectiveness of the Program in carrying out the activities under (a)(2);

''(iii) the need to revise the Program; and

''(iv) the management, coordination, implementation, and activities of the Program.

''(C) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act and at least once every 2 years thereafter, the Advisory Committee shall report to the Director on its findings of the assessment carried out under subparagraph (B) and its recommendations for ways to improve the Program. In developing recommendations, the Committee shall consider the recommendations of the United States Geological Survey Scientific Earthquake Studies Advisory Committee.

''(D) FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT APPLICATION.—Section 14 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 App. U.S.C. 14) shall not apply to the Advisory Committee.'';

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking ''Federal Emergency Management Agency'' and all that follows through ''of the Agency'' and inserting ''National Institute of Standards and Technology shall have the primary responsibility for planning and coordinating the Program. In carrying out this paragraph, the Director of the Institute'';

(ii) by striking subparagraphs (B) and (C) and redesignating subparagraphs (D) and (E) as subparagraphs (C) and (D), respectively;

(iii) by inserting after subparagraph (A) the following:

''(B) support the development of performance-based seismic engineering tools, and work with appropriate groups to promote the commercial application of such tools, through earthquake-related building codes, standards, and construction practices;'';

(iv) by striking ''The principal official carrying out the responsibilities described in this paragraph shall be at a level no lower than that of Associate Director.''; and

(v) in subparagraph (D), as redesignated by clause (ii), by striking ''National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Standards and Technology'' and inserting ''Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Science Foundation'';

(B) in paragraph (2)(A)—

(i) by striking ''In addition to the lead'' and all that follows through ''Agency'' and inserting ''The Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (in this Act referred to as the 'Agency')''; and

(ii) by amending clause (iii) to read as follows:

''(iii) assist the National Institute of Standards and Technology, other Federal agencies, and private sector groups in the preparation and wide dissemination of building codes and practices for structures and lifelines, and aid in the development of performance based codes for buildings, structures, and lifelines that are cost effective and affordable;'';

(C) in paragraph (3)—

(i) by inserting ''and other activities'' after ''shall conduct research'';

(ii) in subparagraphs (C) and (D), by striking ''the Agency'' both places it appears and inserting ''the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology'';

(iii) in subparagraph (E), by striking ''establish, using existing facilities, a Center for the International Exchange of Earthquake Information'' and inserting ''operate, using the National Earthquake Information Center, a forum for the international exchange of earthquake information'';

(iv) in subparagraph (F), by striking ''Network'' and inserting ''System''; and

(v) by inserting after subparagraph (H) the following new subparagraphs:

''(I) work with other Program agencies to coordinate Program activities with similar eathquake hazards reduction efforts in other countries, to ensure that the Program benefits from relevant information and advances in those countries; and

''(J) maintain suitable seismic hazard maps in support of building codes for structures and lifelines, including additional maps needed for performance based design approaches.'';

(D) in paragraph (4)—

(i) by redesignating subparagraphs (D), (E), and (F) as subparagraphs (E), (F), and (H), respectively;

(ii) by inserting after subparagraph (C) the following:

''(D) support research that improves the safety and performance of buildings, structures, and lifeline systems using large-scale experimental and computational facilities;'';

(iii) in subparagraph (F) (as so redesignated), by striking ''; and'' and inserting a semicolon; and

(iv) by inserting after subparagraph (F) (as so redesignated) the following:

''(G) include to the maximum extent practicable diverse institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities and those serving large proportions of Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, and other underrepresented populations; and''; and

(E) in paragraph (5), by striking ''The National'' and inserting ''In addition to the lead agency responsibilities described under paragraph (1), the National''; and

(3) in subsection (c)(1), by striking ''Agency'' and inserting ''Interagency Coordinating Committee''.

SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) Section 12 of the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 (42 U.S.C. 7706) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by adding after paragraph (7) the following new paragraph:

''(8) There are authorized to be appropriated to the Federal Emergency Management Agency

for carrying out this Act $19,000,000 for fiscal year 2004; $21,000,000 for fiscal year 2005; and $23,000,000 for fiscal year 2006. Of such amounts appropriated, not less than $3,000,000 shall be made available each such fiscal year for supporting the development of performance-based, cost-effective, and affordable codes for buildings, structures, and lifelines.'';

(2) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the following: ''There are authorized to be appropriated to the United States Geological Survey for carrying out this Act $80,000,000 for fiscal year 2004, of which not less than $30,000,000 shall be made available for completion of the Advanced National Seismic Research and Monitoring System established under section 13; $83,500,000 for fiscal year 2005, of which not less than $30,000,000 shall be made available for completion of the Advanced National Seismic Research and Monitoring System established under section 13; $93,000,000 for fiscal year 2006, of which not less than $36,000,000 shall be made available for completion of the Advanced National Seismic Research and Monitoring System established under section 13; and such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2007, of which not less than $36,000,000 shall be made available for completion of the Advanced National Seismic Research and Monitoring System established under section 13; and such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008, of which not less than $36,000,000 shall be made available for completion of the Advanced National Seismic Research and Monitoring System established under section 13.'';

(3) in subsection (c), by adding at the end the following: ''There are authorized to be appropriated to the National Science Foundation for carrying out this Act $39,000,000 for fiscal year 2004; $44,000,000 for fiscal year 2005; and $47,500,000 for fiscal year 2006.''; and

(4) in subsection (d) by adding at the end the following: ''There are authorized to be appropriated to the National Institute of Standards and Technology for carrying out this Act $8,000,000 for fiscal year 2004; $9,600,000 for fiscal year 2005; and $12,500,000 for fiscal year 2006. Of such amounts appropriated, not less than $2,000,000 shall be made available each such fiscal year for supporting the development of performance-based, cost-effective, and affordable codes for buildings, structures, and lifelines.''.

(b) Section 13 of the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 (42 U.S.C. 7707) is amended by striking subsection (c).

(c) Section 14(b) of the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 (42 U.S.C. 7708(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3) by striking ''and'' at the end; and

(2) by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following:

''(4) $8,000,000 for fiscal year 2004;

''(5) $20,000,000 for fiscal year 2005, all of which shall be available for operations and maintenance; and

''(6) $20,000,000 for fiscal year 2006, all of which shall be available for operations and maintenance.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks, and to include extraneous material on H.R. 2608, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues know that I am a fiscal conservative; so in evaluating this bill, we looked at the justification for an authorized spending that is going to move us closer to being able to deal with earthquakes, to mitigate their damage.

There is no question that damaging earthquakes are inevitable however infrequent they may be. Some of our evaluation reported that annual damages from earthquakes in the United States are about $4.4 billion. This is annual. What we did in this bill is a slight reduction in the authorization; from the prior years. In California, the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the magnitude was 6.7; and it was the most costly earthquake in history, amounting to over $40 billion.

Of course, even though the State of California is very aggressive in trying to work with earthquakes and paying for some of the damages and working in their research to mitigate those damages; through FEMA, our Federal Emergency Management Agency, all of the taxpayers in the United States contribute to paying for some of the damage by earthquakes. So if we can mitigate that damage through research, which helps us engineer buildings and bridges and roadways that are less vulnerable to earthquakes, we are going to, by far, save more money than we are spending on this authorization bill.

The west coast, California, and certainly that area of the country, is assumed to be the location of earthquakes. But that is not the only part of the country that is very vulnerable. In fact, Alaska is more vulnerable than California in terms of the risk from earthquakes. The recent massive earthquake of 7.9 magnitude in Alaska was right where the Alaskan oil transline went through.

We heard testimony before our Committee on Science earlier this year that that quake went relatively unnoticed simply because of the extra precautions and wisdom of people like Lloyd Cluff, who recognized that this pipeline was being built over a vulnerable earthquake area and so he, in effect, built a flexable cradle for that pipeline. So when the earthquake happened, the pipeline was not so rigid and it withstood that huge quake. Without current technology and foresight damage to that pipeline could have cost billions.

There are 39 States that are within zones where the probability of an earthquake occurring is great, and recent research indicates that areas in the eastern and central United States are at greater risk than we ever thought. A 19th century quake in Missouri actually rang church bells in Boston. So the threat is there and the justification to be better prepared, to even possibly with new seismic technology increase the alert time by maybe 8 or 9 or 10 seconds can help us to be better prepared such as immediately shutting off gas lines, et cetera.

We are moving ahead in NEHRP, and so I commend the Democrats and Republicans for working with all of the agencies and organizations involved to develop this legislation.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in support of H.R. 2608. H.R. 2608 is the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2003.

This legislation will strengthen a valuable Federal program which has the important goal of improving public safety. I want to acknowledge the leadership of the chairman of the Subcommittee on Research, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH), and my colleague, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD), in introducing H.R. 2608. I also want to thank the chairman of the Committee on Science, the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT), for working in a bipartisan manner with this side of the aisle to further develop the bill and to move it expeditiously through the committee and to the floor.

The National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, often called NEHRP, was established 25 years ago to address a serious seismic hazard in the United States. The program has the major goal of determining how to lower the risk to people and to the built environment.

Today, 75 million Americans in 39 States are directly vulnerable to a serious earthquake. The potential economic losses in a large metropolitan area due to a major earthquake could be over $100 billion. These facts alone make the justification for NEHRP self-evident, and even after 25 years the relevance of the program continues.

Most observers of NEHRP believe it has made many valuable contributions. In particular, it has increased our understanding of earthquake processes and has provided detailed information about the geographic distribution of earthquake risk. Equally important, the program has helped to improve engineering design and practice for structures and lifelines suitable for earthquake-prone regions.

Nevertheless, much work remains to be done. The NEHRP can be improved and made more effective, which became evident from the hearings before the Committee on Science. More can be done on technology transfer that will bring into practice what has been learned from the research activities about the most effective and economical ways for enhancing seismic safety of the built environment.

Also, some deficiencies needed to be addressed regarding the planning and

administration of the program. In 1993, the former chairman of the Committee on Science, Mr. George Brown, wrote the President to express concerns about NEHRP. He cited the lack of strategic planning, insufficient coordination and implementation of research results and a lack of emphasis on mitigation. Unfortunately, most of these concerns are still valid.

H.R. 2608 focuses on two aspects of the program most in need of improvement: program leadership and increased emphasis on transitioning the results of research into practice.

Leadership is addressed by designating the National Institutes of Standard and Technology, the lead agency for planning and coordinating the implementation of the interagency program. NIST is charged to convene a process to develop a strategic plan and work jointly with the other NEHRP agencies to prepare a detailed implementation plan and budget for the program for submittal to OMB during the budget formulation process.

The bill also creates an advisory committee of nongovernment experts to help guide implementation of the program and to assist the agencies in defining program priorities. Thus, H.R. 2608 puts in place mechanisms that will provide the leadership needed to ensure a well-coordinated, carefully planned, and effectively executed National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program.

In addition, the legislation authorizes the resources needed to enable NEHRP to achieve its goals. It authorizes full funding for the Advanced National Seismic System. This distributed national facility, which has been the highest priority of the earthquake hazards reduction community, was first authorized in the year 2000, but has been funded at only 10 percent of the level required. I hope that with this authorization adequate appropriations will follow so that the Advanced National Seismic System may be completed without further delay.

The bill also specifies funding needed to complete the George E. Brown Network for Engineering Simulation and to support its operation. Moreover, the funding increases authorized will enable NEHRP agencies to expand their research activities so that this powerful new research tool can be fully employed.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2608 is a bill of national importance and will help improve public safety and mitigate earthquake hazards. I commend the bill to my colleagues and ask for passage by the House.

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

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to just urge that our appropriators and the Senate look carefully and hopefully will quickly adequately fund the efforts that we have put forth in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS).

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. Today I rise in support of H.R. 2608, the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2003.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Environment, Technology, and Standards of the Committee on Science, with jurisdiction over the National Institute of Standards and Technology, more familiarly known as NIST, I want to comment on the interagency coordinating committee in section 3 of H.R. 2608.

This section designates NIST as the Chair of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Coordinating Committee. While I believe that NIST is more than capable of carrying out these responsibilities, and should have this position, I am concerned that the institute will not receive adequate funding to perform these duties. In the past, NIST's earthquake research activities have not received the full funding authorized for them, and this section designates additional responsibilities for NIST.

Adequate funding for NIST labs continues to be a concern. The funding levels for NIST labs in the fiscal year 2004 House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary appropriations bill are $30 million below the administration's request and flat compared to the fiscal year 2003 appropriations.

For the building and fire research lab, where NIST's NEHRP activities are based, the funding level in the fiscal year 2004 House bill is $3 million less than fiscal year 2003 levels.

The Senate Committee on Appropriations' representations for these labs are at the administration's request level. Given that the final number will likely be somewhere between these two, this budget situation could leave many of NIST's vital initiatives underfunded. Any funding level less than the President's request would result in a reduction in force of up to 50 scientists and staff from NIST labs.

□ 1130

NIST is a world-class science institution, home to two Nobel Laureates and scores of other experts who diligently provide the scientific expertise and measurements and standards that is the basis of technologies we use every day. This Chamber has passed laws giving NIST new responsibilities for programs including voting standards, building safety, and nanotechnology. Yet, given the difficult budget climate, it has been a challenge to ensure NIST receives adequate funding to carry out these important duties. You simply cannot keep piling on additional duties without providing funding for them. I am very concerned about that trend.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that I do support this legislation with NIST taking the lead on earthquake leadership activities. However, I intend to work with the other members of the NEHRP Interagency Coordinating Committee, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Office of Management and Budget, and the chairman and members of the Subcommittee on Appropriations Commerce, Justice, State, Judiciary and Related Agencies to ensure that NIST receives adequate funding and support for these additional responsibilities. I ask my colleagues to join me in this effort and in supporting H.R. 2608.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the committee totally agrees with the concerns of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS). What we did in this bill is we increased the authorization of NIST from $2.5 million up to $8 million; but we will work with NIST, we will work with the appropriators because adequate funding is necessary.

The management, moving the management from FEMA, the lead agency management from FEMA to NIST, was a difficult decision in our committee; but we ended up with unanimous agreement because of the new obligations that have been put on FEMA as they go into Homeland Security. We felt that as the lead agency NIST could dedicate the kind of time and organization needed. So there is somewhat of an increased responsibility.

In conclusion, we will work with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) to try to make sure that adequate funding is available.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN).

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) for all of their hard work to bring this bill to the floor today.

I represent an area in California that has been affected in the past by earthquakes. In fact, I remember very well the 6.9 Loma Prieta earthquake that shook the Bay Area in 1989. It was really an awesome experience, and I think anyone who has been through an earthquake like that can remember exactly what they were doing and how it felt. And to know that that level of earthquake is not the big one really does emphasize the need to take this whole area very seriously. That is what this bill does.

The bill is to make sure that the Federal Government provides the necessary resources and support needed by those in the earthquake research community who have dedicated much of their life's work trying to understand the causes of earthquakes, to anticipate when and where an earthquake may happen, and, most importantly,

how we can best prepare ourselves to survive the potentially devastating results of earthquakes.

The National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program was first created in 1977 in response to growing concerns about the threat of damaging earthquakes. Initially, the program focused on research in the areas of geotechnical and structural engineering and earthquake prediction. Over time, researchers acknowledging that earthquake prediction was a huge challenge and began to emphasize activities like seismic retrofitting and rehabilitation, risk assessment, public education, and outreach and code development. And the fact that San Jose, California, did not fall down in the Loma Prieta earthquake is testimony that good code enforcement and structural engineering does work and does save lives.

The program has achieved great progress since its inception and is considered by most to be a very successful undertaking. Through the efforts of those involved, we have seen a substantial decrease in the loss of life and injury. The capabilities of seismic risk assessment have improved greatly. We have learned important lessons in mitigating earthquake hazards as a result of technological advances in areas like performance-based engineering, information technology, sensing and imaging.

In the Committee on Science we were faced with many challenges in order to make this program even more helpful in our understanding of and our ability to mitigate the effects of earthquakes. Some have argued that the new knowledge and tools have not translated into a decreased overall vulnerability. The adoption by end-users of NEHRP innovations has been incremental and slower than expected. The cost of rehabilitating existing structures to be more earthquake resistant has often proved to be too high as is the cost of building new facilities to minimize risk.

We know that the private sector has not had adequate incentives and that most State and local governments lack adequate budgets to address these challenges.

I will be following these issues with great interest particularly when it comes to ensuring that the Federal Government provides sufficient funding and leadership to meet the research needs of this program. That a future large earthquake in a major U.S. urban area could result in damages of $200 billion should provide us here in the Congress with sufficient incentive to encourage our research in this vital area. This is a historic case where we know that we must not be ''penny wise and pound foolish.''

I remain concerned as to whether or not NEHRP can be reasonably expected to meet its goals at the level of funding it currently receives. And I look forward to working to increase the level of funding.

I was happy to work with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) as well as the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) in a bipartisan manner to make sure that the funding in the fiscal year 2004 was increased for the Advanced National Seismic System. I think they did a great job. And, actually, I think our committee worked well together to improve this bill. I look forward to continuing to work with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) and the rest of the committee to try to make certain that those who are doing research in the sciences have the funds and support they need from our Federal Government.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I compliment the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) for bringing us the kind of information and dedication that she has to try to make this a better bill and to try to have government do a better job in terms of mitigating the consequences of earthquakes.

And I would mention that it is not just this country that NEHRP helps. We work worldwide in trying to share the research that we have done to help reduce the consequences of earthquakes all over the world. I think it is appropriate in terms of understanding that I just give a brief background on some of the agencies that are involved.

NEHRP is a long-term comprehensive interagency earthquake hazard reduction mitigation program. It was established in Congress in 1977, and four agencies participate in this effort. We have FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency; the U.S. Geological Survey, USGS which has done a fantastic job in this area; the National Science Foundation, which is under the purview of our Subcommittee on Research because of the tremendous research efforts that we are making in this arena; and of course, NIST, the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Each agency has distinct responsibilities to undertake in support of the overall program goals. NSF, with the geoscience, the engineering, the economic and social aspects of earthquakes; USGS carries out both the basic and applied Earth science and seismic research and monitoring; and FEMA has been responsible for overall coordination of the program, education outreach and implementation of research results, and now we are asking NIST as the lead agency to take a little larger role to conduct the research and development in earthquake engineering aimed at improving building design codes and construction standards.

Also, there needs to be additional support to reducing the damages from earthquakes. In addition to our efforts in government, I would call on the insurance industry to consider lowering its insurance rates for those municipalities and for those individuals who comply and build their structures to be more resistant to earthquake damage. It seems logical that if there is extra spending of money to protect against earthquakes in the building structures, whether they are municipal bridges, highways, buildings, or residential structures, that the insurance industry should consider encouraging the effort with lower premiums.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I urge this bill be passed, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying that we should appreciate the bipartisan support and the support of the government agencies that are involved in this program. Certainly we know that earthquakes cannot be prevented, but we can mitigate their impact; and that is what this bill does. I ask for all Members to support the bill.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2608, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HEALTH CARE SAFETY NET AMENDMENTS TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT OF 2003

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3038) to make certain technical and conforming amendments to correct the Health Care Safety Net Amendments of 2002.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3038

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Health Care Safety Net Amendments Technical Corrections Act of 2003''.

SEC. 2. TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS.

(a) HEALTH CENTERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b) is amended to read as if—

(A) subparagraph (C) of the second paragraph (4) of section 101 of Public Law 107–251 had not been enacted;

(B) paragraph (7)(C) of such section 101 had not been enacted; and

(C) paragraphs (8) through (11) of such section 101 had not been enacted.

(2) AMENDMENTS PER PUBLIC LAW 107–251.—Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b), as amended by paragraph (1), is amended—

(A) in subsection (c)(1)(B), in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking ''plan..'' and inserting ''plan.'';