

Iraq. Turkey has decided not to send troops to Iraq. Japan will not be sending personnel and it is providing less money for rebuilding than it once offered. Even South Korea has said that the lack of security in Iraq makes the idea of sending South Korean troops untenable. Where now is the joint effort that the President promised? How will the administration secure the assistance that is clearly needed in Iraq? The number of casualties is increasing at an alarming rate; when will it stop?

I believe that the administration must embrace a multilateral peace process to bring lasting peace to Iraq and to create an environment in which rebuilding can safely occur. A multilateral process is needed not only to develop and maintain peace within Iraq but also throughout the Middle East region.

Therefore, in addition to creating a plan in Iraq the President needs to create a plan to truly engage our allies. That is how the United States will be successful not just in the short term but for years to come. That is how we can responsibly follow up the inspiring words of His Excellency Prime Minister Allawi.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. McCOTTER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EDWARDS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STRICKLAND addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RYAN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ETHERIDGE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk tonight about the Lee-Capuanos-Sanders discharge petition which is H.J. Res. 748. This resolution requests immediate consideration of H.R. 1102, which is the National Affordable Housing Construction Program, a trust fund, which targets funding and resources to States and localities to assist people in the most desperate need for affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, today, many of us recognize that we do live in two Americas, one for the wealthy and one for those who are struggling to just make ends meet. We have families living in dilapidated rental units, clutching to potentially meaningless section 8 vouchers, facing the harsh realities of high-cost housing or homelessness; but we have an opportunity here to make a real difference in the lives of people who need just a bit of our help, people, families, children, men and women.

We have an opportunity to help support families in their desire to build intergenerational wealth for the future. At a time of State budget crunches and shortfalls, we have an opportunity here to support our States who want to build safer, more affordable quality communities for our most vulnerable constituents.

Discharging H.R. 1102 under an open rule to the House floor would at least allow us to debate the need for more affordable housing and show where our national priorities really are. I know that our constituents want us to authorize a national affordable housing trust fund because it would construct 1.5 million affordable housing units over the next decades.

The Center For Community Change estimates that a national affordable housing trust fund would create 1.8 million, that is 1.8 million, new jobs. That is nearly \$50 billion in wages, good-paying jobs; and with our economy the way it is right now, with people on the brink, with so many layoffs, you cannot tell me that 1.8 million new jobs will not make a difference in the lives of millions of people.

Mr. Speaker, just think of it, if this Congress invested a mere 5, \$5.1 billion, that is \$5 billion, that is peanuts really, \$5 billion into affordable housing, of course instead of this never-ending war in Iraq, if we did this, I mean, the war in Iraq now is upwards of \$200 billion. If we just invested \$5 billion into this trust fund, we could commit at least \$37 to \$40 million to each State for housing, \$200 billion again, Mr. Speaker, for Iraq. We should not even worry about \$5 billion. We should be supporting this bill. We should move it forward in this House. \$5 billion, again as compared to \$200 billion, that is very minimal in terms of resources.

So this does not make any sense to me, why this bill has not come to the floor for a debate, why we do not have a national housing trust fund. Signing this discharge petition will help this tripartisan bill. We have over 215 Members with the gentleman from Vermont

(Mr. SANDERS), myself, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), the gentleman from New York (Mr. CAPUANO), and many, many cosponsors on both sides of the aisle, and the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), tripartisan.

If, in fact, we discharge this petition, we would really overcome whatever political obstacles there are that have prevented this realistic, sensible and targeted, affordable housing legislation from coming before this Chamber.

It is my understanding that former Secretary Mel Martinez just said he did not want it to come to this body, and that is what has happened. 214 cosponsors, I do not think it makes sense for us to allow a former Secretary of HUD to dictate the legislation that comes to the body of this House. This program can and will make a considerable difference in the lives of our constituents.

Let me just tell my colleagues, over 5,000 organizations, unions, working men and women, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, individuals have endorsed this bill and are organizing grass-roots support to really call their Members and ask them for their support and why they are not supporting it, if they are not.

We recognize the cost and the hesitation that many Members had in regard to using the FHA surplus, which was the way the bill was initially written. So that is why, in order to garner additional bipartisan support, we have revised the funding mechanism and asked that the capable appropriators find the necessary \$5 billion wherever they deem appropriate. We have negotiated in good faith on this bill, and it makes no sense for us now to be here pushing this discharge petition as we are because of the fact that it has gone through committee and that it should be debated on this floor.

□ 2045

It should be authorized because it will provide housing to all, which many of us feel, I know some may not believe this, but I believe that housing should be a basic human right, and because of that, it outweighs all of its cost.

So I encourage all Members to sign their names to the Lee-Sanders-Capuanos discharge petition, because together, we can build affordable futures for families and thousands of children across this country. If we work together for passage of this bill, we can prevent thousands of our elderly and low-income families from choosing between food and shelter. And in many instances, that is what is going on. If we work together for passage of this bill, we can build safe havens through affordable supportive housing instead of homeless shelters for women fleeing domestic violence. If we work together for passage of this bill, we can build more opportunities for home ownership and mixed-income communities in rural and urban America.

Investing in H.J. Res. 748 means investing in a national affordable housing trust fund and providing a greater

chance to realize the American Dream for all Americans. Together, we can bridge those two Americas into one prosperous land for all.

So I ask my colleagues, I plead with my colleagues, because we only have about a week left here, to come to the House floor and sign this petition. I am asking all of them to make a decision that reflects the need for more affordable housing opportunities, for more jobs, and for more State and local choices for housing and community development.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), who is a consistent fighter for children and families and who also believes basic housing should be a human right for all.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman for yielding to me and for her work and the work of her colleagues on this important initiative. I am delighted to be an early cosponsor of this legislation because it follows the needs of my constituents in the Eighteenth Congressional District in Houston. We have confronted in that district a number of housing dilemmas and housing concerns.

The first one that comes to mind, of course, is the year-long work that we had to participate in in order to overcome some obstacles in restoring what we call the senior home repair program. There is not much, probably, that sometimes Members have not seen because of their travel to war zones and dealing with some of the conditions of their constituents. We see tragedies of great moment because we are expected as elected officials to be able to respond to those needs. But going into inner-city areas and even to rural areas and sometimes seeing the conditions that senior citizens live in, people who have worked their whole lives but maybe as they have worked their income has not met their ability to survive, with their health needs, their food needs and their housing needs.

I spoke earlier today of constituents who live in burned-out homes; half the home literally burned down because there were no public resources to either repair the home or replace the home. The same with homes that were in such bad condition that bucketloads of water would come in when it rained. The wiring was in poor condition. There was no ability to have air-conditioning. These are homes that people live in.

And, Mr. Speaker, what about the thousands of persons that are living with family members or others? They call those individuals transients, those who are living from place to place. These are individuals with families. In fact, in our school district, we had a name for those children that wound up either in different schools in the same school year because their family had to move from place to place, or maybe were living in a car and the car then

fell upon disrepair and so they had no place to go.

It is interesting that even in the richest country in the world that we have this dilemma in housing. So the national housing trust fund legislation is really long overdue, with 214 cosponsors. This is a bill that we wanted to do in regular order, the Committee on Financial Services, the members of that committee, the leaders of that committee, the names we have called out. I believe the gentlewoman mentioned the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), leading this special order this evening, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), and I saw the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO). Those of us who joined eagerly to be cosponsors really realize this is an opportunity that has been lost.

Even today, those that I know to be long-standing supporters across party lines, such as Jack Kemp, who was with me in Houston a few months ago, where we went to a complex of Habitat for Humanity and we were able to build in Houston hundreds of homes. Homeowners contributed to it. And we are very grateful for Habitat for Humanity and projects like that, but that is not the total answer. We participated in that project. It was related to the Super Bowl. And we are glad that we did some constructive things that the NFL does, and we continue to work with Habitat for Humanity and a number of other self-help programs, but we cannot self-help ourselves across America in the enormous deterioration of public housing in America.

There is an eagerness of those living in public housing to own their own homes. And the HOME program, where we were giving equity and giving down payments, is really on the ropes. The home repair program for senior citizens is on the ropes. Why is it on the ropes? Because we are not able to fund it the way we need to fund it. So today Jack Kemp, and I might add Henry Cisneros, stood up to support the concept of a national housing trust fund.

I believe that this really plays into the whole desire of every American to have a better quality of life. We always go back to the opening words of the Declaration of Independence because it was the framework by which the Founding Fathers drafted our Constitution. It is words we use very often. I do not know how they managed to capture such brilliant language that fits all centuries, all years; that we all are created equal. I always do a caveat that as they wrote it, they obviously left out a large portion of those in America, claiming that slaves were less than one person.

But the words were beautiful, they were meaningful, and they can be carried and applicable to all. We are all created equal with certain inalienable rights of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Mr. Speaker, in this Nation, the pursuit of happiness, I believe, encompasses education, health care, and housing. A national housing trust fund would construct, rehabilitate and preserve rental housing for people with the very lowest incomes, as well as provide rental housing and homeownership opportunities for those with incomes of up to 80 percent of area median income. This is important.

But besides the homeless, Mr. Speaker, there are some 25,000 people on the waiting list in Houston for Section 8 housing. It is atrocious, that list. They just stay on and on and on and on. The list does not move. Throughout everyone's districts many people ask how they get on the list, or why are they on the list so long; or how can they get housing. The trust fund would use a dedicated source of revenue to produce and rehabilitate and preserve 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, these would not be Republican homes, independent homes, Democratic homes, or only urban homes, big city homes, or only central city homes. These would be homes across the Nation. And when you travel to districts that are rural, you can be assured that people need places to live.

The trust fund will provide much-needed stimulus to our economy, creating jobs and adding to the revenues of States and localities. An investment of \$5 billion in a national housing trust fund will result in 1.8 million new jobs and \$50 billion in wages.

One of the things I think we never think about when we think about housing, like when we got Federal funds to help rehabilitate my public housing, housing developments as the residents there like to call it, I added an amendment that year for Houston and other public housing projects to use the residents of public housing to work on the rehabilitation project; to use them to be carpenters and plumbers and electricians, those who lived inside those housing developments. Because they would be getting skills and getting income.

This is a clear win-win situation. New jobs and \$50 billion in wages. Who knows, those people working on this housing could then elevate themselves to the middle class and then buy their housing. This is a positive, positive, positive stroke of genius.

The lack of adequate housing hurts children now and in the future. Poor housing circumstances have been linked to poor educational performance and poor health. Children with unstable housing situations have unstable schooling. A review of the research on high-classroom turnover shows the highly detrimental effects of changing schools on educational outcomes. Other research shows that children living in substandard housing have increased chances of lead poisoning and asthma, while high-housing costs leads to child malnutrition as families choose between food and rent.

When I worked with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in my district, but particularly Fannie Mae, where we have an office, to see the looks on the faces of those who were getting homes, and when we had the ribbon-cutting ceremonies and the children went into their own bedrooms, what a difference their own bedroom made. That is why the national housing trust fund is so very important. It helps people with the lowest income face the greatest difficulty, which is finding housing that is available and affordable. For people across the income spectrum who are experiencing housing affordability deficits, this is what this is all about.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot imagine that we would want to keep 4.8 million low- to moderate-income working families earning between the full-time minimum wage and 120 percent of area median income without housing. There is a critical housing shortage for them.

The lack of affordable housing hurts elderly people and people with disabilities. The national vacancy rate does not capture the market failure in affordable housing. Because we do not have the affordable housing units, we lose out on the people who are able to buy those houses.

It is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. A \$150,000 or \$200,000 home may seem affordable to those who are working for dollars way above that of individuals needing to get the kind of housing that is affordable. In light of the Nation's housing crisis, the national housing trust fund is a moral imperative and national resources should be used to combat this.

Let me just say that I spoke earlier today on the floor asking for a plan in order to help us move swiftly in rebuilding Iraq and returning our soldiers home with valor and ceasing the violence. We are spending \$5 billion a month in Iraq, a billion dollars a month and more in Afghanistan, and already we have spent \$200 billion. I want the gentlewoman to know that I cannot imagine that this Congress, with all of the cosponsors that she has, would not give us the opportunity before we shut down to go home and be able to pass this legislation, and, frankly, to save lives in America. There are homeless people, with ruined lives, and we need to be able to protect them and provide them opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for giving me this opportunity not only to speak about the needs across the Nation, but to speak about the needs in Houston. We have lived this and we have seen it. I have gone out to homes. While I speak there are people living in conditions that are shameful. We need more money in Houston, but I know we need more money across the Nation for housing.

So I hope we will see the passage of this bill. Let us do everything we can. I cannot thank the gentlewoman enough for the leadership that she has provided, and she has my commitment that we will work together on this very important issue.

The House version of the National Housing Trust Fund legislation now has an impressive 214 cosponsors. But the leadership of the Financial Services Committee, which has jurisdiction over the bill, has not taken up the bill.

So in late July, my colleagues Representatives BARBARA LEE, MICHAEL CAPUANO and BERNIE SANDERS filed a discharge petition in an effort to move the National Housing Trust Fund forward. The petition would "discharge" the committee of its responsibility in considering the bill. If a majority of the Members, 218, sign the petition, the bill could come directly to the House floor for debate and a vote.

A National Housing Trust Fund would construct, rehabilitate, and preserve rental housing for people with the very lowest incomes, as well as provide rental housing and homeownership opportunities for some people with incomes up to 80 percent of the area median income. The Trust Fund would use a dedicated source of revenue to produce, rehabilitate and preserve 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years.

The Trust Fund will provide much needed stimulus to our economy, creating jobs and adding to the revenues of states and localities. An investment of \$5 billion in a National Housing Trust Fund will result in 1.8 million new jobs and \$50 billion in wages.

The lack of adequate housing hurts children now and into the future. Poor housing circumstances have been linked to poor educational performance and poor health.

Children with unstable housing situation have unstable schooling. A review of the research on high classroom turnover shows the highly detrimental effects of changing schools on educational outcomes. Other research shows that children living in substandard housing have increased chances of lead poisoning and asthma, while high housing costs lead to child malnutrition, as families choose between food and rent.

While people with the lowest incomes face the greatest difficulty in finding housing that is available and affordable, people across the income spectrum are experiencing housing affordability problems. There is nearly a two million unit gap in the housing available and affordable for the lowest income people and the number of people needing housing.

There is no jurisdiction, urban, suburban or rural, where wages from a full-time minimum wage job can pay the rent on a modest two-bedroom home and in many places, the equivalent of at least two or three full-time minimum wage salaries are needed. In addition, a recent study found that 4.8 million low- to moderate-income working families—families earning between the full-time minimum wage and 120 percent of the area median income—had critical housing needs in 2001, spending more than half of their income on rent or living in substandard housing.

The lack of affordable housing hurts elderly people and people with disabilities. On average, people with disabilities who receive SSI would need to use their entire SSI check each month to pay the rent on a modest one-bedroom apartment. Six times as many seniors needed housing assistance than were receiving assistance and 324,000 existing subsidized and affordable housing units are at risk of being lost to the private market.

The national vacancy rate does not capture the market failure in affordable housing. The

2001 national vacancy rate of 8.4 percent does not mean that those vacant units are uniformly available around the country, nor that those vacant units are affordable to people with low incomes. Recent housing development has been focused on luxury rentals, out of reach of people earning low wages. In contrast, over the 1990s, 14 percent of the rental housing affordable to the poorest people has disappeared from the housing stock. Indeed, in many places, affordable housing has been demolished to make room for luxury housing.

In light of the nation's housing crisis, the National Housing Trust Fund is a moral imperative and national resources should be used to combat this. To date, nearly 4,000 organizations, religious leaders, businesses, newspaper editorials and others have said that our country needs a National Housing Trust Fund by becoming Trust Fund endorsers. New endorsers of the Trust Fund are added every day. In the 107th Congress, the endorsers were joined by 200 members of the House of Representatives and 29 members of the Senate who cosponsored Trust Fund legislation. Given the extent of housing needs, the federal government should make it a priority to provide sufficient resources for the construction, preservation and rehabilitation of housing for the poorest people.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentlewoman from Texas for that very powerful, eloquent, and comprehensive statement, and also for reminding us of the types of cuts and what is on the chopping block this year as we try to push forward a bill to create 1.5 million affordable housing units.

The gentlewoman reminds us of what we are faced with and what we are fighting just to protect. Let me give some numbers here, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, by HUD's own admission, this year's budget cuts \$1.63 billion out of Section 8. That is outrageous. Public housing funding is being cut by \$180 million. The gentlewoman talked about public housing in her district. What are people going to do? What are people going to do? We zeroed out \$149 million for last year's HOPE VI. Outrageous. Outrageous.

For Community Development Block Grants, the funding is what we call flat, which means really that it has fallen by about 9 percent. The budget actually eliminates brownfields, it eliminates rural housing and economic development, it eliminates empowerment zones and Community Development Block Grants. It rescinds about \$675 million of contract amendments for our section 236 projects, which provide prepayments for assisted housing projects.

□ 2100

The request of \$139 million represents a cut of \$35 million for lead paint grants. I could go on and on. Serving as a member of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, we have fought these battles this year and will continue to fight against these cuts.

As we attempt to get a debate on the National Housing Trust Fund, what we

see are efforts to cut what is left. We need to not only restore these cuts that are in the existing budget, but we need to fight for more funding for section 8, more funding for community block grants and more funding to get rid of lead in our children's homes. We need more money, not cuts. This affordable housing trust fund at least puts us stepping in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) to comment on these cuts as they relate to her district. I know the gentlewoman's district is similar to my district in terms of the struggles that people mount every day. This is an important issue that needs to be made a national priority.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me.

First of all, these are shocking numbers to know that our appropriations that are moving to the floor are going to literally put a dagger in the needs of Americans all over.

One thing I would say is housing is not political. It is not partisan. It should not be. I want to just read a column from David Broder, Washington Post, "Help At Home." He mentions Henry Cisneros and Jack Kemp. He mentions that they were right in contending that housing is every bit as important a measure of American values as any of those other concerns. The quote is, "We are a Nation that understands and asserts the promise of individual opportunity, and we recognize that decent housing is a precursor to its realization." Then they say their agenda includes programs to end chronic homelessness.

When we take away section 8 and the equity program and the public housing program, we increase homelessness. It is chronic homelessness for people who cannot just pull themselves up. They want to revive and expand public housing, increase the use of housing vouchers, encourage employee-assisted housing, eliminate regulatory barriers to affordable housing and crack down on predatory lending and overt discrimination.

Obviously, that is an expanded concept, but then they endorse the establishment of a national housing trust fund. This is an idea which is gathering increasing support in Congress to provide the capital needed to produce affordable housing.

One other comment, I say housing is not partisan; Secretary Jackson was in Texas, but even his review of the situation when he was in the home of a senior citizen, Mrs. Waddle, Secretary Alphonso Jackson examined the crumbling wallboard, cracked ceiling and sagging foundation in Earnestine Waddle's northwest Houston home. She is 73 years old. She brought the whole group of us to an emotional standstill. We are waiting to have her home repaired. She is an example of what the gentlewoman is talking about.

I would simply say the national housing trust is long overdue. Here we have

bipartisan affirmation that we need to do more for housing, and here we have Earnestine Waddle's home as a symbol of homes across the Nation. We want to be in the business of helping people across the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the article about Secretary Jackson's visit to Earnestine Waddle's home.

[From the Houston Chronicle, June 30, 2004]

WAIT FOR HOUSE REPAIRS ENDING

(By Mike Snyder)

A member of President Bush's Cabinet draped his arm around a 73-year-old Houston widow Wednesday and promised that her long wait for badly needed home repairs would soon end.

Alphonso Jackson, the U.S. secretary of Housing and Urban Development, examined the crumbling wallboard, cracked ceiling and sagging foundation in Earnestine Waddle's northwest Houston home. Waddle will be the first homeowner to get help under a revamped city program to repair the homes of low-income elderly and disabled people, Jackson said.

"I'm somewhat emotional, because I think this is wrong, that Mrs. Waddle has to live like this," Jackson said.

HUD suspended Houston's home-repair program in November after finding evidence that some contractors had been overpaid or performed shoddy work. The city resumed the service on a limited basis in April, but the guidelines were so restrictive that fewer than a dozen households qualified for assistance.

Jackson said Wednesday that work should begin this month on an expanded program that will include major rehabilitation and reconstruction of houses as well as the short-term emergency repairs being made now. His announcement prompted applause and a chorus of "amen" from a crowd gathered to hear him at the Acres Homes Multi-Service Center.

Mayor Bill White, who joined Jackson and U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee for the announcement, said new guidelines worked out by the city and HUD will ensure problems that led the federal agency to shut down the program would not recur.

"We are going to do what it takes to get qualified people to do these home repairs," White said. "We will be accountable for what we do."

If the City Council approves, the city will budget \$2 million for the program, and HUD will reimburse the city after approving the completed work.

In the past, the city has delegated the selection of contractors and oversight of their work to nonprofit agencies such as the Houston Area Urban League. Under the revised guidelines, city employees will perform these functions, said Kevin Davis, spokesman for the city's Housing and Community Development Department.

A limit of \$5,000 per house is being eliminated, Davis said, because officials determined this was not enough to address the needs of many eligible households. Officials haven't decided whether to apply a new cap, he said.

The home reconstruction component is new to the program and reflects a recognition that many houses are in such poor condition that repairs are not feasible.

Jackson said he came to Houston at the urging of Jackson Lee, a Democrat whose 18th Congressional District includes many poor Houston neighborhoods where repairs are badly needed. Jackson Lee has spent months working with local and federal officials to get the program started again.

"In her tenacious style, she brought (the problem) to my attention and kept insisting that I come and look at what was happening," Jackson said. "She emphasized why the program was so important."

Waddle, who said she has lived in the house in Acres Homes for almost 40 years, said she was grateful for Jackson's help.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I am glad the gentlewoman brought to our attention the visit of the Secretary of HUD. I was quite disappointed when he came to our subcommittee when we were talking about housing. He indicated that poverty was a state of mind and had nothing much to do with the economics or discrimination or the environment or the state of condition in terms of one's circumstances. Perhaps he was sensitized by this visit. Let us hope so.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN), a great leader, who is fighting on many fronts.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me commend the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE). I have visited both of your districts, and I know we have similar problems as far as HUD is concerned and housing and homeownership.

I personally had one of the largest town hall meeting workshops on homeownership where we brought in all of our partners, and we are working together to try to improve housing for all Americans.

The Congressional Black Caucus's goal is to have a million new homeowners. I am proud to be a part of that.

But I have to say that this administration, the Bush administration, has almost wiped out the housing program. In the memo that was uncovered that, if George W. Bush is reelected, they are going to cut every single domestic program, and there are not a lot of advocates, unfortunately, for housing in this Congress.

On the vote tonight is another demonstration of "we do not really care about the people who need the hands up." This administration practices what I call reverse Robin Hood. When I was coming up, my favorite program was Robin Hood. These people practice robbing from the poor and working people to give tax breaks to the rich. Of course, it happened again today.

I certainly agree that we need middle class tax cuts, but we also need breaks for the working poor, people who work every day but cannot make it because they do not have health insurance, they do not have decent housing for their children.

I was listening to the report on 9/11 where they were talking about what was not available for the young people in Iraq, decent housing, training, education. I said to myself, we need a little of that in my district, and I am sure in the gentlewoman's.

The homeless have been mentioned. I have been on the Committee on Veterans Affairs for over 12 years. One-third of the homeless people are veterans, one-third. It is criminal that we

do not provide the support system that they need. They are out there because they do not have the proper medication, the proper assistance. When one walks around and sees the homeless, most people try to have a blind eye. One-third of them have lost a lot defending us.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, with regard to the homeless, I failed to mention the budget numbers with regard to programs for the homeless, a \$50 million cut.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to mention \$50 million, but the Hope Six program is slated to be completely eliminated. That is the only program that goes into the community and not only replaces housing but has other kinds of programs that will assist the people that live in public housing to help them with job training, education, after-school programs; and of course, the Drug Elimination Program is completely wiped out.

I have to say Under Secretary Mel Martinez and George W. Bush, they have destroyed the housing program. It is just not a priority for the administration.

Hope Six in Florida received three grants, but it may be the last round of assistance that people in public housing will receive if this administration is reelected.

The Drug Elimination Program, Members can see that this program and programs which assist, help with after-school programs and tutoring programs; it was the program that actually brought in the cops into the community, working with the young people so they would not get involved in the world of crime; completely eliminated under this administration. The list goes on.

Certainly housing has not been a priority. But what was interesting to me was I have received visits from the realtors and the home builders because they are concerned about the new homeownership programs that have worked so well with the public-private partnerships. Those programs have been on the chopping block in Florida and throughout the country.

I know the gentlewoman has received some of the same complaints. Why would programs be cut which actually help people become homeowners?

Mr. Speaker, let me say to the gentlewoman, I am very excited about her program, and I am very pleased to be a cosponsor, but can the gentlewoman explain where we are going to get the funds from?

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for laying it out there and telling it like it is.

Initially, when we introduced this legislation a couple of years ago, the funding would come from the FHA reserves. There is enough money in the FHA reserve account to fund this \$5 billion and keep our reserve account solvent.

However, in the spirit of bipartisan-ship, tripartisan-ship with the gen-

tleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), we agreed that we would amend out the specific designation of the FHA reserve fund as the \$5 billion contributor to the trust fund and indicated we would provide the opportunity for our very capable appropriators to determine where this \$5 billion could come from.

Mr. Speaker, there are many accounts which this \$5 billion could come from where it would not even be missed. Here, we could create 1.6 million new jobs, \$50 billion in wages. Our economy could get going again. We would have good-paying jobs in the construction industry, and we would provide affordable housing for millions of people.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, what a wonderful program.

Just one other point I want to make. Recently, the present Secretary of HUD was on Mr. O'Reilly's program, and I want to get a copy of the transcript and submit it for the record because it was horrifying that someone, an African-American, could talk about the fact that you are in an awful condition because this is what you want to be in. He would not have been in the position of Secretary if it were not for affirmative action, a program that this administration; President George W. Bush, on Martin Luther King's birthday announced we should not have any affirmative action.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier when the gentlewoman from Texas indicated that the Secretary had visited her district and visited an individual who was living in a dilapidated house, and I said I hoped he had become a little more sensitive to what we were talking about because in the subcommittee hearing, he talked about poverty in terms of it being a state of mind, not a state of condition, not a function of circumstances or unemployment or living in substandard housing in communities which had very little resources. I am not sure if he became more sensitized about the issues of poverty. I am shocked that he continued with that argument on television.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, all we need to do is look at the substandard conditions in many of our public housing complexes.

□ 2115

That is not a state of mind. That is a state of circumstances, and no one wants to be in those circumstances. But if we look at the dismal record of this administration as far as job creation, African Americans are at almost 10 percent unemployment. So if we look at where we are as far as employment opportunities, training, it is interesting to talk about what they are going to do in the future, but I would like the people to look at their present record. Judge people on the work I have done. I love that spiritual: "Let the work I have done speak for me." We look at the record of this adminis-

tration when it comes to housing, and it is dismal. When it comes to training, dismal. When it comes to education, dismal. And all of this goes together to change that state of mind, to give people that opportunity to get a heads up, and that is what we are supposed to be about.

It is a real honor to serve in the House of Representatives. It is really an honor because we have an opportunity to help people that need a little helping hand. It is not a state of mind. We visit people who try all they can, and they have run out of their employment, and the training program is not there. And they have trained people to go into other jobs, and then they have sent those jobs overseas, and they have no job.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me just say I am glad the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) highlighted what the real issues are right now in this country. Talking about jobs and unemployment, for example, in my district the average cost of a house, a two-bedroom house, it is about \$450,000, and the unemployment rate in the African American community and the Latino community is double digit. Also, the average income is 45, 35, \$50,000. How in the world can a family of four afford a two-bedroom \$450,000 house on an income of 45 to \$50,000, if that? The American Dream is a nightmare. It is a nightmare for many Americans.

This affordable housing trust fund would help bring us back home. It would help allow for the American Dream to be realized even by those who have not had those opportunities that some of us have had, and that is what this is about.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. LEE. I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. That is, Mr. Speaker, I think the most important thing, to have a trust fund. So once we have a trust fund, then we have a dedicated source of revenue, and that is certainly what housing needs because it is not a priority. A lot of people that are in housing, they do not vote. They do not have any rich lobbyists up here. So, therefore, they are not included. They are not on the agenda. No one cares about them. So that is part of the problem.

So I really want to commend the gentlewoman for coming up with a mechanism that we can have a dedicated source of revenue. And then, of course, we will have to continue to fight because, just like in transportation, the reason why we cannot pass a transportation bill, and the money is also there in the trust fund, is this administration for some reason does not want to invest in the infrastructure in this country. In Iraq, yes. But not in this country. Because for transportation every billion dollars creates 44,000 jobs, and that is what the people need.

Once they have a job, then they can have housing. But until that time, they have to have affordable housing because people just cannot afford it. And the gentlewoman said \$44,000 or \$45,000 or \$50,000. What happens when people have nothing, they have no source of income? They have lost their job, they paid into the fund, but yet this administration will not even entertain extending it so that people can get some assistance.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me say I am glad the gentlewoman called to the public's attention the special interest political nature of housing. And she is right. The homeless do not have lots of money to put a lobbyist here in Washington, D.C. to pound the pavement all the time. But we are really very fortunate that 5,000 organizations have come on board for the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign led by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition. So I am just very proud of them that they have stepped up to the plate and have filled that void, and that is why it is unbelievable that after we passed the bill out of committee, we cannot even get it to the floor to debate.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman will continue to yield, it is not not believable because it is not a priority of this administration. I have served for 23 years, 10 years in the Florida House, and I have been here for over 12 years. I have never seen an administration that dictates what comes before the House of Representatives, the people's House. I mean, if they do not want the bill to pass, it does not pass. Just like with the gun bill, they do not want the bill to come up, regardless of what they have said, because it did not come up. So people do not understand what has happened in this country and in the people's House.

I love being here because it was 129 years before the first African American got elected to Congress; so I feel that it is very important that we speak up for the people who do not have lobbyists here in Washington, who do not have people that are going to fight to make sure that we have decent, safe, and affordable housing. And we have a Secretary who does not understand that, a Secretary of Housing, who just happens to be an African American.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think this is a good example of how the democratic process over and over and over has been thwarted in this House. Here we have 5,000 organizations, we have sponsored a bill that is tripartisan, the bill passed out of the committee, so regular order has prevailed. And where is the bill? We cannot even have a debate, and that is all this discharge petition requires is a debate. We have 214 cosponsors. That is a lot of people. That represents millions of Americans, those 214. How in the world their voices are allowed to be stifled in a debate as important as this one is beyond me. I thought democracy

was real in America, but this is another example, and in this instance it is my understanding the former Secretary of HUD just called to say, We do not want it to come to the floor. I do not know what his reasons are. He is now running for the senate out in the gentlewoman's State, Mel Martinez, but he did not want it to come; so it is not here.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman will continue to yield, I know him very well. He is a nice person. But I can tell the gentlewoman he was the worst Secretary we ever had. Because for this administration, it is just not a priority, and they do not want to spend the dollars. It is mind boggling how if a person is not one of the rich, companies, I mean, the gentlewoman talks about people that really need a helping hand. That is not a priority of this administration. It is not a priority of the former Secretary. It is just not when they cut the programs that they cut. It does not matter what one says. I say that all the time. Actions speak louder than words. I can say "I love you" all I want to. I can say "I support you" all I want to. But if I cut the programs that make people whole, then I do not care anything about them.

They can show them better than they can tell them. And this administration consistently has cut not only housing but veterans housing programs, consistently cut them. And, therefore, if we do not have affordable housing, then people end up homeless in the streets. And that is a sad state of affairs when we have veterans in the streets that today they are our soldiers, they are our heroes; tomorrow there is no safety net for them.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, during the Congressional Black Caucus weekend, we provide breakfast for the homeless. And I have the privilege, it is a real honor, to be able to just be there with the homeless and serve breakfast 1 day in Washington, D.C. Each and every year in the last 3 years, that line has grown and grown and grown. And I am appalled at the number of homeless veterans who come out for a meal on that morning.

So when I come back here to Congress on the subcommittee and fight for the \$50 million, to restore those cuts, fight for additional funding for the homeless and for Hope VI, I cannot help but wonder who is out of touch with reality in this administration and in this Congress and why in the world that would just cost \$5 billion would not be allowed to get to the floor to be discussed. Is there a problem there?

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the problem, in my opinion, is that if this administration does not support it, then it cannot come to the floor. We cannot have a debate over it. In fact, if we look at the Medicare bill, which is just so important to so many people, they would not even allow a Democrat in the House of Representatives to be on conference. They

have the votes, but they do not even want to discuss ideas that are not their ideas. Even though they can just vote it down, they do not even want a discussion. And that is the same thing with the gentlewoman's bill. They do not even want the bill on the floor for discussion.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, it does not, again, make any sense from a financial institution standpoint to not allow this bill to come forward for discussion because financial institutions will benefit from this economic stimulus initiative. Some of the organizations that have supported the trust fund, let me just share this with the gentlewoman: the National Cooperative Bank Community Development Corporation, the Congress for Community and Economic Development, National Neighborhood Coalition, the National Credit Union Foundation, the National Community Building Network. I could go on and on about the financial institutions that have supported this.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. If the gentlewoman will continue to yield, Mr. Speaker, how will they partner? For example, I heard the gentlewoman say the credit union, and I have spent time discussing with them and talking with them about their being more involved with housing and helping in homeownership.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, the financing that the financial institutions, which private lenders would do, would be matched by the trust fund two to one.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. So that would expand the dollars, and so they would be able to serve more people?

Ms. LEE. That is right, Mr. Speaker. And we are talking, again, about a public/private partnership. We are not talking about a handout. We are not talking about a subsidy that is going to rip off the Federal Treasury.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. So that \$5 billion could be leveraged?

Ms. LEE. It could be leveraged up to 20, \$30 billion. And that is the problem. I would just say it is a drop in the bucket in terms of what is possible under this type of arrangement with regard to a trust fund. Several States have trust funds that have funds that have been established. This would put 35 to 40 million in each State into a trust fund. That would actually help trust funds that have been established or start new trust funds, and the Federal Government would be a major player in that and should be proud of what it would do for its people.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to once again commend the gentlewoman on working on this initiative, on her AIDS initiative. She has certainly been a bright star in Congress since she has been here and her leadership in the area of housing and the work that she has done as far as HIV and getting funding.

This administration went to Africa and committed \$15 billion. I do not

think we have \$1 billion yet. Photo-ops are one thing. But that is, once again, how we talk the talk, but we do not walk the walk. And the world community had expected some assistance and some leadership from the United States in this area, and none has come so far.

I just need to know what kind of dollars have been put up for the AIDS that the gentlewoman worked so hard on.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for bringing that to our attention.

□ 2130

Ms. LEE. That was a \$15 billion, 5-year initiative. It should have been \$3 billion for each year. We still have not gotten to the \$3 billion for the first year yet. We are fighting very hard to increase the appropriations. The trust fund was supposed to be up to \$1 billion a year. So far the administration has put up maybe \$200 million a year. We bumped it up a little bit on this side and are hoping the Senate will bump it up, but we still have not gotten to \$1 billion a year for the trust fund.

I share that because the trust fund again has the ability to leverage \$8 billion to \$9 billion worldwide for people living with HIV and AIDS, for prevention, for care and treatment, for orphans, for young men and women, for families, and we still cannot get the type of funding that is required for the whole HIV-AIDS initiative. It is shameful.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman will yield further, I guess, once again, it is not a priority. It is back to Robin Hood. They do not have the big-time lobbyists up here, although the world community is looking to the United States for leadership in this area, and it is just has not been a priority.

I really want to commend the gentlewoman. I am going to let her close. I want to thank her so much for her leadership in the housing area, in what she has done as far as HIV, just stressing the importance of having a dedicated source of revenue for housing, because, as I said, the memo went around where this administration indicated if reelected, every single domestic, domestic, program, would be cut.

Ms. LEE. I want to thank the gentlewoman.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Elections have consequences.

Ms. LEE. I thank the gentlewoman for joining us this evening and for her steady hard work and leadership on housing and so many issues, especially with regard to our veterans, our children, senior citizens and all of those that she so forcefully and eloquently speak on behalf of. Hopefully, after tonight, maybe the bell will alarm, maybe the drum has been beat a bit louder because of her very powerful statement tonight.

Mr. Speaker, let me just close by saying how important this discussion is and how many of us feel that housing is a basic human right, and until we real-

ize that and establish policies that indicate that, the American dream will continue to be a nightmare for millions of Americans.

Our country does not have a housing policy. We need a national housing policy. We need a national housing agenda that speaks to the housing needs of the low income, the poor, the working poor, the middle income, the upper income, all of those who care about housing and the homeless.

Until we provide those basics, such as food and shelter, for the least of these, I do not believe we are living up to our commitment in terms of our faith, in terms of those who we care about, in terms of making sure that liberty and justice for all is the order of the day.

I just urge all Members of this House to please help us move our housing initiative forward by signing the Lee-Sanders-Capuan discharge commitment. Please sign it next week before we leave, because the people of America need to know that housing and the economic security of families and children is not a partisan issue; that Democrats, Republicans, independents, all care about it, and we want this American dream to be real for each and every American.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, from Vermont to California, there is an affordable housing crisis in this country and it is only getting worse. Millions of Americans who are working 40 hours a week, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities are paying over 50 percent of their limited incomes on housing. For families living paycheck to paycheck, one unforeseen circumstance—a sick child, a lost job, a medical emergency—can send them into homelessness. These life-shattering events happen every day in America and it is a national disgrace.

Mr. Speaker, if you don't believe us, just ask the half-million veterans who put their lives on the line defending this country or the more than one million children who will experience homelessness this year if they believe there is an affordable housing crisis. Ask moms and dads who are working 40 hours a week that have to sleep in their cars or out on the street because they can't pay the rent, if there's an affordable housing crisis in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the sad reality is that there is not a single place in America today where a full-time minimum wage worker can afford an average 2 bedroom apartment. Not a single place in America.

Legislation that I have introduced to establish a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund (H.R. 1102) will begin to put an end to this crisis once and for all. It will give states and localities the resources they need to build at least one and a half million affordable housing rental units in this country leading to the creation of 1.8 million new jobs and nearly \$50 billion in wages. In other words, the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund is a win-win that will put people back to work and into affordable housing.

Unfortunately, despite over 200 tri-partisan co-sponsors; despite the support of over 5,000 organizations representing organized labor, big business, environmentalists, banks, religious leaders, and affordable housing advocates, a vote has not been scheduled for this

bill. For over 3 years, the Administration has opposed this legislation, while its policies have made the affordable housing crisis even worse. While Congress has provided hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks to the wealthiest one percent over the past 3 years, we are forcing our nation's low-income senior citizens, veterans, and families with children to pay the price.

Well, in less than 48 hours, over 100 Members of Congress have signed a discharge petition to force a vote on the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act immediately.

Mr. Speaker, while 218 signatures are required in order to succeed, I hope you don't make us wait that long. I hope that we can convince you that this bill is needed now more than ever.

Mr. Speaker, I know that is a tough decision for you to make. But, quite frankly, people all over this country are making much tougher choices.

This evening a mom and dad will be at the kitchen table staring at their bills. They will have to make a choice. Do we pay the rent; or do we feed our children.

Tomorrow morning a senior citizen who worked hard and played by the rules all of her adult life will have to make a choice. Will she pay the rent; or will she pay for her life saving prescription drugs.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't have to be this way. In the richest country on earth, families should not have to make these unacceptable choices. That's what the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund campaign is all about.

And, just today, Jack Kemp and Henry Cisneros, former HUD Secretaries under President George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, respectively have endorsed the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

David Broder, wrote in the Washington Post this morning that the Kemp-Cisneros "Recommendations strike me as practical and specific—not tilted to the left or the right. . . . They endorse the establishment of a National Housing Trust Fund, an idea that has gathered increasing support in Congress, to provide the capital needed to produce, preserve or rehabilitate at least 1.5 million affordable housing units over the next 10 years."

And, according to the bipartisan National Millennial Housing Commission, created by Congress, and co-chaired by our former colleague Susan Molinari, "The addition of 150,000 [affordable housing rental] units annually would make substantial progress toward meeting the housing needs of extremely low income households, but it would take annual production of more than 250,000 units for more than 20 years to close the gap."

Mr. Speaker, the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act will close this serious affordable housing gap. In fact, if H.R. 1102 was signed into law, we could more than triple affordable housing construction next year and provide accommodations to more than 100,000 families. In short, the establishment of a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund is needed now more than ever. I urge my colleagues to sign the Discharge Petition. By doing this today, we can mark the beginning of the end of the affordable housing crisis.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may