

Kucinich	Moore (KS)	Scott (VA)
Langevin	Moore (WI)	Serrano
Lantos	Moran (VA)	Sherman
Larsen (WA)	Nadler	Skelton
Larson (CT)	Napolitano	Slaughter
Lee	Neal (MA)	Smith (WA)
Levin	Oberstar	Snyder
Lewis (GA)	Obey	Solis
Lipinski	Olver	Spratt
Lofgren, Zoe	Ortiz	Stark
Lowey	Owens	Strickland
Lynch	Pallone	Stupak
Maloney	Pascrell	Tanner
Markey	Pastor	Tauscher
Marshall	Payne	Terry
Matsui	Pelosi	Thompson (CA)
McCarthy	Price (NC)	Thompson (MS)
McCollum (MN)	Rahall	Tierney
McDermott	Rangel	Towns
McGovern	Reyes	Udall (CO)
McIntyre	Ross	Udall (NM)
McKinney	Rothman	Van Hollen
McNulty	Roybal-Allard	Velázquez
Meehan	Ruppersberger	Visclosky
Meek (FL)	Rush	Wasserman
Meeks (NY)	Ryan (OH)	Schultz
Melancon	Sabo	Waters
Menendez	Salazar	Watson
Michaud	Sánchez, Linda	Watt
Millender	T.	Waxman
McDonald	Sanchez, Loretta	Weiner
Miller (NC)	Sanders	Wexler
Miller, George	Schiff	Woolsey
Mollohan	Schwartz (PA)	Wynn

days within which to revise and extend their remarks and that I may include tabular and extraneous material on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2361.

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

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2361, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 392, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2361) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 392, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of July 26, 2005 at page H6562.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. TAYLOR) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. TAYLOR).

□ 1645

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today we bring before the House the conference agreement on H.R. 2361, the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2006. I would like to thank all of the members of the Subcommittee for their support and guidance this year. I want to extend special thanks to the subcommittee vice chairman, the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. SIMPSON), and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS), the ranking member and my good friend, for their assistance in shaping the bill. We are under last year, and we are under the allocation.

The conference report balances many competitive and diverse needs. It pro-

vides funding for programs in the Department of the Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Forest Service, the Indian Health Agency, the Smithsonian Institution, and several other environmental and cultural agencies and commissions.

With the ongoing war on terrorism and a sizable Federal debt, the American taxpayer demands fiscal prudence, yet entrusts us to continue the conservation and care of our Nation's natural resources, the protection of the environment, and critical programs for native Americans and other programs. The needs far outweigh the funds available, but I believe this bill addresses the most critical needs.

The conference report is the product of a balanced, bipartisan, bicameral effort that resolves over 2,000 differences between the House and the Senate bills. Moreover, it addresses many of the key issues raised on the House floor in May and stays true to the fundamental issues that helped the bill pass overwhelmingly in the House. Here are a few of the highlights:

Payments in Lieu of Taxes are \$9 million over the enacted level. The arts and humanities are \$5 million each over the enacted level. Funding for operations of the national parks has increased by \$61 million. Restrictions remain in the bill for pesticide testing on human subjects. Funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Act is \$900 million, which is \$50 million above the House level and \$170 million above the budget request.

The Forest Health Program, which is critical to reducing this Nation's risk of catastrophic wildfires, is restored to the enacted level.

Finally, I am proud to say that this conference agreement contains \$1.5 billion in critically needed funds for veterans medical care.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the priorities of the American people are reflected in the conference agreement, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

I would like to thank staff on both sides of the aisle because, without their hard work, we would not be able to bring this bill forward at this time.

At this time, I will include a table detailing the various accounts in the bill for insertion in the RECORD.

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—2

Burton (IN) Sensenbrenner

NOT VOTING—7

Andrews	Johnson, Sam	Wu
Burgess	Paul	
Carson	Schakowsky	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1640

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 3423. An act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to medical device user fees.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL, FY 2006 (H.R. 2361)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2005 Enacted	FY 2006 Request	House	Senate	Conference
TITLE I - DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR					
Bureau of Land Management					
Management of lands and resources.....	836,826	850,177	845,783	867,045	860,791
Wildland fire management:					
Preparedness.....	258,939	286,701	272,852	272,852	272,852
Fire suppression operations.....	218,445	234,167	234,167	234,167	234,167
Additional appropriations (Title IV).....	98,611	---	---	---	---
Other operations.....	255,300	235,696	254,545	259,545	259,545
* Subtotal.....	831,295	756,564	761,564	766,564	766,564
Central hazardous materials fund.....	9,855	---	---	---	---
Rescission of balances.....	-13,500	---	---	---	---
Construction.....	11,340	6,476	11,476	9,976	11,926
Land acquisition.....	11,192	13,350	3,817	12,250	8,750
Oregon and California grant lands.....	107,497	110,070	110,070	110,070	110,070
Range improvements (indefinite).....	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Service charges, deposits, & forfeitures (indefinite).....	20,055	32,940	32,940	32,940	32,940
Offsetting fee collections.....	-20,055	-32,940	-32,940	-32,940	-32,940
Miscellaneous trust funds (indefinite).....	12,405	12,405	12,405	12,405	12,405
Total, Bureau of Land Management.....	1,816,910	1,759,042	1,755,115	1,788,310	1,780,506
United States Fish and Wildlife Service					
Resource management.....	962,940	985,563	1,005,225	993,485	1,008,880
Construction.....	52,658	19,676	41,206	31,811	45,891
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 108-324).....	40,552	---	---	---	---
Land acquisition.....	37,005	40,992	14,937	40,827	28,408
Landowner incentive program.....	21,694	40,000	23,700	25,000	24,000
Private stewardship grants.....	6,903	10,000	7,386	7,500	7,386
Cooperative endangered species conservation fund.....	80,462	80,000	84,400	80,000	82,200
National wildlife refuge fund.....	14,214	14,414	14,414	14,414	14,414
North American wetlands conservation fund.....	37,472	49,949	40,000	39,500	40,000
Neotropical migratory birds conservation fund.....	3,944	---	4,000	4,000	4,000
Multinational species conservation fund.....	5,719	8,300	5,900	6,500	6,500
State wildlife grants.....	69,028	74,000	65,000	72,000	68,500
Total, United States Fish and Wildlife Service..	1,332,591	1,322,894	1,306,168	1,315,037	1,330,179
National Park Service					
Operation of the national park system.....	1,683,564	1,734,053	1,754,199	1,748,486	1,744,074
United States Park Police.....	80,076	80,411	82,411	80,411	81,411
National recreation and preservation.....	60,973	36,777	48,997	56,729	54,965
Historic preservation fund.....	71,739	66,205	72,705	74,500	73,250
Construction.....	302,180	307,362	291,230	299,201	301,291
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 108-324).....	50,802	---	---	---	---
Land and water conservation fund (rescission of contract authority).....	-30,000	-30,000	-30,000	-30,000	-30,000
Land acquisition and state assistance.....	146,349	54,467	9,421	86,005	64,909
Total, National Park Service (net).....	2,365,683	2,249,275	2,228,963	2,315,332	2,289,900
United States Geological Survey					
Surveys, investigations, and research.....	935,464	933,515	974,586	963,057	976,035
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 108-324).....	1,000	---	---	---	---
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 109-13).....	8,100	---	---	---	---
Total, United States Geological Survey.....	944,564	933,515	974,586	963,057	976,035
Minerals Management Service					
Royalty and offshore minerals management.....	270,550	283,146	275,406	275,246	276,381
Use of receipts.....	-103,730	-122,730	-122,730	-122,730	-122,730
Oil spill research.....	7,006	7,006	7,006	7,006	7,006
Total, Minerals Management Service.....	173,826	167,422	159,682	159,522	160,657
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement					
Regulation and technology.....	108,269	110,435	110,435	110,435	110,435
Receipts from performance bond forfeitures (indefinite).....	99	100	100	100	100
Subtotal.....	108,368	110,535	110,535	110,535	110,535

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL, FY 2006 (H.R. 2361)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2005 Enacted	FY 2006 Request	House	Senate	Conference
Abandoned mine reclamation fund (definite, trust fund)	188,205	188,014	188,014	188,014	188,014
Legislative proposal.....	---	58,000	---	---	---
Subtotal.....	188,205	246,014	188,014	188,014	188,014

Total, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.....	296,573	356,549	298,549	298,549	298,549
=====					
Bureau of Indian Affairs					
Operation of Indian programs.....	1,926,091	1,924,230	1,992,737	1,971,132	1,991,490
Construction.....	319,129	232,137	284,137	267,137	275,637
Indian land and water claim settlements and miscellaneous payments to Indians.....	44,150	24,754	34,754	24,754	34,754
Indian guaranteed loan program account.....	6,332	6,348	6,348	6,348	6,348
Total, Bureau of Indian Affairs.....	2,295,702	2,187,469	2,317,976	2,269,371	2,308,229
=====					
Departmental Offices					
Insular Affairs:					
Assistance to Territories.....	47,861	46,543	48,843	48,963	49,163
Northern Marianas.....	27,720	27,720	27,720	27,720	27,720
Subtotal.....	75,581	74,263	76,563	76,683	76,883
Compact of Free Association.....	3,450	2,862	3,362	2,862	3,362
Mandatory payments.....	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Subtotal.....	5,450	4,862	5,362	4,862	5,362
Total, Insular Affairs.....	81,031	79,125	81,925	81,545	82,245
Departmental management.....	95,821	120,155	97,755	104,627	127,183
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 109-13).....	3,000	---	---	---	---
Subtotal, Departmental management.....	98,821	120,155	97,755	104,627	127,183
Working Capital fund.....	---	---	---	22,555	---
Payments in lieu of taxes.....	226,805	200,000	242,000	235,000	236,000
Central hazardous materials fund.....	---	9,855	9,855	9,855	9,855
Office of the Solicitor.....	51,656	55,752	55,340	55,652	55,440
Office of Inspector General.....	37,275	40,999	39,566	39,116	39,116
Office of Special Trustee for American Indians					
Federal trust programs.....	193,540	269,397	191,593	191,593	191,593
Indian land consolidation.....	34,514	34,514	34,514	34,514	34,514
Total, Office of Special Trustee for American Indians.....	228,054	303,911	226,107	226,107	226,107
Natural resource damage assessment fund.....	5,737	6,106	6,106	6,106	6,106
Total, Departmental Offices.....	729,379	815,903	758,654	780,563	782,052
=====					
A-T-B reduction to administrative costs.....	---	---	---	-22,000	---
=====					
Total, title I, Department of the Interior:					
New budget (obligational) authority (net)...	9,955,228	9,792,069	9,799,693	9,867,741	9,926,107
Appropriations.....	(9,881,774)	(9,822,069)	(9,829,693)	(9,897,741)	(9,956,107)
Emergency appropriations.....	(103,454)	---	---	---	---
Rescission.....	(-30,000)	(-30,000)	(-30,000)	(-30,000)	(-30,000)
=====					
TITLE II - ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY					
Science and technology.....	744,061	760,640	765,340	730,795	741,722
(By transfer from Hazardous substance superfund)...	(35,808)	(30,605)	(30,606)	(30,606)	(30,606)
Environmental programs and management.....	2,294,902	2,353,764	2,389,491	2,333,416	2,381,752
Pesticide fees (legislative proposal).....	---	(50,000)	---	---	---
Office of Inspector General.....	37,696	36,955	37,955	36,955	37,455
(By transfer from Hazardous substance superfund)...	(12,896)	(13,536)	(13,536)	(13,536)	(13,536)
Buildings and facilities.....	38,688	40,218	40,218	40,218	40,218
Emergency appropriations (P.L.108-324).....	3,000	---	---	---	---
Hazardous substance superfund.....	1,247,477	1,279,333	1,258,333	1,256,165	1,260,621
Transfer to Office of Inspector General.....	(-12,896)	(-13,536)	(-13,536)	(-13,536)	(-13,536)
Transfer to Science and Technology.....	(-35,808)	(-30,605)	(-30,606)	(-30,606)	(-30,606)
Leaking underground storage tank program.....	69,440	73,027	73,027	73,027	73,027
Oil spill response.....	15,872	15,863	15,863	15,863	15,863

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL, FY 2006 (H.R. 2361)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2005 Enacted	FY 2006 Request	House	Senate	Conference
Pesticide registration fund.....	19,245	12,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Pesticide registration fees.....	-19,245	-12,000	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000
State and tribal assistance grants.....	2,438,758	1,779,500	2,076,500	2,331,000	2,132,000
Categorical grants.....	1,136,591	1,181,300	1,151,300	1,122,550	1,129,696
Rescissions (various EPA accounts).....	---	---	-100,000	-58,000	-80,000
Subtotal, State and tribal assistance grants....	3,575,349	2,960,800	3,127,800	3,395,550	3,181,696
=====					
Total, title II, Environmental Protection Agency:					
New budget (obligational) authority.....	8,026,485	7,520,600	7,708,027	7,881,989	7,732,354
Appropriations.....	(8,023,485)	(7,520,600)	(7,808,027)	(7,939,989)	(7,812,354)
Emergency appropriations.....	(3,000)	---	---	---	---
Rescissions.....	---	---	(-100,000)	(-58,000)	(-80,000)
(Transfer out).....	(-48,704)	(-44,141)	(-44,142)	(-44,142)	(-44,142)
(By transfer).....	(48,704)	(44,141)	(44,142)	(44,142)	(44,142)
=====					
TITLE III - RELATED AGENCIES					
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE					
Forest Service					
Forest and rangeland research.....	276,384	285,400	285,000	280,892	283,094
State and private forestry.....	292,506	253,387	254,875	254,615	283,577
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 108-324).....	49,100	---	---	---	---
National forest system.....	1,380,806	1,651,357	1,417,920	1,377,656	1,424,348
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 108-324).....	12,153	---	---	---	---
Wildland fire management:					
Preparedness.....	676,470	676,014	691,014	676,014	676,014
Fire suppression operations.....	648,859	700,492	700,492	700,492	700,492
Additional appropriations (Title IV).....	394,443	---	---	---	---
Other operations.....	377,687	67,761	399,000	369,025	402,889
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 108-324).....	1,028	---	---	---	---
Funded in Defense Bill (P.L. 108-287) (sec. 8098).....	(30,000)	---	---	---	---
Subtotal.....	2,098,487	1,444,267	1,790,506	1,745,531	1,779,395
Capital improvement and maintenance.....	514,701	380,792	468,260	409,751	441,178
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 108-324).....	50,815	---	---	---	---
Funded in Defense Bill (P.L. 108-287) (sec. 8098).....	(10,000)	---	---	---	---
Emergency appropriations (P.L. 109-13).....	24,390	---	---	---	---
Land acquisition.....	61,007	40,000	15,000	44,925	42,500
Acquisition of lands for national forests, special acts.....	1,054	1,069	1,069	1,069	1,069
Acquisition of lands to complete land exchanges (indefinite).....	231	234	234	234	234
Range betterment fund (indefinite).....	3,021	2,963	2,963	2,963	2,963
Gifts, donations and bequests for forest and rangeland research.....	64	64	64	64	64
Management of national forest lands for subsistence uses.....	5,879	5,467	5,467	5,067	5,067
Total, Forest Service.....	4,770,598	4,065,000	4,241,358	4,122,767	4,263,489
=====					
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES					
Indian Health Service					
Indian health services:					
Non-contract services.....	2,098,424	2,207,277	2,207,277	2,207,302	2,207,277
Contract care.....	480,318	507,021	507,021	507,021	507,021
Catastrophic health emergency fund.....	17,750	18,000	18,000	18,000	18,000
Total, Indian health services.....	2,596,492	2,732,298	2,732,298	2,732,323	2,732,298
Indian health facilities.....	388,574	315,668	370,774	335,643	358,485
Total, Indian Health Service.....	2,985,066	3,047,966	3,103,072	3,067,966	3,090,783
=====					
National Institute of Health					
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences....	79,842	80,289	80,289	80,289	80,289

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL, FY 2006 (H.R. 2361)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2005 Enacted	FY 2006 Request	House	Senate	Conference
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry					
Toxic substances and environmental public health.....	76,041	76,024	76,024	76,024	76,024
Total, Department of Health and Human Services..	3,140,949	3,204,279	3,259,385	3,224,279	3,247,096
OTHER RELATED AGENCIES					
Executive Office of the President					
Council on Environmental Quality and Office of Environmental Quality.....					
	3,258	2,717	2,717	2,717	2,717
Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board					
Salaries and expenses.....	9,027	9,200	9,200	9,200	9,200
Emergency fund.....	397	---	---	---	---
Total, Chemical Safety and Hazard.....	9,424	9,200	9,200	9,200	9,200
Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation					
Salaries and expenses.....	4,930	8,601	8,601	8,601	8,601
Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development					
Payment to the Institute.....	5,916	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300
Smithsonian Institution					
Salaries and expenses.....	489,035	524,135	524,381	524,135	524,281
Facilities capital.....	126,123	90,900	90,900	100,000	100,000
Total, Smithsonian Institution.....	615,158	615,035	615,281	624,135	624,281
National Gallery of Art					
Salaries and expenses.....	91,708	97,100	97,100	96,600	96,600
Repair, restoration and renovation of buildings.....	10,946	16,200	16,200	15,000	16,200
Total, National Gallery of Art.....	102,654	113,300	113,300	111,600	112,800
John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts					
Operations and maintenance.....	16,914	17,800	17,800	17,800	17,800
Construction.....	16,107	15,200	10,000	15,200	13,000
Total, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.....	33,021	33,000	27,800	33,000	30,800
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars					
Salaries and expenses.....	8,863	9,201	9,085	9,201	9,201
National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities					
National Endowment for the Arts					
Grants and administration 1/.....	121,264	121,264	131,264	126,264	126,264
National Endowment for the Humanities					
Grants and administration.....	122,156	122,605	127,605	127,605	127,605
Matching grants.....	15,898	15,449	15,449	15,449	15,449
Total, National Endowment for the Humanities....	138,054	138,054	143,054	143,054	143,054
Total, National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities.....	259,318	259,318	274,318	269,318	269,318
Commission of Fine Arts					
Salaries and expenses.....	1,768	1,893	1,893	1,893	1,893
National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs					
Grants.....	6,902	7,000	7,000	7,492	7,250

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL, FY 2006 (H.R. 2361)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2005 Enacted	FY 2006 Request	House	Senate	Conference
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation					
Salaries and expenses.....	4,536	4,988	4,860	4,943	4,860
National Capital Planning Commission					
Salaries and expenses.....	7,888	8,344	8,177	8,244	8,244
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum					
Holocaust Memorial Museum.....	40,858	43,233	41,880	43,233	42,780
Presidio Trust					
Presidio trust fund.....	19,722	20,000	20,000	19,722	20,000
White House Commission on the National Moment of Remembrance					
Operations.....	248	250	250	250	250
Total, title III, related agencies:					
New budget (obligational) authority (net)...	9,036,011	8,411,659	8,651,405	8,506,895	8,669,080
Appropriations.....	(8,898,525)	(8,411,659)	(8,651,405)	(8,506,895)	(8,669,080)
Emergency appropriations.....	(137,486)	---	---	---	---
TITLE IV - GENERAL PROVISIONS					
Across-the-board cut (.476%) (rescission) (Sec. 437)...	---	---	---	---	-126,000
TITLE VI - SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS					
Veteran's Health (Sec.439) (emergency appropriation)...	---	---	---	1,500,000	---
Veteran's Health (Sec. 439).....	---	---	---	---	1,500,000
Grand total:					
New budget (obligational) authority (net)...	27,017,724	25,724,328	26,159,125	27,756,625	27,701,541
Fiscal year 2005.....	---	---	---	1,500,000	1,500,000
Fiscal year 2006.....	27,017,724	25,724,328	26,159,125	26,256,625	26,201,541
Appropriations.....	(26,803,784)	(25,754,328)	(26,289,125)	(26,344,625)	(26,311,541)
Supplemental appropriations.....	---	---	---	---	(1,500,000)
Emergency appropriations.....	(243,940)	---	---	(1,500,000)	---
Rescissions.....	(-30,000)	(-30,000)	(-130,000)	(-88,000)	(-110,000)
(Transfer out).....	(-48,704)	(-44,141)	(-44,142)	(-44,142)	(-44,142)
(By transfer).....	(48,704)	(44,141)	(44,142)	(44,142)	(44,142)

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

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

I support this conference report on the fiscal year 2006 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill, and I will vote for it, in just a few minutes, I hope. With the addition of \$1.5 billion in spending for veterans health care attached to this bill, I believe that this conference report will get widespread support in both the House and the Senate.

After we made a decision to add this \$1.5 billion, I contacted back in the State of Washington the veterans hospital in Seattle and the one at American Lake to find out what the backlog was, and I was shocked to find out that there is a backlog of some 2,000 veterans who are waiting to get an initial appointment at those hospitals. So this money clearly is needed, and I am pleased that the other body selected the Interior appropriations to add this \$1.5 billion to and that we were able to present it here today to the House.

There are several areas of this bill that I believe are underfunded; however, I believe these funding decisions were the result of an inadequate allocation. Although the majority cannot escape responsibility for this allocation, I believe that we here in the minority have been treated fairly during the process of developing the 2006 Interior appropriations.

First of all, I want to thank the chairman, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. TAYLOR), for the decision to provide the Park Service operating budget another year of healthy increases. Over the last 2 years, we have provided more than \$100 million in increases for the parks operating budget, and I am very proud of that accomplishment. We really were seeing a decline in some of the parks because they were not able to cover their fixed costs on an annual basis and had to lay off people and were unable to provide the American people with the services that they needed.

However, I am disappointed with the overall amount for the Clean Water Act State Revolving Fund. I had hoped that the conference report would end up closer to the Senate mark of \$1.1 billion, rather than at \$900 million, which is only \$50 million above the House mark. Over the last 2 years, this funding has been cut by 33 percent.

I am also disappointed that we could not retain the full \$10 million increase for the National Endowment for the Arts, which was approved on the House floor in an overwhelming vote, but I am gratified that we could agree to some increase for both the NEA and the NEH.

I am glad to see this conference report contains increases over the House mark for both land acquisition and the State grant program. Although these programs are cut from last year, I agree with the decision to restore some of the funding; and I am sympathetic

to the argument that, during a year with such a low allocation, it is most important to protect core programs and make land acquisition a more secondary goal.

I am deeply appreciative of everyone's efforts to resolve the issue concerning the use of humans during pesticide testing. I think the conference report reflects the will of both the House and Senate to stop such tests until the EPA develops regulations reflecting the recommendation of the National Academy of Science and follows the Nuremberg protocols. In addition, these regulations will prohibit such testing on pregnant women, infants, and children.

I also want to praise the compromise contained in this conference report on the Martin Luther King, Jr., memorial to be built on the National Mall. The conference report contains \$10 million that must be matched by private donations. This matching requirement will spur increased private donations and reflects the thinking of the chairman, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. TAYLOR), who felt very strongly that we should try to raise as much money for the memorial from the private sector.

Again, I want to say that the chairman has been very fair and his staff, led by Debbie Weatherly, has done an outstanding job in putting together this bill. I want to congratulate Mike Stevens and Pete Modoff of my staff for the exceptional work they did on this bill. I think this is, in a very difficult year, I think this is a bill that deserves our support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the ranking Democrat of the full Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I would simply like to say that this is a close call on this bill as far as I am concerned; but weighing all of the conflicting pressures, I come down on the side of recommending a vote for the bill, primarily because of what it does to finally provide sufficient funding for veterans health care.

With respect to that item, I would simply say to our friends on the majority side of the aisle, welcome aboard. We tried for the last year and a half to convince this administration and to convince the majority that the veterans health accounts were underfunded. Finally, the administration admitted that that was true; and, in fact, the amount being added to this bill today for veterans health care is exactly the amount that we had been asking be added to that program for that purpose for a long period of time.

I want to make clear, the shortfall for veterans' health care is not the responsibility of the chairman of this subcommittee. This problem is supposed to be taken care of by another subcommittee; but, in fact, after running away from the problem for

months and months, the majority party has finally decided that they did not want to go home in August and have to face the folks at the Legion hall or the VFW hall without finally doing something to fix the problem. So I am glad that they did.

But even though I am going to vote for this bill because of what it does for veterans, I think we need to understand that in a number of other areas, this bill is far from where it ought to be if we are to meet the responsibilities that we have to this country's future. Overall, funding for the EPA declines by \$291 million in this bill. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund has now been cut by 33 percent over 2 years. Grants to States for conservation and recreation are reduced by two-thirds from fiscal year 2005. Every State suffers a 66 percent cut.

In the year 2001, land acquisition funds in this bill were \$442 million. Today, they are \$124 million. That is the lowest appropriation for this item in the past 20 years. Construction funding for national parks and refuges and forests has been reduced by about 10 percent from last year. The funding for Forest Service buildings, roads, and trails has been cut from \$514 million to \$441 million, a reduction of 14 percent.

BIA school construction is funded at a level \$53 million below last year. Health facilities construction for Indian health services is funded at \$38 million, a reduction of \$50 million. I do not believe those numbers are numbers that we would be proud to take home.

So we are stuck with a choice. We can cast a protest vote against the cuts in this bill, which many of us have already done; or we can recognize the fact that in a time of war we have an obligation to meet the health care needs of those who have risked everything for this country; and I think we, in the end, have no real choice but to come down in favor of voting for that increased veterans funding.

But I hope that the general public will understand that the cuts in this bill do the Nation no favors. We are shortchanging our country's future. We are not meeting our stewardship responsibilities, and we will pay a long-term price for that, I regret to say.

Mr. Speaker, let me say one other thing. I do want to express my appreciation to the subcommittee chairman for the fairness with which he has dealt with this bill. I may not agree with the priorities that the majority party budget resolution imposed on the subcommittee, but I do want to say that I think the chairman has been most fair in his dealing with the minority; and we appreciate that.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), who is one of the leaders in this House on budget matters.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in full support of the \$1.5 billion in veterans health care funding for 2005, which was added on to this conference report. I am pleased that my colleagues on the other side have finally come around to our position on veterans funding and now acknowledge that their budgets have not funded this priority accurately or adequately.

This shortfall has not occurred for lack of notice or foresight. Over warnings from veterans groups and our own strenuous objections, the budgets passed by this House have consistently, consistently, understated the cost of veterans health care.

□ 1700

This is the Veterans Administration borrowing from Peter to pay Paul, denying or delaying service until a supplement finally comes through. And then when the supplement comes through, it busts the spending caps imposed in the budget and adds to the deficit.

This is no way to budget for veterans health care, and it is no way to budget generally. The White House just 2 weeks ago issued a midsession review of the budget, which we received with some skepticism. We observed that their projections of the deficit seemed better, partly because they omit the full cost of various policies like veterans health care, the ongoing cost of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and fixing the alternative minimum tax, extending other tax credits.

In the short run, these omissions make the deficit look better, sure, but in the long run the true costs emerge, and the actual deficits turn out to be worse than projected.

Here, for example, is what happened to veterans health care in the fiscal 2005 budget cycle. When we brought forth our budget resolutions on the Democratic side for 2005, we argued that the discretionary spending levels in the Republican resolution were too tight, not realistic, and would short-change essential priorities like veterans health care.

We were not alone. The chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee argued that more funding for veterans health care was badly needed, but our concerns went unheeded. Now we have to face the truth. The funding provided for veterans health care in the 2005 budget was, in fact, not sufficient.

And since an accurate funding level was not built into the budget, today's bill will move discretionary spending for 2005 over the allocation included in the Republican budget. This misestimate, like others, was left out of the deficit projections that OMB announced just a couple of weeks ago.

For the record, let me point out that the Democrats put forth a responsible budget for 2005. Our budget brought us to balance by the year 2012, yet we

funded veterans health care priorities and other priorities adequately.

Our budget provided \$1.3 billion more for veterans health care in 2005, and \$1.5 billion more over a 5-year period of time. Unfortunately the same story is playing out, unfolding again in 2006. Once again, once again, this year we warned that the budget provided too little for veterans health care, and once again it was to no avail.

Our resolution provided \$1.5 billion more for veterans health care in 2006, \$16.4 billion more over 5 years, and a budget, mind you, that balanced by 2012. Just 3 months later, 3 months later, we are told that the VA appropriations bill for 2006 will have to exceed its budget allocation to accommodate the administration's amended request for veterans health care. And, of course, the deficit estimates for 2006 will have to be revised upward accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, I would gladly vote to raise veterans health care to the level it should have been to start with, but I urge that we learn a lesson from this experience and be forthright in the future about the cost of veterans health care. And in that connection, I would note that in the outyears, 2007, 2008 and onward, the official estimates of the Republican budget still grossly underfund veterans health care, they understate the deficit, and they definitely will have to do this all over again until the numbers are finally done right.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS), who has been a real leader on the issue of dealing with pesticides and their effect on humans.

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

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Interior-Environment appropriations bill. I want to especially thank the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS), the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. TAYLOR) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS), the ranking, for their work on this legislation.

I am particularly proud of the steps that Congress has taken today to require the application of stringent ethical and scientific safeguards of intentional human dosing studies, and to stop the testing of pesticides on pregnant women and children. And I would like to thank all of your staff for their leadership on this issue.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. SOLIS. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the gentlewoman on her hard work on this. I can remember when we had the amendment on the floor. It was adopted here in the House unanimously. And I think your work

and the work of your colleague from California in the other body on this matter, where they also won a vote there, too, was very impressive.

And, you know, this is the first year our committee has had jurisdiction over the Environmental Protection Agency, so we are all learning about these issues. I want to congratulate you on your real leadership. And I think what you did will be something that will protect children and pregnant mothers and will bring better standards at EPA on this issue. I congratulate you on this effort.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I would like to also submit that our staffs have worked very hard, and the outside organizations that worked in tandem with us, religious organizations, the scientific, environmental community, as well as activists. In fact, the United Farm Workers also submitted a letter of support.

This should never have happened. It should never have taken place, the testing of pesticides on humans, and particularly children.

So I know that I stand here before you in the Congress to say that this is a good moment for us in this particular time. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, as co-sponsor of this amendment, I rise today to support the application of stringent ethical and scientific safeguards to intentional human dosing studies of toxic chemicals and applaud the inclusion of this language in the Interior-Appropriation bill.

This amendment forbids the EPA from considering any intentional human dosing study unless it meets the minimum ethical and scientific safeguards outlined in the February 2004 National Academy of Sciences report and the 1947 Nuremberg Code adopted after World War II. I am submitting copies of the NAS report and the Nuremberg Code into the RECORD.

In particular, this amendment prohibits intentional human dosing on pregnant women, infants, or children, and requires the creation of a review board to evaluate the ethical and scientific propriety of intentional human dosing studies before they can be conducted, considered, or relied on. In 2002, the National Academy of Sciences convened a panel to examine the issue of intentionally dosing human subjects with pesticides and other toxic substances.

The report of the NAS, published in February 2004, recognized that these experiments can be "troubling" and in some cases "repugnant." For this reason, the NAS concluded that to be "ethically justified," a human pesticide experiment must pass "rigorous scrutiny on both scientific and ethical grounds."

All of the studies currently pending before EPA are scientifically and ethically suspect and appear to fall far short of the stringent criteria for EPA consideration outlined by the NAS and the Nuremberg Code, and required in this amendment. EPA provided Congress with a list of all human intentional dosing tests under consideration by the agency. An extensive evaluation of these tests shows that they are rife with ethical and scientific flaws and do not approach the standard for acceptability.

Representative WAXMAN and Senator BOXER evaluated the serious flaws in these studies in

a report released last month entitled Human Pesticide Experiments, which I am submitting into the RECORD.

It is also clear that EPA's draft regulation regarding human testing similarly fails to meet the minimum criteria required in this amendment. EPA circulated internally a draft rule among the agency's various offices on June 20, 2005. EPA's draft rule, slated for proposal next month, would have allowed the systematic testing of pesticides on humans. The draft rule does not comply with the recommendations of the NAS and the Nuremberg Code, and it contains multiple loopholes that invite abuse.

The EPA draft is inconsistent with the standards we require in this amendment. EPA originally commenced its rulemaking in response to a wave of industry pressure to permit intentional dosing of human test subjects with toxic chemicals.

The pesticide industry has mounted a campaign to expand testing of pesticides on humans in order to weaken health standards. Because of the stricter requirements imposed by the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, the pesticide industry has been under growing pressure to reduce the risks that pesticides pose to infants and children. The industry has adopted a strategy to evade these requirements by testing pesticides on a small number of adult human subjects, and then cite these tests to argue that the chemicals are safe.

EPA's proposed rule encourages this strategy and is contrary to the recommendations of the NAS and the ethical guidelines of the Nuremberg Code that we require in this amendment. I am submitting for the record a June 2005 report titled Flash Report: New EPA Proposal Encourages Human Pesticide Experiments.

As outlined in more detail in this report, EPA's proposed rule violates the ethical and scientific safeguards now required by this amendment, by failing to establish a national review panel to prevent abusive experiments, and by failing to provide full protections for children and other vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, the EPA draft rule does not clearly require that pesticide experiments comply with even its sub par standards. To the contrary, EPA proposed to accept all experiments as long as they "substantially" comply. This provision overtly undercuts the protections in the rule. The vague standard of substantial compliance wrongly sends the signal that EPA will not demand strict adherence to ethical standards in human pesticide experiments.

Intentional human toxicity testing has a troubling history that includes manipulation and abuse of the most vulnerable members of society. The amendment that I am supporting today will ensure that EPA may not consider or rely on any intentional human-dosing study that does not meet the minimum ethical and scientific criteria recommended by the NAS and expressed in the Nuremberg Code.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I would yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS).

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I will not consume very much time. I rise to express my deep appreciation one more time to my colleague and friend, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), for his cooperating with me

as we have gone through this initial conference process, but most importantly to congratulate both my colleague, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS), and my colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. TAYLOR), for the fabulous job on this first of a series of conference reports that we expect to send to the President's desk.

It is very early in the process, but the Interior bill will be on the President's desk, and I am very certain he will find it to be to his liking. So congratulations to each of you for your work.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LEWIS of California. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important moment today that we are passing this conference report before the August recess. And I want to congratulate the chairman and ranking member, who has really worked tirelessly to work with the chairman to get these bills enacted.

But I think there is absolutely no excuse not to try to do this and try to pass the rest of the bills in September and show the American people that we can get the job done before the start of the fiscal year.

And I think every time we have a new chairman, we do better in this regard. The previous chairman, of course, had to deal with other problems. But I think the chairman has made this a big priority. I think it is important that we do this, and I want to congratulate him for his leadership as the new chairman of the full committee.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me further say that none of this would have been done as effectively and with the high quality reflected in the conference report without the great help of our staff. They have done a tremendous job. They are breaking records here. It is because of the cooperation of the entire committee, the Members and the staff working together.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, it is with deep regret that I rise in opposition to this conference report. Let me explain. Mr. Speaker, this is a bad bill. It guts some of our most important environmental programs. It seems that the Republican majority realized what a bad bill it was and in order to win support for it, they put \$1.5 billion in much needed funds for veterans' healthcare.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am a pragmatist. I realize that there is no perfect bill. Sometimes we have to settle for some good and some bad. The bill before us, however, is a close call.

The problem is a simple one. You see, for years my Republican colleagues have been shortchanging our veterans. The number of veterans treated at VA facilities increased from 2.7 million to 4.7 million from 1995 to 2004. The Department expects to treat 5.2 million veterans in 2006. Currently, more than 50,000 veterans are waiting in line for at least 6 months for health services from the VA. Medical costs are increasing at nearly double the rate of inflation. Yet, over five years, the Re-

publican budget for primarily veterans' health programs is funded \$13.5 billion below the amount needed to maintain services at current levels.

I am pleased that my Republican colleagues have finally seen the light and realized that we cannot ask our men and women in uniform to make the ultimate sacrifice only to come home and have the promise of quality and timely healthcare broken. However, I am angry as hell that they attached this much needed funding to a particularly appalling bill.

You are probably saying, "Dingell, how appalling could it be when we are finally getting this funding for our veterans?"

Well, let me tell you.

EPA has estimated that there is a \$388 billion shortfall between needed clean water and drinking water investments and the current level of spending. What do my Republican colleagues do to address that shortfall, Mr. Speaker? They cut the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund by \$200 million from the FY 05 enacted level! That is a 33 percent cut over the past two years. Moreover, the bill cuts water and sewer construction grants by more than 30 percent—a reduction of \$107 million from last year. This hardly seems like a reasonable response.

Conservation and land acquisition got a \$41 million reduction. This is 25 percent below last year's enacted level. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have the dubious honor of providing the lowest appropriation for land and conservation programs in 20 years.

Funding for construction at our National Parks, Refuges and Forests was cut by ten percent and funding for Forest Service buildings, roads and trails by 14 percent. Stateside grants for conservation and recreation got an amazing two-thirds cut, from \$90 million last year to \$30 million.

So, you see the conundrum before us.

It is with a heavy heart that I feel that I must stand against not only a bad bill, but also against the process. It is unconscionable that my friends on the other side of the aisle would link this critically important and much needed funding for our Nation's heroes to a bad bill.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant support of this conference report.

I am very reluctant to support this bill because it contains provisions I strongly oppose. Specifically, this bill contains harmful cuts to important interior and environmental priorities. It cuts \$800 million from last year's funding level for natural resources and the Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental and management and science and technology accounts are severely cut in this bill. The bill cuts \$107 million for water and sewer construction STAG grants, cuts \$200 million from SRF clean water funds, and cuts \$30 million from stateside grants to states for conservation and recreation.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress has a solemn obligation to protect our Nation's water, air and land resources for public health and safety. We must practice responsible stewardship of our natural resources and pass on to future generations a physical environment as bountiful as the one we have enjoyed. This bill fails this test miserably.

I will vote for this bill because it contains desperately needed funding for veterans health care. Specifically, the conference report on H.R. 2631 contains \$1.5 billion in veterans

health care funds to make up for the Administration's bogus budget proposals. Democrats in this House have been arguing for months that the Administration is shortchanging VA health care, and we should restore that funding in the proper legislation under regular order. A nation at war must take care of its veterans, and I will vote for this bill to provide this critical funding for veterans health care.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my disappointment with the Interior Appropriations bill that we are considering today. Although I will reluctantly vote for this legislation, I am concerned with the reduction in funding for many important domestic programs.

While I am pleased that this conference bill does not completely eliminate the Land and Water Conservation Fund, (LWCF), as in the House-passed version, I am still disappointed that this program only received \$30 million, which is one-third of what it received last year.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been instrumental in assisting local and State governments preserve vital open spaces. This program was established in 1965 to address rapid overdevelopment by increasing the number of high quality recreation areas and facilities and by increasing the local involvement in land preservation. To achieve this goal, the fund was separated into two components, one portion of the fund serves as an account from which the Federal government draws from to acquire land and the other portion is distributed to states in a matching grant program.

New Jersey has been active in seeking grants from this program and has received funds from the LWCF that were used to preserve treasures such as the Pinelands National Reserve and the Delaware National Scenic River. In addition, LWCF has provided more than \$111 million in state and local grants to build softball fields, rehabilitate playgrounds and to expand state parks.

Urban and highly developed regions, such as the region that I represent, will suffer the most from the elimination of the LWCF state grant program. The LWCF matching-grant program has proven to be a successful way to overcome the high cost of living that makes land acquisition and renewal projects costly in these regions. The steep reduction in funding for this program will leave local leaders without the capital necessary to enhance the quality of life in their communities.

This bill also cuts other domestic programs that benefit all Americans and future generations. This legislation only provides \$900 million for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund—a reduction of \$200 million from last year. This is vitally important to keeping drinking water clean and safe by supporting wastewater treatment, nonpoint source pollution and watershed and estuary management. Additionally, this bill cuts Federal land acquisition funding by 25 percent and reduces funding for construction projects in our national parks, refuges and forests by 10 percent.

Despite my reservations with cuts to important Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, and the Department of Interior, DOI, programs, I am pleased that this bill does the right thing and finally provides the VA the funds it needs to continue the delivery of care to our veterans through the end of the current fiscal year. This month, our Nation marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Veterans' Administration, the forerunner of today's

Department of Veterans Affairs. Even as we celebrate the VA's many achievements, particularly in the field of medical research, we should use this opportunity to ask if we, as a country, are truly putting our money where our mouth is regarding VA funding. Every day, VA doctors, nurses, technicians and other staff across our country work to try to deliver the best possible health care to our veterans. They face one critical and continuing obstacle—a VA medical system that is chronically, and needlessly, underfunded.

I hope that the Congress will learn from this experience and pass mandatory funding legislation for the VA health care system. It's long past time for Congress to cease its band-aid approach to funding for veteran's health care, and I urge my colleagues to honor the request of the leaders of our Nation's veterans organizations to deal once and for all with this shameful and avoidable situation.

Another positive provision in this bill is the modest increase in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Although the final funding levels fall slightly short of the amount approved by the House in May, the additional money will allow the NEA and NEH to build programs that use the strength of the arts and our Nation's cultural life to enhance communities in every State and every county around America.

It is clear that increasing funding for the arts and humanities are among the best investments that we as a society can make. They help our children learn. They give the elderly intellectual sustenance. They power economic development in regions that are down and out. They tie our diverse society and country together. I thank the conferees for recognizing the importance of this investment and giving the NEA and NEH the funds they need to advance our Nation's artistic and cultural life.

Even though I strongly oppose cuts to certain programs in this appropriations bill, I will vote in favor of this legislation. I hope in the future we can provide sufficient funding to these programs that enhance our communities, provide the Nation with clean water, and protect our precious natural wonders.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this conference report to provide funding for the Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency for fiscal year 2006. Despite a tight allocation, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Interior subcommittee performed an admirable task in providing the necessary funding for the continued management of federal lands and the operation of our country's environmental programs. I was disappointed to learn, however, that the bill does not provide much needed funding for a project I requested for the City of Houston and the University of Texas, Houston to conduct a risk assessment of air toxics in the Greater Houston area.

The Houston Chronicle recently completed a five-part series titled "In Harm's Way" that investigated air toxics in the "fence-line" communities near industrial facilities in Houston's East End. In particular, the series noted that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality found that folks residing in some of these neighborhoods experience higher levels of potentially carcinogenic compounds than other areas.

For many years, residents have had concerns and questions about the quality of the

air in Houston's East End, the potential relationship to local industry, and the potential health effects on their families. The City of Houston, partnering with the University of Texas School of Public Health, is already working to characterize the science and weigh the evidence on health effects. Federal funding would allow us to broaden the scope of these efforts to ensure that we include the full range of risk assessment activities in our effort to improve the air in Houston.

While I remain disappointed that the Appropriations Committee did not include a line-item appropriation for this project, I am pleased that my colleague from Washington, the Interior Subcommittee Ranking Member, recognized the need for this air toxics assessment and has agreed to work with me to encourage the EPA to include this assessment as part of its fiscal year 2006 operations.

I thank my friend, Mr. DICKS, for his willingness to work with me on this effort. The folks in these fence-line communities—my constituents—are often the workers who produce many of the essential energy and petrochemical products we all use everyday, and they deserve accurate information about their environment.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that, "You can put a dress on a pig, but it's still a pig." While I am happy that the FY06 Interior Appropriations Conference Report includes \$1.5 billion to make up for the funding shortfall for the Veterans' Administration, VA, it does not mask the horrible choices that were made in the rest of this bill. It's still a pig. This legislation includes cuts to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, decreases in the number of STAG grants, and completely eliminates many conservation grants.

Ensuring that the VA has the funding it needs is one of my highest priorities, which is why I am so disappointed that this money was included in a bill that undermines our environment. It is sad that veterans' have been shortchanged by President Bush who was all too eager to send troops off to war, but failed to account for the cost of their care after they had dutifully served their country. The underestimation by the White House of \$1.5 billion for this year is only the tip of the iceberg with the shortfall for next year already projected to be \$2.6 billion. Unfortunately, the shortsightedness of the Republican majority failed to include this spending where it should be, in the Military Quality of Life Appropriations bill.

However, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the shortcomings for the environment, I will vote for this bill to support our troops.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for the conference report on H.R. 2361, the Interior Appropriations bill. This important piece of legislation provides \$1.5 billion to remedy the shortfall in veterans' health care for this year. Earlier this month, I stood here urging this body to step up to the plate when it comes to veterans. Our veterans must be our number one priority. By passing this measure, we take the first step in fulfilling our obligation to the men and women who have served our country with honor and dignity.

Passage of this bill is a necessity—I will never turn my back to our Nation's veterans. However, I do want to take this opportunity to discuss my concerns with the larger measure

and its failure to address the land and water conservation and management needs of our nation. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been a valuable program for my district. This has been a fund to assist communities in helping preserve open space to protect and conserve unique landscapes. The cut in funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a cut in land conservation for Colorado.

For those who know, the 3rd Congressional District is comprised of rural communities containing millions of acres of public lands. These public lands are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. These agencies and public lands provide many benefits for the local communities in my district. I am disappointed with the decrease in funding to these agencies in this year's Interior Appropriations Conference Report. These agencies have to maintain a difficult balance of managing our nation's public lands with budget constraints. By cutting funding to these agencies it makes it very difficult for them to maintain their current management practices and leaves our nation's public lands in jeopardy.

With that being said, this report does have some positive aspects. The funding of \$5.6 billion for Indian programs is beneficial for school and hospital construction, education grants, human services programs, and law enforcement needs. These programs are essential for the Native American reservations within my district.

More often than not, in the West, the Federal Government is not just your neighbor, it is the entire neighborhood. Since most of my district cannot raise taxes, Payment in Lieu of Funding is vital. These counties with public lands within their boundaries need this funding for schools, roads, and other infrastructure needs. This program has never been fully funded, yet my counties are dependent upon this program. I hope to see this program fully funded next year.

I also want to see continued funding for the National Fire Plan and the forest health initiatives. These programs need to see increased funding due to the continued drought periods in the West and the current pine beetle epidemic. If the beetle infestations are not addressed, we will continue to see our forests

decimated. These insects will continue to cause fire hazards in our nation's forests if we do not get them under control.

I urge Congress next year to fully fund these agency budgets. This is critical to the Western States and our existence.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Representatives OBEY and DICKS for their assistance in securing \$100,000 for Montrose's City Hall Renovation Project. The City Hall building of Montrose was built in 1926 and has been well preserved throughout the years. However, as the City and County continues to grow, so too must the building in order to accommodate the needs of the people. Preserving and expanding the City Hall building in Montrose will allow us to keep a part of history alive for future generations of Colorado. Mr. Speaker once again I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this legislation. We need to sure up our VA budget so we can continue to provide critical health care services to our nation's veterans. In the future we need to restore the Land and Water Conservation funding and fully fund our agencies budgets.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALDEN of Oregon). Without objection the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

Pursuant to clause 10 of rule XX the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and that I may include tabular and extraneous material on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2985.

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

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2985, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2985), making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 396, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement see proceedings of the House of July 26, 2005 at Page H6628.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS).

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume. I do not expect that we will use very much of our time, Mr. Speaker.

The conference report I bring forth today to fund the legislative branch involves those activities providing some \$3 billion, 800 million, an increase of 4.5 percent over the year 2005.

Mr. Speaker, the adjustments upward almost entirely represent increased expenditures for our police services and security around the Capitol campus, and, beyond that, expenses that are directly related to the development of the Congressional Visitors Center.

Otherwise the bill is absolutely flat in terms of spending over 2005-2006. It is a very, very lean bill. I urge the Members to support the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the following for the RECORD: