

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

There was no objection.

AMENDMENT PROCESS FOR H.R. 1461, FEDERAL HOUSING FINANCE REFORM ACT OF 2005

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, the Rules Committee may meet next week to grant a rule which could limit the amendment process for floor consideration of H.R. 1461, the Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2005. The bill was introduced on April 5 and referred to the Committee on Financial Services which ordered the bill reported out by a vote of 65-5 on May 25 and filed in the House on July 14.

Any Member wishing to offer an amendment should submit 55 copies of the amendment and one copy of a brief explanation of the amendment to the Rules Committee in room H-312 of the Capitol by noon on Tuesday, October 25, 2005. Members should draft their amendments to the text of the bill as reported by the Committee on Financial Services on July 14. Members should use the Office of Legislative Counsel to ensure that their amendments are drafted in the most appropriate format. Members are advised to check with the Office of the Parliamentarian to be certain their amendments comply with the rules of the House.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the gentleman: the bill which you just indicated would be on the floor next week and you asked for amendments to be filed in a timely fashion is a very important bill. It came out, as you pointed out, with overwhelming bipartisan support. I think you said 65-7. Since that time, it is my understanding that there has been some change in the bill. In particular, I refer to the provision which deals with the ability of those who may receive dollars under the provisions of the bill for the purposes of constructing affordable housing, that if they receive Federal funds that they will be unable to thereafter participate in encouraging voter registration drives or getting more people on the rolls to vote. That is something that I think the whole House ought to address.

I believe the ranking member is going to ask that that be struck from the bill so that there not be a preclusion on voter registration drives or participation. The Catholic Conference is very concerned about that. I would presume a number of faith-based organizations are very concerned about that provision. I may have a discussion briefly with the acting majority leader on that issue as well.

But can the gentleman tell me whether or not he believes the Rules

Committee will allow the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) to offer an amendment which would put the bill back in the position which 65 people in the committee supported at the time it was reported out.

I thank my colleague for yielding and would ask him if he can give us some thought on that issue, which we feel very strongly about, and hope that that amendment can be protected and made in order by the committee and that we will have a full and fair debate on the floor of the House with reference to that amendment.

Mr. SESSIONS. Reclaiming my time, I appreciate the gentleman not only asking these questions but bringing up and talking about some important issues.

First of all, I would be the first one to admit that we have for the last few weeks been dealing with issues related to Katrina and other important matters as it relates to housing.

To answer the gentleman most directly, I must say that the instructions that I have given are that we are going back to the bill of July 14. There have been no changes made at this time to that. That will be the text that will be considered by the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee, as we deliberate, we take into consideration amendments of how people would wish for the bill to be changed, new thoughts and ideas; and that will be just as current as the filing date that we have set. So it is my hope that you would have the opportunity to work with Members of your party, and that this announcement would be available for Members of my party to say that we are open to any amendment, any thought process that people would like to come to the Rules Committee.

It is not unusual for us to hold hearings and take testimony that may take hours and hours and we hear from people. That thought process will be considered next week. The chairman of the Rules Committee, the gentleman from California, has instructed me to advise Members that we will be ready to do business next week and be open to the amendment process as Members choose.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for that information. There has been some suggestion, I understand, however, that although the bill may be in the same shape now, that there is a manager's amendment proposed and that the vote on the manager's amendment, which we presume, we have not seen it, would cover a multitude of subjects that are in the bill; that the vote on the issue that I have raised could be made on that manager's amendment. Therefore, you would have to vote against the manager's amendment if it changes the provision to which I referred.

I would hope, and this is not a question, just an expression, that the majority would make in order an amendment so that we could have a debate on that issue if in fact the manager's

amendment does what we are concerned about and some people are proposing undermining the ability of some groups, faith-based groups. That is why the Catholic Conference is so concerned about it, faith-based groups or other groups who would build affordable housing, get money under the bill and then be precluded from participating in any efforts, not partisan efforts but nonpartisan efforts to get people on the rolls.

I would just urge the gentleman, who is a distinguished member of the Rules Committee, to consider, very hopefully, favorably the request of Ranking Member FRANK to have made in order an amendment to deal with that subject. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. SESSIONS. I would say to the gentleman, reclaiming my time, that the Rules Committee has been visited by the gentleman from Massachusetts. He is no stranger to the Rules Committee. You also in your leadership capacities and otherwise as a Member of Congress representing your constituents from Maryland have been very vigorous in your support of the things which you believe, the ideas which you choose to press to the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee is very open, and our esteemed chairman will make available that time.

We do not know the content of that manager's amendment that you are talking about at this time. We once again encourage all Members, including the process that will be followed for the manager's amendment, to be filed on that date, October 25.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the distinguished acting majority leader, for the purpose of inquiring about the schedule for the week to come.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for yielding and would say that we intend to convene the House next Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. for morning hour and 2 p.m. for legislative business. We will consider several measures under suspension of the rules. A final list of those bills will be sent to Members' offices by the end of the week. Any vote called on these measures on Tuesday will be rolled until 6:30 p.m.

For Wednesday and the balance of the week, the House will consider additional legislation under suspension of the rules, as well as several measures under a rule. One will be the Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2005 that has just been discussed; two, the Lawsuit Abuse Reduction Act of 2005. The third bill that we would expect to see under a rule would be House Joint Resolution 65, which would be a resolution necessary under the Defense Base Closure Commission for the House to

have a disapproval vote on the work of that commission, a vote that is required by the structure itself.

□ 1215

In addition to that we plan to consider an amendment to the fiscal year 2006 budget resolution that would outline plans for budgeting for the expenses associated with Hurricane Katrina.

I would also like to announce at this time that the following Monday, while we have scheduled that as a workday, the following Monday, October 31, will be a day that we will not be in session. That allows Members to spend that day with their families, and for Members who want to take their children or their grandchildren trick or treating, that day is available for them to do that.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, on behalf of all the parents and grandparents, the acting majority leader and I had a brief conversation about my 3-year-old granddaughter, who this past weekend had the opportunity to show me the costume she is going to be wearing on trick or treat night, and she said, Hey, Pop, can you go with me? And I appreciate the gentleman's making that time available on behalf of his side and my side for all of us who might be doing that. That is a treat early, not a trick, and we appreciate that very much.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, the leader heard me have the discussion with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) of the Committee on Rules. I wonder if perhaps you could comment. We do not know the status of the manager's amendment, as the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) indicates. The acting majority leader does not know the status of the amendment, and I presume that is being worked on. But we have concerns that a very critically important provision of the bill, an overwhelming bipartisan bill, 65 to 7, might be changed and might have added to it a condition for the receipt of money by faith-based charitable organizations, nonprofit organizations to receive money to build housing; that if they received such money that a condition of the receipt of that money would be that they could not participate in voter registration efforts.

We have a letter from Catholic bishops very concerned about that. Other faith-based organizations are very concerned about that. I am sure nonfaith-based organizations are concerned about that. And, obviously, if the position is left in place as it now exists or as it existed when it passed out of the House, we would think that, without that preclusion, without that condition attached, we would be obviously not offering an amendment because we all agree with that. On the other hand, if the manager's amendment somehow changes that and puts that condition into the bill, then we would very much hope, Mr. Speaker, that the majority would allow all the

Members who think perhaps that condition should not be attached to the bill to have a free shot at making that policy judgment on a separate amendment rather than just as a vote against the manager's amendment, which seems like somewhat not only a clumsy vehicle but very conflicted because there will be some issues in the manager's amendment, most of which I am sure the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) will probably agree on, but I would hope that the acting majority leader could work with the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER), with his leadership to ensure that we have a freestanding debate on that issue. It is an important issue, and I think it will serve the House well if we do that.

I would be glad to yield to my friend for any comments he might have.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend yielding to me.

I listened particularly carefully to the gentleman from Texas' answer after the gentleman from Maryland said he might ask me the same question. I am not sure I can improve on his answer to any extent. I think that is the purpose for the Committee on Rules hearing to make that case.

I believe there will be amendments allowed. I know there is a wide discussion that this new fund, a fund we have never had before, if we do create that fund, can be part of the solution to the impact of Hurricane Katrina and Rita and maybe even Wilma. So, assuming that Wilma creates a housing problem as well, for that to be included there would have to be some amendment, as the gentleman suggested, even though the bill, when it came out of the Committee on Financial Services weeks, I believe now even perhaps months ago, with a large vote, does need some adjustment because of circumstances that have occurred since then that both the ranking member and the chairman would be supporting.

But that is the purpose of that hearing, and I thought that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) made the case well, that the Committee on Rules will listen to those arguments and make that determination.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think he made the case that they would listen and make a determination. We are hopeful that they will make a determination that if they are going to change the bill by the manager's amendment they will allow the full House to consider whether that change is appropriate. But I thank the gentleman for his information.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, if I can, we appreciate very much the action on Halloween, on that Monday, October 31. I think that was appropriate. As the gentleman knows, the following week, November 8 is election day for a lot of people: New York City, the State of California, obviously very large jurisdictions; Virginia, a major election going on there. All of us are watching

that election go on. New Jersey gubernatorial, as is Virginia and Ohio. So a very large number of people in America will be confronting elections and, therefore, a large number of our Members.

Has the majority considered the possibility of making sure that we do not have votes until later on in the day, Tuesday, so that we can free up our Members in those jurisdictions, A, to vote and, B, to participate to the extent that they feel it necessary to do so?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman yielding to me.

The week that is in question there has, of course, been on the calendar for a while as a workweek. We would intend at this point to have the reconciliation items on the floor that week. It will be a very full week of work if we hope to get out of here by Thanksgiving, by November 18, as is still our principal goal if we find cooperation in the Senate on that. I think it is likely that we would stay with the regular schedule. We have elections in Missouri too on that day, and while I hope to be there part of the day on Monday, I have already voted absentee, and I assume many of our other Members have already taken that action as well.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for his information. Perhaps we can talk about that further. I understand the problem. We are running out of time. We have got to use the days that are available. That is a very practical problem. I did not have Missouri on my list, but obviously a large number of States. Maryland does not. Maryland does not have elections this Tuesday other than municipal elections, so that is not a real problem for our State. But I understand the time problem, and perhaps we can discuss it a little further and see if there are some other times that we might utilize.

Finally, I would like to inquire further on the schedule for the balance of the year. Our target adjournment date, as I understand it, is November 18. I hope we can make that. As the gentleman pointed out, we do not have total control. The other body has to do things as well for us to get there.

If we do not make November 18, am I correct that the week of Thanksgiving, the Members can be assured that they will not be here the week of Thanksgiving, and am I correct that the probability is that the week after Thanksgiving, which I think starts either the 28th or 29th, that Monday, would not be weeks that we would be here but that, if need be, the week after that and perhaps the week after that in December would be weeks that we would be utilizing?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

We still are hopeful that November 18 could be the date. Our friends in the other body did indicate this week that

they had work on schedule that would allow them to keep that date. I think it is reasonable to assume that some of the work we have to do jointly will stretch out to meet the time frame that they are here rather than the time frame that we are here, and we need to be aware of that. We are still hoping for November 18.

The week after Thanksgiving, the week that starts on November 28 and ends on December 2, if we are still in session at the end of the month of November, we would not plan to work that week. Clearly, we do not plan to work Thanksgiving or the day after. If, in finishing this process up, November 19, November 20, November 21 would finish the process up, I would hate to suggest that we would not finish and get our work done, but certainly the November 28 to December 2 would be a date that I think he and I could right now announce to the Members that if they are planning family activities after Thanksgiving that even if we are still in session, we would not intend for that week to be a workweek.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his answer. I think that is very helpful for Members who are trying to plan.

Mr. Speaker, the PATRIOT Act, we were told that we might go to conference on that bill this week. That did not happen. Does the gentleman know when we anticipate perhaps going to conference on the PATRIOT Act?

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, we are continuing to do work on getting ready for that conference. I would hope that that conference would occur at any time. I am confident that we will appoint conferees and have that conference completed before the law expires. So I think that in itself sets a fairly short deadline but would expect to see that happen in the near future as we thought it might even happen this week.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate his answer.

Reclaiming my time, on appropriations conference reports, prior to the Thanksgiving recess, can he tell us how many he anticipates might be ready, obviously realizing that the other body's actions are difficult to determine, but does he have any thoughts on what appropriations conference reports we might be considering prior to the November 18 date?

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

Mr. HOYER. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and would say that it is still our goal to get out of here, to get the session completed by the Thanksgiving recess. In that case we would have all the bills completed.

The Senate seems to have really gotten their appropriations process energized in a way that means a number of bills will soon be ready for conference. As the gentleman knows, three of the

bills have already been signed into law by the President. It is possible that we would have other additional conference reports next week.

I am not trying to anticipate too much here, but I think the most likely conference that might be completed next week would be the conference that we just appointed conferees to, the agriculture conference, and have that bill as a fourth bill that was completed. But the Senate work that allows us to address these bills one at a time, which I know we all believe is the best way to do this work, has finally reached a point that bears some likelihood that all of that could happen and hopefully will happen by November 18.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his answer.

Lastly, we were expecting today to have a budget amendment, or an amended budget, on the floor today. That did not happen. He referenced it in his opening discussion of the schedule.

Does he expect that bill to come to the floor next week, and if so, does he expect it to call for reconciliation cuts above and beyond the \$35 billion that was in the original budget?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I think I announced earlier that I did expect that bill to be on the floor next week. And in addition, the change in the approach to that measure would be that it would include not only a higher goal for savings in the mandatory programs, an issue we do not take up very often in the House. I think this would be the second time in 10 years we have looked at mandatory savings, but also to include a commitment to revisit the discretionary part of the budget sometime between now and the end of the process and to work with the administration on reconciliation as well as looking at the authority for programs that we did not fund in this Congress and in several cases have not funded for some time and eliminate the authority for perhaps as many as 95 or more programs that are receiving no funding.

□ 1230

All four of those items would be in the budget resolution that the Committee on the Budget would bring to the floor.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for that information.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2005, AND HOUR OF MEETING ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2005

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at noon on Monday next; and further, when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 25, 2005, for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri? There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

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

There was no objection.

DEMOCRAT IRRESPONSIBILITY

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, with the recent hurricanes on the gulf coast, it is heartwarming to witness the unity and the outpouring of support from all Americans.

It is a unity of purpose from all, except one group: Democrats in the House of Representatives. That is right.

Our Republican leadership is working valiantly to find resources to provide help for the displaced residents. The way to do that is to reopen the budget and identify savings elsewhere to pay for those new costs, and the Democrat leadership says, They won't get one Democrat vote.

Now, that is leadership. How sad.

Mr. Speaker, the American people expect us to work together to solve problems. Democrats are stuck practicing the tired, old, petty, partisan politics of the past; and this is disappointing and irresponsible. America deserves more than obstruction from a once-proud party.

BUDGET AMENDMENT

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans' misplaced budget priorities are actually shameful. They continue to be a reverse Robin Hood, slashing funds to safety net programs only to give more tax cuts to the wealthiest of Americans.

The budget reconciliation that we will talk about next week or the next week, whenever you guys can get your stuff together, proposes huge cuts in important programs that the poor and the working poor depend on day in and day out, such as \$15 billion in cuts in Medicaid programs; \$12.5 billion for student loans; and almost \$1 billion in cuts for food stamps. All of this while, and you would allow the richer to get even richer at the expense of helping those who need it the most, doing