

request for activities related to the global war on terror. Now that the administration has provided the full-year request, the House and Senate leadership have refused to provide this critical funding for our troops who are serving in harm's way.

Additionally, instead of moving the Labor-HHS bill, the DOD bill and the MilCon-VA bills through the process by regular order and holding separate conferences, this omnibus package would be carried as part of the Labor-HHS bill.

Frankly, as I talk to my colleagues who know the appropriations process around this place pretty well, they can't quite believe why we're doing this. For each of these bills passed the House separately and individually, they've got programs that are highly supported. There is little doubt that regular order would work if the leadership would allow it to work.

Let me be clear on this. The President has already indicated that he will sign a freestanding MilCon bill, and he will sign a freestanding Defense bill. Especially it's important to note that the MilCon bill includes funding for veterans as well, with a commitment for his signature. By not moving these bills individually, the majority is using our veterans as well as our troops essentially as political pawns.

Yesterday, I had a conversation with the President's Chief of Staff, Josh Bolten. He clearly indicated that if this package makes its way to the White House, it will be vetoed by the President in this form. Apparently the President delivered a similar message to our Members and the press at the White House yesterday morning.

Personally, I think it's outrageous that the majority is proceeding in this way with funding for our troops and our veterans simply to try to push through a 10-plus billion dollar increase in the Labor and Health and Human Services programs. To me, this is nothing more than essentially, at least some would describe it as political blackmail, as well as a poke in the eye to our troops, our veterans, our Members, as well as our President.

To the Democrat majority who conceived this misbegotten, ill-conceived legislative strategy, let me say this: You are not only making a mockery of the legislative process, you are intentionally undermining a strong bipartisan desire to fund our troops, provide medical care for those troops, as well as provide funding for our veterans. This approach is kind of like the SCHIP package on steroids. And I believe that it, too, will fail.

I do not intend to sign the conference report or vote for it when it reaches the floor. I will also be supporting the President's veto, should he decide to veto this package. Clearly, this is in excess, and it's a fundamental violation of what I think should be the tradition of the appropriations process.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 8 minutes.

Madam Speaker, the gentleman is a good friend of mine. And I don't mind his pulling my leg, but from way over there, it's a little bit of a stretch.

Let me simply recite a few facts. If we take a look at the past history to see how these bills have been handled in the past, the gentleman talks about having a separate military construction bill. The fact is, over the last 5 years, when our Republican friends controlled this House, on three occasions they tied the military construction bill to other bills. And on one occasion, they never managed to pass a military construction bill at all. Only once in the past 5 years did they pass a freestanding military construction bill. So, I will stack our record against theirs any time.

There is another substantial difference between us on that score. In the 2007 budget and in the bill before the Congress now, we've added \$7 billion in additional funding for veterans health care, money which the administration itself opposed. So, I make no apology for what we have done on that score.

Let me also point out the gentleman is objecting to the possibility that we will combine the labor, health, education bill, the defense bill and the military construction bill into one piece. If we do that, that would mean that 90 percent of the dollars in the bill would be security related. The President has asked us to send him a defense bill and to send him a military construction bill. That is exactly what we would be doing. In addition to that, we would be sending the largest domestic bill, so that together we would be sending, in essence, 71 percent of the appropriation part of the budget down to the White House. I make no apology for that.

I would also point out that, while the gentleman has a newfound objection to omnibus appropriation bills, during the 12 years in which the Republicans controlled this body, 56 times they sent omnibus appropriation bills to the President for his signature.

□ 1545

During the Bush administration, they sent omnibus appropriation bills to the President 27 times. The President had no objection whatsoever when they came from a Republican Congress. I find it interesting that he now professes objection because we are doing what his Republican Party did in spades for so long.

In fact, last year, the other side, when they controlled this House, they avoided sending an omnibus appropriation bill to the President because on the domestic side of the ledger, they didn't bother to send him any at all. So we had to spend the first 6 weeks when we were in control of this body cleaning up last year's Republican business.

I would also point out, lest we take lectures from the administration and

OMB, Mr. Nussle, who is the President's new budget director, he was chairman of the Budget Committee for 6 years. Since 1976 when the Budget Act was passed, Congress failed to pass a budget resolution four times. Three of those four times occurred when Mr. Nussle was chairman of the committee. So I don't think I am going to take any lectures about the newfound interest of the new budget director in having timely consideration of any matter related to the budget.

I would also point out that during Mr. Nussle's tenure of 6 years, the Republican Congress passed three omnibus appropriations and one omnibus CR. So it seems to me that this is a debate about, if not nothing, at least very little. I would simply say that what we ought to be looking at is not what kind of a ribbon we have on the package, but we ought to be taking a look at the contents of the package. And I make no apology whatsoever about the contents of this package.

Now, if we take a look at the President's statement, his veto pronouncement yesterday, he says that the Congress has wasted time voting on efforts to change direction in Iraq. I would suggest that the President has wasted 5 years of the country's influence by the way he has handled Iraq in the first place. The President objects to the fact that in all of the domestic appropriation bills, we are some \$20 billion above his budget suggestion, about 2 percent. That 2 percent difference is the difference between having a President and having a King. And I would point out, he wants to spend 10 times that much money in Iraq in just 1 year.

The President says that Congress has gone it alone on SCHIP. I would suggest the President has gone it alone in Iraq. He has gone it alone without our allies. He is going it alone now without the support of the American people. So I would be careful, if I were the President, referring to someone "going alone" on anything.

I would also point out that the President says the Labor-H bill is bloated. Well, as a practical matter, if we were to pass the President's budget, we would be cutting vocational education by 50 percent. We would be accepting the idea that we ought to cut the National Institutes of Health grants by 1,100 grants over the past 2 years. We would be accepting the fact that we ought to allow No Child Left Behind to become a hollow shell in terms of financing. The President is, in fact, objecting to our increase for special education, an item which the Republican Party in this House took the lead on in putting in the bill in the first place.

So it seems to me the President, his priorities are not supported by the country. So he is falling back on a process argument. I don't think anybody is going to be especially impressed.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I just might mention that

during the time that the chairman and I have worked together in the Appropriations Committee, we have talked many a time about process where we both happen to think it is very important. But the fact is that all three of these bills, the Defense bill, the MILCON and veterans bill, indeed, Labor-HHS, all passed this House separately. We could carry these bills in regular order. It is frankly a sham to suggest that it is a requirement to bring these packages together.

Mr. OBEY. Would the gentleman yield if I yield him a minute of my time? I ask unanimous consent to give the gentleman a minute of my time.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. OBEY. I would simply ask the gentleman, with the exception of last year when you were chairman, or last term when you were chairman, where were your speeches when your party brought those 56 omnibus appropriation bills to the floor? Where were your objections then?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. OBEY, I know that you speak on the floor a lot more than I do, and I appreciate the talent with which you do it. But in the meantime, we are talking about regular order, trying to change the appropriations process so it makes sense, not destroy our committee. I would suggest we are on a pathway to destroy this committee.

Mr. OBEY. Are you saying that it didn't make sense when your party did what we are doing today 56 times? Is that what you are saying?

Mr. LEWIS of California. What I am suggesting, Mr. OBEY, is that there are, in this place even, there are people who sometimes use data and statistics for their purposes versus other purposes. This is our committee and I would hope we would run it in regular order.

Mr. OBEY. I find the gentleman's conversion interesting.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT).

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I certainly don't intend to lecture my good friend from Wisconsin on this process. He works hard. Between him and Mr. LEWIS, they probably have forgotten more and have also understood more about this process maybe than any other two Members that have ever served. But the fact is when Congressman LEWIS was the chairman, we actually took veterans out of the appropriations bill they had been in for years because we thought they had been used in a way that was not appropriate.

We took veterans out of VA-HUD and made it part of Veterans and Military Quality of Life for the specific reason that we didn't want to see that process that had gone on for too long continue. In 2005, the first year we did that,

Chairman LEWIS and his committee brought that bill and every other bill to the floor one bill at a time. In fact, this is the first time since 1987, 20 years ago, that we have been in this part of October without a single appropriations bill having passed the House floor.

Clearly, if we were voting to go to conference on Labor, Health and Human Services, the motion before us, I would have some enthusiasm for getting at least one conference started. I would also be arguing that the conference we should be going on would be the ones for the bills that have been over here the longest, and one of those two bills following Homeland was, I think we call it now Military Construction and Veterans. But it is still a military quality of life bill. It still affects military families. It still affects retirees. It still affects veterans. And it is a bill that not only the President has said he would sign but this House passed 138 days ago. The Senate passed it almost 2 months ago and named their conferees 2 months ago.

This is a bill that does have increases for veterans. Every bill in the 10 years I have been here has had significant increases for veterans, none more so than this, to the point that the increases for veterans and military families and military construction in this bill, about \$18.5 million a day, so if today we just multiplied that by 31, that is how much money hasn't been spent in the last month on military families, on military retirees, on military veterans, on people serving that would have been affected by military construction. It's high time we went to conference on that bill.

But what we don't want to start here is a process where we take our veterans and our military families and our retirees and we use them as a vehicle to have another political debate. As I understand, all I know is what I hear on the floor and read in the paper on this, that the plan is to take three bills, two of which almost every Member of this Congress voted for, add to them a bill that was as divisive in floor debate as any bill we debated, and have this three-car pile-on or this three-car pile-up, this three-bill pileup that I think sets an unfortunate precedent for how we use veterans and military families.

I wish we were going to conference on a number of bills today, and I wish we were committed to do these bills in the way that both the chairman and the ranking member have argued effectively over years now that we should be doing these bills.

Mr. OBEY. I yield myself 1 minute.

The gentleman says that he finds this a precedent. I repeat, we are doing with Military Construction what the Republicans did in 4 of the last 5 years, considering Military Construction in association with other bills. I do welcome, however, the newfound expression of support for veterans by the now minority party. Over the last 2 years, we had to drag them kicking and

screaming into voting for higher funding for budgets for veterans' health care than their own President wanted. In fact, when their committee chairman agreed with us 2 years ago that we needed to add a billion dollars to veterans' health care, they responded by removing that committee chairman from the committee because he wasn't following the party line.

I don't think veterans will have much trouble determining who has been on their side the last 5 years and who hasn't.

With that, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL).

Mr. ISRAEL. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

Madam Speaker, this bill does, in fact, combine various other appropriations measures. But those measures in their totality clearly reflect the top priorities of the American people. In fact, every one of those bills separately passed with significant Republican support by significant bipartisan majorities in this House.

The reason that this bill in its totality makes sense and should, with all due respect, attract the support of my friends from the other side of the aisle is because it does, in fact, fund the global war on terror. It funds our defense. It funds military construction. But it also funds America's other priorities. It funds our troops but it also takes care of our veterans, the largest increase in veterans health care in the 77-year history of the VA. It funds our defense with a robust military. But it also funds the war on cancer with increased investments in the NCI and the NIH.

□ 1600

It funds our military so that we can achieve global stability, but it also gives working families and middle-class taxpayers a little bit of a break, actually, more than a little bit of a break, a significant break on their college expenses so that our kids can compete in a globally competitive environment.

I would conclude, Madam Speaker, by suggesting that the differences between where the administration is and where we are should not be minimized. They are significant. As the chairman said, this administration is arguing over a \$22 billion increased investment with one hand, and, on the other hand, telling the American people they have to come up with another \$200 billion for Iraq. We are spending \$12 billion a month in Iraq. The difference between where the administration is and where we are on these other priorities is 2 months in Iraq.

We want \$880 million in increased investment for LIHEAP so that senior citizens don't have to shiver in the cold because their heating costs are too high. That is 2½ days in Iraq, that \$880 million. If we want to invest \$1 billion in medical research for people with

cancer, with Alzheimer's, with Parkinson's, that's 3 days in Iraq.

Our \$1 billion investment covers an entire year. The administration's strategy covers 3 days in Iraq. We want \$1.4 billion for the entire year for improved health care access. With this administration, the equivalent cost is 4 days in Iraq. We want \$1.8 billion in increased investments to keep American streets safe with additional law enforcement and additional police. The administration says we can't afford to keep America's streets safe but is willing to spend an equivalent amount over 5 days in Iraq.

Madam Speaker, this bill reflects the priorities of the American people. Separately, the components passed with overwhelming Republican support. This should be a bipartisan effort. It should be a bipartisan effort because, number one, it supports our troops, provides for robust defense, and takes care of our priorities here at home as well.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the Republican leader of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER).

Mr. BOEHNER. Madam Speaker, let me thank my colleague from California for yielding.

Let me say that my colleague from California, the former chairman of the committee, and the current chairman of the committee, Mr. OBEY from Wisconsin, are two Members who spent their entire careers working through this appropriation process. They deserve the thanks and respect of all the Members.

The motion here to go to conference is not about the Labor, Health and Human Services bill. That is not the issue. The issue isn't whether we have omnibus bills. We have had omnibus bills long before I got here and they will be going on long after I have been here. The issue here is the fact that the plan is to move this bill to the Senate to get a conference report, to package the Labor, Health and Human Services bill with the Defense appropriation bill and the Military Quality of Life bill.

Why is this happening? Because our friends in the majority want to continue to play political games here in Washington, DC. We went through political games last week with the SCHIP vote, a bill that there was some attempt to work with us, but not really. No changes were made. We are going through the same process of having this bill vetoed again. Why? Because the majority refused to reach out and work with us in a bipartisan manner to resolve the few differences, the few differences we had in the SCHIP bill. But here we go again. Here we go again.

Madam Speaker, the majority knows and the President has made clear that he will veto this bill. To pass a bloated Labor, Health and Human Services bill on the backs of our troops and our veterans is not the right thing to do. It's a political trick. You're daring the President to veto this bill. Well, guess

what? You know and I know that the President is going to veto this bill. Yet, here we go, playing political games once again.

As I said last week, I said last month, and probably the month before that, the American people are tired of all the political games. They want us to find some way to resolve our differences and to deal with the issues that they care about. There are a lot of important issues in the Labor, Health and Human Services bill that are very important to our country. There's a lot of important issues in the Defense appropriation bill. They help fund our troops and give them the tools that they need. Certainly, when it comes to the Military Construction Quality of Life bill, taking care of our veterans is very important. But you know and I know that this is not more than a political trick.

Let me tell you what; it makes me sick, makes me sick to watch this process continue, playing political games, and nothing gets done. Congress is at the lowest approval rating in history, and what is going on? We are continuing to play political games. That is why the American people are sick of this process, and it ought to stop.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Madam Speaker, there was an old comedian who used to say: When somebody says it's not about the money, it's about the money. When the gentleman says it isn't about the Labor, Health and Education bill, it's about the Labor, Health and Education bill.

The gentleman objects to the fact that we are doing what has been done in this institution for many years. We are taking the bills that are finished in both Houses at this time and we are trying to get them to the President in the fastest possible way. And the way to do that is to send them down together.

Now, the President wants to cherry-pick. He wants to pick and choose. He said you have got to send me 11 separate bills. He didn't send us 11 separate bills. The President sends us one omnibus budget. He put all the departments together in one document and sent them down to us. We are sending him back whatever proposals we can put together in the fastest possible time.

Madam Speaker, he says that the Labor-Health bill is bloated. Well, let me compare it to the President's budget. The President says that he is the "great decider" and that he is going to decide how much money is going to be in this bill and we have got to live within that limit or else he's going to veto anything else we send him. If we live under the President's budget, we would cut vocational education by 50 percent. Anybody think that is a good idea? If we live under the President's budget, we would eliminate all student aid but Work-Study and Pell Grants. Anybody here really believe that is a good idea?

In all my years in Congress, I never heard anybody say: OBEY, why don't

you guys get together and cut cancer research. Yet, that is what this previous Republican Congress and the President have done the last 2 years; they have cut 1,100 grants out of the National Institutes of Health, medical research grants. If you want to live under the President's budget on law enforcement, we would cut what the committee has in its bill by one-third. The President wants us to cut handicapped kids' education by \$300 million. Mr. WALSH, the ranking Republican member of the Labor-Health Subcommittee, led the objection to that, and in fact persuaded the committee to put a higher number in the bill than I had put in the chairman's mark; yet the President says we ought to follow his budget for Labor-Health. If we do, we will cut rural health by 54 percent.

He also wants us down the line to cut the Clean Water Revolving Fund by 37 percent. He wants us to cut disabled housing assistance by 47 percent. He has ordered his Secretary of Veterans Affairs to send us a letter indicating that they don't want the \$4 billion that we have added to veterans health care.

So you don't think this is about priorities? You bet you, it's about priorities. I submit to you, the teachers of this country, the school kids of this country, the parents of this country, and the veterans aren't going to be fooled. Veterans aren't going to be very thrilled if you take care of their needs so long as they are in Iraq, but the minute they get home you forget the help their kid's need to get an education, you forget the help their wife's needs or husband's needs if they run into medical problems.

Veterans are whole people, just like everybody else. This Congress has an obligation to meet all of their needs, not just their needs so long as they are wearing the uniform and then forget them once they take it off. That is not the American way. It shouldn't be the Congress's way. That is why we are proceeding as we are proceeding.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds all Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am going to be calling upon my colleague, who is the ranking member of the MilCon-VA bill in just a second. But I wanted to mention it is very interesting to see my colleague, the chairman, to use statistics and data for his own purposes.

We have, over the last 12 years, had nine omnibus appropriations bills, and where those bills were put together in packages, I objected to that procedure all along the line. But, as a matter of fact, as a matter of fact, negotiations had taken place on the part of both sides of the aisle, and the President signed those bills. He didn't suggest he would be vetoing those bills.

Data can be used for one's purpose, but we ought to be accurate and recognize that facts are facts.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER), the ranking member of the MilCon-VA bill.

Mr. WICKER. Madam Speaker, this really is an unprecedented move. We were originally told that it would be scheduled for first thing this morning. Then it was rescheduled for early this afternoon. And once again, the matter was so controversial that it had to be pulled again and we find ourselves discussing it now at this moment.

I frankly wish my friend from Wisconsin would pull the motion again, because there is only one way to understand this process. This is, as the Republican leader said, a political stunt. If it is allowed to proceed, the result will be predictable. The President will veto the product of this conference committee, because it will attempt to spend billions and billions of new dollars on domestic programs we cannot afford, just when a balanced budget is within sight again. The President will veto the bill, the President's veto will be sustained, and we will be back to the drawing board.

While all of this is unfolding, much-needed funds for our veterans clinics and for our servicemembers and their families will be delayed, not to mention essential funding for our Nation's defense in the global war on terror, for our troops in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq who are risking their lives for our country even as we speak. These key national security expenditures will have to wait even longer than they have already waited.

The other result of this process will be just as predictable. Some people in this town, in this very House, will have gotten what they wanted: more political theater, more attempts to link good policy with excessive spending in an attempt to score political points.

Madam Speaker, does the Democratic leadership of this Congress want to pass appropriation bills or do they just want to make new campaign commercials?

Four and one-half months ago the House of Representatives passed the Military Construction-VA bill with an overwhelming 409 votes. The Senate passed its version of MilCon-VA with only one dissenting vote on September 6, 8 weeks ago. The President has expressed his willingness to sign the bill. Mr. EDWARDS and I, along with our subcommittee, have stood ready to go to conference for almost 2 months. Why, other than politics, have these funds for military quality of life and for our Nation's veterans been delayed?

Mr. EDWARDS and I, as chairman and ranking member, have worked along with our Senate counterparts and our staffs to craft a compromise between the two versions of MilCon-VA. Only a few outstanding issues remain. We are ready to go with this essential bill. The same is true for the Defense appropriations bill.

That means we could have bills on the President's desk within a matter of

days. Funds for vital infrastructure for our troops, child development centers and veterans programs could be in the pipeline within a matter of days. Do we really want to hold our present and former troops hostage for political games?

So I urge my friends on the other side the aisle to reconsider this unprecedented maneuver. Send the bills by regular order according to the established rules. Let's get the funds to our troops without further delay.

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER).

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I think this is a sad day for our country, because we put into place several years ago what we called a bridge fund. I call it the ammo, the armor, the equipment fund. That was a fund that we added to the Defense bill to carry our troops over during the winter months before that spring supplemental, before that extra funding came about in the springtime of the next year.

That is important for them, and that gave them a certain confidence level that they were going to be funded without having to take money out of the cash register for the next year, have to delay training exercises, have to delay the equipping of forces back here in the United States.

And you know something? We had a bill that was ready to go here. The Defense appropriations bill is something that clearly would sail through, the President would sign it, and there was no risk in this bill that would fund our operations and our warfighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Democrat leadership now has injected risk, because you have hooked it up with a bill that the President said he is going to veto. That injects risk into this very, very difficult operation.

So what do we have with our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, our marines in Afghanistan and Iraq? We have got the uncertainties of war, the dangers of war. We have got the uncertainties that attend their families back here in the United States. And now the Democrat leadership has injected another uncertainty, an uncertainty that they will be funded fully in these difficult months.

□ 1615

So you took away this bridge fund, what I call the ammo, the armor, the equipment fund, and the answer you have given us is, well, if the President caves, then the troops will get the money. Holding our troops, our forces, hostage during a time of war is something that this body has never done.

I would hope that the Democrat leadership would make an about-face on this. I would hope you would adopt the

great position of Democrat Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, who said, "In time of war, the best politics is no politics."

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

I yield myself the time simply to respond to something said by the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER). Mr. WICKER implied that the delay that took place in bringing this to the floor today was because of supposedly some turmoil about how this bill was packaged.

In fact, as the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) will tell you, the reason for the delay is because I spent all day defending two Republican amendments to this bill that the Senate wanted to reject. And until I got agreement to quit horsing around with those amendments, I refused to bring this bill to the floor.

And now I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURU).

Ms. DELAURU. It really is disingenuous when I listen to my colleague from California talk about ammo, armor and equipment from the folks who brought our young men and women into a battle without appropriate ammo, without armor, and without the appropriate equipment that they needed to be able to fight this war from the outset. In fact, it has been the Democratic majority over and over and over again who have increased that funding for our troops in the field.

Let me also say to our distinguished minority leader, and you should not be fooled by the commentary, this issue is about the Labor, Health, Education and Human Services bill. And the folks who are playing games are the minority and the Republicans on that side of the aisle.

This is bill where we know that we will increase funding for veterans health care, offer pay raises for active duty soldiers, provide additional support for military families. Let me just tell you what this President wants to veto: the investment in lifesaving medical research, the investment in increased education funding, and he would like to veto our being able to strengthen job training in this Nation.

Two or three examples, my friends. The President's budget cuts funding for medical research at the National Institutes of Health. He would cut that by \$480 million. That is 800 fewer research grants than last year to study deadly diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, leukemia, Parkinson's, heart disease. We rejected that on our side of the aisle. We invest \$1 billion above the President's request or roughly the cost of three days in Iraq. That's what the President wants to veto.

Let's take a look at the Centers for Disease Control. When the chairwoman testified before the committee, she said we face as a nation the issue of the daily health challenges: 4 million seniors living with Alzheimer's, 583 women diagnosed with breast cancer every single day, and 176,000 teens who will

struggle their entire lives with diabetes. And so if we fail to pass the Labor-HHS appropriation conference report, we cut that CDC budget by \$475 million. The President wants to veto that \$475 million for those efforts.

Let's take a look at what he said last month, that is the President: "Don't go backwards when it comes to educational excellence. We have come too far to turn back." Yet he will recall millions in Perkins loans funds and cut the special education program by \$291 million. Going backwards is exactly what he is proposing to do.

We invest \$5.9 billion in education, the cost of just 18 days in Iraq. What will we do with it? We will benefit 8.5 million students to prepare our Nation for the 21st century economy.

Let's talk about the President last week. An additional \$42 billion from Congress for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that will in the next decade cost \$2.4 trillion, or \$8,000 per man, woman and child. Let's fight for people, not dollars, and the people of this Nation understand that.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the ranking member of the Veterans Committee, STEVE BUYER.

Mr. BUYER. I have come to the floor because what is clear is there are no disagreements with regard to the VA-Milcon appropriations bill. There is no disagreement between the House, the Senate or the White House, which means that weeks ago we should have appointed conferees and we should have voted on this bill if in fact our priority, in a bipartisan way, is clearly that of the troops.

So I come to the well really bothered here today. The word "gamesmanship" has been used. The word "partisanship" has been used. When it comes to funding our troops, those words should never be used. A few years ago, almost 2½ years ago, I met with Republican leadership and I wanted to get politics out of the military health delivery system and the VA. That is when I said get HUD out of VA and let's combine this. So what we have done by doing VA and MilCon, we do this so the authorizers and the appropriators can work together on the seamless transition issues so we get politics out of the arena.

And now to take this bill to which there are no disagreements and to attach it to a vehicle where there are disagreements, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is absolutely correct, it places the bill at risk.

The last speaker talked about HHS. I am here to talk about funding veterans and our troops and the dependents and their families. We shouldn't be playing these games with the White House if our priorities are truly with America's most precious assets, and that is the men and women who wear the uniform, and to care for those who keep the watch fires burning and their children. So let's don't play these games.

I have to agree with JOHN BOEHNER. There is a reason the American people

look at Congress with a 14 percent approval rating. It is because of these types of games.

We are better than this. We are better than this. So let's come together like we passed this bill 138 days ago and keep our bipartisanship and send this bill to the President.

Mr. OBEY. May I inquire how much time is remaining on both sides.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Wisconsin has 9 minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 11½ minutes.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I thank the gentleman and appreciate the opportunity to make a few remarks here.

Madam Speaker, a lot has been said here. The minority leader came down and said this makes him sick. Another speaker came down and said we are somehow holding the troops hostage. Another Member comes down and says this is a sad day. You know, I think all that rhetoric may be nice, but what we are trying to do here is run the government. As has been stated several times, when the Republicans were in charge, they put bills together and got them passed. And now all of a sudden to take a stand here like this has never happened is, I think, a tad bit disingenuous.

But we have to ask ourselves now that everyone is bringing the troops in here: What are the troops fighting for? They are not fighting for a Defense bill. They are not fighting for a VA bill. They are fighting for our country. And what is our country? Our country is a country that makes investments in its own people. They are fighting for America because it's a great place to live. It's a great place to get educated. It's a great place to get health care. And for us to say somehow they are just fighting for only a portion of our society, I think is a bit disingenuous, too. I bet if we talked to some of the troops and we asked them what it means to be an American, they would say it means to be free and to be able to achieve the American Dream. And you achieve the American Dream by being healthy, by being educated, by having access to this great country. That is what we are trying to do here.

We have a great bill. This Labor-HHS bill is great. It is called the people's bill. Just like the VA bill is the people's bill. This all goes together. This is one cohesive investment that we need to make in our country; and we are asking the Republicans, Madam Speaker, to join us.

You can't hide behind the President. Article I, section 1 creates this body. We are the ones who fund the government. If the President wants to veto this, help us override the veto.

These are all good bills. And when those veterans get home, as Mr. OBEY stated, they need the same exact kind of attention and their families need the same exact kind of attention that

every other citizen gets. They want high quality, low-cost education. They want high quality, low cost health care, and they want an opportunity for their kids to live the American Dream. Is that too much to ask? That's the question: Is that too much to ask?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE), a member of the committee.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of our Nation's veterans, more than 100,000 of whom live in my congressional district.

Madam Speaker, 138 days ago, 4½ months ago, this House passed the Veterans-MilCon appropriations bill; and 55 days ago, the Senate passed their version. Since that time the party in control, the Democrats, have sat on their hands refusing to appoint conferees and take action to fund our Nation's heroes. Leader BOEHNER has actually appointed conferees to the conference, and virtually every Republican Member has implored the Speaker to move forward. Our troops are too important to play political games.

Just this past week, I heard from a woman in my district whose son is being treated in the spinal cord injury unit down in Tampa. Let me share with you that she is not a Republican. She is a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat. Her comment to me was that she was ashamed that the increased appropriation that was in the very good bill that we passed here, she was ashamed that those funds have not yet been freed up.

October 1 was the beginning of the Federal year. We have veterans in need of services. We have veterans in need of increased staffing at the various hospitals. Combining these bills clearly is an effort to have people vote on something that will come back and be certainly not what the American public wanted.

You know, when your side won in November, Madam Speaker, I think Americans thought, oh, good, things will be done differently. They are not only not being done differently, they are being done worse than before. That is not what the American public wants.

The American public wants to have our military funded. They want to have our veterans, whether it is from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, or those currently coming back from OIF and OEF, deserving to have good-quality care at the veterans hospitals. And to have that as a separate bill, not be held hostage.

Mr. OBEY. Does the gentleman have any remaining speakers?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Not on this portion, no.

Mr. OBEY. Then could I ask the gentleman to give his summary remarks. I have only one remaining speaker.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I would speak just for a moment by way of saying that I think in many ways we have demonstrated if we

are not careful with our rhetoric, we can undermine the opportunity we have for bipartisan consideration of very important work in the House.

One of the most positive experiences I have had as a member of the Appropriations Committee has been to sit in that subcommittee that deals with Labor-HHS. I have been very, very impressed with the amount of non-partisan, bipartisan support for fundamental research, for example. Earlier it was suggested that there is not that base of support. It is when we get this partisan confrontation on the floor that polarizes us that we tend to become confused about the real work that is positively done within our subcommittees.

□ 1630

Madam Speaker, I must say I would hope that we can do all that we possibly can to try to bring both sides together relative to those research items that I feel have such high priority.

Beyond that, I'm going to be later raising a question by way of a motion to instruct conferees that would suggest that the Labor-HHS bill ought to be dealt with by itself. Where the members of that subcommittee worked so hard and have such expertise in this arena to set their work out and complicate it with VA-HUD over issues that relate to veterans is absolutely undermining the appropriations process.

So, with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the remaining time.

Let me state once more that I find somewhat disingenuous concerns expressed about the so-called delay that this process will provide for veterans health care. I would like to know where that same concern was when last year the now-minority party never even passed a Military Construction bill. Last year, they completed their session, they walked out of town, shut the doors and said good-bye, and they never passed any bill whatsoever to provide veterans health care.

So we took over in January, and the very first action we took was to clean up that mess and add over \$3 billion to veterans health care. That was our top priority. And then we followed it up in the regular appropriation bill by adding again more than \$3 billion. So I will take a backseat to no one in terms of our expression of concern for veterans.

But let me say, we're not just going to take care of veterans as long as they wear the uniform. We're also going to try to take care of their kids' needs for a decent college education. We're going to try to take care of their families' needs in terms of medical research. We're going to try to take care of their housing needs. We're going to try to take care to see that there's decent law

enforcement so they can live in communities where kids can actually grow up into adulthood. As the gentleman from Ohio said, we're going to treat veterans as a whole person. That's the purpose of trying to pass all of these bills.

Let me simply say I think these bills have been bipartisan. The Labor-Health-Education bill, one of the speakers indicated that it was the most contentious bill on the floor. We got 53 Republican votes for that bill. I hardly think that we would have done that if it had been a partisan product. In fact, if you average all of the appropriation bills that we passed in this House, we got 65 Republican votes on average for every appropriation bill that passed. That means that we passed these bills on average by exactly two-thirds, which is exactly what it takes to override a Presidential veto.

Now we're simply trying to get these bills to the President as fast as we can and in a way which does not enable him to have an easy time of cherry-picking. That's what we're trying to do.

I sat down with the President's budget director, Mr. Nussle, and I said, Look, why don't we right now, even while the Senate is working, sit down and try to work out a bipartisan compromise for all these bills? He said, Dave, I'm new at the job, but he said, so far I don't find anybody in the White House that has the slightest bit of interest in compromise. I said, Well, that's too bad. I hope that changes. Please call me if it does. But meanwhile, if the President wants to veto something, why don't we at least sit down and try to figure out which bills he wants to veto so maybe we can agree on which ones to send him first. I got no takers on that either.

So we're proceeding the way we're proceeding because we're playing off what the President of the United States has said and done, and so far all we've heard is my way or no way. I don't believe that the Republican Members of this Congress came here to walk in lock step, and certainly we didn't on this side of the aisle. We will find out as the process unravels.

And so with that, I would simply urge that we support this motion.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection the previous question is ordered.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

The motion was agreed to.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT OFFERED BY MR. LEWIS OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct conferees.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Lewis of California moves that the managers on the part of the House at the

conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the bill, H.R. 3043, be instructed to disagree to any proposition in violation of clause 9 of Rule XXII which:

(1) Includes any additional funding or language not committed to the conference;

(2) Includes matter not committed to the conference committee by either House; or

(3) Modifies specific matter committed to conference by either or both Houses beyond the scope of the specific matter as committed to the conference committee.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XXII, 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 of California. Madam Speaker, I can't help but mention that the preceding discussion must be very enlightening to Americans across the country who may be interested in what we have to say here. It's always been my personal belief that the vast percentage of problems that we face as a people have very little to really do with partisan politics if we can get people together at the subcommittee level to really talk with each other about finding solutions, but clearly, clearly, Madam Speaker, it has to be apparent to almost everybody who had listened today that one side of the aisle in this body seems to believe that the only solution to every problem around is to throw more money at it. That clearly is not the case. Many a solution is found by way of people working together, not just throwing money at some wall.

Madam Speaker, in this motion to instruct conferees, I really repeat the point that the subcommittee members who work within the Labor-HHS community have great expertise in the programs within this arena. They spend a lot of energy and time applying themselves to that work.

Today we're in a process where we're going to tie that piece of work to a combination of two other bills. It's totally unnecessary. The Defense bill passed the House by very sizeable bipartisan numbers. Indeed, the MilCon-VA bill did the same. To suggest that we can't go forward with Labor-HHS as a separate product, I think this is a very unhealthy reflection on the work of that subcommittee.

This motion says the conference can only conference the Labor-HHS bill. They cannot consider adding Defense, MilCon-VA, or other matters outside the scope of the Labor-HHS conference. The Members who serve on the Labor-HHS subcommittee should be making decisions in an open conference regarding the disposition of programs and funding levels in that bill, not other appropriations bills related to the troops, veterans, or other items outside the scope of that conference.

Members serve on subcommittees and have the expertise I suggest because they work within those subcommittees. The people on Labor-HHS, very talented in their work, spend relatively

little of their time in the Defense arena, as well as the arena that deals with MilCon and veterans.

To air-drop Defense appropriations conference reports and the MilCon-VA bill into this process is absolutely unprecedented, in my view, and is a disservice to our Appropriations Committee.

Politicizing these bills and circumventing the normal practice of this and other committees does nothing more than undermine the American people's faith in their government.

Let's move beyond purely partisan politics and send the President a free-standing Labor-HHS bill, as well as individual Defense and MilCon-VA appropriations.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Is the gentleman sure he doesn't want to yield back? Could I inquire of the gentleman how many speakers he intends to have on this?

Mr. LEWIS of California. I think maybe there are two or three.

Mr. OBEY. All right. We'll try to do the same.

Madam Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Let me simply say, Madam Speaker, that what the gentleman is saying is that he wants to prevent us from doing something on this bill which his party did 56 times in the time that they controlled this House over the past 12 years, and I don't find that especially persuasive.

He also wants to prevent us from producing more than one bill at a time, and yet the President signed omnibus appropriation bills 27 times since he's been President, when they came from his own party. Now, because one might come from the Democratic Party, he wants to make a Federal case out of it. I don't think people are going to be very impressed with that either.

I find it very interesting that out of all of the motions that the minority could have offered, they haven't offered a single motion, and nothing in this motion today would in any way reduce by one dime any of the funds that we appropriated in the Labor-Health-Education bill. They argue that the bill is bloated, and yet when we give them an opportunity to offer motions to reduce spending for any specific item they don't take advantage of it.

That is exactly the same experience we had when the subcommittee considered the bill, and in fact, virtually every Republican motion and every Republican speech was on behalf of an effort to increase funding for a number of items, whether it be vocational education, which I agree with, or whether it be Pell Grants or whether it be special education.

So I find it interesting that after all of that rhetoric about so-called bloated funding for this bill they choose to argue an arcane process issue.

All they're really saying is, when you consider Labor-Health, don't even think of moving forward with Military

Construction, don't even think of moving forward with Defense, don't even think of addressing the problem of California wildfires, don't even think of adding additional funding for MRAPs. Well, if they're comfortable with that, fine. I don't think we ought to let procedural theology get in the way of doing what's needed for American families and American veterans and American fighting men and women.

So, with that, I would simply urge a "no" vote on the motion.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 3½ minutes to Judge CARTER of Texas, a member of the committee.

Mr. CARTER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in support of the motion to instruct conferees.

I've been sitting here listening to what's been said here today and trying to figure this all out. I think everybody, I think the American people are trying to figure it all out. It's an interesting process to analyze how the Congress is working on this appropriation process.

But when you really look down as to what we're doing here, we're trying to solve three problems this week on this issue of appropriations. We've got three areas that we're going to look at.

We've got a problem that we want to resolve. We want to fund the Department of Defense and the job that they do defending our Nation, and we've got an appropriations bill that deals with that, deals with protecting our soldiers in the field, getting their mission done and all the things that go attached to the Department of Defense.

We've got a second issue we want to deal with. We want to take care of those veterans that have served us so well and so proudly over the years, make sure that we fund the programs that are necessary for them and to do the necessary military construction of the various bases around the world that is necessary to make sure we're providing for our active duty military what they need. We have those two bills that we've got to deal with this week.

□ 1645

We have a third bill, which is the Labor-HHS bill, that deals with issues of labor, health and human services. All those are important bills. Let's figure out how we can best get this done. The American people gave us a little survey this last week. They told us the one thing they are mad at us about is they say, why don't you just get something done? Why don't you get through the bull and get down to doing the job? That's their number one complaint.

Let's look at this. What's the best way to do this? We've got a Defense bill that there is really no obstacles for that anybody can find. Everybody is pretty much okay on that. We've got a

MilCon-Veterans bill. In fact, we made an agreement when we had that little fight over earmarks that we would let those go without even discussing the earmarks, because they were going to go fast track through and be done very quickly. Nobody has got a complaint with that.

Then we have got one bill that a third branch of government has a serious complaint with and has the ability to actually veto. Let's see. Is it an efficient way to do our job this day, to take the two bills we can get done very simply and attach it to a bill that has a major roadblock on it? Is that doing our business efficiently? It seems to be not a good idea to me, but maybe it is. But why would we want to do that? We can pass two easily. The third, we're going to have a long discussion about and a fight and maybe a veto. We could get it done if we separated them apart, but we're putting them together. Why do we do that? Maybe it's because they've got people on their side of the aisle that won't vote for the Defense bill. There are 89 of them that said they won't. So maybe this would coerce them to do it. Or maybe they think they can roll over the President and the Republicans on the issue of spending. Who knows. But let's get down and do it efficiently and just deal with Labor-HHS today.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL).

Mr. ISRAEL. I thank the chairman.

Mr. Speaker, I must say I am hearing some conflicting priorities on the floor today. We have heard that the appropriations process is not moving fast enough, despite the fact that under the leadership of Chairman OBEY in the House, we passed every single one of our appropriations bills, I believe in record time. We are hearing that the appropriations process isn't moving fast enough on the one hand, and now we have a motion to instruct the conferees to actually slow it down, to take pieces out of this bill, to stop it. You can't have it both ways. We are trying to get things done. We are trying to move our priorities forward.

Now, I understand that some of my friends don't want to deal with the labor, health and human services aspects of this bill, and they are concerned with the President's argument that we have plenty of money to fund Iraq but can't afford veterans health care here at home and educational priorities here at home and low-income heating for the elderly here at home.

I understand those arguments, but let me suggest to my colleagues that they read a study that was just released yesterday by Harvard Medical School. That study shows there is, in fact, a critical connection between the VA pieces of this bill and the health and human services aspects of this bill. The two should be considered together. That study found that, today, there are 2 million veterans who have no health insurance. And they aren't eligible for

VA benefits. Not eligible for VA benefits and too poor to afford health insurance. The number of uninsured veterans jumped to 1.8 million in 2004, and the population of uninsured veterans is increasing at twice the rate of the general population.

Now, the Labor-H aspects of this bill provides \$1.4 billion above the President's request for programs to improve health care access. So taken in its totality, this bill, without segregating the human services components, taken in its totality, this bill protects our troops in the field and also provides access to veterans at home who may not qualify for veterans benefits. As has been stated before, our veterans are a whole. They come back from the war, the last thing they should worry about is not having health insurance. It's the labor, health and human services aspects of this bill that could provide additional access to health care, and that is why this bill ought to be considered as it is.

I would make one other point. We have already considered these bills separately. Each of these components were, in fact, debated, deliberated and passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in the Appropriations Committee and then debated again, deliberated again and passed with significant Republican support on the floor of the House.

There is no reason to move backwards. There is no reason to delay. There is no reason to stop this process. We want to get these bills to the President. We should do so.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the ranking member on the Labor and Education Committee, BUCK McKEON from California.

Mr. McKEON. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the motion to instruct conferees. I am disappointed to be standing here under these circumstances.

A full month into the new fiscal year, the Democrats have failed to send a single spending bill to the President for his signature or veto. The President laid out his positions early this year, asking the Congress to adhere to fiscally responsible spending caps.

Democrats have been unwilling or unable to control their spending, passing bills that topped these spending targets by billions of dollars. Now, rather than moving separate bills to support our troops and veterans, Democrats are holding these bills hostage to the swollen Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill.

As the former chairman of the Education Committee, I know firsthand the arguments the other side will make on funding in that bill. So let's focus on the facts. Republicans are strong supporters of programs that support education, health care and workers. Our fiscally responsible spending targets allow significant resources for these programs. Republicans have a

strong record when it comes to funding education.

At the same time, we know that the achievement gap in our schools is not caused by a lack of funding, but by a lack of accountability. Throwing money at the problem is not the answer. Our committee is a case study in how the priorities of Democrats diverged from those of the American people.

Democrats have failed to act on the No Child Left Behind, the higher education, and job training bills this year. Yet, they have passed bills to strip workers of the right to a secret ballot election, overturned six decades of civil rights law, and created new entitlement spending at the expense of low- and middle-income college students. The worst may be yet to come.

When Democrats finally take up higher education reform, we may see prisoners getting Pell Grants and drug dealers getting Federal aid. The Democrats have, quite simply, got their priorities in the wrong place. It's time to get back to work and fund these three bills separately for our troops, our veterans, and our students.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I have only one remaining speaker, so I would ask the gentleman to finish.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, how much time is remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Wisconsin has 24 minutes. The gentleman from California has 21 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I would yield to my colleague from Florida, former chairman of the Appropriations Committee, BILL YOUNG, for as much time as he may consume.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. I thank the chairman for yielding me the time.

Madam Speaker, I rise to applaud Chairman OBEY for the statements that he has made since the beginning of this session of Congress that we are going to pass all of the appropriations bills individually, separately, and send them to the President, individually and separately. I think that is a great idea. As a former chairman of this Appropriations Committee, I wish I could have done the same thing.

I understand the frustration that Chairman OBEY has in not being able to move the bills the way that he wants to move them. I experienced the same frustration. Mr. OBEY is right. We did have omnibus bills during the time that we were the majority party. The reason we had the omnibus bills is because our partners in the Senate refused to pass their bills.

Now, Chairman OBEY has said so many times that we just didn't do our job. In the House, we did our job. In the House we passed our appropriations bills just like Chairman OBEY did this year, but it takes two Houses to approve a bill and to send it to the White House.

The frustration is that without appropriations bills, the government

shuts down. It's pure and simple. Article I of the Constitution of the United States, section 9, says that the administration can't spend any money that has not first been appropriated by Congress. So in order to meet that constitutional responsibility, we have had, on occasion, the need to create an omnibus appropriations bill because the Senate refused to pass their bills. Now, I will concede that during our chairmanship the Senate was a Republican Senate. It was controlled by the Republicans.

Today, the United States Senate still refuses to pass all of their appropriations bills, and today the Senate is controlled by the Democrats. So it just seems like the Senate is the Senate, no matter who controls them politically. But in the case that we are debating today, there is absolutely no good government reason to combine these three bills. Combining these bills will slow them down.

It has been suggested by some of the speakers we ought to move ahead. The Defense appropriations subcommittee was scheduled to conference tomorrow morning to send the bill to the Senate and to the White House. I understand the Labor-HHS Subcommittee was also scheduled to conference tomorrow. These bills could have been conferred and, by the way, the Military Construction Veterans' Affairs Committee was also prepared to conference, and the President said that he would sign that bill, he would sign the Defense bill. He expressed his concern about the Labor-H bill.

I voted for all three of them. I voted for the Defense bill, I voted for the Military Construction Veterans Affairs bill, and I also voted for the Labor-HHS bill. I think we ought to handle these bills individually to speed up the process, not to slow it down.

By combining these three bills, we all know that it will slow down the process. How long would it slow it down? I don't know, but I do know this, that there is already talk about conducting the appropriations process on these bills on a continuing resolution if it gets slowed down too much. That's not good.

We have done CRs, and we know that, and we know the reason for them. But there is no good reason to put these bills on a CR. They are ready to conference. They are ready to come back to the House and go to the Senate and go to the White House. They are ready. There would be no delay.

It's just not right because there is no good government reason to do this. It's just not right to do it. I suggest that we should join in supporting Chairman OBEY when he says that these bills should be done individually, separately and sent to the President in that fashion, individually and separately.

I support this motion because, if this motion does not pass, and if we appoint Labor-HHS conferees to conference the Defense bill, I mean, they are all very, very talented members, and they all

have great knowledge, but, you know, none of them sat through the hearings. None of them sat through the justifications. None of them sat through the markups.

So to have the Labor-HHS members who are outstanding members on both sides of the aisle, to have them conferring a large bill as complicated as the Defense bill, that's just not right. It's really interesting that the bills that the leadership would add to the Labor-HHS bill make up 80 percent of the dollars to be appropriated.

□ 1700

The Labor-HHS bill, which becomes the vehicle, is only 20 percent of the appropriations.

This is not right. I'm not going to suggest why the majority leadership made this decision. But I'm going to say, emphatically and without fear of contradiction, there is no good government reason for combining these three bills, because they are ready to be conferred and sent to the President without any delay whatsoever.

And I thank the gentleman for yielding and for the good job that he does in his role on the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. OBEY. Can I inquire how many speakers the gentleman has remaining?

Mr. LEWIS of California. I have one additional speaker to close.

Mr. OBEY. Just one?

Mr. LEWIS of California. Yes, sir.

Mr. OBEY. Then I'm the last speaker on our side.

How much time remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Wisconsin has 24 minutes.

Mr. OBEY. I yield myself 5 minutes.

Madam Speaker, I simply want to repeat what the gentleman from Ohio said earlier. We often see politicians try to wrap themselves in the flag, and we often try to see politicians pose for holy pictures every time the issue of veterans comes up. And America's very good at saluting veterans and playing the band when they go off to war. We haven't been as good in dealing with their problems after they come home.

And so what we intend to do in the Military Construction bill, in the Defense bill, in the Labor-Health bill, and in a number of other appropriation bills is we intend to deal with all of the problems faced by veterans and their families and other families in this country.

When veterans come home, they aren't just worried about whether or not they're going to get veterans health care. They also want to know whether the kids are going to be able to go to decent schools, taught by qualified teachers in decent classrooms. So we are going to be trying to see to it that programs such as title I and handicapped education are much more adequately funded than they would be under the President's budget.

Impact Aid, that directly affects many military families. We're trying to make sure that we do a better job

funding that program than the President did in his budget.

Medical research, believe it or not, veterans need the results of medical research just as much as and probably more so than many other Americans. We're going to see to it, in our bill, that we don't experience a cutback of 1,100 grants in military research around the country.

I would suggest that this motion simply says that the new minority does not want us to do something which they did 56 times when they ran this House, namely, combine appropriation bills for the purpose either of efficiency or to strengthen our capacity to meet our obligations around the horn.

I also think something else is going on. Under the budget rules of the House, the President does not have the right to veto a budget resolution; he only has the right to veto appropriation bills. But what he is trying to do, by asserting that he, and he alone, will determine what the overall number is for appropriations, he is trying to indirectly position himself so he can veto a budget resolution. He's never had that power. The Congress never gave him that power, and the Constitution certainly doesn't.

So I would suggest that one of the probably unintended consequences of the motion of the gentleman from California is that it would, inadvertently, transfer additional power to the executive branch. I don't think that's wise.

Having said all of that, I want to make one more point. I know the gentleman from Florida would never want to misstate or misquote any other Member, but I was somewhat stunned to hear him suggest that I have said that we must pass these appropriation bills singly. In fact, I have said many times on this floor just the opposite.

I've said that, unlike the previous chairman, who was extremely concerned about passing each of these bills separately, that while I would prefer to do it that way, I would be happy, if that didn't work, to pass them in minibuses or omnibus or any other kind of bus you can find, so long as we deliver the goods, and so long as the goods are the right goods for the American people. And that's the philosophy I have.

So I would simply suggest, we've had more debate than I'd expected today on procedural niceties. I would suggest that we simply recognize that we've got an obligation to get on with completing our appropriations business. This is the most effective way we can do it.

All three of these bills passed the House on a bipartisan basis, and I have no reason to expect that they won't do the same when they come back from conference.

I do want to say that I agree with not all, but some of the comments made about our esteemed colleagues in the other body, but that's a discussion for another day.

And with that, if the gentleman has one remaining speaker, then I'm pre-

pared to yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the ranking member of the Labor-HHS Subcommittee, JIM WALSH of New York.

Mr. WALSH of New York. I thank my friend from California for yielding time, and I rise in strong support of this motion to instruct conferees.

Before I do that though, I'd like to comment, just make a couple of comments on some of the debate that's occurred, specifically, the notion that the Republican Party, when we were in the majority, did not pass our military quality of life and veterans bills. And I know the chairman knows this, but we did. In the House, we did. We passed our bills overwhelmingly. And we ran into a little problem with the other body. And I know the chairman feels our pain there because he has been and will continue to be running into problems with the other body, and I will work with him on those. But we did conscientiously work to resolve these issues here in the House. And I think historically, at least in my brief time here, we have done that. But the Senate is the Senate, and they do what they do. We do it our own way, and I think we do it very effectively regardless of the party in power in the House.

I would also mention, because the chairman did a little bit of crowing about the things that they are doing in this bill and they've done in the other bills, we passed, year after year after year, record increases in veterans health care spending. And they were needed because we have so many veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan with severe injuries, both physical and mental. But we stepped up to the plate and we did it in a bipartisan way. And we passed record increases. I think, on average, 10 percent increases per year; faster growth than any other budget in the Federal Government. So we are second to none in our support of veterans. And we will continue to support those bills that the other party passes if they are truly bipartisan. And I think this one, the Military Construction and VA bill is.

Back to the motion to instruct the conferees. Quite simply, what this motion says is that the conferees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bills should not add material to the conference report that was not approved by either House or the Senate. This should not be controversial, but based on what has happened here today, it is.

The reality is that this majority should not be combining a bill that has received a veto threat with two other bills that have not.

I've supported the Labor-H bill throughout this process. Chairman OBEY has been fair, and I've worked with him shoulder to shoulder to bring this bill forward. He has fought for Republican and Democratic initiatives

and measures equally, and I thank him, and he has my respect for that. But I was not consulted when it came to putting these three bills together.

I voted for the Military Construction-VA bill. I voted for the defense bill. They are all good bills, in my humble opinion. The Senate has passed all three bills, as has the House. There is no reason why these three bills cannot be conferred individually, sent to the President individually and accepted or rejected individually. But most assuredly, by combining them, they are all doomed to fail. If the President vetoes any of the three freestanding conference reports, we in the House, and our colleagues in the other body, will have an opportunity to override that veto.

Frankly, I see the effort to attach the Defense and Military Construction-Veterans bills to the Labor-HHS bill as nothing more than posturing and, in fact, brinksmanship.

Madam Speaker, the resulting bill would represent everything that is wrong with Washington. The confusion that will ensue in the country will only serve as a shining example of why this Congress today enjoys its lowest approval ratings in generations.

The people of New York's 25th Congressional District sent me to Washington to represent their interests and to solve problems. This effort to combine these bills creates a problem.

This Congress has produced less than a handful of bills in 10 months, and no appropriations bills to date. We can pass and have signed two bills easily, the Veterans bill and the Defense bill. But instead, by combining these bills to Labor-H, we will bring them all down. It is a plan to fail, just like the SCHIP bill was.

As I said, I support the Labor-HHS bill and I will likely continue to support it as a freestanding bill.

I understand politics and I understand political strategy, but putting funding for veterans health care and our military at risk to score points is beyond the pale.

I know there are some Members of Congress and some individuals in the White House who would like to see this government continue to operate on a continuing resolution as we have this past year. I don't. We can pass these bills stand-alone, but we can't pass them lashed together.

This process hurts the credibility of the Appropriations Committee, a committee that has historically been non-partisan and task oriented.

Mark my words, if we continue along this path, we will be operating on a CR again in 2008. And for a third year in a row, no Member requests will be honored in the Labor-HHS bill, and for a third year in a row, the Appropriations Committee will fail to meet its responsibilities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 191, nays 222, not voting 19, as follows:

[Roll No. 1026]

YEAS—191

Aderholt	Franks (AZ)	Nunes	Boysd (KS)	Holden	Ortiz
Akin	Frelinghuysen	Pearce	Brady (PA)	Holt	Pallone
Bachmann	Gallegly	Pence	Braley (IA)	Honda	Pascarella
Bachus	Garrett (NJ)	Peterson (PA)	Brown, Corrine	Hooley	Pastor
Baker	Gerlach	Petri	Capps	Hoyer	Payne
Barrett (SC)	Gilchrest	Pickering	Capuano	Inslee	Perlmutter
Bartlett (MD)	Gingrey	Pitts	Cardoza	Israel	Peterson (MN)
Barton (TX)	Gohmert	Platts	Carnahan	Jackson (IL)	Pomeroy
Biggert	Goode	Poe	Carney	Jackson-Lee	Price (NC)
Bilbray	Goodlatte	Porter	Castor	(TX)	Rahall
Bilirakis	Granger	Price (GA)	Chandler	Jefferson	Rangel
Bishop (UT)	Graves	Pryce (OH)	Clarke	Johnson (GA)	Reyes
Blackburn	Hall (TX)	Putnam	Clay	Johnson, E. B.	Richardson
Blunt	Hastert	Radanovich	Cleaver	Jones (OH)	Rodriguez
Boehner	Hastings (WA)	Ramstad	Clyburn	Kagen	Ross
Bonner	Hayes	Regula	Cohen	Kanjorski	Rothman
Bono	Heller	Rehberg	Conyers	Kaptur	Royal-Allard
Boozman	Herger	Reichert	Cooper	Kennedy	Ruppersberger
Boustany	Hobson	Renzi	Costa	Kildee	Rush
Brady (TX)	Hoekstra	Reynolds	Costello	Kilpatrick	Ryan (OH)
Brown (GA)	Hulshof	Rogers (AL)	Courtney	Kind	Salazar
Brown (SC)	Hunter	Rogers (KY)	Cramer	Klein (FL)	Sánchez, Linda T.
Brown-Waite,	Inglis (SC)	Rogers (MI)	Crowley	Kucinich	Sanchez, Loretta
Ginny	Issa	Frank (MA)	Cummings	Lampson	Sarbanes
Buchanan	Johnson (IL)	Rohrabacher	Davis (AL)	Langevin	Schakowsky
Burgess	Johnson, Sam	Ros-Lehtinen	Davis (CA)	Larson (WA)	Schwartz
Burton (IN)	Jones (NC)	Roskam	Davis (IL)	Larson (CT)	Scott (GA)
Buyer	Jordan	Royce	Davis, Lincoln	Lee	Scott (VA)
Calvert	Keller	Sali	DeFazio	Levin	Serrano
Camp (MI)	King (IA)	Saxton	DeGette	Lewis (GA)	Shea-Porter
Campbell (CA)	King (NY)	Schmidt	Delahunt	Lipinski	Sherman
Cannon	Kingston	Sensenbrenner	DeLauro	Loebsack	Shuler
Cantor	Kirk	Sessions	Dicks	Lofgren, Zoe	Sires
Capito	Kline (MN)	Shadegg	Dingell	Lowey	Skelton
Carter	Knollenberg	Shays	Doggett	Lynch	Slaughter
Castle	Kuhl (NY)	Shimkus	Donnelly	Mahoney (FL)	Smith (WA)
Chabot	LaHood	Shuster	Doyle	Maloney (NY)	Snyder
Coble	Lamborn	Simpson	Edwards	Markey	Solis
Cole (OK)	Lewis (CA)	Smith (NE)	Ellison	Marshall	Space
Conaway	Lewis (KY)	Smith (NJ)	Ellsworth	Matheson	Spratt
Crenshaw	Linder	Smith (TX)	Emanuel	Matsui	Stupak
Culberson	LoBiondo	Souder	Engel	McCarthy (NY)	Sutton
Davis (KY)	Lucas	Stearns	Eshoo	McCormick (MN)	Tauscher
Davis, David	Lungren, Daniel	Sullivan	Farr	Giffords	Tanner
Davis, Tom	E.	Tancredo	Gonzalez	McDermott	Towns
Deal (GA)	Mack	Taylor	Gillibrand	Meeks (NY)	Tsongas
Dent	Manzullo	Terry	Gordon	Melancon	Udall (CO)
Diaz-Balart, L.	Marchant	Thornberry	Hastings (FL)	Michaud	Udall (NM)
Diaz-Balart, M.	McCarthy (CA)	Tiahrt	Hastings (FL)	Miller, George	Van Hollen
Doolittle	McCaul (TX)	Tiberi	Herseth Sandlin	Mitchell	Velázquez
Drake	McCotter	Turner	Higgins	Mollohan	Visclosky
Dreier	McHenry	Upton	Hill	Moore (KS)	Walz (MN)
Duncan	McHugh	Walberg	Hinchey	Moore (WI)	Waterson
Ehlers	McKeon	Walberg	Hinojosa	Neal (MA)	Watson
Emerson	McMorris	Walden (OR)	Hirono	Oberstar	Wexler
English (PA)	Rodgers	Walsh (NY)	Hodes	Obey	Woolsey
Everett	Mica	Wamp	Jindal	Olver	Wynn
Fallin	Miller (FL)	Weldon (FL)	Ackerman	Latham	Yarmuth
Feeley	Miller (MI)	Westmoreland	Alexander	LaTourette	Sestak
Ferguson	Miller, Gary	Whitfield	Butterfield	McCrery	Stark
Flake	Moran (KS)	Wicker	Carson	Miller (NC)	Wasserman
Forbes	Murphy, Tim	Wilson (NM)	Cubin	Paul	Schultz
Fortenberry	Musgrave	Wilson (SC)	Hensarling	Ryan (WI)	Weller
Fossella	Myrick	Wolf	Jindal	Schiff	Wilson (OH)
Foxx	Neugebauer	Young (AK)			
		Young (FL)			

NAYS—222

Abercrombie	Baldwin	Bishop (GA)
Allen	Barrow	Bishop (NY)
Altmore	Bean	Blumenauer
Andrews	Becerra	Boren
Arcuri	Berkley	Boswell
Baca	Berman	Boucher
Baird	Berry	Boyd (FL)

NOT VOTING—19

	Latham	Sestak
	Alexander	LaTourette
	Butterfield	McCrery
	Carson	Miller (NC)
	Cubin	Paul
	Hensarling	Ryan (WI)
	Jindal	Schiff

□ 1736

Messrs. KUCINICH, HONDA, WATT, BISHOP of Georgia, SPRATT, KLEIN of Florida, MARSHALL, OBERSTAR, STUPAK and DONNELLY, and Ms. BERKLEY and Ms. MATSUI changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

Mr. HASTERT changed his vote from "nay" to "yea."

So the motion to instruct was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.