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So the motion to table was agreed to. The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 1099, I was unable to vote due to medical reasons. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3074,
TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RE-
LATED AGENCIES APPROPRIA-
TIONS ACT, 2008

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 817, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 3074) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 817, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of November 13, 2007, at page H13598.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. OLVER) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report to accompany H.R. 3074.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report on H.R. 3074. Before I explain the contents of the conference report, however, I would like to thank my ranking member, the gentleman from Michigan, JOE KNOLLENBERG, for his great help in crafting a well-balanced Transportation and Housing bill. JOE and I have put together a strong bipartisan bill that will help address the Nation's important transportation and housing needs.

I think JOE and I have been a good team and I look forward to working closely with him again next year. I would also like to thank the staff on both sides of the aisle for all of their hard work. On the minority side, Dena Baron and Dave Gibbons and Jeff Goff. And on the majority side, Kate Hallahan, our clerk; Cheryle Tucker; David Napolioello; Laura Hogshead; Alex Gillen; Mark Fedor and Bob Letteney. They performed well under stress and trying circumstances, and without their dedication we would not be here today debating this bill.

Mr. Speaker, Members can and should be proud of this bill because it provides critical investments in our Nation's transportation and housing infrastructure, and does so within a fiscally sound manner and within our conference allocation.

Unlike some other issues we debate in Congress, transportation and housing have a long history of bipartisanship, and I hope we can continue in that spirit of bipartisanship today.

At their core, both transportation and housing have a direct impact on the people we represent. All of us are affected by congestion on our roads, travel delays in our airports, and the lack of dependable public transportation. We also all benefit from community development investments and the availability of affordable housing in our communities. This bill in so many ways affects each and every one of us.

Let me briefly explain some of the highlights of the conference report.

For the first time in 13 years, our bill includes \$75 million for the Veterans Affairs Supported Housing program, commonly known as VASH, to provide roughly 10,000 housing vouchers and supportive services to homeless veterans.

While we do not know the exact number of homeless veterans, the Veterans Administration has estimated that there were as many as 196,000 during a point-in-time count just last year. Surely we can all agree that 10,000 homeless veterans are 10,000 too many homeless veterans. Even one homeless veteran is a homeless veteran too many.

We have also included \$30 million for about 4,000 new housing vouchers for the disabled, the first new housing vouchers for the disabled in 5 years. The need for housing for the disabled has been well documented, with average housing rents rising much faster than a disabled person's monthly supplemental security income, SSI.

Secondly, the bill provides \$250 million to help with the current foreclosure crisis. We have included \$200 million over the President's request for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, a recognized national intermediary between lenders and homeowners, to help individuals and families forestall foreclosure and keep their homes. A separate \$50 million is provided for HUD's housing counseling program to help new potential home buyers avoid future foreclosures.

According to the Mortgage Bankers Association, the second quarter of this year saw the highest percentage of mortgages go into foreclosure since 1972. Many of those foreclosures and delinquencies are due to the proliferation of subprime and other adjustable-rate loans. With 2 million subprime mortgages expected to reset over the next 18 months, the number of homeowners facing delinquency is staggering in many parts of the country.

The funds included in this bill for foreclosure counseling is the first

major Federal investment into this growing crisis. The President has stated on a number of occasions that he wants to help solve this problem. If he is serious, he would sign this bill into law and help many tens of thousands of families receive the help they need to manage their finances and the refinancing of their mortgage so they can keep their homes.

In addition, the bill also makes significant investment in our transportation infrastructure. The Minnesota bridge tragedy put a national spotlight in the State, on the state of America's transportation infrastructure, especially with the number of lives lost in that tragedy. More than 20,000 out of some 100,000-plus bridges on the national highway system are characterized as "structurally deficient" or "functionally obsolete." Traffic on these bridges is over 190 million trips per day.

The conference report includes an additional billion dollars over the President's request for the bridge program as a downpayment to help States fix their long list of substandard bridges; \$195 million is specifically included for the I-35 bridge in Minnesota, which alone carried 140,000 passenger vehicles per day. And that sum will make Minnesota whole for the full replacement of that Interstate 35 bridge in Minneapolis.

Those are the new initiatives, but there are numerous other positive transportation and housing investments in this bill. The bill honors the highway guarantees which were set in the authorization bill in 2005, the SAFETEA-LU authorizing bill which was brought forward by the now minority just 2 years ago. That guarantee provides a record level of investment in transit as well. This funding will improve the Nation's transportation and infrastructure and is expected to create close to 80,000 new jobs between highways and transit.

The bill also provides \$1.375 billion for Amtrak, plus an additional \$75 million for a new intercity passenger rail program to create a faster, safer, and more reliable intercity passenger rail system. That \$75 million was requested by the President.

We have included \$3.5 billion for the Airport Improvement Program, the same as last year, for critical airport safety capacity and security upgrades.

We have also provided almost \$3.8 billion for Community Development Block Grants, the extremely popular CDBG program, which is \$100 million above fiscal year 2007 but still \$400 million below the fiscal year 2001 level. It is estimated that every dollar of community block grant funding leverages \$3 in private investment for critical community and economic development priorities in over a thousand localities around the country.

The bill restores housing for the elderly and disabled to last year's level. And finally, we have provided enough funding to ensure that no one that has

a section 8 tenant or project-based housing voucher will lose that voucher in this fiscal 2008 year.

Mr. Speaker, transportation and housing is not a Republican, not a Democratic issue. A broad consensus exists affirming the great needs for transportation and infrastructure investment and affordable housing nationwide. As such, this budget should be above partisan politics and should be passed and signed into law. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to adopt the conference report.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, Chairman OLVER, has already detailed many of the aspects of the fiscal year 2008 conference report. I am pleased to say that I will support the conference report. The conference report has much to commend. I want to thank JOHN OLVER; JOHN and JOE I guess is what it amounts to. But we have worked together very hard on this, along with the staffs on both sides, and I commend him for working with us to bring this product forward.

We meet the majority of the transportation funding guarantee as mandated by SAFETEA-LU, plus included some wise legislative provisions such as raising the airline pilot mandatory retirement age to 65 and prohibiting towing on Federal roads in Texas.

We didn't go overboard on funding Amtrak and kept the reforms we put in place 2 years ago in hopes of bringing the railroad into the modern age. One unfortunate point I would like to make is one of the Transit New Starts Project, a project for the Chicago area's commuter rail, Metra, the UP West Line, was inadvertently not included in the bill. It was funded in the House bill, and in the negotiations all sides supported conference funding, and I am very hopeful we can work a little magic to get that included.

In housing, we provided more than \$100 million for about 11,000 new incremental vouchers for three of our most vulnerable populations: veterans, including those returning from Iraq who might face homelessness without rental assistance; nonelderly disabled individuals, the so-called Frelinghuysen vouchers; and vouchers to keep families together when facing homelessness rather than forcing the children into foster homes.

Further, the bill insists that these vouchers retain their use and purpose upon turnover when the current individuals and families no longer need them.

The vouchers for veterans are important and will certainly be welcomed throughout Michigan as well as the rest of the country. I want to note the intent here is not just for HUD to administer these vouchers, but for HUD and VA to work together so that the full array of eligible services are coordinated and administered jointly.

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Along that same line, I strongly support a new demonstration in the homeless program to avoid forcing children through the trauma of homeless shelters by rapidly rehousing these families in secure rental units and providing the care and training in that setting, rather than through the shelter plus care process. We need to be sure, however, that in doing so we do not end up subsidizing drug or other illegal activity.

I want to also express my appreciation for the provision in the bill that waives the Medicaid cap on income and allows citizens in Michigan to voluntarily pay more and still receive rental assistance. This has made a tremendous difference in my district, and the new statewide provision will apply to all Michigan residents. Obviously, it is available for consideration in other states, too.

As many of my colleagues know, Michigan has been facing a severe credit crunch due to defaults and foreclosures resulting from the subprime lending boom a few years ago. The resets are around the corner and the problem may well get worse for Michigan before it gets better. But no one wants to see foreclosure, not the homeowner, not the banks, and certainly not the Federal Government which has insured many of these loans.

As a result and through extensive collaboration with my colleague, Chairman OLVER, and our Senate counterparts, we included a provision that I am sure will go a long way towards stemming if not reversing the trend in the home mortgage market. We have included \$200 million in new funds for intensive and extensive loan foreclosure mitigation guidance plus counseling and targeted funds to those areas which are facing the largest threat of foreclosure.

We have ensured that the funds will be in the hands of the expert counselors and State housing finance agencies before the loan resets dates hit homeowners who will find it difficult to meet the higher payments. We have not placed the funds in HUD, or created a financial handout for mortgage companies or homeowners. Instead, we are using the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, which is in itself expert and has a network of expert loan counselors throughout the country. As a federally chartered corporation, they will be able to avoid the many delaying regulatory hurdles that would result if funded through HUD, but still must meet all the requirements to ensure the integrity of the funds provided to expert counseling agencies. I firmly believe that Michigan will benefit greatly from the one-time funding being provided in this bill to help at-risk homeowners get through this difficult period.

Having said that, there are clearly areas in the bill that could and should be reduced in funding or for which funding should be allocated.

All of us have heard about the shortfall that HUD now faces in meeting contracts with longstanding low-income assistance providers under the project-based section 8 program. While better than the Senate bill, let's face it, we did not solve the problem. We only delayed the date at which the crisis will occur. Yet at the same time, the voucher program has \$300 million in excess funds based on the new methodology instituted by the majority as part of the 2007 continuing resolution. Apparently the majority does not trust their new methodology that much, yet those funds could have further reduced the shortfall that HUD faces with project owners under the project-based program, or reduced the cost of the bill itself.

Furthermore, the Department continues to receive funds for a long list of small boutique and duplicative programs, all of which could be eliminated as the administration requested without harming any of the program.

Finally, I want to emphasize that there are no new air-dropped earmarks from the House minority.

I want to thank my colleague and chairman, Chairman OLVER, for his work on this bill. I have to say he was most fair. This was a very inclusive conference and, because of his cooperation and the highlights of the bill, I will be voting "yes" on passage of the conference report.

I reserve the balance of my time

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I yield at this time 3 minutes to the vice chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. PASTOR from Arizona.

(Mr. PASTOR asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PASTOR. I thank my chairman, JOHN OLVER, for recognizing me.

First of all, I want to congratulate Chairman OLVER and Ranking Member KNOLLENBERG for the fine work they have done on this bill. It is quite an accomplishment. If you look at last year, we were not able to conference the bill and here we are talking about a bill that has been conferenced with the Senate. Both the chairman and the ranking member have talked about some of the programs that have been given additional funding, but I would like to talk about a few that this bill starts a new initiative.

One is a program that the railroad administrator spoke to us about at one of our hearings, and that is the ability of the Federal Railroad Administration being able to provide grants to have intercity connection by rail. And in Arizona, it is a program that we are looking forward to see implemented. As you may know, Arizona is growing very quickly, and the two metro areas, the Phoenix metro area and the Tucson metro area, in a very short time are going to be growing into each other, and there is a great need to connect them because the freeway that connects them today is no longer efficient.

So by applying for these grants, hopefully we will be able to connect 90 percent of the Arizona population with a rail.

With the possibility of that connection, then there is a possibility that Arizona may be connected with Amtrak. So it is an initiative that this conference bill brings forward that those of us in Arizona are very happy to see implemented, especially in this city-to-city rail connection.

For those of us who were local elected officials, I am very happy to report that CDBG is in this bill and will receive additional money, so local officials can use these monies to develop the social infrastructure that is needed in many of our locations that do not have the economic development activity that other parts of the city has.

The other initiative I want to talk about is one that you will begin to see cooperation with the Federal Transit Authority and HUD. As the transit lines are being developed, there are initiatives in this bill that will encourage the development of affordable housing and development of small businesses along the transit line. This is something that, again, those of us who have transit lines that are being developed, that with these initiatives we can develop affordable housing, because many of the people who will be on the transit lines are people that will be going to work and in many cases need to have the affordable housing that the transit line will bring it.

I congratulate both the chairman and the ranking member for this fine bill, and I ask for its passage.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio, MARCY KAPTUR, a senior member of our subcommittee and someone who has been very much involved in planning for communities over the years.

Ms. KAPTUR. I thank the chairman very much for the time, Chairman OLVER and Ranking Member KNOLLENBERG, for just a fantastic effort on this conference report. Let me say I rise in full support.

There are so many programs in it, such as our community development block grant program which helps over 1,180 communities across this country. We have been able to provide \$3.79 billion in this bill, which is still, though responsible, \$400 million less than we spent as a country in 2001, with many of our cities finding revenues on the decline or stuck because of the condition of the economy. So I know many of our mayors will welcome this.

I rise especially to point to the programs dealing with housing counseling, \$250 million in this bill through the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, dollars to be disbursed within the next 60 days to help parts of the country that are just suffering so greatly because of the home mortgage foreclosure crisis.

There is no more important form of savings that any American family can have than their home. What has been happening across our country is we not only have a negative savings rate, but now we have a \$1 trillion housing crisis in which hundreds of thousands of people have lost their homes or are about to lose their homes. This \$250 million that is included in this bill that will go through the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation for counseling will help to try to allow some of these families to retain their homes as these mortgages are reset.

Frankly, I have been so disappointed in HUD's just sitting on the dime. As FEMA sat on the dime as people drowned in Louisiana, we've got people drowning all across this country because they're losing their homes and there's been no action. So we hope that this housing effort will make a big difference in helping them to be able to maintain their largest form of savings.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to mention the program for housing for special populations in this bill. There is a total of 7,500 vouchers for homeless veterans that are living in missions across this country, that are in our jails, that are on the streets. Surely we can do better than this as the American people. There are also 4,000 vouchers in the bill for the nonelderly disabled and another 4,000 vouchers for families with children, where children are separated from their families because the families have no housing. Ask yourself the question, how well will that child perform in school when their home situation is so uncertain that they don't even know where they're going to stay at night?

I think that this bill provides some important stimulus to the housing sector, and the funding that we have provided is certainly not enough in view of what we are facing as an economy as funds are drained away from our communities as a result of this subprime lending crisis, but at least we have done something in this bill to recognize that there ought to be dispatch in the subprime lending market, and if HUD can't do a very good job of it, then let's let the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation try to deal with these families that are dropping off the edge. I know that our mayors and those involved in housing for special populations will see this bill as a step forward.

I compliment the chairman of the committee and the ranking member for moving this legislation.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) who has been very helpful with thoughts and suggestions about how transportation and housing should fit together in the planning of communities.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy, as I deeply appreciate the work that the subcommittee has done. This is not just about spending money; it's about spending money right.

It is important that resources are being focused to being able to "fix it first," to be able to deal with the fraying of our Nation's infrastructure. As the gentleman pointed out, there are 100 million trips on tens of thousands of substandard bridges across the country.

There is an important step in this legislation to have more robust funding for Amtrak. We have avoided the problems of past sessions where we have come through here to have an ideological battle fought about how somehow the United States should be the only country in the world without government-supported rail passenger service. Given skyrocketing oil prices and congestion in our highways, people understand that that is a prescription for disaster. I appreciate the hard work of the committee coming forward with a proposal to help put a floor underneath the rail passenger infrastructure, not making a difference just for Arizona but throughout the country.

I appreciate looking at the big picture. The committee's willingness to look at how land use, housing, and transportation fit together to coax maximum advantage out of those investments is very, very important.

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I hope that we can continue to work with the subcommittee, with the whole Appropriations Committee, with the authorizing committees to be able to get more out of these investments.

Last but not least, it should be pointed out that this will be the last budget that we'll be able to have with the transportation funding at this level. The refusal of the administration to work with us to increase transportation investment in the last Congress resulted in a reauthorization level that is higher than the trust fund can support. We're going to be running out of money here in a couple of months. That means that the task of the subcommittee will be extraordinarily difficult, given the slow payout rate of transportation funding. It means you're going to have to cut probably four times the amount of the deficit this next year, and it's going to be even greater in subsequent years. So I'm hopeful that, working with the subcommittee dealing with appropriations and with Ways and Means, with the authorizers, we can come forward to make sure that we don't lose the opportunity to make the right investments in transportation and housing, because these are going to help us with greenhouse gases. These are going to help us with economic development, with energy efficiency. It's a tall order ahead of us, but I appreciate the foundation that the subcommittee has laid, and look forward to working with them.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I would like, at this point, to enter into the

RECORD a couple of letters which we have from public organizations. One is Americans for Transportation Mobility. And this is an organization which is an umbrella of the American Public Transportation Association; the American Road and Transportation Builders Association; the Associated Equipment Distributors; the Associated Equipment Manufacturers; Associated General Contractors; American Society of Civil Engineers; International Union of Operating Engineers; Laborers International Union of North America; the National Asphalt Pavement Association; National Construction Alliance; National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association; and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who are cosigners on this letter of support for H.R. 3074.

And I have, secondly, a letter from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, commonly known as AASHTO. I think every one of us who has ever worked at the State levels of public funding, as well as the national levels, understands what AASHTO is. And this is a letter of support signed by the executive director of AASHTO, also in support of the conference report on H.R. 3074. And I offer that for inclusion in the RECORD.

AMERICANS FOR
TRANSPORTATION MOBILITY,
Washington, DC, November 14, 2007.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: The Americans for Transportation Mobility (ATM) Coalition strongly urges you to support the conference report for H.R. 3074, the "Transportation Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008."

H.R. 3074 honors the commitments to capital investment in highway and public transportation infrastructure made by Congress in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and will not increase the federal budget deficit. Although H.R. 3074 under-funds public transportation by \$81 million, the ATM Coalition still feels strongly that this conference report should pass as a stand alone measure in order to maintain and improve the nation's highway and public transportation systems in fiscal year 2008.

America's transportation system is being stretched beyond its capacity. Both public and private usage of highways, transit, and aviation systems are increasing at rates far outpacing infrastructure investment. A decaying surface transportation system costs the U.S. economy \$78 billion annually in lost time and fuel while congestion adds significant pollution to the air, and substandard roads claim thousands of lives every year.

As representatives of over 400 major users and providers of the nation's surface transportation infrastructure network including the business and labor communities, our unique coalition is dedicated to ensuring the global competitiveness, economic prosperity and the American way of life by promoting investment in transportation infrastructure. SAFETEA-LU provided record levels of investment in highways and transit programs by ensuring that revenues flowing into the Highway Trust Fund are only used for their intended purpose: fixing and maintaining the nation's transportation infrastructure. By passing the H.R. 3074 conference report, Congress will maintain its commitment to a

safe, efficient and competitive transportation system.

Sincerely,
Americans for Transportation Mobility.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE
HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION
OFFICIALS,

Washington, DC, November 14, 2007.

Hon. DAVID OBEY,
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: As the House begins consideration of the Conference report on the Housing and Transportation Appropriations, H.R. 3074, I wish to advise you the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and its 50 State members strongly support and urge that the legislation be passed as submitted.

The Nation's transportation system is the foundation of our economy. If investments are delayed it will impact the economy and add to increased costs because States will not have the full funding that would be available given the guaranteed spending provisions of SAFETEA-LU. Given the timing of the construction season it is also of immediate importance that the bill be passed promptly.

Sincerely,

JOHN HORSLEY,
Executive Director.

At this point, I would like to yield 7 minutes to the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few observations about the White House comments on this bill, because we are told that the White House intends to veto this bill.

Let me point out some facts about this bill. This bill spends about \$105 billion, all told. Much has been made in the debate this morning or this afternoon about earmarks in this bill. Earmarks are about 1 percent of all of the funds that are provided in this bill, around \$1.2 billion.

For reference, last year, the appropriation, or rather the transportation authorization bill included about \$20 billion in earmarks. I didn't see the President talking about vetoing that bill. I find it quaint that he now purports to be upset because this bill contains 1/50 the earmark level of bills that he has previously signed.

I would also note that the President objects to the elimination of the deep cuts which this bill contains for the Community Development Block Grant and for housing programs. There is no individual in this country who is a greater beneficiary of taxpayer-subsidized housing than the President of the United States. He lives in that big white house on Pennsylvania Avenue. He doesn't have to worry about having a driver's license to drive on the roads in this country because he has nice chauffeurs and nice limousines which are transported everywhere around the country. He has lots of people in the kitchen to prepare any meal that he wants prepared. If he wants to have a relaxing weekend, he can go out to Camp David, and he can take a helicopter so he doesn't have to worry about beating the traffic. And yet, this

President objects to the fact that we are trying to do a mite more than his budget does for low-income housing in this country.

Section 8 housing, he's very unhappy about the fact that we've increased funding for that. It just seems to me that this is one case of the pot calling the kettle black if the President objects to that kind of funding.

When we first started putting together appropriation bills, Mr. Speaker, I asked each of the subcommittee Chairs to disregard the year-to-year arguments that we've usually had in this place, and I asked all of the chairmen and chairwomen to ask themselves: What is this country going to look like in 5 and 10 years? And in the case of this bill, how many more cars are there going to be on the road? How much more pressure are we going to have for our rail traffic, both passenger and transport, or freight?

I asked people to look at what the expanded population would mean in terms of added demand for housing for the elderly, as well as low-income housing. And then I asked the Chairs to try to prepare a bill which would get us to where we needed to be over a 5- or 10-year period in order to meet those challenges. And that is essentially what this bill tries to do with very limited available funds.

Now, this bill contains about \$5 billion increase in funding above the President's level. That's about 2 weeks of what we spend in Iraq. I make no apology for it. I wish it were more. No country can have an efficient economy if it doesn't have an efficient transportation system and if it doesn't have modern infrastructure. This is one of the bills that tries to meet those demands.

So the President, if he wants, can invent a disagreement with the Congress and veto the bill if he wants. But I think the American people will recognize, the American taxpayer will recognize, while they may not agree with every choice made in the bill, that this is a far more reasonable response to the future needs of the country than is the President's very pinched view of the investment needs that we have here at home.

So I would urge support to this bill on both sides of the aisle. It's been put together on a bipartisan basis. To my knowledge, every single Republican on the subcommittee signed the conference report. I think that there is not really very much in terms of policy which would recommend a "no" vote on this bill. And I urge Members to recognize that we've got an obligation to deal with the needs of the least visible people in our society, the least powerful, and the least well connected. This is one of the bills that tries to do that.

I urge an "aye" vote for the bill.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I want to yield as much time as he may wish to consume to the gentleman who is the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. LEWIS from California.

Mr. LEWIS of California. I appreciate very much my colleague yielding. And before making the remarks I have in mind, I want to extend my congratulations to the chairman and the ranking member for a very thoughtful effort to put together a very reasonable bill, while it is a bit over the funding levels of the President, and as a result of that I'll probably vote against it.

I had not planned to speak on this bill, for I had an understanding from the other side that maybe neither the chairman or the ranking member would spend too much time speaking.

I must say that some years ago it was my privilege to chair this subcommittee, and I took that responsibility very, very seriously. I know that the chairman of the committee has been very frustrated with me this year as I've suggested, more than one time, that the solution on the other side to every problem, it seems, is to throw more money at it.

And the chairman just was wringing his hands a bit about the section 8 funding in this bill and suggesting we certainly should be doing a better job.

Well, let me say, Mr. Speaker, we absolutely should be doing a better job.

And back then, when I had a chance to chair this subcommittee, I spent some time with then-Secretary Henry, under a different administration than this one, and he and I went to section 8 housing circumstances and both wrung our hands with some frustration about the way many of those housing authorities are operating and the way they're using the money that we send out there to help the poorest of the poor have a chance for reasonable housing.

We found that there were some serious questions to be raised, and that led to a thing called the Housing Fraud Initiative. And we gave extra money to the Inspector General of the Housing Authority, and the Inspector General went around the country, and, indeed, found serious problems in any number of housing authorities about the way the money was being spent that supposedly was designed for the poorest of the poor.

It is not a fact that those housing authorities automatically respond in a way that would reflect the best use of our money. And if that's an illustration, indeed, the chairman has made my point. We don't solve problems by just throwing money, especially if we're not willing to follow the money and see if it's getting to the people we pretend to want to help in the first place.

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

I hesitate to get involved between my chairman and my big ranking member here, but since they've gotten into it and the ranking member has made the comment that every suggestion that we make is to throw money at the problem, I just wanted to point out that the President has actually indicated that he will veto this legislation.

It provides \$3 billion more in budget authority than he requested in the original budget.

And I'd like to remind people on both sides of the aisle that in each of the last 6 years, each of the last 6 years, the President, rightly, signed transportation and housing budgets into law that were above his initial request. The irony here is that in fiscal year 2003, the President signed into law the transportation and housing budgets that were over \$9 billion above his request. Ours is 3, on budget authority. And in fiscal 2004 it was \$4.2 billion above his request, and in fiscal 2006 it was \$7 billion above the President's request.

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And he did that at times, he signed those bills, without a whimper, without any objection, when the deficits, the budget deficits, were much larger than they are today. This bill is a responsible piece of legislation, and I hope that it will be adopted.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), who is the authorizing Chair for the housing portion of this legislation.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Prior to my speaking, Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER). The gentleman will state his inquiry.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Are we debating the Defense appropriations bill here?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. We are debating the conference report on H.R. 3074.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Is the subject matter of that HUD or Defense?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk has reported the title of the bill. Would the gentleman like it to be restated?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Yes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will re-report the title of the bill. The Clerk read the title of the bill.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was confused, Mr. Speaker, because I had to go up to the Rules Committee and I came back and I heard the gentleman from California saying stop throwing money at the problem, that's not the way to solve the problem. And when I think about what we're throwing money at, I assumed we were talking about the Defense bill and Iraq and reconstruction, because so much money has been thrown at that, none of us can keep track of it. Then it turns out he's talking about a relatively small increase in CDBG. I certainly agree we should not solve problems by throwing money at them. That, however, led me to think we must be talking about the bill that spends so much more money than anything else and that has had more documented waste and abuse and fraud, the

Defense bill and the Iraq spending, than all the other appropriations bills put together.

As to this bill, now that I know what we're talking about, not to be taken for granted on the floor of this House, I want to be congratulate the gentleman from Massachusetts for doing an excellent job with the limited resources he was given, far too limited.

There is an increase in here for the Community Development Block Grant program. The President apparently wanted to continue his path of reducing Community Development Block Grants, having them be lower than they were years ago when he came into office. In fact, that is a very important program for our municipalities, and I am very pleased to see that it is not being reduced.

As to section 8, every year when the Republicans were in power, we would approach the point when we were running out of section 8s. And as a member of the committee that has the authorization role here, we would hear from Members, Democratic and Republican, about the importance of keeping this going. Now, I agree it should be improved. And what we have done here in this House, we began something last year but we finished it this year and sent it to the Senate. We passed a bill we called SEVRA, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act. So, yes, we think there should be reform. This House has passed on a bipartisan basis, support from everybody in the authorizing committee, a bill to improve it. So we are trying to make things better. And I guarantee you that you will not find anywhere under HUD, and I know a lot about that department, anything like the wanton expenditure waste that we have seen in Iraq and elsewhere.

What the gentleman from Massachusetts has done in the housing area is sensibly to respond to important needs. I particularly want to say earlier this year, the Secretary of HUD, Secretary Jackson, asked me to meet with a group called ADAPT. These are people who represent people with disabilities. They were concerned about the availability of section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities, particularly those who may have been turned away from public housing projects. In response to that, in collaboration, the bill we have today increases that pool of vouchers. Now, they're not earmarked for that group, and we will have further conversations about how to deal with that, but there are additional vouchers here that the Secretary of HUD came to me and said, look, will you listen to this group and try to respond? And these are vouchers that respond to their needs.

I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts. I wish he was able to throw money at the problem. I wish we had a set of priorities in this country that were more respectful of genuine human needs. But given the limited resources he has, he and his subcommittee have done an excellent job.

Dingell
Doyle
Gilchrest