

think the media attempt to influence public policies.

Fewer than one in three Americans give the media positive rating for “keeping any personal bias out of stories, fairness, presenting and even balance of views, and presenting negative and positive views equally.” By four-to-one margins, Americans see the New York Times and National Public Radio as having a liberal bias, and by a three-to-one margin, Americans see journalists and broadcasters as having a liberal bias.

We need to encourage the media to adhere to the highest standards of their profession. Only then can we restore Americans’ faith in news reporting.

A METRICS APPROACH

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, when Congress considers competing proposals to stimulate the economy, why not take a businesslike approach and consider the “metrics” of previous efforts? When the current administration took office, the Dow Jones Industrial Average stood at 10,587. Yesterday, it was 12,472, representing a gain of 18 percent over 7 years. Unemployment and poverty rates are higher. Our debt is staggering. Our trade deficit is the highest in history.

During the previous Democratic administration, the Dow Jones Industrials rose 328 percent over an 8-year period. Unemployment fell every year, millions were lifted out of poverty, and we achieved a budget surplus.

So this time around, ask yourself, which model works for me? Which model was better? I think the facts speak for themselves.

□ 1015

WORKING IN A BIPARTISAN MANNER TO STAVE OFF IMPENDING ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

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

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, one year into a liberal Democratic majority in Congress, the economy is struggling. The big government policies of the new majority are taking their toll. High gasoline prices, the subprime market crisis in housing and news that inflation is at a 17-year high all demand a bipartisan stimulus package in the next 30 days. Congress must act, and must act swiftly.

But there will be choices to make. Democrats want an extension of unemployment insurance benefits and tax rebates. Republicans will accept rebates, but they also want incentives for businesses, while avoiding tax increases to offset the package.

I submit that Congress must focus stimulus on the kind of economic stim-

ulus that will create jobs and growth for small business and family farmers. The real antidote to the impending recession is more money in the hands of the wage earner and the wage payer. This is and always has been the pathway to prosperity in the American economy.

I urge my colleagues to work in a bipartisan manner to stave off this impending economic downturn in the best interests of all of the American people.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3524, HOPE VI IMPROVEMENT AND REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

Ms. CASTOR. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 922 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 922

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3524) to reauthorize the HOPE VI program for revitalization of severely distressed public housing, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived except those arising under clause 10 of rule XXI. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except

one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of H.R. 3524 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

SEC. 3. House Resolution 894 is laid upon the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. CASTOR. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my colleague from the Rules Committee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS). All time yielded is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. CASTOR. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 922.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. CASTOR. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, House Resolution 922 provides for consideration of H.R. 3524, the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2007, under a structured rule. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate, controlled by the Committee on Financial Services, and the rule also makes in order seven of the eight amendments submitted to the Rules Committee.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support today of the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act and this rule. HOPE VI is a partnership between the Feds and local communities that started in the 1990s that revitalizes our communities across this country by replacing old, distressed public housing projects with modern housing and new communities that are healthy, safe and affordable.

Our renewed effort could not come at a more important time, because so many families across America are in the grips of a housing crisis. Foreclosures are way up, and options for safe, clean and affordable housing are down. Just last month in my home county, Hillsborough County, in Florida, there were over 1,000 foreclosures filed, a huge jump from last year. And affordable apartments and housing are few and far between.

The House of Representatives over the past months has been doing a great deal to throw lifelines to our families, our seniors and veterans when it comes to housing. We have passed bills in this House that help homeowners avoid foreclosure, that provide resources to local communities, to build safe and clean affordable housing, and that cracks down on predatory lending.

Families across America also should be aware that the Congress passed a helpful new law that is now in effect for 3 years that relieves homeowners

facing foreclosure from paying income taxes on their discharged mortgage debt, meaning that homeowners who refinance their mortgage will pay no taxes on any debt forgiveness that they receive. Previously, loan forgiveness was often taxed as income.

We are going to keep working to provide families with affordable options for safe places to live through the HOPE VI reauthorization and this rule today.

HOPE VI has been very successful since its inception in the 1990s. HOPE VI has revitalized neighborhoods across the country, including in my hometown of Tampa, Florida. A little public investment can be the linchpin to wider community redevelopment in communities across this great country.

HOPE VI completely transformed the distressed public housing complexes of College Hill and Ponce de Leon Court public housing projects in Tampa into the new Belmont Heights Estates. I attended school when I was younger next to these housing projects, and I saw firsthand what these conditions can do to an area and the folks who live there.

Behind me are posters of before and after, before HOPE VI, and then after the investment of HOPE VI.

So many public housing projects have deteriorated to the point that the health and safety of families is at risk and surrounding businesses and neighborhoods suffer. Since 1992, through HOPE VI, many communities have revitalized and transformed severely distressed housing into safe and livable communities. And 15 years later, this Congress, in a bipartisan way, but led by Democrats, will renew our commitment to safe, clean and affordable housing for families across this great country by building on the success of HOPE VI investment.

Over time, through HOPE VI, we have demolished nearly 135,000 severely distressed public housing units and replaced them with modern, safe and clean neighborhoods that do not concentrate poverty in a single location. What happens on the ground to these neighborhoods? Crime rates decrease, employment rates increase, and fewer folks have to rely on public financial assistance.

In Tampa, demolition started in 1999, and 8 years later we have built 860 rental units. Some are for families who need a little help and others are market rate. We built 74 new safe and clean homes for seniors and mixed in single family homes, some for rental and some for purchase.

More important than the buildings, however, and these were very bad, the new Belmont Heights Estates community made possible by HOPE VI has improved people's lives in the surrounding community and private investment has followed. Families are thriving in their new revitalized neighborhood, and their success stories are remarkable, because, remember, to qualify for that helping hand of an affordable home, most folks are required

to improve their own self-sufficiency, like Belkis Rodriguez, who, after completing job training, has been promoted at the day care center where she is employed and she is now on the path to becoming a public schoolteacher. And Patricia Gowins in Tampa, a mother of two, is working on her high school diploma while working at a local hotel since her community has been revitalized. My neighbors and their stories of success are proof that HOPE VI is able to make positive contributions to our communities.

Our update legislation today will make further improvements and ensure that residents who are displaced by revitalization efforts will have the right to return to their neighborhoods. Because of the shortage across America of clean, safe and affordable housing, it is vital that the number of units demolished are replaced so that we do not shortchange our neighbors who have been asked to leave their homes.

We are committed to ensuring that homes built with the help of Federal funds are sustainable and energy efficient, and that helps save money in the long run. Our efforts today will make the American Dream of home ownership possible for more families across this country. And thanks to Chairwoman MAXINE WATERS, Financial Services Committee Chair BARNEY FRANK and Congressman MEL WATT of North Carolina, thanks to them and their leadership and their dedication to safe, clean, affordable housing for our families, we are going to do a great service for families across this great country.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this rule and the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from Florida yielding me the time. I appreciate the gentlewoman's comments, specifically as they relate to really the author of HOPE VI, who is Jack Kemp, at that time in the early nineties the Secretary of Housing in the United States of America.

□ 1030

I think that today, as we talk about HOPE VI and the wonderful attributes that HOPE VI has brought not only to inner cities but to thousands of people who live in these new areas as opposed to a large housing complex, it is a testament to the dream that, as Secretary, Jack Kemp brought to our great Nation.

Madam Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to this restrictive rule and to a number of the provisions included in the underlying legislation in its current form. This legislation, which alters a successful public-private partnership and housing program that encourages public housing authorities to work with the private sector to create more livable public housing, has a

number of avoidable, and I repeat, avoidable shortcomings; and I hope that there will be at least some of them that will be corrected during this restrictive rule process as is provided for by the rule.

One of the provisions in this bill particularly threatens the continued participation of private developers in the program, which jeopardizes HOPE VI's continued success. I believe that is part of the success, the public-private partnership, in creating mixed-financed and mixed-income affordable housing.

By mandating compliance with privately developed green building rating systems, rather than providing market-based incentives to reach these goals, this legislation creates additional cost burdens for green compliance and adds further impediments to an already complicated financing structure which could discourage developers from undertaking future projects.

Further, because the legislation makes specific reference to only one green building rating system, this legislation federally mandates winners and losers and stifles future innovation and technology advancement in all aspects of green buildings.

I think it would be a flaw to say that the one standard that has been developed in 2007 and 2008 would be the only model as we move forward in public housing. I certainly would not want that in the free market where, as a user of the free market, I would be told one standard that was developed this year is what we will use. The future is bright, and I wish that our friends on the other side would recognize that there will be many, many more technological advances made in the future; and mandating one standard today is a flaw in this bill.

Thankfully, my former Rules Committee colleague and friend from West Virginia, the gentlewoman SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, has an amendment to this legislation that will require minimum green building standards, in other words, the floor, not the ceiling, that will make mandatory graded sections of HOPE VI application, requiring a minimum standard for green building, and allowing for developers who build to a more stringent green standard to receive even greater credits. That means that we could exceed the one standard. For instance, if you lived in a very cold area, or very hot area, you could exceed for maximum utilization the opportunity to build the house, up front, properly.

So our friends on the other side who are telling us the one standard is like a one-size-fits-all rather than a minimum standard, however, if a determination is made in the section of the country that might artificially or might otherwise be able to take advantage of a different standard, a different way that might improve economical standards of efficiency, it wouldn't be included.

By utilizing this market-based approach, rather than the one-size-fits-all

standard of our friends in Washington of a heavy-handed government mandate, this amendment achieves the goal of building green without stifling innovation for new and improved green building standards.

I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, because it will take our friends who are Democrats if we are going to pass this, to please support this commonsense fix to the legislation.

Another aspect of this legislation which requires improvement is the elimination of HUD's current authority to award demolition-only grants, which would prohibit the demolition of unsuitable public housing without the replacement of those units. Mr. Speaker, clearly there may be instances when demolition-only grants are appropriate; for instance, when public housing authorities may have already assembled a financing package to fund redevelopment and replacement housing activities, but are lacking the funds for the demolition itself.

Additionally, because of their age and denigration, it is certainly possible that some distressed public housing sites would not be viable candidates for redevelopment. There are lots of places in this country where something was built 15, 20, 30, 40 years ago that might not be easily accessible to the modern conveniences of today. And these sites, though only partially occupied or completely vacant, because they put a demand in a particular area, would be excluded. In these instances, other forms of housing assistance such as section 8 vouchers may be more appropriate in a community than public housing.

To address this flaw in the legislation, I have introduced an amendment to allow HUD to retain this commonsense authority, rather than trying to tie their hands by taking some of the options that had previously been available to them off the table.

For their part, HUD has noted that these grants have provided housing authorities with resources to raze, or to tear down, distressed developments and relocate impacted families. The result is a cleared site that more readily attracts Federal or private resources for the revitalization of the property. I encourage all of my colleagues to once again support this commonsense amendment to allow HUD to retain the flexibility to respond to individual cases, particularly in those cases where a public housing authority does not even have a HOPE VI renovation grant, leaving it with fewer options in revitalization in its most distressed or otherwise not as easily used sites.

Mr. Speaker, in the last five budget proposals to Congress, this Bush administration has advocated the elimination of the HOPE VI program, citing the completion of the program's mission and ongoing inefficiencies within the programs. These programs have been assessed by the administration's objective Program Assessing Rating Tool, what is called PART, which has

deemed HOPE VI to be not performing, inefficient, and more costly than other programs that serve the same population. In addition to these fundamental problems, the PART assessment notes that "the program has accomplished its stated mission of the demolition of 100,000 severely distressed public housing units."

I include a copy of this assessment as well as a Statement of Administration Policy on this matter for insertion into the RECORD.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT: HOPE VI—SEVERELY DISTRESSED PUBLIC HOUSING

The HOPE VI program revitalizes distressed and obsolete public housing, usually replacing it with less dense housing combining a mixture of public and privately owned housing. The program awards grants through a competitive process to State and local public housing agencies for this activity.

NOT PERFORMING: INEFFECTIVE

The program is more costly than other programs that serve the same population. It also has an inherently long, drawn-out planning and redevelopment process.

The program has accomplished its stated mission of demolishing 100,000 severely distressed public housing units.

The program coordinates effectively with related programs in designing a comprehensive program to improve the community.

We are taking the following actions to improve the performance of the program:

Implementing changes to complete projects more quickly. The average time to complete a project after award is being reduced from 8 years to 7 years with further improvement anticipated.

Reducing the average cost per unit of the project. (The average grant award has been reduced from \$30 million to \$20 million to improve project management.)

Terminating the program since it has completed its mission. The remaining balance of over \$2 billion will be spent during the next several years to complete funded projects.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY—H.R. 3524—HOPE VI IMPROVEMENT AND REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

(Rep. Waters (D) CA and 8 cosponsors.)

The Administration is strongly committed to providing safe, decent, and affordable public housing to those citizens least able to care for themselves and recognizes the contribution made by the HOPE VI program toward the revitalization of public housing. However, because the program has proven over time to be less cost-effective and efficient than other public housing programs, the Administration strongly opposes H.R. 3524, the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2007.

HUD has awarded \$5.8 billion in HOPE VI revitalization funds to public housing agencies through the end of 2007. While the majority of the funds have been used to promote neighborhood revitalization, \$1.3 billion remains unspent. The program's complex planning and redevelopment process has resulted in significant delays in the execution and completion of projects, with the average HOPE VI project taking 7 years to complete. Additionally, some public housing authorities lack the capacity to properly manage their redevelopment projects. The Administration believes that sufficient program funds remain available to allow HUD to properly oversee the completion of existing HOPE VI redevelopment projects but does not believe that additional funds should be authorized or appropriated for this pro-

gram. Indeed, the last five Administration Budgets have proposed to terminate the program in favor of more efficient and cost-effective programs. The Administration's first priority is to place HUD's principal programs, housing approximately 4 million low-income households, on sure footing. In fact, the President's FY 2008 Budget proposed approximately \$28 billion for that priority.

The Administration also strongly opposes provisions of H.R. 3524 that mandate one-for-one replacement of any public housing unit that is demolished or disposed of under the HOPE VI program. It is not feasible in many communities to provide mixed-use development, including one-for-one replacement of public housing units, on the location of the demolished public housing project. Further, acquisition of additional land in the surrounding neighborhood for use in implementing a one-for-one replacement strategy may not be possible. Even if such land were available, costs to acquire and develop it would be expected to increase the cost of each HOPE VI unit.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support these commonsense amendments that I have spoken about today on the floor which we believe will better the bill, in some cases keeping the good parts that had been in and other parts allowing flexibility. We believe that, in fact, this can be a wonderful bipartisan agreement that we could reach today. However, we would ask that all of our colleagues support the Neugebauer, Sessions, King, and Capito amendments.

I also encourage every Member of this body to oppose this rule until the Democrat majority provides us with the open rule process that we were promised over a year ago. I ask all of my colleagues to vote "no" on the previous question and on the rule.

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

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on the previous question and on the rule. I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3524, and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

PERMISSION TO REDUCE TIME FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING DURING CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3524

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that, during consideration of H.R. 3524 pursuant to House Resolution 922, the Chair may reduce to 2 minutes the minimum time