

REPUBLICAN CUTS DEVASTATE  
HOUSING

**HON. BARNEY FRANK**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 16, 1995

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, the rescissions voted by the Appropriations Committee last week threatens serious harm to the social fabric of our Nation. By increasing military spending, and focusing overwhelmingly for reductions on programs which seek to provide assistance for those most in need in our society, you and your fellow Republicans have seriously erred. Increasingly, it is becoming clear to many people that the priorities of the House Republicans threaten seriously to exacerbate some of the gravest social and economic problems we face. I will from time to time be sharing with our colleagues information I receive about the devastating effect these cuts will have as they become available to me from people in my district and elsewhere who are grappling with these issues.

For example, on March 3, the New Bedford Standard Times printed an article in which the executive director of the New Bedford Housing Authority Joseph Finnerty, clearly outlines the terrible effects which will result from the devastating cuts voted in housing programs by the Appropriations Committee last week. Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, some in your party have sought to justify these cuts by pointing to defects in the way HUD has been administered.

It is true that HUD has suffered from maladministration in recent times—most grievously during the 8 years of Ronald Reagan, when Samuel Pierce presided over a department which was corrupt, inefficient, and overall a disaster. Victimized lower income people today who are in continuing need of housing because of the outrageous record of Secretary Pierce under President Reagan is terribly unfair. But that is what the Appropriations Committee has chosen to do.

Mr. Speaker, in the hopes of persuading my colleagues not to go forward along this path, I ask that the New Bedford Standard Times article featuring Mr. Finnerty's discussion of housing programs be printed here.

[From the New Bedford Standard Times,  
Mar. 3, 1995]

REDUCTION WOULD CAUSE CHAOS, FINNERTY  
SAYS  
(By Bill Ibelle)

The massive federal funding cuts that are racing through Congress will have a devastating effect on public housing tenants in New Bedford, according to Executive Director Joseph Finnerty.

The cuts, which would slash the maintenance budget and the five-year modernization program by 30 percent each, would create "chaos" in the city's public housing, Mr. Finnerty said Thursday during the Housing Authority's monthly meeting.

"This is not a false alarm," he said. "The new Republican majority in Congress has the votes for these cuts. Now, just when we are on the verge of major improvements in our neighborhoods, we have this ax hanging over our head."

The maintenance cuts, which would amount to \$625,000 a year, would cause a steady deterioration in public housing, Mr. Finnerty said.

"This is not something that is going to be felt immediately, but it will have a devastating long-term effect," he said. "These cuts

are unprecedented, massive and eroding to public housing."

The federal cuts also would kill or seriously delay major modernization projects like the one scheduled for the aging Bay Village complex later this year. That project includes lead paint and asbestos removal as well as installing new windows and doors. Similar modernization projects have already taken place at the Westlawn and Brickenwood projects and are about to begin at Presidential Heights.

"The improvements we're making now are not just for public housing tenants but for all residents of the surrounding neighborhoods," said Mr. Finnerty. "By modernizing these units, we're making these neighborhoods into a better investment."

Mr. Finnerty also unveiled exterior drawings for the 43 units of new public housing to be built throughout the city this year. The units will replace units lost with the demolition of Evergreen Park.

The duplex units are designed to blend in with the single family homes common to the city's neighborhoods:

Three of the sites will have two duplexes each (the corner of Shawmut Avenue and Coggeshall Street, the corner of Cottage and Campbell streets and a plot that runs between Sylvia and Howard streets).

One site will have four duplexes (North Street behind the City Hall annex parking lot).

One site will have two row houses with a total of seven units (South First and Rivet streets).

The largest site will have eight duplexes (New Plainville Road just north of the tank).

Mr. Finnerty said the Housing Authority completed buying all six sites Feb. 24. Construction is slated to begin in June and last 12 to 14 months.

In other business the board:

Approved payment of an additional \$10,864 to the Boston Architectural firm, Hicks & Krockmalnic, for rebidding of the Presidential Heights modernization project. Due to a legal challenge by two of the unsuccessful bidders, the Housing Authority had to cancel the original contract and put the project out to bid a second time.

The \$4.5 million project which includes removing lead paint and asbestos, installing exterior siding, windows, doors and building new porches and fixing the roofs, is slated to begin this summer.

Approved payment of an additional \$3,875 to Enviroscience for drawing up new bid specifications for lead and asbestos removal at Presidential Heights.

Approved a \$15,980 contract to Coro Construction of East Greenwich, R.I., for re-roofing eight duplexes on Chaffee Street. Coro was the lowest of eight bidders.

Approved the payment of \$5,255 to Seaview Construction of Providence for installing railings at Harwich Manor.

Approved a \$23,763 contract with Electronic Sales and Service of New Bedford for installing a communications system that includes 43 portable radios. The system will be used by the authority's maintenance staff.

Approved a 2.3 percent increase in the income limits for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, which serves 182 families in the city.

Approved a 1.2 percent increase in the income limits for the federal Assisted Housing Program.

Voted to support efforts by John G. "Buddy" Andrade to increase membership in the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts among public housing tenants. Mr. Andrade requested the authority's support in drumming up interest for a Scouting show scheduled April 2 at the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School on Ashley Boulevard.

Filed a request from the Caroline Street Tenants' Association for several maintenance improvements. The residents asked the authority to cut down an apple tree, complaining that youths throw the apples through windows, the apple blossoms attract bees and the fallen apples are hazardous to senior citizens using walkers and canes. The association also requested the removal of tree roots that have caused sidewalks to buckle and the installation of outdoor lighting around the apartments.

Observed a moment of silence at the beginning of the meeting in honor of commissioner Umberto "Battle" Cruz, who died unexpectedly last month.

COMMON SENSE LEGAL  
STANDARDS REFORM ACT OF 1995

SPEECH OF

**HON. JACK REED**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 10, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 956) providing for further consideration of the bill (H.R. 956) to establish legal standards and procedures for product liability litigation, and for other purposes:

Mr. REED. Mr. Chairman, I was one of two Democrats to support H.R. 956 during its consideration by the Judiciary Committee.

I support product liability reform and I support the core principles of the original H.R. 10/H.R. 956.

A CAP ON PUNITIVE DAMAGES

We need to bring certainty and proportionality to the process. Everyone agrees that some awards are totally out of proportion to the harm done. The cost of insuring for this uncertainty is part of the litigation tax that drives up costs for all consumers.

Proportionate, not joint, liability for de minimis tortfeasors. This is a necessary reform: defendants who are peripherally responsible should not be handed the entire bill for someone else's wrongdoing just because they may have deep pockets.

A STATUTE OF REPOSE

Manufacturers should not be sued for a product that is still being used long past its useful life. And they deserve protection against suits that result from misuse or alteration of their products.

However, this bill has been distorted by the adoption of a series of floor amendments and the failure of the Rules Committee to allow consideration of amendments that would have, in my opinion, improved the bill.

For example, an amendment by Mr. BERMAN of California that would have provided relief from joint liability for de minimis tortfeasors while retaining liability for highly culpable wrongdoers was not allowed to be offered, in spite of the fact that this amendment received bipartisan support in the Judiciary Committee. As it stands now, the bill offers protection not only to de minimis tortfeasors but to serious wrongdoers who are 80 or 90 percent responsible for an injury.

But it is really the adoption of several floor amendments that vastly expand the scope of the bill that prevent me from being able to