

principles wherein all areas of Government are affected proportionally.

Our children are the future. Our Government must continue to provide a safety net for mothers and children who are least able to provide for themselves. Programs such as child nutrition and Head Start are essential to our national interest. We must also invest in education and job training so that our Nation will be able to effectively compete in the global marketplace.

We must also honor our commitment to the elderly. They have the right to live in this country and enjoy the security and comfort of retirement without the fear of Government reducing their benefits to the point they must sell all of their assets to qualify for governmental assistance.

We can achieve a balanced budget without devastating cuts in Medicaid, Medicare, education, and without raising taxes on working families.

Therefore I urge my colleagues to move responsibly and pass the budget.

#### EPA APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized during morning business for 4 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this week, we will be addressing the remaining appropriations conference reports, including the VA-HUD appropriations conference report which provides funding for the Environmental Protection Agency.

Unfortunately, our environmental laws have taken blow after blow in the 104th Congress as bills spiked with antienvironmental measures pass the House floor, both out in the open as in the Clean Water Act reauthorization or through more mischievous measures, as through appropriation and budget bills like the VA-HUD conference report that we will be voting on this week, most likely tomorrow.

No other Government agency is facing the kind of cuts that are included in this bill for the EPA.

The bill cuts funding for the EPA to set and enforce environmental and public health standards for air pollution, pesticides, and clean and safe water by 17 percent from what the President proposed.

Hazardous waste site cleanup is being cut by 25 percent, slowing efforts to make the Superfund Program faster, fairer, and more efficient.

And EPA's enforcement funding is being hit even harder, with a 27-percent cut in enforcement of all environmental programs.

On top of all the direct cuts to EPA's budget, this bill cuts by 30 percent funds that go straight to the States to help keep raw sewage off beaches and out of waterways.

And State loan funds for use in protecting community drinking water na-

tionwide are reduced by 45 percent in this bill.

Restricting the EPA's ability to implement environmental protection programs and reducing funding to the States, in my opinion, is nothing less than an unfunded mandate on the States to maintain environmental quality.

In the majority of cases where adequate Federal funds are not made available, State funding just is not there.

This means that a virtual environmental protection vacuum will be created by this bill, where polluters get off scot free at the expense of environmental quality, and human safety and health.

One must ask why funding for environmental protection is being targeted or why after three votes to remove restrictive riders from the VA-HUD appropriations bill, the majority of the riders were simply moved to report language and several riders still remain as actual legislative language in the bill.

For example, incorporated in this bill is a rider that prevents EPA from stopping dumping of potentially harmful fill into wetlands.

EPA is by no means overly zealous in its use of this authority over wetlands, and only 11 times in the history of the wetlands program has it stepped in to veto this type of dumping.

Even in New Jersey, a State with one of the most stringent wetlands programs in the country, 94 percent of all wetlands permit applications are approved. So why is it necessary to put a rider in this bill prohibiting the EPA from protecting wetlands?

Another measure that does not belong in this bill is the prohibition of EPA's authority to add hazardous waste sites to the national priority list under Superfund.

The Superfund listing process is strictly scientific now.

There are those in this Congress, however, who seem determined to politicize the process by placing all sorts of restrictions on listing Superfund sites.

My committee, the Committee on Commerce, is now reviewing the Superfund Program, and I maintain the legislative process should simply be allowed to run its course.

If this conference report is passed in its current form, the EPA's hands will be tied and the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink will suffer dramatically.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill and send it back to conference in order to restore the EPA's ability to effectively protect the health and safety of our environment and our constituents.

Essentially, if we send the bill back to conference again, those who represent the House and the Senate can get together and come up with a better bill that does not cut enforcement for environmental protection as much, that provides sufficient funding to the

States so that they can continue to maintain a quality environment. This is what we should be doing in this Congress instead of passing this bill.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12, rule 1, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 p.m.

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

As we gain more knowledge about the workings of our world, we pray, gracious God, that we will sense more fully the wonder and the awe and the marvel that are about us and which have been provided by Your creative hand. May we live each day with a reverence for the miracles that are before us, with an appreciation of the mysteries of the universe and with a greater awareness of the ambiguities of the road ahead. Give us pause to reflect on Your majesty, the power of Your love, and the marvelous occasions we have to serve You and the people of the land. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. WELLER] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WELLER led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives: