I acknowledge, I repeat, the problems with the Endangered Species Act. I talked about some of them. These problems we have talked about at long length before the authorizing committee, and they are going to be addressed in the substantive legislation when it comes to this body and it is debated here on the floor.

That is why, Mr. President, a moratorium on listing species is wrong. The moratorium removes flexibility of the Secretary of the Interior. It delays action when action is critical. This moratorium in this conference report does, in fact, jeopardize the existence of species.

In this conference report, I think that we find a lot of impatience for substantive, reasonable, and prudent reform. We should be patient. We should recognize that this bill needs to be reauthorized. The moratorium would, regretfully, in my estimation, remain in effect despite the lack of logic, despite the damaging effects, and despite the fact the committees of jurisdiction have and will continue to address issues of concern.

The proponents of the Endangered Species Act reform argued for better science throughout the process of specie preservation. I ask, how is better science provided for if the funding is not provided for? Many who argue for reform of the Endangered Species Act assert the need to do more than just list a species, but also to declassify and delist species. Let us make sure the agency has the ability to do that, and they only have the ability to do that if there is sufficient funding.

But then what is the effect of failing to fund the act at an effective level? Mr. President, one of the effects of insufficient funding would be a decline of the medicinal research and humanitarian purposes that have benefited from the preservation and study of species and plants. Indeed, there is a great hope, hope of thousands of people who are fighting diseases that are anchored in the search for cures within the ecosystems and plant life that today may be on the verge of extinction.

More than 40 percent of prescriptions filled in our country, in the United States, each year derive from plants, animals, and microbes. These include medicines to fight cancers, infections, contagious disease, heart disease, childhood leukemia, to name just a few.

There is a lot of fun made of the Endangered Species Act. Why do we worry about this animal or that plant? The reason we worry about them is, I repeat, 40 percent of the prescriptions filled in our country are derived from plants, animals, and microbes.

Take, for example, the rosy periwinkle. It sounds funny, does it not, rosy periwinkle? In this little plant, two compounds were found that have proved successful in treating Hodgkin's disease and childhood leukemia.

As far as childhood leukemia, it cures childhood leukemia except in rare cases. When the Presiding Officer and I were children, teenagers, young adults, children who got leukemia died. It is not that way anymore. Parents who have little children who have childhood leukemia are cured. Why? Because of something called the rosy periwinkle.

There is also a pupfish, an imperiled desert vertebrate, residing in isolated hot springs in the Southwest part of this country. The pupfish can survive in very high salt concentrations, and this ability is being studied as we speak by researchers in hopes of developing new treatments for kidney disease.

This pupfish is extinct in many places. There are a variety of pupfish. In the State of Nevada, we have an agricultural area that grew cotton. Because of the pupfish, the water that supplied the cotton was curtailed, and that area is no longer a cotton farming area. That is the sacrifice that was made for this little fish that will, all scientists say, lead to some dramatic changes in the way we treat renal failure.

We do not know every plant and animal that exists and, consequently, we do not know every cure, remedy, and healing that may exist for our benefit.

I am not going to take the time of this body. There are Senators wishing to speak on this floor. I could list plant after plant that leads to helping relieve the pain and misery of disease and, in many instances, cures disease. Of the 220,000 worldwide types of plants, only 5,000 have been examined for medicinal compounds. We know, as a result of an article within the past year in the Wall Street Journal that talked about some of these plants that were deemed to be worthless, how they have brought about dramatic improvements in the way we treat disease.

The black bear, which is a threatened bear in many parts of the United States, are now being studied because scientists believe they have found definitive and definite clues to the prevention of osteoporosis. How? The bear loses no bone mass during its 5- to 6-month hibernation period, and scientists are wondering why. They are now beginning to find out why.

What cures are we willing to risk losing with lack of funding of the Endangered Species Act? I do not think we should be willing to risk the loss of any cures. Recently, the American Society of Microbiology called for increased research in potential medicinal plants and other species, which takes on an urgency as known diseases grow resistant to known antibiotics.

How can we justify underfunding such a vital work of preserving species? I know there are problems with the Endangered Species Act. I say that on this floor for the second time today. I know that we have to reauthorize it and make some changes in the way the act has been administered. But I tell each of my colleagues, we must trust the legislative process of reauthorization and reform and fully fund the Endangered Species Act. It is not happening in this conference report, and that is too bad.

We ensure for ourselves the need for more emergency saving efforts. This is a small price to pay when it comes to protecting and preserving species faced with imminent extinction.

I repeat, I recognize the difficulty of this legislation arriving at the point where it is. I again extend my congratulations and applause to the managers of this legislation, the senior Senator from the State of Washington and the senior Senator from the State of West Virginia. But I really feel that this conference report is lacking in a number of different ways, not the least of which is the problem with the Endangered Species Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. BOND addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to proceed for 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator is recognized to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

VA, HUD, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, the reason I asked for morning business at this time was to bring my colleagues up to date and those who are very much interested in the appropriations process, particularly as it regards the Environmental Protection Agency, VA, and HUD, and what is happening here.

We have had a bill that has been passed by the Senate, passed by the House, and a conference report passed by the House that is waiting here. We have not passed it because the administration has promised clearly and unequivocally to veto it.

There are several things that are going to happen today. First, the majority leader has scheduled the measure to be passed later on after this bill, perhaps in wrapup tonight, and second, there is a major media effort to mischaracterize, I believe, what is going on with respect to the environment.

Some of my colleagues may have seen an article in today's Washington Post: ''Temporary Reductions Halt 'Environmental Cop.' '' It relates to concerns expressed by EPA Administrator Carol Browner.

I am getting a little tired of the press conferences, press statements, and grandstanding from the White House regarding how the majority in the Congress is rolling back environmental protection and making deep cuts in the environment.

Ms. Browner is reported in the Post as saying, ''The environmental cop is not on the beat.'' She decries the fact

that the temporary budget reductions resulting from the current continuing resolution are causing a reduction in inspections. I agree with her. I would like to see a bill passed and signed into law.

Let me set the record straight. The EPA appropriations bill which passed the Senate earlier this year funded EPA's operating programs at the fiscal year 1995 level, and the conference report on VA–HUD and independent agencies provides a total funding level for EPA which is $48 million more than the Senate-passed bill, a reduction of only 4 percent below the postrescissions fiscal year 1995 funding level.

We have managed in a very, very tight budget to provide close to full funding for EPA at a time when constraints on discretionary spending are extraordinarily tight. This subcommittee received an allocation which was 12 percent below last year's level, yet we managed to hold EPA at close to current funding levels. Despite the rhetoric from downtown, this demonstrates, I believe, a Republican commitment to continue to improve the environment.

Now, I am the first to admit that the EPA has received some targeted budget cuts in the appropriations process but the reductions came from areas which the National Academy of Public Administration and others identified as being unnecessary, wasteful or duplicative. NAPA is a nonpartisan organization which was commissioned by my Democratic colleague and predecessor, Senator MIKULSKI, then chair of the committee, to undertake a report on reforming EPA 2 years ago.

In this bill and the conference report, we followed the NAPA recommendations presented to Congress almost a year ago to turn more responsibility over to the States that have developed an enormous capacity over the past 25 years to manage environmental programs, including inspections of facilities. According to NAPA, ''EPA should revise its approach to oversight, providing high performing States with grant flexibility, reduced oversight and greater autonomy.''

That is what we have tried to do for this appropriations bill, and we have included authority for EPA to begin issuing block grants for maximum flexibility. We have tried to focus on the areas of highest risk to human health and the environment and reduce those programs which do not get the most bang for the buck in terms of environmental protection.

But the administration and EPA, rather than spending time organizing press conferences and news events, should be following the recommendations of NAPA to get its own house in order. Despite EPA's claim to support NAPA's recommendations, we have seen little in terms of real change. And regarding today's article in the Post, let me point out to my colleagues that indeed EPA is operating under a constrained budget because of the continuing resolution, and I am fully prepared to send a bill to the President so they will not have to operate under a continuing resolution. The conference report on the EPA bill, that is, VA–HUD and independent agencies, would provide an increase of 11.5 percent over the current continuing resolution, yet the President wants to veto the bill. His agents have stated unequivocally that he will.

I have suggested to administration officials that I as chairman, the ranking member, Senator MIKULSKI, and our colleagues in similar positions in the House, are more than willing to sit down to find accommodations within the 602(b) allocation to negotiate a reasonable compromise.

Rather than negotiating with us, today I am told later on the Vice President will hold a press conference with Administrator Browner at a suburban Maryland wastewater treatment plant where they will continue to attack Republican reductions in environmental improvements. Rather than pointing to the successes achieved over the past years to improve our water quality, they will talk about how the budget will impair future water quality improvements.

Let me set the record straight, Mr. President. Funding for EPA wastewater treatment construction in this year's bill is $1.125 billion. In addition, the conference report stipulates that if legislation enacting a new drinking water State revolving fund is not authorized by June 1, 1996, an additional $500 million will be available for wastewater State revolving funds for a total of $1.625 billion.

Mr. President, this would represent an increase of about $400 million over last year's level.

Now, in the last 2 weeks or more, I have repeatedly requested of top administration officials that they tell us how they wish to reallocate spending within the 602(b) allocations. I have made that request among others to Administrator Browner, to CEQ director, Ms. McGinty, to OMB director Dr. Rivlin, to the Vice President himself. I put in a call to the President. Obviously, he has other things on his mind. But none of these people has responded.

As a result, it appears that when this bill goes down, if the President carries through on his threat to veto it, it will be vetoed and EPA will fall back to the level of the continuing resolution. The only word we have heard from the administration is they want to spend about $2 billion more.

The White House talks the language of reducing spending to balance the budget, but they do not have the music yet. They think the only way they can live is to spend more money. We have done the very best we can to establish priorities within the context of achieving a balanced budget in the year 2002.

I wish to say for the record that my ranking member, Senator MIKULSKI, has gone out of her way to be helpful, to work with us, to make as many accommodations and improvements in the bill as possible. She too has sought the involvement of the administration. And even though Senator MIKULSKI's top priority, national service, is not funded in this bill, other than for closedown, it cannot be funded unless and until the administration is willing to sit down with us and tell us where they wish to make cuts to generate the support to pass this bill in both Houses.

Senator MIKULSKI has been thoroughly cooperative throughout. I could not ask for anyone who has been more willing to put the needs of the environment, of veterans, of housing, of space, and other important agencies ahead of partisan bickering. It is with great regret that I tell my colleagues that we are likely to see the measure, which is scheduled for passage later on tonight, vetoed by the President because simply he wants to spend more money.

I make the point again for those interested in the environment that if the President were to sign this bill, or if the President were even to send his people to discuss with us how to make improvements to protect their priorities, we would be more than willing to negotiate with them. Absent any response—and there has been no response—this bill will be scheduled later on for passage this evening. I regret that we will not receive the funding for environmental actions that are included in this conference report if the President chooses to veto it. But make no mistake. If there is a reduction in funding for environmental efforts, it will be the President's decision. It will be the President's veto. He is going to get a bill that is very close to last year's funding, and it protects the top priority programs in EPA.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. BRADLEY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BRADLEY. I will be very brief. I rise to speak in opposition to the conference report. I know there are others who want to speak, and I simply want to make a few points.

I think it will be vetoed. I think it should be vetoed. I think that it continues the process of watering down our efforts to protect the environment, and it in my view should be rejected.

There are three areas that I believe need our special attention. The first is that under the conference report the protection of fish, wildlife and plant species awaiting endangered species listing would be blocked for another year, even if the species is on the brink of extinction.