

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening in very strong support of the President's veto of the Republicans' devastating cuts in environmental protection and housing programs.

This bill is one of the more glaring indications of the extremist, anti-environmental policies of the Republican majority.

We should not be here having this debate. We should have funded the EPA, Housing and Veterans Program 2½ months ago. But the Republican leadership insists on adding extremist provisions, and I applaud the President for having the courage to reject them.

How anyone who is truly committed to ensuring clean water and clean air can, in good conscience, stand before the American people tonight and support this bill is more than I can fathom.

This bill is an attack on our natural resources and the environmental health and safety of the American people, plain and simple.

This bill cuts the Environmental Protection Agency by more than 20 percent, but that's only the tip of the iceberg: The Devil is in the details:

A 30-percent cut in loans to States that help keep raw sewage off our beaches and out of our rivers,

A 45-percent cut in funds that provide critical assistance to local communities to keep drinking water safe, a 20 percent cut in the program that cleans up hazardous waste sites, a complete termination of the EPA's authority to stop toxic dumping in wetlands and a 27-percent cut in EPA enforcement activities—that means the environmental cop will not be on the beat. So much for getting tough on crime.

In the area I represent, Federal loans are critical in helping clean up Long Island Sound and preserve the purity of the New York City water supply. And yet this bill cuts more than \$750 million from these funds to the States.

There is no denying that these environmental rollbacks will cripple the EPA's ability to protect the quality of our air and water and because of their insistence on these extremist provisions, the Government is now shut down—less than 1 week before Christmas.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, what is the time situation here?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] has 2 minutes and the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] has 2 minutes and the right to close.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the other side allegations that the President is not interested in balancing the budget. The President clearly, in his veto message today, answered that. Here is what he said in his message.

He said:

I am vetoing the bills not only because of the impact they have on the environment we leave our children, but also because of other

things that they do that violate our values. They completely eliminate the National Service Program, which has been very successful, broadly supported by people across partisan lines in communities all across America. They cut innovative programs for economic development in our cities, the areas which have been left most untouched by the economic recovery of the last 3 years. They cut health care for veterans.

None of these things, the President says in his message, are necessary to balancing the budget.

Then, lastly, with reference to the whole question of medical care, I think it is important for us to listen to what the President said. He said the bill provides less than I requested for the medical care of this Nation's veterans. It includes significant restrictions on funding for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs that appear designed to impede him from carrying out his duties as an advocate for veterans. Further, the bill does not provide necessary funding for V.A. hospital construction.

Now, obviously, the President has addressed these things which he deems to be values which he, as the President of the United States, has a responsibility to carry out.

Finally, the President says this:

This bill does not reflect the values that Americans hold dear, and I urge the Congress to send me an appropriations bill that has these important priorities that truly serve the American people.

That is the responsibility the President has to the American people. He has today exercised that responsibility. It is certainly incumbent upon the Congress to follow the direction given by the President of the United States.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of our time to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY], our whip.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the committee and I commend the ranking member. He is, indeed, an honorable man and is trying to protect his values.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Wisconsin, the distinguished ranking member of this committee, said he did not know what kind of dictionary we used. I would just challenge him to go look up the word "truth." There is a lot of stuff going on around here that has a hard time meeting that definition in the dictionary.

The President is telling the American people that the Congress has shut down the Government and we have not done our work; that he wants to balance the budget, but because of his values he is having a hard time agreeing with Congress and what bills he is being sent. If the President was so concerned with the balanced budget or the Government shutting down, he should have signed the first balanced budget in 26 years. Twenty-six years. He vetoed it.

The President vetoed the Interior appropriations bill. The Interior Department hires 133,800 employees.

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He could have opened up all the parks, all the monuments, by signing this bill.

He vetoes this bill that employs over 293,000 employees, and if we combine the two, that is 426,800 employees that could be going to work right now, being paid, and those offices would be open.

Mr. Speaker, we have done our work. We worked all year long putting these bills together and bringing them to the floor under the auspices of balancing the budget by the year 2002. But the President is like a procrastinating Christmas shopper. He has not thought about balancing the budget or these appropriations bills all year long, and here at the last minute, a week before Christmas, he decides he wants to be involved in the process.

We are at a crucial time in our history. On one hand, the President's values want to spend more money in Washington. On our side, we think we ought to empower the family, stop the credit card, and provide empowerment for the local and State government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Without objection, the previous question is ordered.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS].

The motion was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the veto message of the President to the bill, H.R. 2099, and that I might include tabular and extraneous materials.

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

There was no objection.

FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

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Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Appropriations be discharged from further consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 131), a clean CR to extend the existing CR to January 26, to authorize the 2.4 percent military pay raise to be effective January 1, and to eliminate the 6-month disparity between COLA payment dates for military and civilian retirees in fiscal 1996, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the guidelines consistently issued by successive speakers, as recorded on page 534 of the House Rules Manual,