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## House of Representatives

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

(Continued)

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. GUTKNECHT

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. GUTKNECHT: Page 95, after line 21, insert the following new section:

SEC. 422. Each amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act that is not required to be appropriated or otherwise made available by a provision of law is hereby reduced by 1.9 percent.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent, if the gentleman would agree, that we have a time limit agreement on the gentleman's amendment and all amendments thereto of 20 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Chairman, I would cede to the chairman of the subcommittee, yes, 20 minutes, 10 each side.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Ten minutes to each side.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] will control 10 minutes in support of his amendment and the gentleman from California [Mr. LEWIS] will control 10 minutes in opposition to the amendment.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT].

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, some of us were extremely disappointed a few weeks ago

when we passed the conference committee report on the budget because in that budget, we reneged on a promise that we made last year and we increased spending by about \$4.1 billion over what we had agreed to spend in last year's budget resolution.

Back in November 1994, the people of the United States I think sent a pretty clear message. They wanted us to put the Federal Government on a diet. They wanted us to balance their budget. I think, by backtracking on some of the commitments we made last year, we made a serious mistake and not only a breach with the taxpayers of America today but, more importantly, with our children.

So I am offering again the same amendment that I offered last week, and I intend to offer it to every appropriation bill from this point forward to eliminate the 1.9-percent in discretionary spending on every appropriation bill that comes through this House. Now, if we will do that, we can recover that fumble and get back the \$4.1 billion that we overstepped in the budget agreement just a few weeks ago. I want to just briefly say what this 1.9-percent amendment will not affect, because I think there will be some misstatements on this floor of the House, and I think there is some misunderstanding. First of all, this amendment will not affect compensation of veterans. It will not affect pensions for veterans. It will not affect veterans insurance and indemnities. It will not affect the readjustment in education benefits for veterans, and it will not affect burial benefits, because I think sometimes people are concerned about that. It will not affect mandatory spending.

So, Mr. Chairman and Members, what will the amendment affect? Well, it will affect discretionary spending, including administrative costs for the Federal bureaucracy. It will include \$1.2 billion for Mission to Planet Earth, \$4.3 billion for community development

block grants. It will affect the \$50,000 travel budget for the VA Secretary. And it will affect up to \$15 million for the EPA employee bonus program.

Finally, it will affect, although a previous amendment may have changed this, the \$365 million for AmeriCorps. So it will have some impact.

Mr. Chairman, what we are really talking about is less than 2 cents. It is about keeping our faith with the American people, set about keeping the promise we made just 1 year ago and the promise that many of us made in the elections 2 years ago. Mr. Chairman, I hope that Members will support the amendment.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. STOKES] and I ask unanimous consent that he be permitted to control that time.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise in the strongest of opposition to the gentleman's amendment. We all know the potential impact of across-the-board cuts, but this 1.9-percent cut indeed could be devastating to this very delicately developed bill. Let me tell the Members what this amendment would do.

For those of us who care about VA medical care, this across-the-board cut would impact those programs by no less than \$323 million, a minor little cut in VA medical care that we fought so hard today to increase by \$40 million. Under those circumstances, that would mean that thousands of veterans would not be able to receive inpatient medical treatment and thousands would not receive their outpatient care.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

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