

Dixon	McCrery	Sanders
Doolittle	McDade	Scarborough
Fawell	McIntosh	Schiff
Foglietta	Mollohan	Sisisky
Gekas	Moran (VA)	Smith (OR)
Gillmor	Morella	Souder
Gonzalez	Nadler	Stearns
Houghton	Owens	Stokes
Hunter	Payne	Torres
Kasich	Pombo	Towns
Kleczyka	Porter	Waters
Kolbe	Rangel	Weldon (PA)
Leach	Riggs	Whitfield
Markey	Rohrabacher	Young (AK)
Martinez	Roybal-Allard	Young (FL)
McCarthy (NY)	Ryun	

□ 0939

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, is it not customary for lines forming to sign discharge petitions, that they do so along the side, so that they are not in the middle of the gentlewoman from New York who is trying to present a rule?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The Chair is advised the last several times discharge petitions were filed, the line of Members proceeded from the far right-hand aisle so as not to interfere with debate of the House.

The Chair will insist that Members not stand between the Chair and the Members speaking and that Members not congregate in the well during the debate.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2107, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 277 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 277

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2107) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LINDER] is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York [Ms. SLAUGHTER], pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 277 waives all points of order against the conference report and against its con-

sideration. The rule also provides that the conference report shall be considered as read. The conference report for the Department of the Interior and related agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year 1998 incorporates a total of \$13.8 billion for the fiscal year 1998.

□ 0945

Mr. Speaker, the agenda of the majority has been misrepresented on a number of issues in the past, one of those issues being our commitment to preserving our natural treasures and the environment. In the 104th Congress, we passed a very proenvironment farm bill, a safe drinking water bill, and nine other major bills that had the support of countless environmental groups. Today we have before us a funding bill that takes care of our national parks and protects our environmental resources by providing funding increases for the national parks, the National Forest System, national wildlife operations, and Everglades restoration.

I am also very pleased that the Interior bill amends the recreational fee demonstration program that will now allow parks, forests, and other public lands to keep all the fees that are collected. This initiative, when combined with the \$362 million remaining from the \$699 million appropriation for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, will help address the backlog in maintenance on public lands.

We all want our children and grandchildren to enjoy the natural beauty of our Nation's treasures, and I believe that this effort will ensure a better maintained and operated parks system for future generations. Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased that the Interior bill includes funding increases for some quality museums and artistic institutions, including the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, the Holocaust Memorial Council, and the Kennedy Center.

I am not, however, supportive of the funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, which receives a \$1.5 million cut in this bill below last year's level. While I am disappointed that we were unable to hold the House position that I strongly supported, I am pleased that this bill contains some major oversight reforms of this agency. We all know that private donations and corporate sponsors provide billions of dollars to encourage an appreciation of the arts, and I simply do not believe we need to fund the NEA when these funds could be put to better use. I urge my colleagues to support this rule so we may proceed with the general debate and consideration of the merits of this very important bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This conference report has taken a long time to complete, Mr. Speaker,

because the Interior appropriations bill encompasses a number of controversial issues, including the arts and the environment. However, I would like to praise the conferees for their hard work in reaching agreement on the report language.

In particular, I am pleased that they ultimately saw fit to include in the report \$98 million for the National Endowment for the Arts, a funding level which more accurately reflects America's support for the arts than did the original House bill from which all NEA funding was struck on a point of order. It is essential that we continue Federal support for the arts because the arts enhance so many facets of our lives. From the educational development of our children to the economic growth of our towns and cities, we learn more every day about the ways in which the arts contribute to our children's learning.

One recent study showed that students with 4 years of instruction in the arts scored 59 points higher on the verbal portion and 44 points higher on the math section of the SAT's than did students with no art classes. New research in the area of brain development shows a strong link between the arts and early childhood development. At the University of California in Irvine, researchers found that music training is far superior to computer instruction in dramatically enhancing a child's abstract reasoning skills, which are necessary for the learning of math and science. Another recent study showed that doctors with music instruction had greater diagnostic abilities in using stethoscopes than did doctors without music training, and we were all quite surprised to find that the skill of listening and diagnosing with a stethoscope was missing in far too many of our physicians.

Obviously, arts education pays great dividends in a wide range of fields. No other Federal program yields such great rewards on so small an investment. The arts are also an integral driving force behind the economic growth of our Nation. The small investment that we make this year, \$98 million, will contribute to a return of \$3.4 billion or more to the Federal treasury.

The arts support at least 1.3 million jobs, not only in New York City or Los Angeles or Chicago, but in smaller cities like Providence, RI; Rock Hill, SC; and Peekskill, NY. These are just a few of the many towns and cities across our Nation whose economies have flourished, largely as a direct result of investments that have been made in the arts.

This is not a parochial issue. Members of the House received a letter earlier this year from Americans United to Save the Arts and Humanities, an organization of business leaders, expressing their strong support for NEA. In that letter the CEO of Xerox Corp., the chairman and CEO of Sun America, Inc., the chairman and CEO of Sara Lee