CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time for morning business has expired.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999—CONFERENCE REPORT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair lays before the Senate the VA-HUD conference report. There are 60 minutes for debate to be equally divided.

The report will be stated.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee on conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4194), have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by all of the conferees.

The Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of October 5, 1998.)

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. I yield to my distinguished colleague from Maryland for a request.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that during consideration of the report 105-769, that Ms. Bertha Lopez, a detaillee from HUD serving with the VA-HUD committee, be afforded floor privileges.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Thank you. I yield the floor and look forward to proceeding on our conference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANTORUM). The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BOND. I thank our distinguished ranking member, Senator Mikulski. Before I get into the bill, let me say Senator Mikulski and her staff have given us tremendous cooperation, guidance and support. The process is always very difficult in this bill, but it runs much more smoothly because of her leadership, her guidance, and her deep concern for all of the programs covered.

Mr. President, I am pleased to present to the Senate the conference report on the fiscal year 1999 VA-HUD and independent agencies appropriations bill. The conference report provides $93.4 billion, including $23.3 billion in mandatory veterans' benefits. I believe this represents a fair and balanced approach to meeting the many compelling needs that are afforded this Subcommittee, particularly in the face of a very tight budget allocation.

The conference report accords the highest priority to veterans' needs, providing $439 million more than the President's request for veterans' programs. Other priorities include elderly housing, protecting environmental spending, and ensuring sufficient funding for space and science.

We did our best to satisfy priorities of Senators who made special requests for such items as economic development grants, water infrastructure improvements, and similar vitally important infrastructure investments. Such requests numbered over 1,500 individual items, illustrating the level of interest and the demand for assistance provided in this bill.

We also attempted to address the administration's top concerns wherever possible, including funding for 50,000 new incremental housing vouchers, funding for the National Service Program at the current year rate, additional funding for the cleanup of Boston Harbor, and $650 million in advance funding for Superfund, contingent upon authorization reform of the Superfund Program by August 1, 1999.

For the Department of Veterans Affairs, the conference report provides a total of $42.6 billion. This includes $17.3 billion for veterans medical care. That figure is $278 million more than the President's request, and $249 million more than the 1998 level. Thus, we have increased by just about a quarter of a billion dollars the amount of money going to veterans health care above what was available for the past fiscal year. There was a strong consensus in this body, on a bipartisan basis, that the President's request for veterans medical care was inadequate, and that additional funds were needed to ensure the highest quality care to all eligible veteran's seeking care.

Funds above the President's request also provided for construction, research, State veterans nursing homes, and the processing of veterans claims. I am pleased to note that additional funds will be spent to honor and care for our Nation's veterans.

In HUD, the conference report provides for the Department of Housing and Urban Development a total of $26 billion. Again, this is $1 billion over the President's request. We were able to provide this significant increase in funding because of additional savings from excess section 8 project-based funds as well as savings from our reform of the HOME property disposition program.

Because of these savings and reforms, we have been able to increase funding for a number of important HUD programs, including increasing critically needed funding for public housing modernization from $2.55 billion to $3 billion; increasing HOPE VI to eliminate distressed public housing from $550 million to $625 million; increasing the very important local government top priority, Community Development Block Grants from $4.6 billion to $4.75 billion.

We increased HOME funds, providing the flexibility for local governments to make improvements in providing needed housing for low-income and needy residents, from $1.5 billion to $1.6 billion, and we increased funding for homeless assistance from $223 million to over $1 billion, including requirements for HUD, recapitulating and reprogramming unused funds.

We also included $584 million for section 202 elderly housing, and section 811 disabled housing. This is an increase of some $550 million over the President's request for the section 202 program.

This reflects the sense of this body, expressed in a resolution jointly sponsored by my ranking member and myself, saying that we could not afford an 80-percent cut in assistance for elderly housing as proposed by the Office of Management and Budget.

I want to be clear that these funding decisions for HUD do not reflect a vote of confidence for HUD. HUD remains a high-risk agency, with capacity problems and dysfunctional decisionmaking. Let me remind my colleagues that HUD remains designated as a high-risk agency by the General Accounting Office, the only department-wide agency ever so designated. I am not confident that HUD will make appropriate progress. I also want to warn my colleagues that, while we have provided the additional 50,000 welfare-to-work incremental vouchers that the administration requested, HUD and we on this Committee knew that the Secretary of HUD would stop the funding for HUD; if the funding were to be cut this is a budgetary problem of huge magnitude and it is something this body and the House are going to have to work on next year and the year after and the year after. The problem grows significantly more serious every year and inaction is not an option.

The conference report, at the request of the House and the leaders of the Housing Authorization Committee in...
the Senate—the distinguished chairman of that subcommittee, Senator Mack, will be addressing this later—includes a public housing reform bill entitled the “Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998.” I congratulate both of the authors of the conference committee for making significant and positive reforms to public and assisted housing programs. I believe that, given the legislative calendar and the situation, it was appropriate, with the advice, counsel and direction of the leadership, that we included it.

There are some issues I want to flag now because I think we may want to come back and readdress them, as we do in so many things that we pass in the housing area in this body.

I am concerned that the requirements on targeting might adversely impact the elderly poor. I am concerned about a provision that could allow HUD to micromanage housing choices of public housing families on a building-by-building basis, and I do not agree with the provision that would provide the HUD Secretary with a slush fund of some $110 million.

Most of my concerns, however, relate to provisions that could become effective in fiscal year 2000. I expect that we will continue to review these areas and we will work, as we have in the past, in full cooperation with our distinguished colleagues on the authorizing committees in both the House and the Senate and discuss these further in future bills.

Finally, this appropriations bill provides a significant increase for FHA mortgage insurance. We raised the floor from $86,000 to $109,000, and the ceiling for high-cost areas from $170,000 to $197,000. This is a critical provision. It means that families will have new and important opportunities to become homeowners.

With respect to the Environmental Protection Agency, the conference report provides $7.650 billion for EPA. That is about $200 million more than current year funding. Included in this is the President’s full request for the clean water action plan which totals $130 million in new funding, principally for State grants aimed at controlling polluted runoff or nonpoint source pollution. The conference report also provides $2.125 billion for State clean water and safe drinking water revolving funds, an increase of $276 million over the President’s request and $50 million over the current year.

Mr. President, I am very proud that we were able to provide this, because I think in every State, if you talk with the people who are actually doing the hard work of making sure that wastewater is cleaned up and that we have safe drinking water, they will tell you that these State revolving funds, which provide low-cost loans and enable communities to take the vital steps necessary to ensure that they clean up their wastewater and have safe drinking water, they will tell you that these State revolving funds are absolutely critical for meeting the long-term needs of our communities.

Back to the rest of the bill, for Superfund, the conference report provides $1.5 billion, the same as the current year funding. In addition, there is an additional $800 million, contingent upon authorization by August 1, 1999.

Other high priorities in EPA, which we have funded, include particulate matter research, funding for the brownfields at the full request level, providing to the States the tools they need to prevent pollution, cleanup of waste sites and enforcing environmental laws. Almost half of the funds provided in this bill will go directly to the States for these purposes.

For FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, there is a total of $827 million, approximately the same amount as current year funding, with emphasis on preparedness for both natural and man-made disasters.

The conference report includes the President’s request of $306 million for disaster relief spending. While there are not new funds above the President’s request for disaster relief, let me assure everyone that the current balances in the disaster relief fund are sufficient to meet all the needs at this time, including those stemming from Hurricane Georges, as well as the flooding that hit my State over the weekend and resulted in tragic deaths in the Kansas City area, as well as severe damage to homes and businesses.

We all appreciate the good work FEMA has done in the victims struggling to recover from recent devastation, whether it is hurricanes, floods or tornadoes. Our thoughts and prayers are with the many people who suffered severe losses because of natural disasters.

In order to support efforts aimed at mitigating against future disasters, the conference report provides $25 million for predisaster mitigation grants. These funds are intended to ensure communities will be better prepared and that losses will be minimized when the next disaster strikes. We hope these funds will be well spent to strengthen the Nation’s preparedness for natural disasters.

Finally, within FEMA, the conference report also includes a provision addressing the need to feed the hungry people of the world. This is an increase of $10 million over last year’s level and the initial phases of what I believe will be a significant scientific breakthrough.

Before I yield to my colleague from Maryland, I do want to take this opportunity to talk about a crisis that is wreaking havoc throughout our country. That crisis is in Medicare home health benefits. They are in severe jeopardy.

The Health Care Financing Administration implemented a home health interpayment system, the IPS, which hits hundreds of home health agencies, many of which are small, freestanding providers, and has been forcing them out of business.

In Missouri alone where we had last year 230 home health care agencies, 50 agencies have already shut their doors entirely or have stopped accepting Medicare patients. One of them is the largest program in the State, the St. Louis Visiting Nurses Association, but many of them are small businesses that provide critically needed health care services. It may be rural areas or it may be in the inner cities, but they are serving some of the most deserving, poor elderly and disabled in our country.

The agencies that are being hit are those that serve the most complex cases, the ones with the most difficult challenges. Some parts of Missouri are losing their only source of home health care.

My hometown of Mexico, MO, has a small rural hospital. It is the Audrain Medical Center. We are very proud of it. But recently I received a letter from David Neuendorf, the medical center’s chief financial officer, describing the difficulties they are facing. He stated the following:

In Mexico the HealthCor, Beacon of Hope, and Homecare Connections agencies have closed. Other firms headquartered elsewhere have closed their Missouri offices. Those who need home care in this area are simply not going to be able to get it in the future. When
they become sick enough they will end up in the hospital where they will receive more expensive treatment.

Mr. President, in Missouri we have a well known phrase: “Show me.” Mr. President, people in Missouri have shown that the interior装饰 in the system is denying access to critical home health services. The IPS is the worst case of false economy I have ever seen. If the elderly and disabled cannot get care in the home, what is going to happen? They either will walk into a sitting in the emergency room very sick or they will go into institutionalized care, going into expensive nursing homes or even hospitals, or the patients simply will not get care at all.

One agency chief officer who testified before the Small Business Committee exemplifies the problem. She tells me she provides care to the most complex cases, the most difficult ones to serve in a central city area. And if this system fails, these patients go broke, she could go out of business, and of the 350 patients she has, almost half of them would have to immediately into nursing homes.

This means that not only will Medicare costs but there will be an explosion in State and Federal Medicaid budgets. We are going to have to pay for these poor, elderly, and disabled who are very sick. If we do not take care of them in the home health setting, we are going to take care of them in less convenient, less comfortable ways for them but far more expensive ways for us.

We must demand this insane, inequitable, and punitive system be corrected before we adjourn. And there are many proposals floating around. I believe Members on both sides of the aisle of this body know stories about how serious this crisis is. Some of them provide needed relief to home health agencies, those whom they serve. Some of them merely add a few lifeboats to a sinking ship. But it is clear one important consideration is missing. It is imperative we restore access to home health care for medically complex patients, especially those in center cities and rural areas. We cannot just reshuffle the deck and cause losses to vulnerable patients.

Mr. President, I would have addressed this under the VA-HUD bill, under the FEMA’s emergency budget. Unfortunately, home health care does not qualify for disaster relief. But let me assure my colleagues, that the human disaster of failing to address this home health care problem is going to be as severe, if not more severe, than many of the tragic natural disasters we address in FEMA.

Mr. President, to sum up, I am very proud of the work that we have been able to accomplish. I appreciate once again the work of my distinguished colleague. I recognize others have worked on this later, but now it is my pleasure to defer to the distinguished Senator from Maryland. I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. MIKULSKI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Mr. President.

I am really proud once again to come to the floor with my colleague, Senator Bono, to bring to the Senate’s attention the 1999 VA-HUD conference report and urge that we move quickly to vote on and pass what I believe is a very solid report. This is a strong conference report, and I believe it is one which will be signed by the President of the United States. And why? Because it meets the day-to-day needs of the American people as well as the long-range needs of the United States of America.

It provides a safety net for our seniors. It gets behind our kids. It invests in science and technology and makes our world safer. It meets compelling human needs and at the same time makes public investments in Federal Laboratories that will come up with the new ideas for the new products, for the new jobs, for the 21st century.

Let’s talk about a safety net for seniors. We have often said to our veterans that we will never forgot for what we sacrificed that they have made in the wars, and many of them bear the permanent wounds of war. But I believe the way a grateful nation expresses its gratitude is not with words but with deeds. That is why I am not pleased that we are providing the VA medical care account $17.3 billion to meet that need. This will ensure that our veterans will receive quality medical care and that whenever they enter a VA hospital or an outpatient clinic, promises made will be promises kept.

At the same time, we provided $316 million for VA medical research. VA medical research is different from NIH research. Building on basic science, it actually does research in hands-on, applied clinical practice—both in acute care as well as in prevention and home health care. This means that this will focus on those diseases that ravage our veterans—like diabetes and like prostate cancer as well as the Gulf War Syndrome.

In addition to what we have done for senior citizens in the veterans health care program, we also worked to make sure that there is a safety net for seniors in our housing for the elderly. Misfortune, home health care does not qualify for disaster relief. But let me assure my colleagues, that the human disaster of failing to address this home health care problem is going to be as severe, if not more severe, than many of the tragic natural disasters we address in FEMA.

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funding for critical science and research at the National Science Foundation and the National Space Agency. This legislation will provide $3.6 billion in the National Science Foundation account. This is an 8 percent overall increase in that account.

The NSF has peer review programs focusing on developing cutting-edge science and technology. We want to, again, work to make sure that this money is used wisely. We believe that the National Science Foundation is on track.

In addition to that, this appropriation provides $13.6 billion for the National Space Agency. It will spur technology development, as well as look for the origins of the universe.

To my colleagues in the Senate and to those also watching, while we were working on the funding for NASA we recognized a great American hero, Senator JOHN GLENN. At the request of his colleague from Ohio, Senator J. B. BOND, we have honored the NASA Lewis Research Center in Cleveland the "John Glenn Research Center," which we think is an appropriate recognition. We thank the junior Senator from Ohio for making that request.

While we are working on NASA, we have been troubled about the funding for the space station and also the failure of the Russian Government to deliver its promises. We have instructed NASA to take a look at how we are going to get value for taxpayers' dollars and how we are going to get technology for taxpayers' dollars. After rather firm conversations with the National Security Advisor of the United States, as well as the Administrator, we believe we have language in our appropriations that will help us get both value and technology for our cooperation in this effort.

We are also working on a safe world. We have funded the Environmental Protection Agency to clean up our environment and also take those steps that are necessary to prevent increased environmental degradation. One of the efforts, of course, is in brownfields, which we hope will be a new tool to be able to clean up those contaminated areas and turn a brownfield into a "green field" for economic development.

We continue to be troubled about the lack of an authorization for Superfund. We will fund Superfund last year for 5 years, to do training at the local community and throughout this Nation, to be ready for those disasters that normally would affect a particular region, but at the same time the readiness helps us to go to a quick response. Often after a disaster, we have to restore it to its old condition or even better, and therefore, we need to look at ways to prevent disasters.

There also is another disaster that threatens the United States that is very deeply troubling to me. That is the whole issue of threats of terrorist attacks on our own United States of America. I know at the highest level there are coordinated task forces, particularly from our military, but within our legal system and fund FEMA's effort to do the training necessary to deal with attacks, particularly of bioterrorism and chemical weapons. We regard this as a very important effort.

I want to mention before I close the very close cooperation we have had in this bill with the authorizers on Housing and Banking. I particularly acknowledge the role of my senior Senator, Senator PAUL SARBANES, and Senator BOND, who really worked this year to come up with a new authorizing framework for public housing. I believe that they did it. They worked on economic integration of public housing so it doesn't remain ZIP Codes of pathology. We have worked together in our legislation. We are taking their authorization and incorporating it here to make sure that there are new housing resources. In our bill there will be 50,000 new vouchers designed by Senator BOND, to make sure that welfare is not a way of life but a tool to a better life, and that public housing is not a way of life but a tool to a better life. We have worked cooperatively with them, and we have worked long and hard on our bill to eliminate outdated public housing rules that only hold people in place, and often have kept people in poverty. Also, this legislation will extend the life of the Safe, Thriving Neighborhoods program that I helped develop that not only tried to eliminate the concentrations of poverty and bring down the old walls of public housing, but to create new hope and new opportunity. I am so pleased that the authorizers have spent over 2 years looking at this to come up with a new framework.

I know my own colleague, Senator SARBANES, is trying to get here to speak on this bill. If he doesn't, I know he will speak later. We were both due at a breakfast meeting in Baltimore and he covered that so I could be here to move my bill. How I like working as a team. It is really a great pleasure to me to have my senior colleague, PAUL SARBANES, on the Budget Committee, and working on the Housing and Banking where we have worked as a team to look at the day-to-day needs of people.

He took this concept of what was happening in public housing and delved into it to come up with new ideas and a framework, the support of Senator MACK, who I know has gone into public housing, talked with residents, listened to the best ideas of foundations and think tanks and also the needs of residents, as did my own support of Senator BOND and my colleagues could enjoy the relationship with their colleague within my State as I do. Senator SARBANES and Senator MACK have come up with a new framework. They pushed us to the wall to come up with new funding. We had to forage for the funds, but we were able to do it. We truly hope this will create hope and opportunity.

In addition to that, we are particularly appreciative of the conference report to maintain the funding for national service, which others had wanted to eliminate.

We want to thank them for that because that is also another tool for creating hope and opportunity. So that is my perspective on the VA-HUD bill. Once again, working on a bipartisan basis, we show that we can meet the day-to-day needs of our American people, as well as the long-range needs of the United States of America. I thank my senior colleague. I wish all of my colleagues, listened to the best ideas of our staff and myself. Senator BOND, I thank you for all of the courtesies, the collegiality, and the consultation in which we engaged on this bill. I thank you for really the professionalism of your staff, J on Kamarck and Carrie Apostolou, who really helped me in many ways to come up with good ideas and worked with you for good solutions.

I also thank my own staff, Andy Givens and David Bowers, and Bertha Lopez, a detailee from HUD who has been with us, who has worked hard to
make sure I could fill my responsibilities. I thank them for their hard work and effort.

In closing, I also want to say that over on the House side, another member of VA-HUD is retiring. We pay our respects to Congressman Louis Stokes, who not only helped move this bill forward.

So, Mr. President, that is my perspective on the bill. In a few minutes, I know we will be moving toward a vote. I urge every single Senator on my side of the aisle to support this bipartisan effort to move the appropriations and really encourage all others with outstanding appropriations to act in the same bipartisan fashion that we have.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. BOND addressed the Chair.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I join with my colleague from Maryland in expressing our appreciation to the House authorizing committee. She mentioned Senator SARBANES. I want to express my sincere appreciation to Senator MACK. They spent 4 years in "legislative purgatory" attempting to come up with legislation which I feel are important.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I wish to thank the conference committee members, and in particular the chairman of the VA Appropriations Committee, Senator BOND, and the Chairman of the Housing Subcommittee, Senator MACK. I appreciate their working with me to include two provisions in public housing reform language which I feel are important.

We have worked together to include a provision to allow vouchers for crime victims. This would create an opportunity for individuals who are living in public housing units the chance to leave a bad situation if they are a victim of a crime.

Public housing residents could receive a housing voucher if they were the victim of a crime of violence that has been reported to law enforcement.

These individuals would be empowered with the choice of where they want to live and are given the freedom to determine what surroundings they desire. I strongly believe that people should have the option of vouchers when their housing is unsafe.

We also included what I hope will be a thorough study by the General Accounting Office of the full costs of each federal housing programs. I have been dismayed by the lack of data on the cost and benefits of public housing, section 8, and voucher programs. We need better data.

Once we determine what these programs actually cost on a unit by unit basis we can better determine the best approach. I personally prefer vouchers, but I believe the success story of all these programs to help us determine the most cost effective means of providing government assisted housing as we enter the 21st century.

Again, I would like to thank the chairmen and their staff for completing action on public housing reform legislation and look forward to working with them in the future.

CLARIFYING THE STATEMENT OF THE MANAGERS ACCOMPANYING THE VA-HUD CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I want to clarify a section in the statement of the managers accompanying the VA-HUD conference report. The language urges EPA not to spend any funds or require any parties to dredge contaminated sediments until completion of a National Academy of Sciences report on dredging technology. The report may take two years to complete.

It is my understanding that the language is not intended to limit EPA's authority during the next two years with respect to dredging contaminated sediments that pose a substantial threat to public health or the environment where EPA has found that dredging is an appropriate response action.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to thank Chairman Bono for his inclusion of funding within the Economic Development Initiatives account for three important projects in Wilkes-Barre, Philadelphia, and South Philadelphia.

The conference report also includes $2 million for the City of Pittsburgh to redevelop the LTV site in Hazelwood, Pennsylvania. These funds can be used to clean up and prepare the site for eventual reuse. One possibility being contemplated in the area is an effort to attract the Sun Oil Company to build a new coke facility which create hundreds of new jobs.

I am pleased that we have been able to increase the level of funding in the bill from $750,000 to $1 million for the downtown revitalization project in Wilkes-Barre which is also a top priority for Mayor Tom McGroarty and Congressman PAUL KANJORSKI.

I am also pleased that the conference report includes $50,000 for a project in Central and South Philadelphia, which is plagued with an average annual family income of $7,600, 45 percent unemployment rate, and a 50 percent high school drop-out rate. These funds are intended to provide initial resources for the development of a job training and business center to generate employment in this section of Philadelphia. The regional project is spearheaded by Universal Community Homes, a for-profit community development corporation which has a strong presence in the city, and which has received grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for housing and other initiatives which are geared toward improving the quality of life for low-income families.

In January of this year, I had the opportunity to visit Universal Community Homes. Members of the media and community leaders were present to bring to my attention that the South Central Philadelphia sections of the city are in critical need of a job training and business center.

I take this opportunity to clarify with Chairman Bono that it is the conferees' intent that Universal Community Homes is the appropriate applicant for the EDI grant for Central and South Philadelphia.

Mr. BOND. I thank my colleague and have appreciated his interest in worthwhile projects in Pennsylvania. I agree with his understanding that the conferees intend that Universal Community Homes is the appropriate applicant for the funds provided for a job training and business center.

NEW ENGLAND HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise with my colleague from Connecticut for the purpose of a colloquy with the Chairman and the Senator from Michigan. Mr. President, I have spent time recently thinking about the financial constraints facing the veterans health system in New England.

Mr. BOND. Yes, the Chair is aware of the financial constraints in New England.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, news accounts have indicated that New England's veteran health care system will suffer additional cuts despite recent efficiency and consolidation efforts. Veterans could be cut off from health services throughout the region. Is the Chairman aware that without additional dollars administrators will have to cut deeply into valuable health care programs and basic administrative support services?

Mr. BOND. I am well aware that the New England region has had to make significant reductions in health care costs in part because of the VA funding formula.

Mr. DODD. I know the Chairman knows that the veterans in VISN 1 live in a region that stretches from Connecticut to Maine. The budget for our region's medical care has dropped from $854 million in fiscal year 1996 to $809 million in fiscal year 1998. I have been informed by the Department of Veteran's Affairs that the New England region will endure yet another budget cut in fiscal year 1999. I hope that the Appropriations Committee will take note of the impact these reductions are having on facilities across New England.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as the Chairman, I am a member of the VA/
The appropriations bill will help address this need by funding 50,000 new Section 8 vouchers this year. About one out of every 4 households in need of housing assistance receive it. Of the roughly 12 million families that need housing assistance but do not receive it, almost half have worst case housing needs. These families are paying more than half of their incomes every month in rent, or live in physically sub-standard Housing, or both.

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vouchers to as many as 40,000 more low-income families each year. I commend the appropriators for recognizing the need for this resource, and implementing this important change. The conference report also reaffirms our commitment to homeownership by expanding the FHA single family mortgage insurance program. We are currently seeing record levels of homeownership in this country, and HUD should take great pride in this accomplishment. Not all of those who qualify for homeownership are afforded an opportunity to purchase a home in the neighborhood of their choice. The Fiscal Year 1999 appropriations bill will help address this inequity by raising the FHA loan limits in both high cost urban areas and lower cost rural areas. These new loan limits will enable roughly 17,000 additional families to become homeowners each year. The conferences are also to be commended for increasing the levels of funding for certain HUD programs. Funding for the CDBG program, the HOME program, the public Housing capital fund, the HOPE VI program, the homeless assistance fund, Fair Housing initiatives, HOPWA, Housing Choice Vouchers and the Lead Hazard Abatement program have been significantly increased for Fiscal Year 1999. These funding levels, many of which are higher than the Administration’s request, demonstrate the appropriator’s commitment to supporting housing and economic development initiatives despite other competing needs contained in this appropriations bill.

I am especially pleased that the appropriators have chosen to fund the Youthbuild program at $42.5 million for Fiscal Year 1999—$7.5 million over what was enacted in 1998. Youthbuild, which I helped pass into law, provides on-site training in construction skills, as well as academic and job skill lessons, to at-risk youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Approximately 7,300 young people have participated in Youthbuild programs to date, and many more at-risk youth will be able to benefit in the future from the increased resources that have been devoted to this program.

Mr. President, I would also like to express my support for the public housing reform act which was attached to the conference report. As a member of the Subcommittee on Housing Opportunity and Community Development, I have worked closely with Senator Mack, Senator Sarbanes, Secretary Cuomo, Representative Kennedy and Representative Lazio to develop this comprehensive measure. I am very proud of the final product.

The public housing reform act successfully achieves a delicate balance: it deregulates public housing authorities while retaining their commitment to home- ownership by expanding the FHA single family mortgage insurance program. The bill allows PHAs to develop their own preferences, including a preference for working families, but requires that at least 40 percent of all public housing residents be qualified for homeownership. PHAs may use the newly available Section 8 per- units that become available each year to be provided to people making below 30 percent of area median income. These protections, which I fought very hard for on the Senate floor and which are better than current law, will benefit residents at all levels by facilitating the creation of mixed income developments.

The value of mixed income developments cannot be overstated. Working families stabilize communities by offering hope and opportunity in environments of despair. In recognition of this important principle, the reform bill will require housing authorities to develop plans for the economic desegregation of their distressed communities. Each PHA must develop an economic desegregation plan with consultation with its residents, and all plans will be submitted to HUD for approval. The economic desegregation plan was incorporated into the bill at the strong urging of Secretary Cuomo, and I am confident that HUD officials will be committed to making this provision work.

The Reform Act eliminates many burdensome requirements for housing authorities. One-for-one replacement rules, which prevented PHAs from demolishing vacant public housing projects and building lower density developments, have been repealed. Total development costs have been revised to allow housing authorities to construct more viable communities. And PHAs will be permitted to use their Federal funds in a more flexible manner, including investment in mixed finance developments that attract private capital.

But with this freedom comes a new responsibility: housing authorities must involve residents in the decisions that will affect their lives. The Reform Act will empower residents in important ways. They will sit on PHA boards, they will participate in the PHA planning process, and they will be offered greater opportunity to manage their own developments or solicit alternative management entities.

Other provisions in the public housing reform act were added by the conferees to better serve the residents. For example, the bill includes a mandatory earned income disregard so that public housing residents who are unemployed, or who have been on welfare assistance, will not be charged any additional rent for a one year period after finding a job. The bill permits and encourages PHAs to establish escrow accounts for residents—accounts which residents can use to fund homeownership activities, moving expenses, purchase air conditioners, or other self-sufficient initiatives. The bill also retains the Tenant Opportunity Program as a separately funded grant program, and mandates that at least 25 percent of available funds under this program be distributed directly to qualified resident organizations.

The public housing bill also makes a real commitment to expanding homeownership opportunities for low income Americans. The bill committed to use a portion of their capital funds in support of homeownership activities for public housing residents, and families can now use their Section 8 vouchers to help cover the cost of mortgage payments.

In short, the Public Housing Reform Act will go a long way towards improving the lives of the millions of Americans who are receiving Federal housing assistance. It is a nice complement to the funding increases contained in the rest of the VA-HUD bill—which will help many more Americans who are in dire need of housing assistance. I urge all of my colleagues to show their support for both of these important initiatives by voting in strong support of the conference agreement on H.R. 4194.
Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I would like to enter into a colloquy with the distinguished ranking member of the Banking Committee, Senator SARBANES, to clarify various provisions in the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 and discuss the understandings reached among conferees regarding these provisions.

Section 508 requires a disregard of earned income under some circumstances, including persons who obtain employment after one year of unemployment. The rules define "unemployment" for this purpose should provide sufficient flexibility so that a family member who may have a brief, temporary period of employment during the preceding year would not be ineligible for the disregard. At the same time, the rules must not encourage households to change their employment patterns to take advantage of the disregard.

Section 519 provides guidance for a new Operating Fund formula, including that agencies will "benefit" from increases in rental income due to increases in earned income by families in occupancy. The extent of this benefit will be determined in the negotiated rulemaking on the Operating Fund formula. More generally, the Operating Fund formula should not be skewed against or discourage mixing of incomes in public housing that is consistent with the bill's objectives. With respect to the Capital Fund formula, the possibility of having an incentive to encourage agencies to leverage other resources, including through mixed-finance transactions, should be considered during the negotiated rulemaking process.

Section 520 amends the current definition of total development costs, but retains the current law directive in section 6(b)(2) of the United States Housing Act that these guidelines are to allow publicly bid construction of good and sound quality. In the past, HUD has not interpreted this reference to a sufficiently durable construction, of a nature that will reduce maintenance and repair costs and will assure that public housing meets reasonable community standards. The Department should interpret this section as requiring the use of indices such as the R.S. Means cost index for construction of "average" quality and the Marshal & Swift cost index for construction of "good" quality.

Where a family is relocated due to demolition or disposition, voluntary conversion of a development to tenant-based assistance or homeownership (sections 531, 533 and 536), the family must be offered comparable housing that is located in an area that is generally equivalent to the location of the displaced resident's housing. For purposes of this provision, the phrase "location of the displaced resident's housing" may be construed to mean the public housing development from which the family was vacated, rather than a larger geographic area.

Where a family is relocated due to demolition or disposition, voluntary or required conversion of public housing to tenant-based assistance or homeownership (sections 531, 533 and 536), relocation may be to another public housing unit of the agency at a rental rate that is comparable to the rent applicable to the unit from which the family is vacated. However, this requirement does not mean that the rental rate always must be exactly the same. Specifically, if the agency has exercised its discretionary authority in the initial unit to charge less than thirty percent of adjusted income to the family, that authority would be inapplicable to or inappropriate for the new unit, the comparable rent could be a rent that would apply if this discretionary authority had not been exercised (i.e., up to thirty percent of adjusted income).

With respect to public housing demolition (section 531), the conference report does not include a provision from the Senate bill that would deem applications approved if HUD did not respond within 180 days. However, HUD is urged to continue processing applications responsibly and expeditiously. In the same section, references to demolition or disposition of a "project" may be applied to portions of projects where only portions are undergoing demolition or disposition.

In the provisions for voluntary or required conversion of public housing to vouchers (sections 533 and 537), residents of affected developments are to be provided notice that they can remain in their dwelling unit and use tenant-based assistance if the affected development or portion is to be used as housing. In many such instances, the development may be undergoing rehabilitation, reconfiguration or demolition and new construction. If so, the resident would be entitled to stay in the same development and use tenant-based assistance, but not necessarily the same unit.

The bill provides for the possibility of transfer of housing from an agency to an eligible management entity due to the mismanagement of the agency (section 534). Such mismanagement may result in mixed-finance projects being treated as mismanagement.

With respect to the definition of "mixed-finance projects" in section 539, the requirement that a project is financially assisted by private resources means that the private resources must be greater than a de minimis amount. In addition, in the same section, new Section 39(h) of the 1997 Act applies only to a mixed-finance project that has a "significant number" of units other than public housing units. Therefore, this section would not apply to a mixed-finance project which had only a de minimis number of units other than public housing units.

It is intended that wherever appropriate in programs authorized throughout the bill, reasonable accommodation be made for persons with disabilities. This would apply, for example, in homeownership programs authorized by section 536. With respect to the setting of voucher payment standards authorized by section 545, agencies are urged to make payment standard adjustments to facilitate reasonable availability of suitable and accessible units and assure full participation of persons with disabilities. Subject to the availability of funds, HUD also should allow administrative fee adjustments to cover any necessary additional expenses for serving persons with disabilities, such as additional counseling expenses.

The provision allowing HUD to phase in the new Section 8 law, section 559, provides HUD the flexibility to apply current law to families now assisted by Section 8. This language is intended to be construed so that HUD may continue for as long as necessary to apply current law to families now assisted by Section 8, to the extent the Secretary deems appropriate. Senator SARBANES urged the Senator for the clarification and concurs with the Senator's understanding of the intent of these provisions.
(NYCHA) and HUD are maintained. Under current practice, NYCHA is express-ly allowed, under prior formula agreement with HUD, to utilize its ex-isiting allocations of operating and modernization subsidies for the benefit of certain generally subsidized public housing units. While the FY 1999 VA-HUD Appropriations Act will not allocate any additional funds for these local units, the Act does include a spe-cific statutory protection for units which were assisted prior to October 1, 1998. This provision, in contrast to the new relationship between NYCHA and HUD would be fully protected and maintained. I would ask the distinguished Chairman of the VA-HUD Subcommit-tee if my explanation is consistent with the intent of the conference?

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I concur with the statement by Senator D'AMATO, the Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee. The conference were mindful of the existing situation in New York City and have fully pro-ected existing practice in the VA-HUD Appropriations Conference Report. No provision of the Act is intended in any way to interfere with or abrogate exist-ing contracts for the use of assistance in New York City.

Mr. D'AMATO. I thank the Chairman for his clarifying remarks and wish to express my thanks to the conferees for their consideration of the unique circumstances which exist in New York City.

THE QUALITY HOUSING AND WORK RESPONSIBILITY ACT OF 1998

Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I rise to support the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. This public and assisted housing reform leg-islation is the result of four years of delicate crafting and compromise and has bipartisan Congressional support and the endorsement of Department of Housing and Urban Development Sec-retaireyal, Mr. Jack Kemp, and its final pas-sage today as part of the Fiscal Year 1999 Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Inde-pendent Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 4194).

Mr. President, it is with great re-spect that I salute the distinguished Chairman of the Banking Subcommit-tee on Housing Opportunity and Com-munity Development, Senator CONNIE MACK. Senator MACK is owed a debt of gratitude for her determination and commitment to an informed and reasoned approach to public housing reform. He consistently pursued a steadfast course toward a compromise which represents a positive change to the existing public housing system while protecting our residents whom the program serves. I commend him for his strong leadership and effective stewardship of this landmark legis-la-tion.

I also commend Banking Committee Ranking Minority Member PAUL SAR-BANES, Housing Subcommittee Rank-ing Minority Member JOHN KERRY, all Members of the Banking Committee

and many interested Members of the Senate for their essential guidance and leadership on this issue. Chairman KIT BOND and Ranking Member BARBARA MIKULSKI of the VA-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee deserve our appre-ciation for their willingness to allow this bipartisan legislation to be in-cluded in the Fiscal Year 1999 VA-HUD Appropriations Act. Our House colle-gues, in particular Banking Sub-committee on Housing Chairman RICK AZRA and Banking Committee Chairman JIM LEACH, Banking Committee Rank-ing Minority Member JOHN LAFALCE and Housing Subcommittee Ranking Minority Member JOE KENNEDY, all deerve thanks and appreciation. In addi-tion, I commend and thank HUD Sec-retary Andrew Cuomo and his Administra-tion for his able assistance and sup-port of this bill. All deserve credit for their dedication to this consensus-building effort.

Resident associations, public housing authorities, low-income housing advoc-ates, non-profit organizations, state and local officials and other affected parties have carefully reviewed and participated in this important political and policy process. I express my thanks to all for their significant involvement which has successfully yielded a balanced, fair, and comprehensive reform that will enable us to build and maintain affordable housing throughout our nation.

The Quality Housing and Work Re-sponsibility Act recognizes that the vast majority of public housing is well-managed and provides over 1 million American families, elderly and disabled with decent, safe and affordable hous-ing. It also responds to the need for im-provements to the public and assisted housing system. It will protect our residents by maintaining the Brooke amendment, which caps rents at 30% of a tenant's income, and establishing a ceiling rent voluntary option as an in-centive for working families. In addi-tion, this bill also makes sure that housing assistance continues to be targeted to those most in need. Forty percent of all public housing units which become vacant in any year and seventy-five percent of re-issued Section 8 vouchers will be targeted to families with in-comes below thirty percent of the local area median income. It will expand homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income families. The bill also will speed the demolition of dis-tressed housing projects through the repeal of the one-for-one replacement requirement.

The reforms contained in this Act will reduce the costs of public and as-sisted housing to the Federal Govern-ment by streamlining regulations, fa-cilitating the formation of local part-nerships, and leveraging additional state, local and private resources to improve the quality of the existing stock. This legislation will ensure that federal funds can be used more ef-ficiently in order to serve additional families through the creation of mixed income communities.

Mr. President, I would like to commen in more detail on a few of the many significant provisions in the bill. The legislation recognizes that every American deserves to live in a safe and secure community. To achieve that end, the Act includes a number of provisions designed to protect against persons engaged in violent or drug-related crimes or behavior which disrupts the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises of other tenants or public housing em-ployees.

In addition, the Act will serve to improve coordination between hous-ing authorities, local law enforcement agencies and resident councils, parti-cularly in developing and implementing anti-crime strategies.

Further, at my request, the Act in-cludes provision to ban child molesters and sexually violent predators from receiveing federal housing assistance. To achieve this, local public housing agen-cies would be granted access to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's na-tional database on sexually violent of-fenders, as well as State databases. This improved records access provision is critical to ensuring that these of-fenders are properly screened out and prevented from endangering our chil-dren.

Another critical safety and security measure will ensure that housing au-thorities have the well-defined power to ban absentee and negligent land-lords from participation in the Section 8 voucher program. Currently, HUD's regulations only allow housing au-thorities to refuse to do business with absentee landlords on very narrow grounds. The legislation being passed today will clarify that housing authori-ties may cease to do business with landlords who refuse to take action against tenants who are engaged in criminal activity or who threaten the health, safety or right to peaceful en-joyment of the premises of their neigh-bors.

In addition, my proposals to protect the essential rights of current resi-dents have been adopted in the Act and I commend the residents of my home State for bringing injustices to my at-tention. I am pleased to report that I marched, the protection against eviction without good cause has been fully maintained in the Act. This is critical for the hun-dreds of thousands of senior, disabled and hardworking low-income New Yorkers who depend on public and as-sisted housing for shelter. Second, the residents' right to organize and assem-ble has been fully protected and ex- tended to the project-based and Section 8 opt-out properties. It is imperative that, a number of these Find securityment rights to free speech and assem-bly protected. Finally, the Act makes absolutely clear that no provision of the existing HUD regulation (24 CFR
Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I am greatly heartened by the provisions of the Act. I am fully concur with the comments of my friend, Senator D'AMATO. His statements are fully consistent with my understanding of the legislation.

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I welcome the comments of the distinguished Chairman, Senator D'AMATO. Indeed, the amendments to the Public and Assisted Housing Drug Elimination Act of 1990 which we have included in the Act represent a significant improvement in the program. The provisions will also provide more certain funding for agencies that meet performance standards established by HUD. In addition, housing authorities with urgent or serious crime needs are protected and will be assured an equitable amount of funding.

Mr. President, the intent of these provisions is to provide more certain funding for agencies with clear needs for funds and to assure that both current funding recipients and other agencies with urgent or serious crime problems are appropriately assisted by the program. The provisions will also reduce the administrative costs of the current application process which entails a substantial burden for agencies and HUD. Under the terms of the amendments, HUD can establish a fixed funding mechanism in which the relative needs of housing authorities are addressed with a greater amount of certainty.

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I concur with my colleagues. Drug Elimination Grant funds have proven to be an extremely effective tool in fighting the problems of drug and crime in our Federal housing developments. The residents of this housing have a right to a safe and peaceful environment. The Federal Government bears a unique and overriding responsibility to ensure that residents feel secure in their homes, can walk to the store or send their children to school without fear for their physical well-being. I am especially appreciative of the inclusion of a funding mechanism which will ensure that the Act's renewal provision will address a substantial paperwork burden which has already caused a decline in housing assistance.
appreciate the work of the Chairman on this important issue.

Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I thank both of my colleagues for their clarifying remarks.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, once again we are in the unpleasant position of speaking before my colleagues about unacceptable levels of parochial projects in the VA/HUD appropriations bill. Although the level of add-ons in some portions of this conference report are down, this bill still contains approximately $965 million in wasteful pork barrel spending. This is an unacceptable amount of low priority, unrequested, wasteful spending.

The level of add-ons in the Veterans Affairs section of this conference report is down. The total value of specific earmarks in the Veterans Affairs section of this conference report is about $116 million.

Let me just review some examples of items included in the bill. The bill directs $1 million for the VA's first-year costs to the Alaska Federal Health Care Center to provide access to health services and health information for Alaska IHS, DOD and Coast Guard clinic facilities and linking remote installations and villages with tertiary health facilities in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

An especially troublesome expense, neither budgeted for nor requested by the Administration for the past seven years, is a provision that directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue the seven-year-old demonstration project involving the Clarksburg, West Virginia VAMC and the Ruby Memorial Hospital at West Virginia University. Last year, the appropriations bill contained a plus-up of $2 million to the Clarksburg VAMC that ended up on the Administration's line-item veto list and that the Administration had concluded wasteful.

The VA provides first-rate research in many areas such as prosthetics. However, some of my colleagues still prefer to direct the VA to ignore their priority research programs and instead provide critical veterans health care dollars for parochial or special interest projects. For example, this bill earmarks $3 million for the Center of Excellence at the Truman Memorial VA Medical Center in Missouri for studies on highway surfactants, surfactants, and lupus erythematosus, and provides $6 million in the medical and prosthetic research appropriation for Musculoskeletal Disease research in Long Beach, California. It is difficult to argue against worthy research projects such as these, but they are not a priority for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Like transportation and military construction bills, the VA appropriations funding bill is no exception for construction project additions not requested by the President or the House. For example, the bill adds $7.5 million in funding for the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in Missouri for gravesite development which will provide 13,200 grave sites for full casket interments. Although this is a worthy cause, I wonder how many other national cemetery projects in other States were leapfrogged to ensure that Missouri's cemetery received in the VA's highest priority.

In the area of critical VA, medical faculty funding, again, certain projects in key members' states received priority billing, including $20.8 million add for construction of an ambulatory care renovation project in Ohio, a $9.5 million add for the Lebanon, Pennsylvania VAMC for nursing unit renovations, including providing patients with increased privacy, a $25.2 million add for construction of an ambulatory care addition at the Tucson VA Medical Center and the Denver VA Medical Center ambulatory care renovation project in Missouri for Veterans Affairs section of this conference report. Each of them have $125,000 for the Pershing Hall building in Paris, France for memorial and private purposes.

Mr. President, we are charged with the important responsibility of dedicating funding toward the highest priorities to safeguard our environment. Yet, I am troubled that this conference report is loaded with directed earmarks toward specific projects with inadequate explanation of why these projects are higher in priority than national environmental problems and needs.

I especially would like to hear about the number of Superfund sites that are in critical need of remediation actions or leaking background storage tanks that continue to endanger lives. Yet, the picture that I am putting together from this report is a prioritization of member interest projects. EPA's overall budget contains approximately $484,325,000 in earmarks that are directed to specific states and to national organizations.

Rather than dedicating funding toward environmental concerns, the priorities of the conferees are earmarking spending of $125,000 for the establishment of a regional environmental finance center in Kentucky and $225,000 for a demonstration project in Maryland to determine the feasibility of using poultry litter as a fuel to general electric power. I commend the efforts of my colleagues who worked tirelessly to rectify differences between the two chambers and present us with this conference report. Each of them have worked diligently to ensure that important housing programs and initiatives are adequately funded in a fair and objective manner.

Contained in this bill is funding for many programs vital in meeting the housing needs of our nation and for the revitalization and development of our communities. Many of the programs administered byHUD help our nation's families and our communities, assist low-income families obtain affordable housing, combat discrimination in the housing market, assist in rehabiliting neighborhoods and helps our nation's most vulnerable—the elderly, disabled and disadvantaged have access to safe and affordable housing.

In July, I came to the Senate floor and highlighted the numerous earmarks and set asides contained in the conference report. By that time, the egregious violations of the appropriate budgetary process in the HUD section amounted to $270.25 million dollars.

Unfortunately, I find myself coming to the floor today to again highlight the numerous earmarks and budgetary violations which remain in the conference report of this bill. In the HUD section alone there is $265.1 million in earmarks or asides, or earmarks. While this amount is slightly lower than when the Senate first considered this bill it is still too great a burden for the American taxpayers.

The list of projects which received preferred priority is quite long but I will highlight a few of the more egregious violations. There is $1.25 million set aside for the City of Charlotte, NC to conduct economic development in the Wilkinson Boulevard corridor, $1 million for the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas and Sciences Museum in New Orleans and $2 million for the Hawaii Housing Authority to construct a community resource center at Kuhio Homes/Kuhio Park Terrace in Honolulu, Hawaii.

It is difficult to believe many credible and viable community development proposals may be excluded from access to federal housing funds because such a large amount of funds have been unfairly set aside for special interest projects. I am fortunate enough to have advocates on the appropriating committee.

Finally, I would like to comment on the public housing reform bill which is now included in this funding bill. In the limited period of time I was afforded to examine this provision, I have learned that it includes several initiatives intended to enhance the quality of life for many individuals while promoting self sufficiency and personal responsibility in our communities.

While I applaud these goals and will not object to this bill based on the inclusion of this section I am gravely concerned about the process used to pass this reform bill. It concerns me that this complex measure was inserted at the last moment during conference which precluded the Senate from having sufficient time to thoroughly examine its contents and fully evaluate its objectives. This is a very serious matter which directly impacts the lives of thousands of American families and our local communities.

Certainly, this issue deserves thoughtful deliberation. I will review through the established legislative process and should not be attached at the last moment to a funding conference report. This is not the manner in which we should be implementing meaningful reform intended to benefit the citizens of our nation.

Mr. President, I have touched on only the tip if the iceberg. There is more...
could point to, were time available. I continue to look forward to the day when my trips to the floor to highlight member interest spending are no longer necessary.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida has 7 minutes 30 seconds remaining.

Mr. BOND. I yield 7 minutes 30 seconds to the Senator from Florida. I will ask my colleague, if there is additional time remaining, if he might have 2½ minutes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I would be happy to work with the Senator. I would like to bring to my colleague's attention that Senator SARBAZES might be forthcoming, as well, to comment on the public housing initiatives. If he lands, I want to be able to accommodate him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized for the remaining time.

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I am pleased to have the support of this conference report. I want to commend the chairman of the subcommittee, Senator BOND, and the ranking member, Senator MIKULSKI for bringing to the floor a well-balanced bill.

I am pleased to say that this bill contains a comprehensive reform of the nation's system of public and assisted housing. We began this process of reforming public housing more than three years ago. Negotiating this legislation was a long, difficult and sometimes painful process. But the end result is a carefully crafted, bipartisan compromise that reflects input from the Senate, the House, and the administration. I believe it is a good bill. I appreciate the indulgence of Chairman Bond in permitting the authorizing committee to utilize the appropriations process as the vehicle to enact these important reform, and I appreciate his long-standing support of public housing reform.

In the end, it was the willingness of the Appropriations Committee to increase the level of incremental section 8 assistance that removed the last hurdle to this agreement.

I want to express special thanks to Senator PAUL SARBAZES for his critical role in the development of this legislation and in the recent negotiations. I am convinced that this agreement would not have been possible without the leadership and support of the Senator from Florida, and I cannot thank him enough.

I also want to thank the chairman of the Banking Committee, Senator ALFONSE D'AMATO, for his steady support and guidance over the past 3 years, and also the ranking member of the Housing Subcommittee, Senator KERRY, who has made major contributions to this legislation. This has truly been a bipartisan effort throughout.

There are so many people that have played a role here, obviously the Secretary of HUD, Secretary Cuomo, who has spent many hours and many, many phone calls trying to work through this and working also with Congressman LAZIO, who made a special effort to try to find a way to bring this to a conclusion, and also the work of Congressman LEWIS, the chairman of the subcommittee on the House side.

So, again, this has truly been a bipartisan effort. I thank all of those who were involved.

Since my appointment to the Banking Committee almost 10 years ago, I have visited public housing developments throughout Florida and in cities like Detroit, Chicago, and Jersey City. I have seen public housing that is well run and I have seen public housing that concentrates the very poorest of the poor in developments that are havens for crime and drug abuse and islands of welfare dependency.

On a personal note, I want to say to my colleagues that while I have been working on this specific legislation now for 4 years, I have been involved in public housing issues now for 10 years, since I have been on the Banking Committee. These are the types of issues that come to my mind, two visits that I made.

I spoke with individuals that lived in public housing, and that significantly affected me. I am pleased to say it has had a major role in the legislation that we developed. One person was an individual from Liberty City in Miami, who, frankly, grew up in public housing in Liberty City and saw how public housing has changed since the late 1930s. She—she used this term—"screamed" at me as she was explaining to me the problems she was dealing with and how she used to have a decent place to live and how it had been destroyed over the years. Her message was heard.

I also think of a little 4, 5, or 6-year-old boy in Melbourne, FL. When we walked out of an apartment that was totally destroyed, as we walked down between these three-story buildings that were lacking up of windows and doors hanging by their hinges, this little fellow was walking down between the buildings. I thought to myself, what kind of future can this little fellow possibly dream of if the only environment in which he was going to live was the public housing like we saw. I wanted to share that with my colleagues.

The time is long overdue for us to eliminate the disincentives to work that trap people in poverty, and to ease the complex, top-down bureaucratic rules and regulations that aggravate the problems and prevent housing authorities from operating effectively and efficiently. It is time to begin the process of changing the landscape, poor, concentrated, mixed-income communities with role models and establish a foundation for building communities of hope instead of despair.

Let me make clear that this is only the beginning. The effect of these reforms won't be felt overnight. We are creating a framework for meaningful and beneficial change in our public and assisted housing system. But our ultimate success will depend on the ongoing cooperation and commitment of Congress, HUD, housing authorities, residents, and local communities.

The reforms contained in this legislation will significantly improve the nation's public housing and tenant-based rental assistance program and the lives of those who reside in federally assisted housing. The funding flexibility, substantial deregulation of the day-to-day operations and policies of public housing authorities, encouragement of mixed-finance developments, policies to deal with distressed and troubled public housing, and rent reforms will change the face of public housing for PHAs, residents, and local communities.

This bill empowers residents and promotes self-sufficiency and personal responsibility. It institutes permanent changes and reduces disincentives for residents to work, set aside savings, pay their bills, pay their property tax, paying jobs and maintain family unity. Further, it expands homeownership opportunities for residents of both public and assisted housing.

It improves the living environment for public housing residents by expanding opportunities for working poor families and providing flexibility for housing authorities to leverage private resources and develop mixed-income, market-rate communities.

It focuses responsibility for managing public housing back to the public housing authorities, residents and communities, it eliminates counterproductive rules and regulations, and frees public housing communities to seek innovative ways to serve residents.

The bill requires tough, swift action against PHA with severe management deficiencies and provides HUD or court-appointed receivers with the necessary tools and powers to deal with troubled agencies and to protect public housing residents.

It enhances safety and security in public housing by enhancing the ability of public housing authorities to screen out and evict criminals and drug abusers who pose a threat to their communities.

Finally, the bill enhances resident choice. It merges the section 8 voucher and certificate programs into a single, choice-based program designed to operate more effectively in the private marketplace. It renews requirements that administrative burdensome to landlords, such as "take-one, take-all," endless lease and 90-day termination notice requirements. These reforms will make participation in the section 8 tenant-based program more attractive to private landlords and increase housing choices for lower-income families.

To get to this stage, we have had to work through some very difficult and potentially contentious issues. All sides have been willing to make concessions in the interest of compromise.

The effects of these reforms are that government has become including cooperation and commitment of Congress, HUD, housing authorities, residents, and local communities. These are the types of issues that come to my mind, two visits that I made. 
At a time when housing resources are scarce, a strong argument can be made that the bulk of housing assistance should be made available for the very poor. At the same time, there is a concern that excessive concentrations of the very poor in public housing developments have negatively affected the liveability of those developments.

The final income targeting numbers of public housing and project-based and tenant-based section 8 represent a fair compromise that will encourage mixed income communities in public housing and ensure that tenant-based assistance remains an important tool for housing choice for very low-income families.

Mr. President, this public housing reform bill is the first comprehensive housing reform measure to pass Congress in almost six years. It is a good, bipartisan package that represents the most significant reform of public and assisted housing in decades. I urge my colleagues to adopt this conference report and I urge the President to sign the bill.

Mr. President, Senator SARBAINES was not here when I mentioned earlier how much I appreciate his working with us, working with me, in trying to find ways to keep the process moving as we would hit roadblock after roadblock after roadblock. I want to extend to him publicly my appreciation for his work; also, again, to Senator MIKULSKI, and to Senator BOND. We know that we added to their difficulties. We greatly appreciate what they were able to accomplish with us.

Lastly, I want to mention some members of the staff, Jonathan Miller, and Matt Josephs of the minority staff, again, just went out of their way to help us accomplish this. David Hardiman and Melody Fennel—I thank them as well.

Chris Lord, Kari Davidson, and Cheh Kim of my staff did an outstanding job and did the legwork to accomplish this, at moments of maybe thinking we weren't going to make it but held in there to get the job done. I thank them.

I thank the Chair for his indulgence. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, how much time remains on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 7 minutes 43 seconds remaining.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I yield such time as he may use to Senator SARBAINES, and I very much appreciate his excellent work.

Mr. PRESIDENT. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

First, although I am going to speak a little later in the House, our involvement in this process, I thank Senator MACK for his very generous and gracious comments, and I want to say that this bill would never have happened but for his very fine leadership. I am extremely indebted to him for the very positive and instructive and understanding way he moved this process forward. It has been a long and difficult process, but I am very pleased that we have arrived at this day.

First, let me express my very strong support for this bill. I want to commend Senator MIKULSKI and the chairman, Senator BOND, for their very excellent work with respect to the matters before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Public Housing and have applauded them for the excellent bill they have written with regard to the funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President submitted a strong budget. And I am happy to see that the bill now before us responds to many of those requests.

The bill represents a well-rounded approach to housing and economic development. It provides for 50,000 new vouchers to help people move from welfare to work by eliminating the current 90-day wait on reissuing vouchers upon turnover. The bill effectively adds another 40,000 vouchers.

It provides $500 million in additional capital funds for public housing modernization to help maintain this important affordable housing resource. And the bill includes a total of $625 million for HOPE VI, the very innovative program that was created by my very able colleague, Senator MIKULSKI, which is focused on tearing down the worst, most isolated public housing projects and replacing them with mixed-income housing. Senator MIKULSKI has been an absolute champion of trying to rescue this situation which plagues many of our very large housing projects. I want to acknowledge the tremendous leadership that she has provided in this area.

Working together with Senator BOND, they have fashioned I think a first-rate piece of legislation, I am very pleased to support it.

Let me say, since she is my very able colleague, what a pleasure it has been working with her. I sit on the authorizing committee. Of course, she is on the appropriating committee. Over the years we have been able to work together I think in a partnership not only for our State but for the country.

Mr. President, the primary reason I come to the floor today is to call the Senate’s attention to the fact that an important piece of legislation reforming the Nation's Public Housing Program is attached to this appropriations conference report. This is a tremendous step forward. This public housing legislation I think represents a fine piece of legislative craftsmanship. It reflects a bipartisan approach to reform of our public and assisted housing.

We have been working at this problem, I think been working at this problem for 4 years, at least. The success of this effort reflecting what is before us, is, to a very significant extent, the result of the fine leadership provided by Senator MACK as Chairman of the Housing Subcommittee of the authorizing committee; the work of Senator KERRY, the ranking member of that subcommittee, interacting with our House colleagues, and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Senator MACK has taken a keen interest in the area of public housing since he took over the housing subcommittee in 1995. He has personally headed the Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee, and has spoken to administrators and residents. The commitment of his own time and concern I think is a model of how people responsible for certain programs need to understand the program, oversee the program, and then formulate the changes which will make the program work better.

Senator MACK has been a strongly positive and constructive force throughout the long and often difficult process we have followed to get this positive resolution. I am pleased to express publicly my very deep respect and appreciation for his efforts.

Mr. President, this public housing bill embodies an important bargain. We provide public housing authorities with increased flexibility to develop local situations to address housing needs in their communities but, in turn, they are required to use that flexibility to better serve their residents by creating vibrant and economically integrated communities.

The PHAs will get more flexibility in how to use operating and capital funds. It encourages them to seek new sources of private capital to both build new housing and to repair existing units. It provides more flexibility in the calculation of public housing development costs and encourages the construction of higher quality housing.

Finally, the law gives PHAs increased flexibility to support higher income families while guaranteeing that the poor, including the working poor, continue to have access to 40 percent of the public housing units made available each year.

This new increased flexibility is not an end in itself. The purpose is to provide higher quality housing in an overall improved living environment to the families who live in public housing. We want the Public Housing Program and the Rental Voucher Program, which the appropriators have generously supported in this legislation, to be stepping stones to better lives, to provide access to better schools and more economic opportunities.

There is now a growing consensus that we need to have a mix of families with different levels of income in public housing. Such a policy will strengthen public housing projects and make them more livable communities. To achieve this outcome, the legislation requires the public housing authorities to demonstrate how they will attempt to create these more economically integrated communities. The Secretary...
Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Senator from Ohio.

Mr. DEWINE. I thank my colleague. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss two important provisions in this bill—provisions that honor two distinguished Ohioans who are retiring from public service this year—LOU STOKES and JOHN GLENN.

Mr. President, the bill before us would rename the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio, the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center. That is a fitting tribute for a number of reasons. First, LOU STOKES is a veteran, serving our country in the U.S. Army during the Second World War.

Second, as ranking member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs, LOU STOKES has demonstrated that he is a true champion on behalf of his fellow veterans.

Third, LOU STOKES in recent years has dedicated his attention to improving the quality of care at the facility that will bear his name. He has been working tirelessly with me to provide funds to improve this facility for our veterans in northeast Ohio. This bill in fact contains $208 million to improve the ambulatory care unit at the Stokes Medical Center. This is the latest of a lifetime of examples of how LOU STOKES has made a difference—a difference for veterans and for all his constituents.

I also am pleased and proud that the bill before us contains a provision that, in my view, represents the deepest feelings of the people of Ohio regarding our senior Senator JOHN GLENN.

Mr. President, it would be fair to say that the imagination of Ohio, and indeed of all America, has been captured by Senator Glenn's many space voyages. It is an inspiring odyssey. It is exciting—it reminds us of the spirit of American possibility we all thrilled to when JOHN GLENN made his first orbit back in 1962.

Senator GLENN's return to space as a member of the crew of the space shuttle Discovery marks the culmination of an incredible public career. This is man who flew 149 heroic combat missions as a Marine pilot in World War II and faced the threat of death from enemy fighters and anti-aircraft fire.

And none of us who were alive back in 1962 can forget his historic space flight. I was in Mr. Ed Wingard's science class at Yellow Springs High School in Yellow Springs, Ohio—we were glued to the TV. Our hearts, and the hearts of all Americans, were with him that day.

JOHN GLENN reassured us all that America didn't just have a place in space. At the height of the cold war, he reassured us that we have a place—in the future.

And that, Mr. President, brings me to the purpose of the legislation I am introducing. Even as we speak, in Cleveland, Ohio, there are some hardworking men and women of science who are keeping America strong, who are keeping America strong from this legislative adventure. They are the brilliant, persevering, and dedicated workers of the NASA-Lewis Space Research Center.

People who understand aviation know how crucially important the cutting-edge work of NASA-Lewis scientists is, for America's economic and technological future.

Mr. President, what more fitting tribute could there be to our distinguished colleague, Senator GLENN, than to rename this facility—in his honor?

That, Mr. President, is the purpose of this legislation. It recognizes not just a man's physical accomplishments—but his spirit. It inspired us in 1962. It inspires us this year. And it will remain strong in the work of all those who expand America's frontiers.

The facility would be renamed the National Aeronautics and Space Administration John H. Glenn Research Center at Lewis Field—to honor our distinguished colleague, and also the aviation pioneer for whom it is currently named. George Lewis became Director of Aeronautical Research at the National Advisory Commission on Aeronautics, or NACA. Lewis visited Germany prior to World War II. When he saw their commitment to aeronautical research, he championed American investment in aeronautical improvements—and created the center which eventually bore his name.

He and JOHN GLENN are pioneers on the same American odyssey. Ohio looks to both of them with pride—and with immense gratitude for their leadership. And I am proud, today, that we were able to include this in the bill. I thank the chairman on the House side, Congressman STOKES, who has been instrumental in shepherding this measure honoring Senator GLENN in the other body.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Ohio. I, too, join with him in expressing appreciation for the services of our colleague, Senator GLENN, and our colleagues in the House side. Congressman STOKES. I believe it is very important that we recognize them in this bill. I thank him for his comments. Again, my sincerest thanks to Senator MIKULSKI, to Andy Givens, David Boren and Mike Gravel on their side. On my side, this is a very difficult bill, and I could not have done it without the leadership of John Kasich and the dedicated efforts of Carrie Apostolou and Lashawnda Leftwich.

We have the statement by the chairman of the Budget Committee saying this bill is within the budget guidelines.
I urge my colleagues to support this measure because I believe, while it has many compromises in it, they are reasonable compromises. I am most hopeful that we can have a resounding vote and see this measure signed into law.

I thank the Chair and staff for their courtesies, and I urge a yes vote on the conference report.

Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on this conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the VA-HUD conference report. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. NICKLES, I announce that the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. HELMS) is necessarily absent.

Mr. FORD, I announce that the Senator from Ohio (Mr. GLENN) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. HOLLINGS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INOBE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber who desire to vote? The result was announced—yea 96, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 307 Leg.]

YEAS—96

Abraham Enzi Lugar
Akaka Faircloth Mack
Allard Ferguson McCain
Ashcroft Feinstein McConnell
Baucus Ford Mikulski
Bennet Frist Mosley-Braun
Biden Gorton Moynihan
Bingaman Graham Mukowski
Bond Gramm Murray
Boxer Grams Nickles
Breaux Grassley Reed
Brownback Gregg Reid
Bryan Hagel Robb
Bumpers Harkin Roberts
Burns Hatch Rockefeller
Byrd Hutchinson Roth
Campbell Hutchison Santorum
Chafee Inhofe Sarbanes
Cleland Inouye Sessions
Costs Judds Shelby
Cochran Johnson Smith (NH)
Collins Kempthorne Smith (OR)
Conrad Kennedy Snow
Coverdell Kerry Specter
Craig Kerry Stevens
D’Amato Kohl Thomas
Daschle Landrieu Thompson
DeWine Lautenberg Thurmond
Dodd Leahy Torricelli
Domenici Levin Warner
Dorgan Lieberman Wellstone
Durbin Lott Wyden

NAYS—1

Kyl

NOT VOTING—3

Glenn Helms Hollings

The conference report was agreed to. Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

SENATOR GORTON RECEIVES HIS FIFTH GOLDEN GAVEL AWARD

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, yesterday evening the senior Senator from Washington, Senator Gorton, reached 100

presiding hours in the 105th Congress for his 100 hours of service presiding over the Senate. He will be awarded the Golden Gavel. But there is an interesting point here. This is the fifth Golden Gavel that Senator Gorton has obtained in 100 hours presiding in the Senate Chamber.

I think most Senators will acknowledge that he does an excellent job when he is the Presiding Officer. He is one we call on quite often on Friday afternoon at night. He is always willing to do it. And he dedicates each one of these Golden Gavels to one of his grandchildren. He has seven. This is the fifth one; so he has two more to go.

This is an assignment that takes time and patience. I publicly thank Senator Gorton for achieving this and for the way that he is doing it for his grandchildren.

I ask my colleagues to join in expressing our appreciation.

Applause.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. I do not know that anything else needs to be said, but I certainly want to join with the majority leader in offering my congratulations and my condolences for all of those hours. As one who has only been presented one Golden Gavel in my time in the Senate, I can appreciate the magnitude of the accomplishment just accomplished by the senior Senator from Washington. On behalf of all of our colleagues, I join in congratulating the Senator. I yield the floor.

INTERNET TAX FREEDOM ACT

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, what is the pending business? The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senate resumed consideration of the pending business.

Pending:

A bill (S. 442) to establish national policy against State and local government interference with interstate commerce on the Internet or interactive computer services, and to exercise Congressional jurisdiction over interstate commerce by establishing a moratorium on the imposition of exactions that would interfere with the free flow of commerce via the Internet, and for other purposes—

Pending:

McCain/Wyden amendment No. 3719, to make changes in the moratorium provision.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Amendment No. 3719, as modified

AMENDMENT NO. 3719, AS MODIFIED

(Purpose: To define what is meant by the term “discriminatory tax” as used in the bill)

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 3711, as modified. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

Mr. GRAHAM addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I raise a point of order that this amendment is not germane.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Would the Senator from Florida suspend for just a moment?

The clerk first will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Arizona [Mr. MCCAIN], for himself and Mr. WYDEN, proposes an amendment numbered 3711, as modified.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 26, beginning with line 3, strike through line 5 on page 27 and insert the following:

(2) DISCRIMINATORY TAX.—The term “discriminatory tax” means—

(A) any tax imposed by a State or political subdivision thereof on electronic commerce that—

(i) is not generally imposed and legally collectible by such State or such political subdivision on transactions involving similar property, goods, services, or information accomplished through other means;

(ii) is not generally imposed and legally collectible at the same rate by such State or such political subdivision on transactions involving similar property, goods, services, or information accomplished through other means;

(iii) imposes an obligation to collect or pay the tax on a different person or entity than in the case of transactions involving similar property, goods, services, or information accomplished through other means;

(iv) establishes a classification of Internet access providers or online service providers for purposes of establishing a higher tax rate to be imposed on such providers than the tax rate generally applied to providers of similar Internet access services delivered through other means; or

(B) any tax imposed by a State or political subdivision thereof, if—

(i) except with respect to a tax on Internet access that was generally imposed and actually enforced prior to October 1, 1998, the ability to access a site on a remote seller’s out-of-State computer server is considered a factor in determining a remote seller’s tax collection obligation; or

(ii) a provider of Internet access service or online services is deemed to be the agent of a remote seller for determining tax collection obligations as a result of—

(I) the display of a remote seller’s information or content on the out-of-State computer server of a provider of Internet access service or online services; or

(ii) the processing of orders through the out-of-State computer server of a provider of Internet access service or online services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the amendment being modified?

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I object to the modification of the amendment and raise a point of order that the amendment is not germane.