policy trying to say that the government can out-guess the weather every year, and the government saying we know how much someone is going to produce next year so we are going to have a farm program that is going to fit that. It has never worked.

We have either compounded surpluses or we have caused crop disaster years to be compounded in a negative way. It has never worked, and the government, with all the infinite wisdom we have around here, has never been able to out-guess the weather.

I am on the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. We have also in this bill fought off the administration in their efforts to undercut crop insurance. Looking at the President's budget this year, they cut dramatically crop insurance which was going to devastate any opportunities for farmers to cover their own risk. We have fought off that provision from the administration.

We continue to put in money to help farmers to be able to export their products. My only hope, Mr. Speaker, would be that in this next fiscal year that the administration will finally use the tools that we have given them to help move our agricultural products overseas.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very, very good bill for farmers. It is a very good bill for all Americans and I will support it tomorrow.

REASONS TO VOTE NO ON THE OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Speaker, it is becoming apparent that this House will be called upon to vote on approximately a thousand page document tomorrow that is responsible for over half of the appropriations bills that should have been passed separately, and it is going to do some good things.

It is also going to have a lot of things buried in it that I think none of us could possibly defend when called to task back home. As we speak all across America in 435 congressional districts and one-third of the Senate seats, people are out there begging for the opportunity to serve in the greatest legislative body this world has ever known.

They are putting their houses up for mortgage. They are selling their cars. They are asking friends and relatives for loans. They are doing basically anything they can to get the funds to get on television. What do they talk about once they get on TV? They talk about $15,000 that was squandered here or a million that was squandered there. Many of them get elected to this body, and we have got to wonder what happens to them then, because the same people who are outraged at the squandering of $15,000 or one million will tomorrow vote for a bill that is for tens, no, I am sorry, hundreds of billions of dollars and they have not the foggiest idea where it is all going.

They are going to vote for $18 billion for the International Monetary Fund, an international rat hole over which we have little or no control.

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They are going to vote for farm programs that do not work; educational programs that are not necessary, that have little or no supervision, and above all ought to be the States' responsibility. They are going to vote for things for defense that should have been done, absolutely, but should have been done through the normal process where the committees can take a look at it and decide whether or not that is in the best interest of our country. In short, they are going to try to do 2 years' worth of work in one day.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think one of my constituents would sign a document for a $50,000 mortgage that they had not read. I do not think one businessman in my district would sign a document for a $10,000 loan that he had not read. And yet they are asking the 435 people of this body to sign a document that none of us have read.

The people who have read it are the Speaker of the House, President Clinton, and the Majority Leader of the Senate. That is not good enough for me. That is not good enough for my constituents.

So, I am going to encourage my colleagues to vote ''no.'' We have stayed here this long. We can stay a little bit longer. And I am going to encourage my colleagues to continue to vote ''no'' until we are given adequate time to study the measure that is brought before us, and then and only then should we be making a decision for over hundreds of billions of dollars worth of programs and whether or not it is a good idea for our country.

AMERICA'S PROMISE: NATIONAL DEFENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the House tonight with regard to the bill we are going to be voting on tomorrow. I think the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), some of his comments were completely accurate in that this is a crazy process, the way we have come down here at the end of the year to take these appropriations bills and to lump them together. I do not think this is a good way to do business.

We also have to recognize this is a political institution. Two completely different political parties. Parties do things. Sometimes we scratch our head and do not completely understand and we ask why.

America should be very clear that back in August, the President had a campaign strategy that he coordinated with the Democrats and that was he wanted to shut down the government, so he came over here to the Cannon Building and he met with the Democrat Caucus. They gave him a rounding cheer and applause as they wanted to unite and come together and when we came back together after the August recess, that the President would shut down the government.

Mr. Speaker, he wanted to do that because he thought that he did a good job when he shut down the government before, and Republicans kind of helped him do that. And so he thought, boy, this would be a great strategy. It would be a great distraction from his own problems and a distraction for the Democrats and their failure to accomplish a lot of things they wanted to accomplish.

So what happened? Here we are still in session, a few weeks before an election. And I agree with my colleague from Mississippi, this is not a healthy way to do business. But we also need to understand what put us in this predicament in the first place.

So, there was a political strategy at hand. And, fortunately, we were able to get an agreement. My assessment of the agreement so far is that the Republicans have about 65 to 70 percent and the Democrats, they got what they want. That is what politics is about, is about the art of compromise.

Anybody can stand here in the well and talk about a lot of things they do not like and everybody can find a reason to not vote for it. Likewise, people can find reasons to vote for it. And sure enough, they will do it for whatever particular reason that will be most beneficial for them back in their home districts. But let me talk about something that is more important than either political parties and something that gets my attention with regard to this bill. That is about America's promise, and America's promise is that of our national defense.

When I think about our national defense, we had some testimony by Gordon Sullivan, who is the former Chief of Staff of the United States Army who came and for years and year I used to listen to the Chief of Staff of the Army come and talk to us on the Committee on National Security. He always talked about the Army being on the razor's edge. That is how close we were. This budget will be okay, but we are right on the edge.

Now in his retirement, he talks now about how fragile the Armed Forces are today. He is absolutely correct. In my 6 years here in the House during the Clinton administration, I have seen what he has done to our United States military. They are truly extended in every corner of the world. They have a strategy of working harder and doing more for less, and I can assure my colleagues that is not a strategy for success.

We have Navy ships going to sea undermanned as a result of the Navy

having 18,000 fewer sailors than at the appropriate levels for which I marked up as chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. We have later-deploying Army divisions that have been hollowed out because the Army lacks the resources to man them. We lack the E–5, E–6 sergeants to properly man five of the follow-on divisions. And when we are short these sergeants, we cannot just grow a sergeant overnight.

So, I am very concerned about our, quote, national military strategy to successfully fight and win nearly two simultaneous major regional conflicts. So I am pleased that in this budget agreement we will be plussing up defense. I applaud the President for being a good listener to his Chiefs. He had sent us a letter saying that he wanted to plus-up defense by a billion on readiness shortfalls. Then he learned that that billion was really in excess of 25 to 30 billion is what we really needed.

So, I am not going to stand here in the well and attack the President, because I am glad that he has been a good listener here in these budget negotiations. I would have liked to have had a higher number for defense, because I have been out there with the sailors and the soldiers and the airmen and the marines and I see the equipment. I see the cannibalization of our aircraft. I see that our ships are going to sea and they are going out there at levels that used to be called C–1 battle readiness. Now they go at levels called C–2. At C–2, they are not just going out C–2, they are going out C–2 plus 1, which means that when a ship goes out and one person has a workplace injury, now they end up at C–3 level of readiness. It is deplorable.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill and I appreciate the negotiators working out an increase for defense.

REASONS TO VOTE ''YES'' ON OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I had heard the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) saying that a ''yes'' vote on this apparently, I guess the implication was it would be not an educated vote. I can tell my colleagues that in order to vote ''no'' on this bill tomorrow, they ought to be make sure that is an educated vote as well.

Both of those votes demand that we pay attention to this budget bill, that we look through it closely and, if necessary, burn some midnight oil. I do not mind it. In fact, I get a little excited dealing with this budget. We can find any budget this Congress has ever voted on and we will find that there are a lot of good reasons to vote for it and there are some reasons to vote against it. I would suggest that tomorrow this bill will have more reasons to vote for it than to vote against it.

Every one of us probably every month, some of us every week, sit down with our own family and we budget. There is a lot of times, at least in my own family, where I do not get necessarily the spending money that I would like. Lori, my wife, does not get what she would like. Our three children, two of whom are in college, do not get what they like. But through talks and negotiations, even in the family negotiations, we come up with a budget. That is what we are doing here.

Let me highlight a couple of areas that I think are very important that this budget does do:

Number one, no tax increase. None. Zippo. No tax increase. Now, people who want to vote ''no'' say there is no tax cut. Folks, we do not have the tax cut in there. We did our best. We got it out of the House, but the fact is at least we stopped a tax increase with this bill.

The next item that is important is important for each and every one of us. We have got to invest in our infrastructure in this country. Our infrastructure in this country, the most important infrastructure I can think of, are our young people. And the most important thing in investing in our young people is their education.

This bill does a lot for more teachers, but do my colleagues know what the Republicans insisted on and now, as a result of joint negotiations, that we have come up with? We are going to hire more teachers, but they are not going to be hired at the Federal level. They are not going to be hired at the State level. This money goes directly into the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, I have a sister that is a schoolteacher. At times in the past, she has had to go out with her own money and buy school supply material, even though the budgets in Colorado have gone up for school supplies. Why? Because it does not get down to the classroom. These negotiations over the last 24 hours are now driving this into the classroom, and the gentleman from Mississippi should realize that. A ''no'' vote put its back to the Federal bureaucracy.

There are some other issues. Defense is very important to me. We do not have a defensive missile system to defend this country. If Russia or Iraq or North Korea or China or some other country launched a missile against the United States of America, contained within the boundaries of the State of Colorado we could detect it within 3 or 4 seconds, we could tell what kinds of missile and where the missile is going to hit, when it is going to hit, and what kind of load it is probably carrying. And then all we can say is good-bye, because this country does not have a missile defense system.

We need a shored up defense. We need to have a missile defense system. This bill puts a billion more dollars into the security of this country and this country's future on missile defense.

It does some other things. It increases student loans. I have a couple of kids in college. Most out there are either facing it, have faced it or are now facing it. These student loans are critical. A lot of our kids could not go to college if they did not have a loan to do it. This increases the student loans. Again to the gentleman from Mississippi, another reason to vote ''yes.'' A ''no'' vote cuts those student loans back.

Talk about the government ID system. They wanted to put in an ID system so that Uncle Sam in Washington, D.C., could keep track of us. This bill wipes it out. They wanted to put in a computer system, a database, to follow all college graduates. The government does not need to know that. It is not the Federal Government's business. This bill stops it. Another good reason to vote ''yes'' on this bill.

For the self-employed out there, and it has been a consistent and a very legitimate complaint that unlike other people in our society, they cannot deduct their insurance premiums for their medical insurance. This bill is putting us back on track to allow that deductibility for them.

Mr. Speaker, by digging in a document this thick we can very easily find a reason to vote ''no'' on this bill. But we have a fiduciary duty, a responsibility to look in that bill and see if there are not more good reasons to vote for it than against it. I suggest after we do that, we will support this bill.

EDUCATION PRIORITIES SUPPORTED BY CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I listened to my Republican colleagues tonight on the other side when they started to talk about the agreement that has been reached between the House and the Senate and between the Democrats and the Republicans and the President, and I must say that I am pleased also that this agreement has been reached. Particularly, because it does include one of the major Democratic initiatives, and that is to add 100,000 teachers across the country to our various school districts.

But I do want to say that although I am happy with that result, the bottom line is that the Republican leadership has refused, really, to address the Democrats' education initiative. For a long time, they were opposed to 100,000 teachers. They continue to be opposed to the school modernization plan. Do not let them kid you and suggest that somehow from the very beginning they were interested in having the Federal Government more active in education and helping our local school district, because the fact of the matter is they have been slashing funding for education on a regular basis here for the