

the Northeast is experiencing an unusually cold winter, this bill cuts funding for the Northeast Heating Oil Reserve from \$8 million to \$6 million.

Under the cuts imposed by the administration and the majority here in Congress, the Department of Housing and Urban Development will provide housing services to fewer families and communities will suffer. These cuts come on top of HUD's recently announced plans to cut its operating support for public housing authorities by as much as 30 percent. In letters to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, I have urged the administration to work with Congress to meet the Nation's housing priorities. Unfortunately, this appropriations bill is simply not adequate.

I am also disappointed that this legislation cuts funding for the Federal FIRE grant initiative from \$900 million in the previously approved Senate bill to \$750 million in this final bill. FIRE grants provide local firefighters with absolutely essential equipment and training. I firmly believe the FIRE grant program should have been fully funded. Now more than ever, the Federal Government should be striving to be an effective partner with cities and towns across the country.

Unfortunately, this final bill reduced funding not only for the FIRE grants, but for a myriad of other homeland security activities. In total, this final omnibus bill cuts nearly \$4.5 billion in homeland security spending from the fiscal year 2003 bills written by the Senate Appropriations Committee last year. Homeland security spending was cut in order to stay within the President's spending limits—limits that were imposed not because domestic spending is out of control, but because we have cut tax revenue irresponsibly. At a time when the Federal Government is running record deficits, we are being asked to economize on the safety of local law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and the public.

This bill also fails to provide adequate funding to help state and local governments improve their election and balloting systems. The conference report provides \$1.5 billion for election and balloting modernization. This is a significant first step, but it is substantially below the amount authorized in the Help America Vote Act. I am concerned that state and local governments will not have the resources they need to prepare for the upcoming election and ensure that we do not have a repeat of the 2000 Presidential election fiasco. I am hopeful that we will find the additional resources necessary to make sure that every vote is accurately counted. I hope we will find the additional resources at the earliest opportunity.

In the end, I believe this bill reflects a very troubling attitude that seems to be taking hold here in Washington, which is to talk about helping working families, improving healthcare and

education, keeping our homeland safe, and other priorities, but not to do enough follow-through. The American people deserve better than that.

Again, I thank my colleague from Alaska. He fought hard on some of these issues. Unfortunately, we were not able to prevail as successfully as I hoped we could. But, I thank him publicly for his efforts, and I regret deeply we could not have held onto the Senate provisions during the conference negotiations.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Connecticut for his nice comments. I can only say I regret deeply that I will not have the privilege he will have tonight, to go home to that beautiful young child. We know he protects children because of his great interest in children at this time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed, according to the previous order, to the consideration of conference report to accompany H.J. Res. 2, that it be considered under the following limitation: 15 minutes under the control of Senator BOXER, 20 minutes between the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee; further, I ask that following the yielding back or use of the time, the Senate proceed to a vote on the adoption of the conference report with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I withdraw the request.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will the Senator from Alaska yield for a question?

Mr. STEVENS. Yes.

Mr. REID. Would the Senator allow the Senator from California to proceed with her part of the evening's debate?

Mr. STEVENS. Certainly.

Mrs. BOXER. I will be ready in a moment.

Mr. STEVENS. Is there some limitation?

Mr. REID. She is going to speak as I have indicated to the Senator.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to reiterate the request of the Senator from Alaska, absent the last paragraph, and Senator BOXER be recognized for up to 15 minutes.

Mr. STEVENS. That is all?

Mr. REID. Yes.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I am not ready to lay down the bill. I have no objection to the Senator having 15 minutes, as the rest of us have, in terms of morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair understands the Senator from California is to be recognized for 15 minutes and that is the only request.

Mr. STEVENS. That's correct.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from California is recognized.

NATIONAL FORESTS

Mrs. BOXER. I thank the Senator from Alaska. I also thank my friend from Nevada for the time.

Mr. President, normally I have fancy charts. I have not had time to develop those because we just saw some of the riders of the bill.

I take the floor to make the point that I have many problems with this bill in the area of homeland security—as we are told to take duct tape and plastic and get ready for a chemical or biological attack. God forbid. We have shorted homeland security in this bill. We have shorted port security as it relates to inspecting containers at the ports. We have shorted border security, firefighter grants, community policing grants; and in education, we are leaving many children behind. That breaks a promise to them.

To me, this bill is wanting in many ways. In the area of the environment, which I will talk about, brownfield cleanups have been reduced, and the meaning of organic meat has been turned on its head.

It breaks my heart to tell the Senate tonight that I think America's forests are under major attack. It is unbelievable to me that without any debate or discussion, a pilot program has been expanded massively and, in my opinion, it is going to lead to the ruination of our national forests—our forests that belong to the American people. The program I am talking about is called the Forest Stewardship Program, which started 3 years ago. The idea was to allow limited logging on national forest land for the purpose of maintaining healthy forests in accordance with the forest management plan. Now, as I said, this program has been massively extended.

Let me tell you why I think this stewardship project that is in the bill is an attack on American values. I know the hour is late and I do not intend to take a lot of time tonight. But when riders are placed into a bill as massive as this, I can tell you, when the American people wake up in the morning and learn they are going to lose a lot of the old growth trees in this beautiful land of ours, they are not going to be happy.

I think America's forests belong to the people and I don't like to see a giveaway of taxpayer property. I don't like to see an open invitation to destroy our forests. I don't like to see no limits at all on old growth trees. Timber companies will now pick the trees they want, with no veto from the Forest Service on these projects. This also applies to BLM lands. We could see 70 million acres of national forest land open to logging here. That would also include 10 million acres in my home State of California and millions and millions of acres of BLM land.

In my opinion, the very purpose of this rider is it tries to overrule forest land management plans. I argue that the forest land management plans take precedence. But I can assure you, they are going to start these projects. I only hope, since the only way this could be stopped is in court, that it will be stopped in court. There are limits on public participation in these projects.

Let me show you what they did in the dead of night, if I might say, without anyone watching, without any debate, without any discussion, without any public participation. I don't know that anybody can read this chart, but I am going to go through it.

Under current law, we see that 70 million of 191 million acres of national forests and grasslands are affected.

Under this omnibus bill, we would see the same number of acres affected, plus 200 million acres of 260 million acres of BLM land. We are talking about massive amounts of land.

The number of projects now under the Stewardship Program number 28 projects a year. Now there is no limit, no limit at all.

Who is in charge of the projects? Now under the Stewardship Program, it is the Forest Service. They come in and they will tell a private sector commercial logger: This is what you can cut, but do not cut this tree down and do not cut that tree down because they may be old growth, or whatever, for whatever reason. Now we give it away to the timber companies.

We are seeing in the red the differences between the current projects where they were limited to 28 projects a year to no limit.

Let me say to my friends in California who may be watching this debate tonight, 10 million of our 20 million acres of national forests that we love in our State could be under the ax here. I hope you wake up to this because this was done in the dead of night.

There are, under current law, many reasons we allow logging on these 28 projects a year: soil productivity, watershed restoration. There are many reasons why today in these pilot projects you can log. It is very carefully controlled. Mostly it is to reduce fire hazards, promote healthy forest standards, road and trail maintenance, grading a road to maintain a camp site. These are all allowable in this small number of pilot projects. This is what has been added.

Now after the Forest Service turns over this particular part of the forest to a commercial logger, they can actually log for commercial purposes, such as providing wood to lumber mills.

Let me explain this. Where we had a project before that was aimed at keeping the forest healthy, it has been turned on its head, and now it says we are going to turn it over to the commercial loggers. The Forest Service cannot even have any say in it. It is completely up to the commercial loggers what trees they will cut down. Building a new road is allowed, not just maintaining a road.

I am stunned, frankly, that this could happen in a conference without one word of debate. This is a shock to anyone in this country who believes the national forests belong to the people of our country because this is—and I will put this back again to say in summary how I feel about it—this is an attack on American values. We all know that our precious environment is just that. We see a giveaway of taxpayer property. Not one slim dime will come into the Treasury; not one slim dime.

We have an open invitation to destroy our forests without getting anything back for it. There are no limits on old-growth forest logging. Timber companies will pick the trees they want with no veto from the Forest Service, a complete change from what we have had before. We could impact 70 million acres of national forest lands, including 10 million acres in my home State of California and millions of acres of BLM land.

This is clearly an attempt—I underscore—an attempt to overrule forest land management plans, an attempt I hope will not succeed.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mrs. BOXER. Yes.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to ask the Senator a question. I have only been in the Senate 6 years. She has been here slightly longer. Isn't it curious some of the worst environmental provisions are included in the appropriations bill at the last minute without any hearing, without any review? One would think that the people who were supporting this—the timber industry and those who support these provisions—would not be so afraid of their positions that they have to put them in a stealthy situation where, frankly, it is a "take it or leave it" bill, a "take it or leave it" 2,000-page bill that includes this rider.

If I understand what the Senator has said, this provision, so-called stewardship contract, could open more than 70 million acres of national forest currently owned by the taxpayers of America to logging by private companies, and that until this time, we only allowed them to test this in 28 different projects, and only 10 of those projects have actually been activated and tested. So it is an untested theory which the logging industry, the timber industry has now tried to capitalize on with this anti-environment rider to open up more than 70 million acres to logging; is that the situation?

Mrs. BOXER. I say to my friend, he is right, but there is more. For the first time they have now opened up BLM land as well; that is, 200 million acres of the Nation's 260 million acres of BLM land is also opened, and we are talking about no limit on the number of projects.

Under the current law, it is 28 projects a year. It is extraordinary. Who is in charge? As my friend points out, the timber companies.

Mr. DURBIN. If I may ask my friend from California, I am sure she has read this, but the Los Angeles Times editorial said it best today:

Since the days of Teddy Roosevelt, Forest Service responsibility has been to manage the forests on behalf of all Americans, not to make sure the lumber mills grind out as many board feet as the world wants to buy.

That is from the L.A. Times editorial today.

It seems from what I can gather that many who support this provision believe these national treasures, these national forests are there for the exploitation of private companies rather than the legacy which we owe to our children and future generations.

To allow these companies to come in and run roughshod over millions of acres of America's national forest land for their own profit and to do this at the last minute in an anti-environment rider strikes me as a harsh commentary on the values that this Senate is putting in this bill for the appropriations process.

I salute the Senator from California. Thank you for having the political courage to stand up and make a point about an issue that really is going to have an impact on America for generations to come.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank my friend very much. I know my time is running short. There is nothing I can do here except take a few minutes to call this to the attention of my colleagues and the American people because, as my colleague knows, we cannot amend this report. It is up or down. This is what makes it so egregious to me.

I am ready to go to battle toe to toe any day on this issue, and I am sure my colleagues would give me a fight on it. We would have a vote and take our lumps if we lost and be very happy if we won.

We have a situation where taxpayer property is being given away without 1

cent back to the Treasury. Here we have a situation where, instead of the Forest Service saying, OK, you can cut down a few of these trees, we need it for certain public purposes, they are out of the game. They give it to the logger, and the logger decides what tree to cut down.

I think this is a stunning reversal of a program that started out to be one that was in the public interest.

In closing, I will give you one last example.

Under this new rule—and, again, I apologize for the crudeness of these charts, but we did not know about this until a few hours ago. It is now a stewardship goal, if the Forest Service so states, to provide wood to lumber mills. That becomes a forest stewardship goal. It is unreal.

Our people think we are protecting our forests, but our new goal is to invite the loggers in, with no limits on these projects. I am distraught and disturbed about this. I only hope that the courts will do what they have done in the past and say this is in violation of the forest plans. Maybe they will save us from ourselves. This is miserable.

I wish I could offer an amendment to strip this out. I am prohibited from doing it, but I will bring this back to my colleagues at a time when we have more opportunity to discuss it in detail.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. STEVENS. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consider the conference report to accompany H.J. Res. 2 under the previous agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the conference report.

The legislative clerk read as follows: The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 2) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2003, and for other purposes, having met have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of February 13, 2003.)

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, this is probably a historic occasion because we are presenting to the Senate—as my colleague, Chairman BILL YOUNG, presented to the House—11 appropriations bills in one omnibus bill, a bill that covers the balance of this fiscal year, fiscal year 2003.

We are in this position because of considerations of the last Congress. I will not take the time of the Senate to try to discuss why we did not pass those bills last year, but when we commenced this year and I became chairman of the Appropriations Committee once again, it was my determination that we should proceed with those bills and make sure we had them completed and to the President for his signature before we were forced to enter into the budget process for fiscal year 2004.

It was a very difficult process. I want to thank my good friend and Chairman BILL YOUNG in the House, who did as we requested to get the Senate to adopt two continuing resolutions. One we passed and it has extended the time for consideration of these bills. That time will expire on February 20. We will soon get another continuing resolution to take us over to, I believe, February 24, so the President will have a chance to review these bills before he must sign them. I do believe the President will sign this bill when it is received by him.

It was early this morning that the conference report on H.J. Res. 2 was filed in the House. I was discussing with other Members of Congress as early as 2 a.m. this morning some of the provisions of this bill. It is a very controversial bill, I know. There are many portions of this bill that if I were alone and had the sole right to write the bill, I would not incorporate in this bill. This bill includes 11 separate appropriations bills. The conference report includes 16 divisions. It is a long bill.

I see my friend from Arizona in the Chamber. I acknowledge it is a very difficult bill to go through in a very short period of time. I appreciate the consideration he and his staff are giving to the bill, as he usually gives to our appropriations bills.

I see my colleague from West Virginia is in the Chamber, and when he is ready we will ask that the Senate turn to the consideration of the bill. I want to talk about some of the background of the bill before we begin making statements on the bill and what is in it.

This has been a very difficult process for all of us. I want to say to the Senate that following the election, I outlined to our staff, and our staff director Steve Cortese, a process I hoped we would follow to get these bills passed. The Senate Appropriations Committee staff has been working on these 11 separate bills since the end of the year. We have had bipartisan cooperation. The process we followed in the Senate was that we had 11 teams. They were made up of the 11 subcommittees that would have handled the bills had they been handled individually. These bills were primarily the result of the interaction of the staff director of each of those subcommittees with the staff and the membership of the subcommittee.

We took the product of those 11 teams and put them together into the

omnibus amendment I offered to H.J. Res. 2, the one that was brought before the Senate. I might add that in addition, the conference report contains \$10 billion in addition to the funds for the Department of Defense and intelligence community for the global war on terrorism. These were added to the bill. This was a reserve that was set aside by my great friend from West Virginia when he was chairman, a reserve for Defense pursuant to the request of the President as he presented the budget for the fiscal year 2003.

It would be my intention to ask the Senate to proceed with statements pertaining to H.J. Res. 2 before it is actually received, before we go on the bill. I hope that meets with everyone's approval. Right now it is a matter of discussing the various provisions of the bill.

There are several other legislative initiatives in the bill. They include \$3.1 billion for drought and other agricultural disasters. These funds are offset by reductions in mandatory programs. Medicare and the TANF short-term extensions would give the Finance Committee time to address their matters in a reconciliation bill later this year. There is a .65 percent across-the-board cut to all discretionary accounts in this bill to assure that the total remains within the top line that was agreed to by myself, House Chairman BILL YOUNG, and the President. That is an arbitrary line, I will admit, but in order to get the bill signed, if we joined them together, it was my judgment we could not risk a final veto from the President of the United States after working so hard to put them all through in one package. So we have worked as closely as possible with all concerned to try and make certain that the bills will be in a form the President could sign it.

I have to admit I am sure he will be as disturbed about some of the provisions as I am myself, but I do believe all in all the bill is one the President should be able to sign because we have kept the agreement. We have stayed within the line of the requests made by the President of the United States for funds for fiscal year 2003.

I will take a moment to address the total spending levels in the bill. Last November, Chairman BILL YOUNG and I met with the President to discuss how we might complete the work on these fiscal year 2003 bills. At that time, the President asked that we would hold to the total provided in his budget request, as amended by him. We asked that funds needed for the western firefighting be added to that total to address that emergency. We also agreed at that time there would be no emergency money per se—no amounts added to the bill above the President's request. The President agreed to our request that he would send in a supplemental request for the monies needed for the western fires.

In addition, we discussed the need to fund the election reform bill enacted