fought against giving the commission enough time to complete its work and tried to limit the documents the commission could see.

President Bush and Vice President CHENEY sought to limit any questions they received from the commission and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice tried to avoid testifying publicly at all.

Now, the commission's report is done and the questions it raises are, Are we as safe as we should be today? How much progress have we made in correcting homeland security deficiencies?

Unfortunately, the Bush administration has a lot of work left to be done.

□ 1030

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4837, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2005

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 732 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 732

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4837) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived except: section 129. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KIRK). The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, last night the Committee on Rules met and granted an open rule for H.R. 4837, the Fiscal Year 2005 Military Construction Appropriations Act.

The United States military is clearly the best in the world, and the young men and women in our Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines are thoroughly dedicated and patriotic professionals, the best our Nation has to offer.

And we are asking a lot of our military today. Our military personnel on active duty know that they may well be deployed overseas and perhaps on dangerous missions; so we want to provide a quality of life for themselves and their families that will allow them to serve, knowing that their families will be taken care of with good housing and good health care.

H.R. 4837 recognizes the dedication and commitment of our troops by providing for their most basic needs: improved military facilities, including housing and medical facilities.

Mr. Speaker, we must honor the most basic commitments we have made to the men and women of our Armed Forces. We must ensure a reasonable quality of life to recruit and retain the best and the brightest for America's fighting forces, and most importantly, we must do all in our power to ensure a strong, able, dedicated American military so this Nation will be ever vigilant, ever prepared.

H.R. 4837 provides nearly $1.1 billion for troop housing and $190 million for hospital and medical facilities for the troops and their families. Military families also have a tremendous need for quality child care, especially single parents and families in which one or both parents may face lengthy deployments. To help meet this need, the bill provides $26 million for child development centers.

This bill is more than just a signal to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines that this Nation recognizes their sacrifices. It is a means by which we meet our commitment to providing them decent quality of life, and this will sustain the commitment and professionalism of America's all-volunteer armed services and the families that support them. We owe them a great debt of gratitude.

While our men and women in uniform have swiftly engaged our enemies abroad, they face increasingly complex personal and professional challenges here at home. We must do more to take care of those who are putting their lives on the line to defend our freedom and for their families that support them. So I urge my colleagues to support this rule and to support the conference report.

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. FROST asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Last night the Committee on Rules met to report a rule for the Military Construction Appropriations bill for 2005. The bill has wide bipartisan support. It provides sufficient funding for America's military construction needs and includes funding to improve facilities and family housing on reserve and active duty installations around the world. The bill also includes a provision that protects the most successful military housing project in history, the Military Housing Privatization Initiative.

Under this program, the Federal Government creates public-private partnerships to construct and renovate military family housing. The current state of military housing is a disgrace. It is often old and dilapidated. Under this program, quality homes for our troops and their families are constructed more affordably and more quickly. It is estimated that the government saves 10 to 15 percent over the life of the project, and military families receive improved homes in one-tenth of the time it will have taken using old methods of family housing construction.

When the program started in 1996, it was tied to a cap of $850 million in government investment. The Department of Defense will reach this cap in November. The Military Construction bill contains a provision to raise the cap and ensure that the most successful military housing program ever will be able to continue.

And herein lies the problem, Mr. Speaker. The rule that we are considering today puts this program in danger. It allows a point of order on the section of the bill raising the cap on the Privatization Initiative that would allow it to be completely stripped from the bill. If that happens, the program would be unable to continue past November of this year, and almost 50,000 military families would pay the price and continue to live in substandard housing.

I made a motion last night in the Committee on Rules to protect this section of the bill so that it could not be stripped out, but it was defeated on a party-line vote. I just do not understand that, Mr. Speaker, because perhaps more than anything else in this bill, this provision will help raise the quality of life for our troops and their families.

Perhaps worst of all is the fact that this is the only provision in the Military Construction bill that can be stripped out on a point of order. I think that shows real disregard and disrespect for our soldiers, and, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I find it disgraceful. We in this House are constantly talking about the need to support our troops, and yet when the time comes to actually vote on a substantive issue that could really help our fighting men and women and their families, some

Members of this House are not following through.

I, for one, am proud to support our troops. As a Nation, we continue to ask more and more of them, especially in this time of war and uncertainty. Our brave soldiers and their families deserve to live in quality housing, not slums. It should be their right, not their privilege; and that is why today I will attempt to defeat the previous question. If the previous question is defeated, I will offer an amendment to protect the military housing cap in the bill from being stripped out on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, countless military families and military organizations, and the President of the United States—let me repeat that, and the President of the United States, all support raising this cap. This House should too. America's troops and their families deserve to have our unconditional support as they continue to fight the war on terror. Vote ''no'' on the previous question and vote ''no'' on the rule.

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

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE), the chairman of the Committee on the Budget.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

I rise in opposition to this rule, and I do so without disrespect at all to the gentlewoman. She is a very valuable Member of this Congress and a friend and someone who has worked hard to make sure that when we write budgets, when we determine spending priorities, that we adhere to them. And that is why I rise in opposition to this rule.

This bill breaches the spending limit made under the budget. There will be people who come to the floor today who will claim that the only issue today is military housing when, in fact, the issue today is an $800-plus billion budget from which we can find many puts and many takes in order to adjust priorities here and adjust priorities there in order to make sure all priorities fit within a budget.

How does this process work? The Committee on Appropriations, appropriately and in a way that we all appreciate, filed their bill meeting what is called the 302(b) number for military construction, meaning that it fit within the budget when the committee process began. But there were amendments that were made in order to increase the amount of spending over the budget and over the amount that was prioritized.

Why was that done? It was done for political purposes. It was done to make points because, as everyone knows, in the Department of Defense authorization bill, the cap that we will be talking about today for military housing was lifted. So it is being taken care of. It is being taken care of in the authorization process, which is the appropriate way to handle it, the appropriate direction to take, and a way that does not bust the budget and allows all of us to do this within a responsible process.

This Military Construction bill breaches the allocations that the Committee on Appropriations established for the Subcommittee on Military Construction by $1.2 billion as a result; that is 10 percent of the allocation. We are not just busting this by a couple of bucks here. We are not just saying it is okay to go over by a little. I mean, there have already been three bills that have left the House floor as appropriations that busted their allocations, three bills that we voted on on the floor here, that were sent to the other body, that busted the budget.

So it does happen. It does happen by a few hundred thousand here, hundred million there, but rarely have we ever seen the chutzpa of coming to the floor with a bill that busts it by over 10 percent of the allocation.

How does the Committee on Appropriations usually deal with this? Very typically, very routinely, the Committee on Appropriations comes to the floor and they make an adjustment to their 302(b) allocations. In fact, they can even make an adjustment to a bill that has already left, and they have done that in the past. And in fact, as I understand it today, they will make adjustments to their 302(b) allocations in order to make the three bills that left here, busting the budget, fit, something that they routinely do currently and totally within their jurisdiction and something that we, as fiscal hawks and people that want to make sure that we adhere to the budget, appreciate.

The chairman of the Committee on Appropriations has never brought a bill to this floor that busted the budget. Unfortunately, today this rule would allow that to happen. And that is why I rise in opposition, because we should not allow that to happen.

Military housing is an effective program, so important that I am disappointed that the Committee on Appropriations did not offset the additional cost with a spending reduction in other bills from lower-priority items, which is fully within their jurisdiction. Do they mean to tell me there is nothing else within any of the 13 appropriation bills that are lower priority than the military housing for our families who are fighting to defend our freedom? Nothing? Absolutely nothing? We cannot look for anything?

Just waive the rules, and not only waive the budget and the budget rules, but to do so almost 2 weeks after we had a debate on this floor saying the budget process is broken, we have got to come up with new rules. Why do we have to come up with new rules if we break the rules that we already have? Why do we adhere to the rules that we already have? Such as we write a budget, we allow the Committee on Appropriations to make their allocations within the discretionary accounts. They make that decision and bring bills to the floor to fit within that budget so that in final analysis we are able to stay within that budget overall and not increase the deficit and not borrow more money and not add to the national debt.

But we will continue to hear today that this is an important program and it needs our support. And it does need our support and it already has our support because it is moving through in the Department of Defense authorization.

The House should not be in a position of having to take up this bill. Under section 302(f) of the Congressional Budget Act, it is not in order for the House to even consider a measure that breaches the 302(b) allocation, Mr. Speaker. It is not even in order to consider this bill. And there are all sorts of mechanisms available to the Committee on Appropriations prior to bringing this bill to the floor, to make their adjustments to ensure that this bill meets its allocation.

The purpose of this rule is not to put a burden on enforcing the budget on the committee while it is moving the bill. Nevertheless, in a dramatic lapse of what I would call parliamentary responsibility and budget discipline, the rule waives this point of order. The rule shifts the burden for bringing the bill into compliance with the resolution away from the committee that is responsible, away from the Committee on Appropriations that we ask to make the tough decisions, to make the tough political decisions when they are political, like this one will have to be because people will make political points about this, about people not caring, about people not supporting, about people not wanting our military families to live in decent housing.

□ 1045

Well, there is not a Member of this body, not a Member of this body on either side, who should be accused of that or who would suggest that the men and women who serve in our military, who fight for freedom, should live in sub-quality housing. That is why we have the program. That is why the Department of Defense authorization lifts the cap and works to ensure that our men and women in the military have the ability to do just that.

Faced with the choice, and it is an unfortunate choice that I believe we are faced with today, of enforcing the budget resolution or supporting this rule, I believe it is my job as the chairman of the Committee on the Budget to enforce the budget; to listen to the men and women in the military who think their choice is more important than all sorts of choices that have been made and are going to be made in subsequent appropriation bills, number one, and also listen to the unbelievable amount, it should not be unbelievable,

it is actually believable to me, but the growing chorus of people across this country that say you in Congress spend too much money. Set your priorities. Determine what is important. Support our military families, and find something that is not quite as high a priority to cut out of the budget, to postpone until next year, to eliminate entirely.

The waste, fraud and abuse that is going on in this budget, that is going on in this government, that goes on as a result of what we continue to perpetuate without making those tough choices, is what we have to come through. Are the choices tough? Of course they are tough. But remember 2 weeks ago when we had that budget debate; when everybody said please, take away those tough choices for me. Come up with new rules that have commissions, outside commissions, to make these decisions. Or let us do something so that I do not have to make these tough choices, so I do not have to choose between military families and waste within other Departments of the government.

I know what my choice is. My choice is let us eliminate the waste. My choice is let us support those families, just like everybody else here on the floor would choose.

Instead, unfortunately, what happens today is we have a bill that comes to the floor that not only busts the overall budget, but busts its total allocation for this bill alone by 10 percent. That is irresponsible to our military families, and that is irresponsible to the fiscal integrity of this government.

We should not adopt this rule. If it is adopted, I will move to strike this provision. I ask for people to vote in opposition to this rule.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Will the chairman of the Committee on the Budget please remain for a question? Will the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) please remain for a question? I do not think he meant to intentionally misstate a fact.

I would point out that the authorization bill lifts the cap for 2006. It does not lift it for 2005. In fact, the administration has asked for the $500 million.

I do not think the gentleman intentionally meant to misstate the fact, but he did make a misstatement of fact on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I think that the speech we just heard indeed does illustrate rather dramatically the difference in priorities between most of us on this side of the aisle and many others on that side of the aisle.

What is before us is this: we routinely see Members of both parties in this House talk about the need for shared sacrifice, and we routinely see Members of both political parties posing for political holy pictures because they both profess to be so concerned about the welfare of our soldiers who are fighting our wars on behalf of our national interest. But this rule walks away blatantly—it walks away from our obligation to those military families who are the backbone of our military efforts, whether in Iraq or other places around the world.

Now, the bill as it was reported by the Committee on Appropriations at the request of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), who is the primary mover on this issue, included a provision which allowed the Military Housing Privatization Program to continue to operate. That is important, because 160,000 military families right now live in sub-standard housing, and the provision in this bill to raise the cap on that program would have helped 50,000 of those military families to wind up living in decent housing. This rule will allow a single Member of this House to knock out that provision.

So here we are in the middle of a war. We talk about shared sacrifice, but in the end, how does that shared sacrifice really apply? To some folks in the military, those folks are asked to do their duty not just once, but twice. Some of them have already done one tour in Iraq. Now they are being called upon to do it again. Meanwhile, the rest of us in the country can sit back and ''sacrifice'' by accepting our tax cuts.

Now, the gentleman who just spoke, the chairman of the Committee on the Budget, produced a budget resolution which sacrificed virtually every national priority to his preference that we provide supersized tax cuts to people who make $1 million a year. So the budget resolution which that gentleman brought to the floor guaranteed that we were going to be able to give $90,000 tax cuts to people who make $1 million a year.

Where did the money come from? By squeezing on military housing, by squeezing on aid to education, by squeezing on health research at NIH, by squeezing on law enforcement funding.

The gentleman has very frankly stated his priorities, and I congratulate him for his honesty. I do not think much of his judgment, however, because if we were to follow his judgment and if we vote for this rule, that gentleman will be allowed to strike this provision on military housing.

If we follow this rule, if we allow this rule to pass, we will be in a situation where one Member of the House can exercise his personal preferences and knock out the provision that the Committee on Appropriations, on a bipartisan basis, put in this bill, to try to provide some help to the people who are doing the most to support the national policies of this country, and that is military families. I think that the result of this rule would be shameful.

Now, frankly, I was surprised when I heard the gentleman from Iowa oppose the rule, because this rule is here because of his pressure on the Committee on Rules. But, Mr. Speaker, now as I think about it, I finally realize what the game is. The gentleman from Iowa wanted the Committee on Rules to do the dirty work. He wanted them to directly eliminate that provision, rather than having to take the personal heat by standing up and knocking out that provision on a point of order.

Well, I would suggest the way to correct this problem is to vote down this rule, to vote down the previous question so that we can bring to the House a bill which protects this provision. The rule provided waivers for all kinds of other provisions in the bill. Why did it exempt from that protection military families who need our help the most?

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I would announce to my colleagues, especially on the Committee on Appropriations, that I intend to vote for this rule. But there is one part of the rule that I do not like. I wish that the rule would have protected language relative to military housing.

I am really proud of the Committee on Appropriations and the Congress, because we have done an awful lot for the members of our military services, as we should; and there is a lot more that needs to be done. There are some 24,000 military families anxiously awaiting for this bill to pass so that they can get in line to receive one of those new housing projects.

Some of our military families live in great housing that has been produced through this public-private venture system and at a very low cost to the government, I might say. For every dollar it costs the government, there is $11 of private money invested, and these kids have great places to live. But there are at least 24,000 of our servicemen today who still do not have a decent place to live, and that is what this bill seeks to create and to fix housing for them.

The amendment that is in question does not appropriate any money. I do not see why the budget chairman is so exercised. We did not appropriate any additional money. The amendment that was offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) and by the ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), was strictly to raise the limit on the amount of money the government could enter into with the contractors. We did not appropriate a single additional dollar; and we did not need to, because of the great way this program works.

The chairman of the Committee on the Budget also said, why do this? It has already been done.

That is not true. It has not been done. The authorizing committee would like to do it, but they face the

same budgetary constraints that we face—not dollars, not money being spent by the Federal Government, just to raise the limit on the amount of money that the Federal Government can enter into contracts with private contractors.

It was suggested that we should have made changes in the budget process, and I agree with that. Let me tell you what one of the changes ought to be: the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget is basing his position on scoring by CBO, the Congressional Budget Office. I would like to base mine on OMB, the Office of Management and Budget.

OMB likes this provision, and they say that it is not going to cost any more money. The Administration in their Statement of Administration Policy, and the President, strongly support the provision that we are talking about. They say OMB would not score any additional cost to this provision because it does not increase the amount of budget authority available to the Department of Defense.

So, yes, we need budget process reform. We need to have the people that are scoring our appropriations bills reading from the same page. You cannot have CBO scoring something one way and OMB scoring it another way. That is one of the process changes that we need to make and that we will offer at a later date.

Mr. Speaker, this is important to our kids that serve in the military. As I said, we have done a lot for them, and we sent them to war. Most of the people that are concerned about this budget situation voted to send them to war. And when you go to the hospitals, as I do on a regular basis, to visit the kids, they want to get better, they want to get back to the fight, but they also want to know, if someone is taking care of their family. Are they going to live in decent housing? Are they going to have enough money to buy food for the kids, and things like this.

We owe these kids decent places to live. If we are going to send them to war, we owe them a quality of life that is better than so many of them are living today.

So we have a lot of work to do. The Committee on Appropriations, I believe, has made a great step forward in this bill by adding this language to allow the Department of Defense to increase the amount of authority that they would give to the private-public venture that provides housing for our military families.

There is a lot more that we have to do for these kids. They are paying a lot. The sacrifice is great, the separation from family, the facing of an enemy that is not even known in most cases, the problems they are facing in trying to secure America and our interests against terrorism and the terrorists who would threaten our very way of life. We owe them a lot more than we are doing for them now.

MILITARY HOUSING PRIVATIZATION

The Military Housing Privatization Initiative was started in 1996. This program has successfully converted, 62,000 units and I have seen most of them. The program is extremely popular with military families who are clamoring to get out of the rat traps and into new homes.

The program is extremely fiscally conservative. Every $1 of federal money leverages $11 of private investment.

The provision in the Military Construction bill enhances the privatization program. Without it, the Department of Defense will have to forgo the creation of 24,000 additional homes.

This provision simply raises the cap on the amount the Federal Government can contribute to the program. It does not appropriate one single additional dime for the program. The administration strongly supports this provision. Let me read from the Statement of Administration Policy on the bill. I quote, "The administration strongly supports the provision that would increase the military housing privatization cap from $850 million to $1.35 billion. This increase will improve the quality of life of our military families." OMB estimates that if this cap is not lifted the program will shut down in November of this year.

For 6 years CBO scored this provision the same as OMB. For some reason, this year they have changed their position. Their explanation is long and exceedingly complex. OMB disagrees totally with this interpretation. If there ever is a case to be made for directed scorekeeping, this is it.

I am extremely disappointed that this provision was not protected by the rule and will probably be struck by a point of order. It has been said we will fix it later—why wait—now is better than later.

FACT SHEET

Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) began in 1996. As of February 2004, DOD privatized over 55,000 units through 27 projects—the current plan is for 171,000 units, probably more.

DOD projects that it will privatize over 43,000 units in FY 2005. Of these, DOD estimates that 24,000 units are threatened by the cap.

Affected installations include Fort Drum (2,272 units), Fort Bliss (2,752 units), Eglin AFB (2,155 units), McGuire AFB/Fort Dix (2,592 units).

DOD estimates that about half of current housing inventory is still inadequate (too small, inferior to current design standards, etc.).

Secretary of Defense has established goal of eliminating inadequate housing inventory by 2007 (with exception of four Air Force installations by 2008 and Air Force overseas by 2009). This goal is impossible without MHPI.

Average ratio of private to Federal dollars is 11:1.

Privatization is undertaken only where housing market and life cycle analysis indicate that it is the best option. DOD will still rely primarily on existing housing market to meet service members' needs.

□ 1100

The least we can do is give our military servicemen a nice place to live, for them and their families.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, this rule is a slap in the face to America's military families. They have a right to be outraged, and they will be when they find out what happens on the House floor today.

This rule says to our military families, many of them who have loved ones serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, that the House Republican leadership has made tax cuts for Members of Congress this year a higher priority than better housing for military families.

With this rule, we put at risk the most important military housing program in American history, the public-private initiative. To do so any time would be wrong. To do so during a time of war is unconscionable.

The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) owe our military families and all who respect them an answer to one question: Why is it that you can support just 2 months ago on this House Floor a $69 billion tax break that benefits Members of Congress, but today, we cannot afford to continue our military housing program for 50,000 military families?

Perhaps the answer was given by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) in his speech to bankers in March of 2003, just 1 week before the Iraqi war began, when he said this: "Nothing is more important in the face of war than cutting taxes." Nothing is more important in the face of war than cutting taxes.

I would like to invite the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) to Fort Hood in my district, which has sent nearly 40,000 Army soldiers to Iraq this year alone, to explain why they can bring to the House Floor 2 months ago a bill that cut taxes for Members of Congress making $157,000-plus a year, but they cannot find a way today to protect the most important military housing program ever for service men and women making $20,000 and $30,000 a year. Where is the fairness in that?

Is cutting taxes for Members of Congress while freezing military housing improvements for our troops the leadership's new definition of shared sacrifice during time of war? If so, it is a flawed definition.

Have our military families not sacrificed enough already? Why should 50,000 military families in 22 States now have to sacrifice their dream of better military housing so we can help pay for a self-serving tax cut for Members of Congress?

What is happening today on this floor is an insult to the incredible sacrifices made by our service men and women.

Oh, and how times have changed for the worst. Instead of President Franklin Roosevelt asking all Americans to sacrifice after Pearl Harbor, the House leadership, in the midst of our war on terrorism, is saying with its words and its deeds that nothing is more important in the face of war than cutting taxes.

We are going to hear a lot of excuses today. We are going to hear that technicalities prevent us from preventing a

freeze on the most important military housing program ever. Baloney. The House Committee on Rules, with one phone call from the Speaker, could have done what it has done repeatedly in this Congress on 25 occasions: protect an important provision in this bill from a technical point of order. Unbelievably, unbelievably, that call was not made.

Unfortunately, the same House leadership that told the Committee on Rules to bring a tax cut, helping Members of Congress, to the floor 2 months ago, could not make that phone call to protect military families today. We will hear a lot of excuses about how, well, there are other ways to solve the military housing program crisis. Well, that is exactly what they are, excuses.

Those same Committee on the Budget members failed to solve this problem in the Committee on the Budget. Then they failed to work with the Committee on Armed Services to solve the problem for fiscal year 2005 in the Committee on Armed Services bill. That was two strikes. Now, when the Committee on Appropriations is trying to solve the problem in a bipartisan way and support our military families, these same folks want to prohibit us from doing so. Three strikes, and they are out.

Sadly, though, the people who will be left out in the cold are not Members of Congress who pretend to be fiscal hawks when it comes to funding military housing improvements, but turned into fiscal doves when it came to passing a $69 billion tax break that put money in our pockets. These same people will be leaving 50,000 military families in 22 States out in the cold.

We will hear excuses that military families will just have to wait for Members of Congress to have our 5-week vacation in July and August, and maybe the same House leaders we have who have ignored this housing crisis for the last 6 months will find a way to solve the problem, after campaign trips in August and beach vacations.

I would suggest that leaders in Congress who found the time to rename dozens of post offices this year and schedule tax cuts, votes on tax cuts for Members of Congress like me, maybe they should find the time to solve the military housing crisis now, before they go on vacation, before they make their dozens of campaign stops and fund-raising events in the month ahead. When it comes to solving a serious military housing crisis, the House Republican leadership has been AWOL.

Fortunately, there have been many Members such as the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) and others who have tried to come together to do the right thing.

Let me be clear. I am not asking the House Republican leadership, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) to put themselves today in harm's way like so many of the soldiers from Fort Hood in my district are in Iraq today. However, in all due respect, I would hope the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) would support our troops by saying that, Do my colleagues know what? The military housing crisis should be solved before, not after, we take our 5-week August vacation.

Perhaps a little bit of shared sacrifice during a time of war is not too much to ask for our military families who have already made incredible sacrifices on behalf of the American family. After all, despite the statement of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) that nothing is more important in the face of war than tax cuts, the vast majority of Americans would agree that there is something far more important than tax cuts, and especially tax cuts for Members of Congress during a time of war. It would be more important to support our troops and to support their loved ones, their families, to allow them to live in decent housing while they are giving up so much for our country.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me finish with this. There are moments when support for our military families ought to be more important than loyalty, blind loyalty to the House Speaker and the majority leader. I would suggest today is one of those times. During a time of war on terrorism, let us send a bipartisan vote and a message to our military families by saying, we are not going to go away on vacation in August until we solve the military housing crisis; and that, yes, the House leadership is not perfect, and today it is wrong to bring a rule to this floor that would help one person defeat the most important military housing program in American history.

The vote is what really counts, not our speeches today, and the vote will say this: What is more important, loyalty to the House Republican leadership or loyalty to the military men and women who are making such tremendous sacrifices on behalf of all Americans?

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It is obviously political season, and when it is politically convenient, deficits are a huge problem on the other side of the aisle, but they are not willing to make any sacrifices in any other areas to be fiscally responsible to all of our citizens.

There is no one in this House who does not support our troops and wants to see more military housing. But I really feel that today, in this debate I am listening to, our troops are being used as a pawn, and that is very disturbing to me. Yes, this is an agenda of our President, but I would also like to remind the other side that tax cuts were also a priority of our President.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG), the chairman of the subcommittee.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

I rise in very reluctant support of this rule. I am eager to see this bill move forward. It is my bill. It is our committee's bill. But I am disappointed in one particular aspect of this rule.

The rule does not protect section 129 of the bill from a point of order. Section 129 raises the cap on the military family housing privatization program. This provision does not appropriate one dime in any new money; it merely increases the authorization level in order to allow fiscal year 2005 projects to proceed.

The chairman of the Committee on the Budget referenced the defense authorization bill. It does not even touch on 2005. It talks about 2006. This money, if the cap is not removed, is going to disappear by about November.

Unfortunately, CBO has decided that this provision should be scored. Its rationale for doing so is a little strange and thoroughly unconvincing. The crucial point is this: If the developer cannot service the debt on a project, the Federal Government is not on the hook. This has been stated over and over. There is no backing of any kind for the developer's private debt.

The bottom line is that this is a bookkeeping dispute with CBO, nothing more. But because of the decision of the CBO, this provision is vulnerable to a point of order, and I was hoping that this rule would waive that point of order.

By the way, CBO and OMB scored this the same way since 1996, but this year CBO decided to change it. Nothing in the program has changed, but CBO decided to change the scoring.

The housing privatization program is an enormously successful and popular program. I cannot think of a single person, including the chairman of the Committee on the Budget himself, who has expressed opposition to this program. The administration put out a statement on the bill that strongly, strongly supports the provision. They do not agree with CBO's scoring.

Earlier this year, my subcommittee heard from military spouses who testified to the positive difference that this program made in their lives. Let me just quote from one spouse, Mrs. Susan Sinclair of Fort Rucker, Alabama.

''Thank you for your efforts to improve our housing. The Residential Communities Initiative, RCI, has made many of our government neighborhoods look like civilian communities. My neighbor received a letter from her daughter stating that Camp Humphreys, Korea,'' we are talking about Korea now, ''had the best housing in the Army. What a change. As many of you know from my testimony 3 years ago, when my husband and I were stationed in Camp Humphreys, we lived in a condemned Quonset hut.''

By the way, that still exists around the world, around this country in many ways, too.

''This new housing is a testament to your committee's desire to improve the quality of life of our soldiers and their families. I want you to know how much we appreciate your efforts.'' By the way, we have many of those.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard positive comments like this all the way up to the Joint Chiefs level. I really want to identify, too, with the comments of the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG), because I think he had some very, very significant points.

I have personally seen this housing program and many members of this subcommittee have done so as well, and they have done some great work. Some new communities have been built, and this is a vast improvement.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I again say that I will support this rule, but only with serious reservations.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no way I can support this rule.

Last night, the Republican leadership of this House once again turned its back on military families trying to find a decent place to live. On bill after bill after bill, this Republican majority has chosen to waive all points of order, but on this bill, the Speaker and the majority leader refused to protect the Military Housing Privatization Initiative provision in the Military Construction bill from a point of order, despite the support of the President of the United States and the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services.

The leadership's decision dooms the important military housing provision, and it is wrong; and it is wrong particularly in a time of war.

The housing initiative is a public-private partnership that allows developers and property managers to build or renovate homes for use by military personnel. It is extremely successful. In fact, it has already provided decent housing to more than 60,000 military families, exceeding all expectations. If adequately funded, this initiative will enable the military to eliminate nearly all inadequate units within the U.S. by 2008.

Unfortunately, the law establishing the initiative limits total Federal spending on this program.

□ 1115

This limit will be reached by this November, effectively sounding the death knell for the expectations of 50,000 military families at 27 military bases in 22 States who are desperately waiting for these homes over the next 2 years.

Now, faced with this housing catastrophe, the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), with the bipartisan support of their committee, increased the MHPI cap by $500 million, the amount needed this year to continue upgrading and building military housing under this program.

Mr. Speaker, it is the practice of the Republican leadership in the Committee on Rules to allow points of order to be raised if the chairman of the authorizing committee objects to the inclusion of any provision legislating on an appropriations bill. The chairman of the Committee on Rules consistently explains this whenever Democrats on the Committee on Rules ask why a rule does not protect a certain provision. Yet in this case, the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the authorizing committee, supports raising the MHPI cap in this bill.

Not only that, the President of the United States supports the raising of the cap in this bill; but the Republican leadership, despite all their rhetoric about supporting our troops, has once again turned their backs on our troops and their families.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of those defining moments. If Members of this House want to support our troops and their families, then they will reject this rule. If Members of this House want their actions to match their rhetoric, then they will reject this rule. Each year I have watched the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) do their best for our military personnel and their families with one of the most inadequate allocations in the budget. This year they tackled the difficult challenge of providing decent housing for our military families around the country. They did the right thing in this bill and in return only ask for protection for this important provision, and what they got from the Republican leadership was a slap in the face.

I urge my colleagues to defeat the previous question, support our troops, and support the families of our troops.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER).

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Generally speaking, the authorizing committee, the Committee on Armed Services in this case, would be heavily attending this particular debate to object to the appropriators making policy on an appropriations bill. In this case, we are not doing that. We do strongly support raising this cap, and the reason we want to do that is because for over the last several years, we have played by the rules. We have done everything, I think, according to the rules. We have engaged with the Committee on the Budget, and the chairman of the Committee on the Budget is a very fine individual and has worked hard and diligently with us over the last many years to put together good defense budgets, as has the Republican leadership. We have got a very good package this year; but the one thing we have not been able to accomplish is to raise this cap, and at risk right now are some 24,000 units.

Now, I would just implore the Committee on the Budget and their very distinguished leader, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE), to work with us on this one. Let us pull together on this one. This is one time when the authorizers are willing to not protect their turf, because things do not come wrapped in neat packages; and this is one of those times when we are going to have to make a package that is a little bit different from the standard package. That means doing everything with very vigilant protection of turf by authorizers during the appropriations process.

We support this, and in the end we have got lots of folks that are serving in theatre right now. Quality of life is still a major, major issue with our military families; and we have seized on this new method, this privatization of vastly increasing that quality of life. In the interest of doing that, we are willing to give up this piece of turf at this time and go forward with this fix on this very difficult problem so that we can get more military housing for our military families, and I would just implore the Committee on the Budget to hang with us on this one. Let us all pull together, let us get this thing through, and I would hope that no one objects when it gets to the appropriate point in the debate.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES).

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, about 2,500 military families at Fort Bliss, Texas, which is in my district, are planning, or were planning, to live in new, improved homes thanks to the military housing privatization plan that is scheduled, or was scheduled, to start this year.

However, because of this rule, this rule will prevent these families and thousands of others across the country from receiving the same improved housing they desperately need and they deserve. The Residential Communities Initiative, RCI, is a Military Housing Privatization Initiative that aims to eliminate inadequate housing on Army bases by 2007.

I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), and the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) who have worked very hard to support our troops and to get a provision in the MILCON appropriations bill to increase the cap for the MHPI program.

But this irresponsible rule would effectively strip that provision from the bill. So today I want to ask and urge my colleagues to vote against this rule so that military families across the country can receive improved housing that they so desperately need and so much deserve. At a time when our men and women in uniform and their families are sacrificing so much for our Nation, this, I think, is the very least we can do.

And I want to remind all of you, all of you, my colleagues, that it is not enough to say that we support our troops. It is not enough to say that our troops are performing professionally. It is not enough to say that our troops are performing heroically and then turn around and shaft their families by eliminating this critically needed military housing initiative.

Our troops, their families, and America are watching what we do here today. If you vote for this rule, you are voting against our military families. Let us reject this rule and put our money where our mouths have been. Let us not just talk the talk time and time again on this floor, but it is time to walk the walk. Support our military families. They are watching what we do, and they will hold those responsible accountable, as they should.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in very reluctant support of this rule and with great concern about the provision that would permit an objection to be offered to the military housing provisions in the bill. Mr. Speaker, much has been said about this provision already, and I would just add this, that many of us, all Members of Congress, work to support the men and women who sign up on a volunteer basis to be members of the armed services. When they sign up, we spend millions and billions of dollars on training, recruitment, trying to make sure that the all-volunteer force remains a professional force, and that depends on retention. If we do not have the men and women who volunteer to join the service and who we spend billions of dollars to train, if they do not decide to stay in the military forces, then our all-volunteer force cannot work.

The quality-of-life issues become extremely important, and one of the most important quality of life issues is housing. Currently, we are behind in providing housing for our military families. If we increased our military construction budget by $1 billion a year for 20 years, we would catch up. Obviously, we cannot afford to increase our military construction budget by $1 billion a year for 20 years to do that catchup.

However, if DOD invests $500 million and leverages the balance of what we need to provide housing through this military construction program, we will be able to solve this problem in a relatively short period of time. The program is working. It has proven to be successful, and to remove the legislative cap in fiscal year 2005 is extremely important. We on the authorization committee have provided a provision to increase it in 2006, but to skip a year, which puts us that much further behind. And, therefore, I would urge the chairman of the Committee on the Budget, who has indicated that he is going to raise this objection, not to do so.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, this is not brain surgery. I for myself will vote against this rule, because to vote otherwise would be to vote against the wonderful troops and their families. I just cannot do that.

Let me explain. At the start of fiscal year 2004, the services reported that almost half of the military families' houses were inadequate. We know that they deserve better. The Military Housing Privatization Initiative has an innovative way to address the problem, and when we started the program we made sure it would work.

I am speaking for the troops and their families, and everybody ought to listen today as we speak. Nothing is more important than those young people, those young families that we are charged with raising and supporting. It is more than having a bumper sticker on your car that says, ''Support the troops.'' Right here today by voting against this rule that does away with the opportunity for a clear shot at additional housing is most important.

So what we have to do is to allow this rule to be put back, that we have the opportunity to submit, as the committees intended to do but could not do for the year 2005, all because of the CBO scoring.

We need not go into the complexities of the rule. We need not go into how it was drafted or the point of order that many of us are fearful will be raised. It boils down to whether we support the troops, not just by a bumper sticker, but whether we support them with our votes, because they deserve it so much.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH).

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

As the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Total Force, I just wanted to rise and associate myself, really, with the comments of all of us who have stood up and talked about the importance of our military housing program. It has been a money saver. I think, frankly, Mr. Speaker, the problem is less with the rule than any Member who may exercise the authority given under the rule. If, in fact, this bill goes forward and no one stands to rise in objection, this program that needs to go forward is a taxpayer savings; and most importantly, as everyone has said, placing our military family in much better and much more attractive housing is the right thing to do.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for my colleague, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE), and I understand the position he has taken; but let me suggest that this is a case where an exception should be made and to explain why, let me go quickly through the history of this program.

The Military Housing Privatization Program was established in 1996 and 1997. OMB established how the program should be scored, how it would reflect the cost to the government.

From 1997 until and through this year, OMB has stood by that methodology. If we follow that methodology, we would not be having this debate. In 1996, the committee established a cap of $850 million to make sure that the program worked as intended, and the program has worked as intended. It has exceeded the expectations.

□ 1130

The cap, $850 million cap, was based on OMB's method of scoring. And, once again, if we used that method of scoring, we would have no problem today.

In 2002, we asked OMB and DOD to reaffirm the methodology, and OMB and DOD came back and reaffirmed the methodology. CBO only changed its notion of how these scorings should be done in this year, midstream.

November of this year, the cap we set several years ago will be reached. In the Committee on Armed Services we abided by this fact, and using the revised CBO scoring, we provided an offset of $6.5 billion. The problem is, that will not kick until 2006. Over 2005 and 2006, the DOD has planned to build 50,000 units. If we cannot do what the bill does today, or would do today, that will leave 24,000 military families out in the cold because of an arcane scoring difference between OMB and CBO.

Let me simply say in conclusion, we are not calling for free-lancing. We are not calling for some pull-it-out-of-the-sky number. We are simply saying we will stick with the scoring this program has used since its inception, still used by OMB, as opposed to having CBO's scoring. If we do that, we do not have a problem here.

There is no need for a point of order. The bill should be passed as is. But the rule, if it does not protect that provision, should be voted down.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, one very important part of this debate that we have not gotten to: Most Members of the House support this provision for family housing. The President of the United States supports this provision for family housing. The members of our military who are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places support this provision for family housing. But if we do not pass the rule, if we shoot the rule down, then nothing happens, including family housing.

If, in fact, the rule passes and we get to the bill, maybe we can prevail upon everyone not to raise that point of order so that they do not appear to be the Grinch that stole Christmas from our military families.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KIRK). The gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) has 4 minutes remaining. The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) has 3 minutes remaining.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS).

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, this is a disgrace. I have served on the Subcommittee on Defense of the Committee on Appropriations for 26 years, the Subcommittee on Military Construction for 18 years.

The administration, the Department of Defense, the House Committee on Armed Services, the House Committee on Appropriations and the Subcommittee on Military Construction all support raising this provision. The Committee on the Budget is coming in here and prevailed on the House leadership.

Now, I have heard a lot of rhetoric in this Presidential Campaign about certain votes in the other body where people did not vote for a certain supplemental appropriation for our troops. I want to say it very clearly. The American people are going to judge the majority party here today. If they go out here and vote for this rule that allows this provision to be stricken, they are voting against the men and women in the military of our country. It is simply that clear.

I have always believed this House would always rise up in a bipartisan way and get the job done, when it counted, for our men and women in the field. This will be one of the few times in my 28 years in this House where that does not happen because of the Committee on the Budget and the CBO.

OMB supports this. DOD supports it. The President, the Secretary of Defense, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG). Come on. Let us support this bill.

Let us override the Committee on the Budget.

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my Republican colleagues who genuinely supported improving military housing. But today the only vote that counts is a ''no'' vote against the rule, a rule that would allow one Member of this House to put on freeze during a time of war the most important military housing program in American history.

Let there be no surprise for anyone who votes for this rule that if our colleague, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE), were to use his prerogative under this rule to kill this housing program, then, in effect, regardless of the good intentions, a ''yes'' vote for this rule is a ''no'' vote for better housing for tens of thousands of military families, even families who have loved ones serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Let us rise above loyalty to the House Speaker and to the majority leader. Let us once say together during time of war on a bipartisan basis, we are going to do what is right. And if that means voting against a dictate from the Speaker's office on how to vote for this rule so that we can join together to improve housing for military families, then that is the right thing to do.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

If I understand what is going on on the other side during the last 30 minutes, several Republican Members, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), basically urged the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) not to shoot the wounded. They have basically urged him not to try and strike this provision by objecting to it as a violation of the Rules.

What we want to do, of course, is take the gun out of the gentleman from Iowa's (Mr. NUSSLE) hand by protecting this provision so that he will not be able to shoot the wounded.

Mr. Speaker, I will call for a ''no'' vote on the previous question. If the previous question is defeated, I will offer an amendment to the rule that will protect the section of the bill that raises the cap on the Military Housing Privatization Program and ensures that more of our troops and their families will be able to live in good housing.

I offered this same amendment in the Committee on Rules last night, where it was defeated on a straight party-line vote.

Mr. Speaker, I have served in Congress for 26 years now. In all those years, I have thought that one thing that both sides of the aisle could agree on was our support for our troops and making sure that their needs will always be addressed. I guess what I thought was wrong.

Now we will be able to go forward. If we defeat the previous question, then we will be able to offer it. We will be able to protect this provision, and this bill will be able to be voted on. A vote against the previous question is the only way you protect our troops and the only way you protect the military housing provision in this bill.

If we succeed on the previous question, then there will be a vote on the rule with our protection of that provision, and this bill can be brought to the floor.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FROST. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. EDWARDS. Could I ask the gentleman to make it clear now to all House Members?

What the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) has said is that if we defeat the previous question, then we can bring back the Military Construction appropriations bill today and pass it out of this House today in a way that protects this vitally important military housing improvement program. Is that correct? We were not talking about a 1-week or 2-week delay.

Mr. FROST. That is correct.

Again, vote ''no'' on the previous question.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of the amendment immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Rules, to close.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule.

It has been just a few weeks since we memorialized Ronald Reagan. His body was lying here in state in the Rotunda, and we had people on both sides of the aisle talk about the legacy of Ronald Reagan. And one of the things that Ronald Reagan succeeded in doing was getting both sides of the aisle to talk about deficit spending and fiscal responsibility.

I think it is very important for us to note that as we deal with this issue, everyone else, everyone else on both sides of the aisle, along with the leadership, supports the Ronald Reagan vision of ensuring that we have a defense capability that is second to none; ensuring that, as my friend, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) said earlier, we have the opportunity for an incentive for people to maintain their service in the military.

What does that mean? It means ensuring that we take care of families and provide that housing.

My friend, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS) is absolutely right that there is strong bipartisan consensus on that. But there is also a responsibility that we have here to live within our budget. It is wrong to make the claim that it is impossible to deal with the issue of family housing if we all of a sudden do not do exactly what my friend, the gentleman from Dallas, Texas (Mr. FROST) is arguing.

I believe that we are in a position now where we can be fiscally responsible. At the same time, we can comply with the rules of the House, and we can ensure that we deal with this very important issue of housing for our men and women in uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the appropriate thing for us to do is to move ahead, support the previous question; support this rule; allow us to, in a fiscally responsible way, deal with what obviously is a challenging situation.

The material previously referred to by Mr. FROST is as follows:

PREVIOUS QUESTION FOR H. RES. 732: RULE FOR H.R. 4837, FY05 MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS

In the resolution strike the following: ''except: section 129''

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2443, COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION ACT OF 2004

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 730 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 730

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2443) to authorize appropriations for the Coast Guard for fiscal year 2004, to amend various laws administered by the Coast Guard, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 730 is a rule that provides for the consideration of the conference report for H.R. 2443, the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2004. This is a standard rule for a conference report providing for 1 hour of general debate, evenly divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Transportation and the Infrastructure.

The legislation before us authorizes over $8 billion for the Coast Guard, including a commitment to 45,500 active duty personnel in fiscal years 2004 and 2005. This is extremely important legislation to strengthen the Coast Guard in its ever-increasing role of defense of our homeland.

This bill makes a new commitment to the long-term effectiveness of the Coast Guard. The Department of Homeland Security has called on the Coast Guard to be the defender of American ports while at the same time sending needed resources, soldiers and vessels to the battles against terrorism far away.

I am pleased to highlight the Integrated Deepwater Acquisition Program. This program provides the needed capital to carry out effective acquisition of the cutters, computer equipment and other resources that the Coast Guard so desperately needs. The Deepwater System has not received the funding outlined in 1998, but this bill makes up for the delay. The conference report authorizes over $1 billion for the program, accelerating the Deepwater System 5 years ahead of the original 20-year completion time line.

The Coast Guard is particularly important to the community and constituents that I am honored to represent in south Florida. The Coast Guard Integrated Support Command in Miami is essential to the safety and security of residents. The Coast Guard in south Florida coordinates integrated plans aimed at hurricane safety, recreational boater safety and, obviously, protection of our coastline.

The conference report before us was signed by every member of the conference. It is a good bill, essential really to our continued commitment to the security and safety of all citizens and residents of the United States.

I would like to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO), as well as the ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) for their important work.

I urge my colleagues to support both the rule and the underlying legislation.

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

□ 1145

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I thank my colleague, my friend from south Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART), for yielding me the time.

While the two of us, my colleague and I, may have ideological differences from time to time, we are united in our support for the Coast Guard and the sometimes thankless work that they do every day to protect the ports and shores in our home State of Florida, as well as throughout this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the conference report to the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act.

As my colleague from the majority previously mentioned, the conference report authorizes nearly $8.2 billion in fiscal year 2005 for the Coast Guard. This amount is $169 million more than originally approved by the House last October and more than $400 million above what was approved by the other body. These increases are clear indications of this body's commitment to the Coast Guard's pressing needs.

The conference report also includes $1.5 billion for the Coast Guard's acquisitions, construction and improvements account, a $550 million increase above what was requested. This increase is to be used by the Coast Guard to improve its Integrated Deepwater System, as well as assist the Coast Guard to reduce the list of unfunded shore facilities that has grown significantly over the past 5 years.

Furthermore, the conference report increases the number of commissioned officers and includes significant authorizations which will assist the Coast Guard to better meet our port and maritime security needs.

The Department of Homeland Security is also directed in the conference report to provide Congress with reports regarding joint operational centers for port security and port compliance with security standards.

I mention these two reports because of the great work that is being done in my home county, Broward County, at Port Everglades. There are few ports in the country as innovative as Port Everglades when it comes to security. The Port of Palm Beach, located in the district I represent, has also made significant security improvement as a direct result of the port security grant authorized by this conference report.

Mr. Speaker, the Coast Guard is responsible for patrolling the more than 12,400 miles of coastline in the United States. Nearly 2,000 of these miles are located in mine and my colleague's, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART), home State of Florida where the Coast Guard plays an integral role in patrolling our shores and protecting our citizens. The increase in funding provided in the underlying legislation for this important grant of the United States Armed Forces serves as a statement about the role of the Coast Guard in our global war on terrorism.

Reports have shown that America's ports remain susceptible to attack and infiltration by America's enemies. In the last year alone, south Florida's three major ports handled more than 13.2 million tons of cargo. In all, well over 1.5 million shipping containers were processed by south Florida longshoremen during the last year.

Certainly, these statistics highlight the pressing need to increase the number of Customs agents working in America's ports, but they also suggest that the roles of the Coast Guard and Federal Maritime Commission in protecting our ports are greater than ever.

Mr. Speaker, when Congress created the Department of Homeland Security,