Walden (OR)
Walsh
Wamp
Waters
Watson
Watt
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—17

Carson (IN)
Collins
Deutsch
Dingell
Ferguson
Isakson
Istook
Jones (NC)
King (NY)
Majette
Meeks (NY)
Quinn
Rangel
Ros-Lehtinen
Saxton
Strickland
Waxman

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1241

So (two thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

BOB MICHEL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTPATIENT CLINIC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question of suspending the rules and passing the bill, H.R. 4608.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4608, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 407, nays 0, not voting 26, as follows:

[Roll No. 403]

YEAS—407

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Andrews
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Ballenger
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bass
Beauprez
Becerra
Bell
Bereuter
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Bradley (NH)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brown (OH)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Burgess
Burns
Burr
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Cardoza
Carson (OK)
Carter
Case
Castle
Chabot
Chandler
Chocola
Clay
Coble
Conyers
Cooper
Costello
Cox
Cramer
Crane
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cummings
Cunningham
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (TN)
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLay
DeMint
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Dooley (CA)
Doolittle
Doyle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Edwards
Ehlers
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Filner
Flake
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Frost
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gephardt
Gerlach
Gibbons
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Goss
Granger
Graves
Green (TX)
Green (WI)
Greenwood
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Gutknecht
Hall
Harman
Harris
Hart
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoeffel
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley (OR)
Hostettler
Houghton
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hyde
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
Kingston
Kirk
Kleczka
Kline
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kucinich
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Lucas (OK)
Lynch
Maloney
Manzullo
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McInnis
McIntyre
McKeon
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Menendez
Mica
Michaud
Millender-McDonald
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Neal (MA)
Nethercutt
Neugebauer
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nunes
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Osborne
Ose
Otter
Owens
Oxley
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Portman
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Sabo
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanders
Sandlin
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schrock
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherman
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Simmons
Simpson
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stenholm
Stupak
Sullivan
Sweeney
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Toomey
Towns
Turner (OH)
Turner (TX)
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Vitter
Walden (OR)
Walsh
Wamp
Watson
Watt
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—26

Carson (IN)
Clyburn
Cole
Collins
Culberson
DeLauro
Deutsch
Ferguson
Gilchrest
Isakson
Istook
Jones (NC)
King (NY)
Majette
McHugh
Meeks (NY)
Napolitano
Pickering
Quinn
Rangel
Ros-Lehtinen
Saxton
Strickland
Tauzin
Waters
Waxman

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD) (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes to vote.

□ 1248

So (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, today, I missed rollcall votes Nos. 400 through 403. The reason being that I had a prescheduled meeting with the Secretary of Defense at the same time the votes were taking place.

However, had I been present, I would have voted in the following fashion: Vote No. 400, "yea"; Vote No. 401, "yea"; Vote No. 402, "yea"; and Vote No. 403, "yea."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, on July 20, 2004, on rollcall No. 397 regarding H.R. 3574, I inadvertently voted ''yea,'' but meant to vote ''nay.''

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4837, and that I may include tabular material on the same.

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

There was no objection.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 732 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 4837.

□ 1247

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the 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, with Mr. BEREUTER in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG).

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise to present the fiscal year 2005 military construction appropriations bill, which was reported out of the full committee on appropriations on July 9 by voice vote.

Let me at the beginning thank all of the people who contributed to this bill, the subcommittee staff, and my ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS). I want to also call attention to some of the staff who did remarkable work to bring this bill forward: Carol Murphy, Walter Hearne, Eric Elsmo, Mary Arnold and, of course, Tom Forhan on the minority side.

The ultimate purpose of this bill is to support our service men and women by providing a quality of life commensurate with the sacrifices they are called upon to make. I want to thank each Member again of the subcommittee, because they did contribute greatly via, in some cases, CODELs to look at some of the housing, for example, around the country and around the world. I thank them for their hard work and support, and certainly I add to it again the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), who has been a strong and vocal supporter of our men and women in the service for years.

The bill totals $10 billion, which is $162 million above the fiscal year 2004 enacted level and $450 million above the President's request. The bill also contains a general provision related to housing privatization that CBO scores as additional budget authority. I will get to that shortly. But let me emphasize that $10.003 billion is what the bill appropriates, and not a penny more.

Mr. Chairman, we are at war. Many will argue that in such a time as this, when so many of our servicemembers and their families are making great sacrifices, that this bill does not provide enough. In one respect, they are right. There is no question we could do more if we had more. But I think this bill does a lot of good things and provides our active, Guard, and Reserve servicemembers with critically needed infrastructure to meet their mission goals, and it improves housing and community facilities for their families.

That being said, I want to draw some attention now to the highlights of this bill. Within the total amount of $10 billion, the bill provides $5.3 billion for military construction, including $1.1 billion for troop barracks; $833 million for the Guard and Reserve component and other facilities such as schools, fitness centers, and child development centers.

The bill also provides $1.6 billion for family housing construction, including funding for about 18 to 24 privatization projects, depending upon the cost of those projects; $2.5 billion for family housing operations and maintenance; $246 million for costs related to past BRAC rounds; and $166 million for the NATO Security Investment Program.

In addition, the bill fully funds overseas military construction; it fully funds the chemical demilitarization construction program; it provides the requested funds for projects associated with new weapons systems, including the Army Stryker vehicle, the F–22 Raptor fighter jet, and the C–17 Globemaster cargo plane; and provides much needed funding for the Navy to continue replacing inadequate pier infrastructure.

Now I want to say a word or two about the family housing privatization program.

Mr. Chairman, a limitation on budget authority was placed on the program when it was first authorized in 1996. This $850 million cap was put in as a safeguard for what was then a new and untested program, a pilot program, if you will. Eight years later, the program has become one of the most successful programs we have ever had for improving the quality of life and morale of our troops and families.

This cap will be reached before the end of this year; and if action is not taken to increase the limitation in fiscal year 2005, progress on replacing substandard homes will be seriously hampered. Unfortunately, we have run into a scoring issue with the CBO, which has complicated the solving of this problem.

To my colleagues who are concerned about the impact that the provision would have on our budget deficit, I want to say this, and I may have to repeat this: this provision does not appropriate any new money. None. All the money that is needed to support privatization is already contained within the bill. All this provision does is raise the authorization to allow the program to continue. Not a single dime more will be drawn from the Treasury as a result of this provision.

The committee, frankly, disagrees with the new approach that CBO has decided to take to score the program. It does not reflect the reality of the program. To me, since the provision spends no new money, scoring is like building a bridge where there is no water.

Mr. Chairman, this is truly a vital program. To endanger it because of some bookkeeping disagreement would be unwise. I personally have seen the homes being built because of the program, and I have talked to military spouses about how their lives have improved because of this program. You might be interested in knowing twice the percentage of families that are in the military service are married as compared to, say, during the Vietnam War. This is a good program, it is a bipartisan program, and it is a necessary program.

CBO's rationale for how it scores this program is complex, convoluted, and unfounded. Every Member of Congress that I have talked to strongly supports this program, and I mean every Member. Every witness that testified before the subcommittee supports this program, including the Joint Chiefs and the military spouses. The chairman of the Committee on Armed Services supports this program. Even the administration, the White House, and the Department of Defense strongly support the provision and submitted statements to the committee that it would not result in any, any additional cost to the Federal Government. I have not heard from one single person that does not support this program.

If the housing privatization cap is not raised, then 16 projects covering 23 installations spanning 13 States will be affected in fiscal year 2005. The affected projects include major installations in California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. A significant number of Members on both sides of the aisle will feel the impact on their military constituents.

Mr. Chairman, I ask my colleagues for their support of this bill.

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

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I first want to commend the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) for his dedication to improving the quality of life for our military families. His commitment is genuine, and his work on this bill has been thorough and fair, along with the work of his staff. At every step of the way, the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) has put the interests of our service men and women above all other interests. I commend him for that, and he deserves our thanks and respect for that.

Given what I believe is an inadequate allocation for this subcommittee, a 1.6 percent increase in military construction funds during a time of war, an allocation that is nearly a half a billion dollars below what we spent on military construction before the Iraqi war began 2 years ago, given all of that, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG), the subcommittee, and I have worked together to try to maximize the use of these inadequate tax dollars to benefit our troops, and that is why I intend to vote for this bill.

I am also pleased that we have been able to address, as long as no Member of the House objects to it, what could have been a terrible injustice to our military families. Eight years ago, we began a new approach to military housing. We combined Federal dollars with the strengths and resources of the private sector to create public-private partnerships to improve military housing.

This innovative program is saving taxpayers billions of dollars and dramatically improving housing for our military families. Housing that would have taken 50 years to build under the old system is now being done in one-tenth of that time, in 5 years. Through this public-private partnership, we are providing military families with housing that they can be proud of, and certainly they deserve no less.

Unfortunately, the Congressional Budget Office changed the scoring on this process. In my opinion, they erroneously are scoring dollars that businesses borrow to help build these new homes, even though the Federal Government is not responsible for those dollars. OMB disagrees with CBO's approach, and so do I.

Had we, in this committee, on a bipartisan basis under the leadership of the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) not raised the cap on the public-private military housing program, new housing projects would have come to a halt this November, just a few months away, shutting out over 24,000 military families from new houses in fiscal year 2005 and then delaying an additional 25,000 or so, for an impact on almost 50,000 military families in the next 2 years. That would have sent a terrible message to our military families during a time of war. It is also a good reason for no Member to object on a procedural basis, a technical point, against this amendment.

As a member of the Committee on the Budget, I would point out that I made an effort this spring to solve this problem. The Committee on the Budget refused to solve the problem. I then talked to members of the Committee on the Budget and urged them to meet and work with the Committee on Armed Services to address the problem. The Committee on Armed Services did address it for fiscal year 2006, but did not do it for 2005. Had we failed to act in this subcommittee on this bill, it would have been the third strike. Instead, this subcommittee took the responsibility on a bipartisan basis to address this housing crisis.

Mr. Chairman, I want to commend the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) once again for his strong efforts on this particular important issue. It also could not have been done without the strong leadership of the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG) and the Committee on Appropriations and its subcommittee staffs.

If any Member of this House who objects to the increase in the cap on military housing and the directed scoring allows that to happen, let me explain clearly, Mr. Chairman, what the impact will be. Tens of thousands of military families that are planning right now on having new housing built starting next year will have those promises broken, those promises dashed, even families who have loved ones fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

□ 1300

If we do that, it would be a grave injustice to men and women and families who are making incredible sacrifices on behalf of our children.

Considering the fact that the Committee on Rules allows protection against technical points of order every week in this Congress, on a regular basis, for unimportant issues as well as important issues, surely if there was ever a reason to put the interests of military families above the interests of technical points of order, today should be the day, and better housing for those families should be the reason.

Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss not to mention my disappointment concerning the overall funding level in this bill. Our Nation is at war. Our service men and women are risking their lives in Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the world. Military families are making great, great personal sacrifices for the American family. Yet, this bill spends $420 million less on military construction than we spent prior to the Iraqi war. So Congress, in effect, is asking for more from our troops and military families, while spending less on military construction. That does not make sense.

It does not pass the fairness test because it means we are shortchanging military housing, day care centers, training ranges, and military work facilities. That is not right.

If we can make significant new commitments to defense spending and highway spending and countless other programs, why can we not provide more than a 1.6 percent increase in military construction, which is so important to our troops' quality of life and their training and working conditions, especially during a time of war?

In March of last year, as American troops were making the final plans to commence the war in Iraq, the majority leader, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) spoke to bankers and said this: ''Nothing is more important in the face of war than cutting taxes.'' In all due respect to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), that flawed ideology would be hard to explain to the nearly 400,000 Army soldiers I represent at Fort Hood, Texas, nearly 40,000 soldiers who have been asked to serve in Iraq just this year. It would be hard to explain to their spouses and children who have to worry every day whether their loved ones will ever return home.

I believe most Americans, as they did after Pearl Harbor would say, you know what? Supporting our troops and their families during a time of war is far more important than tax cuts, especially if some of those tax cuts benefit Members of Congress, like us. Unfortunately, the inadequate allocation in this bill reflects the ideology of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) rather than the quintessential American value of shared sacrifice during a time of war.

By increasing defense construction spending by only 1.6 percent, not even enough to keep up with inflation, in effect, in that way, it is a real cut in military construction and quality-of-life programs. It spends $420 million, as I said, less than we spent 2 years ago before the Iraq war even began, and even $900 million less in this bill that the administration, the Bush administration, said was needed for military construction just 12 months ago.

If anyone thinks this allocation was not decided by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) or me or this committee, but was decided by a higher pay grade in this House leadership, if anyone thinks this allocation we had to deal with is adequate, let me remind them of some of the facts provided by the Department of Defense: Number one, 39,000 Army families live in inadequate housing; number two, 34,000 Army barracks do not meet even basic Department of Defense standards; number three, 16,000 Navy and Marine Corps families live in inadequate housing; number four, 31,000 Air Force families live in inadequate housing; number five, 70 percent of Army facilities are C–3 or C–4, which means mission impaired; number six, 66 percent, two-thirds, of Air Force facilities are C–3 or C–4, again meaning that the mission of those facilities could be impaired.

Just a month ago, the House voted for a new $69 billion tax break that will not help our military families, but it will just happen to provide a $1,000 tax credit to Members of Congress such as myself for every child that we have. So I will receive a $2,000 tax credit as a result of that bill that the House voted for, over my objection, 2 months ago.

Now, how can we look today in the faces of our service men and women, look them in the eye and say, last month we could afford to pass a $69 billion child tax credit that applies to people making between $110,000 and $250,000 a year, but today, we cannot even afford 5 percent of that amount to provide a decent increase in military construction funding for military families making $20,000 and $30,000 a year. I just do not see the fairness in that.

Every one of us, Mr. Chairman, Democrat and Republican alike, genuinely respects the service and sacrifices of our troops and their families. No one, no one should doubt that. But I strongly believe that it is time that our budget priorities in Congress should better reflect that respect. Our service men and women deserve no less.

Despite the objections I have to the underfunding of this, despite my concern that perhaps a Member of Congress, for whatever reason, well-intentioned or not, might strike an amendment that would literally freeze the most important military housing program ever, because of the strong leadership of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG), because of the bipartisan way in which he worked this bill, because of his deep commitment and our committee's work to spend an inadequate amount of dollars as efficiently as we possibly could, I intend to vote for this legislation.

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

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. GRANGER), who is also a member of the subcommittee.

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of this important bill that provides for our military and their families. First, I want to commend the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman Knollenberg) for putting together a great bill, and I also want to commend the ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) for his work on the bill.

The military construction bill for fiscal year 2005 provides just over $10 billion for construction at our military bases here at home and overseas, and also for important family housing projects and quality-of-life initiatives at our military installations. Among other things, the bill provides funding for new barracks, medical and dental facilities, and fitness centers and child development centers for our troops and their families. The bill also provides funding for construction projects that support major weapons programs like the F/A–22 Raptor and the Joint Strike Fighter.

I strongly support the inclusion of the provision in this bill to raise the cap on the Military Family Housing Privatization Initiative. If we do not raise this cap, this privatization initiative will come to a halt in November of this year and jeopardize projects to build or renovate 50,000 housing units for our military families. This program is simply the best way to improve housing for our troops and their families.

Additionally, the bill includes several important construction projects for Naval Air Station/joint Reserve Base, Fort Worth, in my district.

It is absolutely essential that we pass this bill to support our military men and women and their families during this time of war. Again, I thank the chairman for his great work on this bill.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), a very effective and hard-working member of the Subcommittee on Military Construction.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I thank the gentleman from Michigan (Chairman KNOLLENBERG) for his leadership on this bill.

We have just had a long debate on this military housing issue, and I think what is missing in it is a little bit of understanding of what it is all about.

Several years ago, Congress authorized that instead of designing military housing, instead of funding and building it, essentially putting up taxpayers' money and then going out to bid and building it to a military plan, we decided why not allow the private sector to build this housing, build it more like the housing that is in the communities, higher quality housing, and build it to the standards that are normally found in the private sector in housing; and this was called the RCI, Residential Community Initiative. It has been a very effective program because we do not have to put up taxpayer money to do it.

Through that, what we have found is that the private sector rushed in and put together these consortiums of developers and have done a job that is more attractive than anything we could have done under the old sort of public-military housing concept.

And the soldiers and the wives of the soldiers are very, very interested. In fact, they came to our committee and said of all of the issues affecting the military, of all of the issues affecting families in the military, the number one issue was adequate housing. Not surprisingly, it is probably the same question on the private side. And they applauded us for addressing the issue, but they asked us to make sure that we do not get stuck in these internal budget rules.

What we are talking about is an internal rule. It is our own rule, we can waive it if we want to, and that is the issue. We should be waiving it. Why should we be waiving it? Because we do not have to put up the money; the private sector does it. Why should we waive it? Because it is all about investment. It is the ounce of prevention that is worth a pound of cure. What is the investment in? It is in quality homes built to code standards in the community, the highest standards we have ever had in this country. It is built to the kind of quality that the housewives and soldiers, the men and women in uniform like.

And what does it do? It helps us, one, go out and recruit people, and we are in an all-voluntary military. We cannot force them to join. They want to join, and part of it is the benefit package that is offered to you while you are in the military, including the housing.

The second is, once you get in, if you are assigned to bases that have the inadequate housing that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) talked about, and there is a lot of it out there, people living in Quonset huts, we should not allow that. If these were local homes, they would be shut down by the building inspectors, yet we allow military families to live in them when the private sector can build new homes. So we need to do that for retention.

Once we have these well-trained people in the military, we want them to stay. One of the biggest attractions of staying is you get to live in a quality community.

So this internal budget rule makes no sense, and I hope that nobody raises an objection.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CRENSHAW), who is a member of the subcommittee as well.

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

I rise in strong support of this legislation for a lot of reasons. Most important, I think, is that of all of the bills that we pass that relate to defense, this is the only piece of legislation whose main theme is the betterment of the lives of the men and women who wear our uniform; and it does it primarily in the area of housing in terms of their quality of life.

For too long, we have put the priority in terms of the weapons systems, in terms of the tanks that they drove, and for the first time in modern history, we are now saying that quality of life, living conditions are very, very important to our men and women.

So in this bill we spend over $1 billion of new money to provide for that kind of housing, and we do it in creative, innovative ways, something like a Ship-to-Shore program.

Right now, our sailors, when they are at sea being deployed, they live in very cramped situations, and that is a real sacrifice that they make, and it is part of the sacrifice they make overall. But when they come back to their home port, it is inexcusable that they have to continue to live on these ships in these cramped conditions, and that is what the Ship-to-Shore program helps to solve. It gives them a place to live on their base, more living room, a better way to live; and that is important.

Then we have heard a lot of discussion about housing privatization. This is revolutionary, and it is crazy that somebody has decided that when the Federal Government spends no money whatsoever that somehow, that is counted against Federal spending. So we have this new program that is innovative, creative, where the private sector comes in, builds new housing, takes the kinds of risks that they ought to take because they know it is going to be a profitable situation. So we have that as well.

Most of all, this bill recognizes the most important asset we have are our men and women in uniform, and this goes a long way towards providing a better quality of life for all of them. I urge the adoption of this legislation.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, again, I applaud this subcommittee for addressing a very serious crisis in military housing that will occur just a few months from now if we do not include the language that was added in the amendment.

To be specific about it, let me just say to my colleagues, Mr. Chairman, some of the families and the numbers of families, the different locations of military installations that will be affected if a Member of the House were to raise a point of order against this housing measure that we added: In New York at Fort Drum, 2,272 families would have their new housing put on hold. I believe Fort Drum has played an important role in the Iraqi war.

□ 1315

In Pennsylvania, 316 families at the Carlisle Barracks would have their new

housing put on hold. At Fort Bliss in Texas, 2,776 families would have their housing put on hold. At Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, 2,739 military families would see the promise of new housing for them broken. At Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, 914 families would lose the promise of new housing. At Langley in Virginia, the State of Virginia, 1,268 families would have their new housing denied them.

Sheppard Air Force Base, 1,288 families in Texas would lose that improved housing. New Jersey, 2,415 at McGuire Air Force Base in Fort Dix. Those are not numbers. That is 2,415 military families making sacrifices for our country who would see their housing dreams go down the tubes.

Let us look at Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, the Southeast and Eastern Navy projects: 6,076 families would have a ''no'' said to them in regard to new housing. How about Twentynine Palms in California, 1,382 families. Well, let us look at Camp Lejeune. Obviously they have made tremendous sacrifices, those machines, that installation as part of our war on terrorism; 3,516 of those families would be told no. Congress could afford to vote in the month of May for a $69 billion tax cut that gave Members of Congress a tax break, but we cannot afford to give you new housing this year during time of war; we have got to put a freeze on your new housing.

Well, let us go down to Georgia. People at Fort Benning have made tremendous sacrifices for our country. They would actually lose 4,055 new military housing under the freeze if any Member of this House objects to the amendment we put in the bill.

At Fort Benning, actually they would not lose it this year. They are planning on getting their new housing next year. They have been told they will not even get their new housing next year, because that will have to be pushed back a year because of the freeze that would occur on military housing this year. Fort Knox, Kentucky, would be in that similar situation. Their new housing for 3,380 military housing would be pushed back a year if any Member objects to what we did on a bipartisan basis in this committee.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to just say the Military Officers Association of America, the Association of the United States Army, the Air Force Association, the National Military Family Association have all written letters asking this House on a bipartisan basis to protect the increase in the cap for military housing so we can show respect to our military families during time of war, not just with our words and our rhetoric but with our deeds and better housing.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN), a member of the committee.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of this military construction appropriations bill and would like to commend the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) for their good work on this legislation.

I would also like to voice my specific support for those provisions of this bill which continue the critical ongoing renovation of military housing. In my district in northern New Jersey, the Army through its Residential Communities Initiative has selected a developer to privatize and revitalize military housing at Picatinny Arsenal. Looking at the larger RCI program, Picatinny's participation is relatively small. We have approximately 113 affected families, but the refurbishment of their houses and homes will have a deep impact on their quality of life. For them this debate and the chairman's leadership has indeed a very human face. These military families care about leaky roofs, substandard plumbing, and ancient electrical wiring.

Mr. Chairman, we in Congress can do several things to support our young fighting men and women who serve our country with such dedication, because literally we are a Nation at war. We can make sure they have adequate pay and benefits. In this regard, we have made significant progress in recent years. We can also ensure that their retirement benefits meet their needs when their service is over. Again, we continue to work to improve veterans programs, but we can and must work to improve the day-to-day quality of life that they have. In this regard, there are few things more important to military personnel than where they live and the quality of the roof over their heads.

This legislation contains important provisions which will allow the continued revitalization of military housing. I would urge the Committee on the Budget to allow this program to continue and to support the bill as it was drafted.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS), a tremendous leader in this Congress on defense issues and an important member of the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, we did not have much time on the rule to discuss this issue on the cap on family housing, and I want to first of all congratulate the chairman (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) for working together in a very bipartisan basis in our committee. The chairman could not have done more to help bring this provision to the floor of the House. We all regret, and I think it was a mistake in judgment for the Committee on Rules, to make a decision to not protect this provision, and this provision which raised by $500 million the cap on family housing was sought by the administration.

Each of the services testified before our subcommittee. The Secretary of Defense and his people supported it. The White House supported it. OMB supported it. The chairman of the Committee on Armed Services supported it. Of course our distinguished chairman of the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations also supported it. And we are going to make a decision based on an arcane rule coming out of CBO that is in conflict with OMB.

Now, my view in this situation, if I were in the majority party and the administration wanted this done, I would be trying to find a way to make it happen; and this is a big problem, because there are, I think, about a dozen projects.

Here are the projects that will not go forward this year if the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE) has his way: Fort Drum, New York; Dover Air Force Base, Delaware; Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina; Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico; Fort Monmouth/Picatinny Arsenal, New Jersey; Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania; Fort Bliss, Texas; White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico; Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma; Eglin/Hurlburt Air Force Base, Florida; Lackland Air Force Base, Texas; Langley Air Force Base, Virginia; Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas; Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma; McGuire Air Force Base/Fort Dix, New Jersey; MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, California; MCSA Kansas City, Missouri; Camp Lejeune/MCB Cherry Point, North Carolina; Stewart Army Subpost.

Those projects will all be delayed because of this decision; and as has been suggested, we are in a time of war. We are in a war on terrorism, a war in Iraq, a war in Afghanistan. We have our troops deployed all over the world.

The one thing the people who are deploying say and their spouses say is one thing we really would like to see an improvement in, in the services, is military housing; and we have worked at Fort Lewis. I have a major project out there that is going forward. It is one of the greatest successes. We can get more housing, new housing and more restored housing faster under this public-private sector project; and usually the majority party is thrilled about public-private projects.

In this case, this decision will adversely affect the quality of life of men and women serving in the military and their families, and this is over an arcane budget rule. To me, the insistence on striking this out is one of the worst mistakes I think we have made around here in a long time.

One thing I have always been proud of, this House has always been able to rise above partisan or short-term considerations and work towards a bipartisan cooperation on defense. Let us not ruin that today.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman

from Virginia (Mr. GOODE), who is a member of the subcommittee.

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Chairman, I too want to salute our Chair, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS). I agree with them. I do not agree with CBO as other speakers have so indicated. I agree with OMB, I agree with the President, and I agree with our subcommittee on this issue of caps. I cannot understand how CBO scores it as it does.

Let me mention briefly the impact in Virginia. An additional 39 units are planned for privatization in fiscal year 2006 and 2007. This includes 22 projects in 16 different States. In Virginia at Langley Air Force Base, we are talking about 1,400 units. I can tell you the quality of life of those at Langley would be significantly enhanced if this could go forward.

One gentleman on the other side said we have got to find a way to make it happen. I believe the best thing to do is vote for this bill, send it forward. This is just part of the process through which Military Construction will go before it is finally adopted by both the House and the Senate and signed by the President.

So I would urge a ''yes'' vote, go forward with the process, and I think positive things will happen throughout that process.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in yielding me time.

I, too, was saddened by the decision of the House Republican leadership, so ably articulated by my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS); and I appreciate the service you are doing for our servicemen and -women, training the spotlight on this.

But I would like to speak briefly, if I could, Mr. Chairman, to a specific area. Historically, I have come before this subcommittee talking about the problems of military cleanup. I did not this time, because I appreciated what the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the members of the committee, were faced with. And I think they have done a good job under difficult circumstances, trying to put a little bit of money into the BRAC cleanup; but I would like to serve notice that I am hopeful that this is the last time that we place this low degree of priority.

I appreciate the imperative that you are facing, but we have a long-term time bomb, literally, that is ticking. The presence of unexploded ordnance and other contaminants on transferred military property limits our use of hundreds of thousands of acres of closed military bases from prime real estate to scenic open space. That is one of the reasons why we have such great apprehension about the BRAC process that is working its way forward. People are afraid that they are going to be left with a toxic white elephant.

And, indeed, the BRAC situation is just the tip of the iceberg, because we have between 10 and 50 million polluted acres; and at the rate of the spending that we are embarked upon now under the MILCON and the Department of Defense, we are going to take in the neighborhood of 300 years or more to clean up this responsibility that will be skyrocketing in costs over time. And these things get worse as the explosives, as the military equipment deteriorates, polluting groundwater, migrating to the surface. This is a problem that we cannot continue to sweep under the rug.

The Federal Government should be leading by example, cleaning up after itself, making sure we are not leaving an expensive, toxic legacy for the future.

Last but not least, this subcommittee can help by providing more leadership with local communities to provide a framework to the cleanup. I have been impressed with what happened in the State of California, recognizing that long-term operation of military installations must involve a partnership between the State, the local, the Federal Government; in some areas, tribal authorities.

□ 1330

I would hope that we could work together in a cooperative fashion with these other entities to be able to have a framework that will promote the clean-up because, ultimately, not only will this improve the quality of life of our military families, it will hasten the day that we solve this problem, saving billions of long-term dollars.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

I thank the gentleman for having produced an excellent bill with limited funds available; and I appreciate the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the ranking member, for his partnership in making this a very good bill. It is a good bill.

We are focusing on one part of the bill, and I think that is appropriate. We should focus on that one part of the bill, but all of the items included in this appropriations bill for military construction are needed. They are cost effective and they are very good projects. But the one that we are vitally concerned about today, the one that we fear might have a point of order raised against it, is the military family housing issue.

I have not found anybody, Mr. Chairman, that is opposed to doing what we want to do. We want to provide decent housing for the members of our military and their families. We do not want a soldier or a Marine to be in Iraq or Afghanistan and have in the back of his mind that his family is living in a rat-trap condition back home. That soldier, that Marine, has to be paying full attention to the mission and to accomplishing the mission, and also to providing some protection for himself or herself while they do this mission.

Congress needs to be totally supportive of the troops; and Congress has done a really good job. I am proud to say that we have identified, just during this year alone, many areas where the government is not taking proper care of military members and their families, and we are fixing them.

And, Mr. Chairman, we ought to do that. We need to fix these issues. We need to provide what our troops need and we need to protect them while they are doing it. And we need to have their families have a quality of life while they are out fighting that war. They do not need to be worried about what conditions the folks are living in back home.

The reason we need to do this is because this Congress voted to send them to the war. Now, maybe everybody did not vote for it, but most of us did, and we have an obligation to the men and women who protect this Nation and protect our national interests, wherever they might be, and who are on the front line in the war against terrorism and the threats of terrorists. A world that is controlled by terrorists or their threats of violence is not acceptable, and I do not know of anyone who would disagree with that except the terrorists.

This Congress has stepped up to the plate before, and we need to step up to the plate today. I am not exactly sure what the issue is on military family housing. Everybody is for it, but there are some who want to strike it from this bill and do it at a later time. What I cannot understand is, if we are going to do it at a later time, why not do it now?

There may be some other bills that could solve this same problem, but this bill is here and fixes it today. Some other bill that might solve this problem of family housing for the military, but it may not have to pass. This bill has to pass. Before this Congress can leave its business, this bill and all of the other appropriations bills have to pass.

That is an interesting point. A lot of folks do not understand that. Appropriations bills have to pass because if they do not, the government shuts down. Now, who wants to shut down the government? I do not know of anybody who wants to shut down the government. There may be some.

But this bill has to pass, and that is why we ought to solve the problem of military housing for families in this bill today, while we are here on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Now, there is a scoring issue. We have had many bills come to the floor where the Committee on the Budget

could have raised points of order—issues like the farm bill that exceeded the budget resolution; like the Medicare reform bill, where costs far exceeded the estimate; and this afternoon we are going to consider a highway program that exceeds the authorizing committee allocation by $400 million. And I have heard nothing about raising points of order on those bills.

I have not heard anyone from the Committee on the Budget state a concern about those bills. No points of order were raised against the farm bill or against the Medicare reform bill. It is my understanding that none are going to be raised against the highway bill today. That may change now that we put a little pressure on the issue, but as of this morning that was not intended.

But, for years, OMB and CBO have scored the military housing program the same way, 6 years. But for some reason, all of a sudden, CBO decided to score it differently. I do not know why. Maybe there is some good reason, but if there is, I do not know what it is.

I want to take just a couple of minutes to read what the President of the United States thinks about this provision in the appropriations bill. He supports this very strongly, as do most of the Members of this House and the Senate, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the chiefs of the services. They all support it. But you know who really supports it? The military troops who are defending our Nation support this because it gives their families some quality of life.

I am quoting now from the letter from the Administration. ''The administration strongly supports the provision that would increase the military housing privatization cap from $850 million to $1.35 billion. This increase will help improve the quality of life of our military families. Furthermore, without this increase, the current limit would be reached by November of 2004 and the program would be over. OMB would not score any additional costs to this provision because it does not increase the amount of budget authority available to the Department of Defense.'' And it goes on for about five more sentences expressing strong support for this provision and, expressing no concern whatsoever for the scoring.

I just think that it is so important to those Americans serving in our military, doing whatever they are asked to do, going wherever they are asked to go, making whatever sacrifice they must make. If we cannot today, in this bill that must pass, take care of their concerns for the way their families have to live, shame on us. But I would tell you that of the 435 Members of this House, I will bet if this was put to an up or down vote, there probably would not be five votes against it.

It is just too bad that a procedural situation, that is not even consistent, can derail this extremely important issue.

Let us not shoot Santa Claus on the floor of the House today.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) for his eloquent comments.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), a senior and respected member of the Committee on Armed Services.

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

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Chairman, I agree with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) that this bill has some good items in the bill, but I think that the heart of the bill was in housing. And I do not know whether we have thought about what are we going to do with reenlistments? How are we going to do with retainment?

The first time the young men and women enlist in the military they enlist on their own. Once they serve 2, 3 years in the military, then they marry. Then the second time they are going to reenlist, they reenlist their families. That is why this bill, the family housing portion of this military construction bill, was the very center of this bill.

The idea was born about private-public housing in my district in Kingsville because we saw the need to free loose some of the moneys for other purposes, and this is where this came about. In Kingsville, Texas, this idea was born, and we have been able to save millions and millions and millions of dollars.

I am concerned about whether we are going to be able to retain these young men and women if we do not provide adequate housing for their wives, for their children.

I have four military bases in my district. Thank God that we do not have a seriousness yet in housing. But right before 9/11, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) and myself, we visited 25 bases in 4 days. I hope that some of the Members have been with us to see the deplorable conditions of the housing that we have throughout this Nation.

I think that we are beginning to see retention numbers coming down. We are going to be able to see within the next few months that reenlistment will come down.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, how much time remains?

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) has 8½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) has 3½ minutes remaining.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the chairman of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations, and a member of this subcommittee.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) for the remarkable work product that he has provided to us.

The subcommittee worked very hard to meet the needs of our military. This is our highest priority, and this bill comes in $450 million above the President's budget request. It supports our active duty forces. It supports our Guard and Reserve. It is building housing, hospitals, schools, public safety and, most importantly, our national security. It is improving our bases.

Personally, in my home, the district in central New York, the Air National Guard base, not 5 years ago, the commandant came through and said, This is one of the sorriest looking bases I have ever seen.

These are soldiers who fought in the Gulf War, who have flown air CAP in Iraq, both north and south, some of the most dangerous duty of any of our soldiers in the country. And what we have done through this bill, through the gentleman from Michigan's (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) leadership, is made that one of the finest looking bases in America to make sure that our troops have the very best facilities and equipment and quality of life that this Nation can afford.

I also rise in strong support of the gentleman from Michigan's (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) manager's amendment regarding raising the cap on privatization of military housing. This provision has outlived its usefulness. The provision was put in place to make sure this program worked. Well, the jury is in. The program works. It works so well that we now need to continue it. And this cap is no longer needed to provide insurance that the program works. It does work. It works better than most.

Our soldiers and their families are benefiting. They deserve good, quality housing and they need it. Let us raise the cap. Let us build more housing and let us support the bill.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HOBSON) who was previously the chairman of this committee for 4 years.

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

Mr. HOBSON. Mr. Chairman, I can think of no bill more important than this bill, especially at this time. And I want to thank the committee on both sides for doing great work on this.

The quality of life for our troops is very important. Their ability to come home and live in appropriate housing is of the highest need.

□ 1345

When I was the chairman of the Military Construction Appropriations Subcommittee, we began in earnest to do the privatization of housing on our bases because we realized that we did not have enough money to build housing under the old MILCON way.

I can tell my colleagues that as we go around and visit the bases today where we have gotten these programs going, people are thrilled at the quality of the housing that is now there.

I think CBO has done a very great disservice to this country in not understanding how these deals are put together. These deals are put together at no risk for the most part to the Federal Government. There is only a couple who have a BRAC guarantee. All the rest of them are a simple, leaseback proposition with no guarantee by the Federal Government.

So let us take a base that has been done. Let us go to Fort Hood, Texas. If we go to Fort Hood, Texas, we have a company that has built this housing, and they have agreed that they will provide this housing to the military; and the military has said we will rent it, we will rent it from you, but if it at some time Fort Hood does not need the housing, the government does not pay for it. The risk of the private financing on this is in the private sector, not to the Federal Government; and I do not think CBO understands that. We do not have to pay for it, if we do not need it.

That is the best deal for the taxpayer. That is the best deal for the troops. He is getting housing that he is entitled to, that is the same type of housing if he were in the private sector, and that is the kind of housing our troops are entitled to; and we are giving it to them.

I urge the support for this bill and to keep this provision in this bill.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 2 minutes.

I would just like to go back to the issue of the military housing program that is being protected in this bill unless a Member of the House objects to it.

I want, Mr. Chairman, all Members and all those watching to understand what is going to happen if anyone objects. First of all, 24,000 servicemen and -women and their families will have a promise broken to them. A promise to provide them with new housing is a show of respect for the tremendous sacrifices they are making for our country and the American family.

Secondly, and this I do not think has been discussed, while the present bill provides a 1.6 percent increase over military construction spending compared to a year ago, not even enough to keep up with inflation, the fact is that many of those dollars being appropriated in this bill will be prohibited from being spent if one Member of this House stands up and objects to our having solved the military housing cap problem.

So, in effect, you are not only saying, no, you are not only going to break the promise to 24,000 military families across this country; you are actually saying that in a time of war it is okay with you if the effect of your action is to actually cut military construction funding this year compared to last year because literally millions and millions of dollars that look like they are being appropriated will be nothing but an illusion, nothing but a false promise to our servicemen and -women, 40,000 of whom live in my district, nearly 20,000 of whom are in Iraq today.

No, Mr. Chairman. When our troops are asked to go into combat, they do not have an option of saying I will take care of that later. That is called AWOL.

Well, today, let us as Members of Congress not go AWOL when we have an opportunity to step up to the plate, and right now, not a week from now, not a month from now, not some false promise, let us vote now to support our military men and women and the better housing they deserve.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON), who is a member of the subcommittee.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time, and I appreciate the time and wanted to stand in support of the chairman's mark on this important bill.

We have been working in the Subcommittee on Military Construction for many years to get this housing privatization project going. To date, we have got about 60,000 houses that are under this program. It has been a huge success. Yet we have something like 160-odd thousand to go. That would be our goal. That would give us about 70 percent of the existing housing units. Big step.

It has been a very, very positive program from Fort Meade to Fort Stewart. Here is a quote that one of the soldiers in our area at Fort Stewart actually wrote us: ''There is a maintenance manager here at Fort Stewart, who is undoubtedly the best I have seen in my 20 years in the military. He is responsible for Marne Homes. He is personable, kind, and most of all a man of his word. If he says he'll fix something, he will fix it and he will fix it fast. He'll fix the root of a problem and not just put a Band-Aid on it. I feel better'' and perhaps this is the key sentence, ''I feel better going to Iraq in a few months knowing he will be here to take care of my family.''

That is a strong statement for our soldiers back home, and yet what is the problem here? We have two scoring agencies. One is the Congressional Budget Office. One is the Office of Management and Budget. And this year, for some reason, the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, changed the way they want to score this.

In essence, what they did is they charged all the money up front. It is the equivalent of going to a soldier and saying, instead of your annual pay being scored on a 1-year basis, we are going to multiply it by the 20 years you are going to serve in the military and we are going to score your pay against you for the whole 20 years. That is what the Congressional Budget Office did. That does not make any sense, but the Office of Management and Budget did not change its scoring. The program has not changed, nor has the committee position changed.

So we should not change as Members of the House. We need to stand with our military. The manager's amendment has fixed this problem for right now. We have got good bipartisan support on it, and we need to move forward on this bill.

So, Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of things that already have been said, which I would like to repeat in my own words, but I am sure my fellow Members of Congress would not mind if I spoke for a little less period of time; but I just want to say that this is what we need to do for our soldiers.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KINGSTON. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, I want to compliment the gentleman on his statement; and when he is right, he is really right. I thank him.

Mr. KINGSTON. I appreciate that. Thanks.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair will advise that each side has 1½ minutes remaining.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the remaining 1½ minutes.

This subcommittee worked on a genuine bipartisan basis to provide a better quality of life for military families. It worked on a bipartisan basis to address a looming crisis in military housing. Now the moment has come for us to decide if we want to support our troops, including troops in combat, with our rhetoric and with our hearts and with our deeds.

With all due respect to our hearts and our intentions and our goodwill, what matters to the 40,000 soldiers I have the privilege to represent at Fort Hood, Texas, is what Congress does with its deeds. Our responsibility today should be to say that in a time of war, it is of the utmost national priority and responsibility to take care of our military families who are sacrificing so much for all of us.

We need to pass this subcommittee bill as it was drafted and passed out of subcommittee, now out of full committee. We need to pass this bill on a bipartisan basis; and for that reason, I ask my colleagues not only to support this bill but to ask all of their colleagues not to be the one person in this House who stops the most important housing program ever for our military.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would ask one question to any Member who would have the gall to stand up and strike out this issue, and that is, 2 months ago, how did you vote on the $69 billion tax cut which included tax breaks for Members of Congress?

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the remaining time.

I believe my colleagues can tell from the input that has been brought forward this afternoon and the contributions from everybody that everyone here feels very strongly about this issue, extremely strongly. In fact, I think about the work that this subcommittee has done. We have always striven to do things in a fashion that

represents actually what ends up being a bipartisan effort, but we actually do not seek that necessarily. It is just that what we are doing is for the common good of our military, and it seems to be appropriate then that it all works out in our favor.

This, I believe, is a fair bill. It is a good bill. We worked with some monetary restrictions. That is something that has to happen over here. It happens all the time.

The other thing I would say, this is, as the chairman has mentioned, a must-pass bill. We cannot think about it and talk about it, but it has got to pass. It is one of the requirements of this committee.

So I would simply say that this, with input that we have got, with the feeling being 100 percent in terms of supporting this measure, that we are in a position to carry out what it is that the troops want. They deserve better housing. This bill promises better housing; and in fact, it does something about the inadequate housing, too, that has become a major problem because the goal of the military is to get those inadequate housing situations out of the picture by 2007. To crimp this, it would simply crimp what we are trying to do here.

So I would urge everybody to support this bill. It is a good bill, and I thank everybody.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Chairman, this Member certainly is pleased that H.R. 4837 provides appropriations for a very important project in Nebraska's 1st Congressional District. The bill includes $614,000 for a national guard and reserve center headquarters building at Lincoln Airbase, Nebraska. This is the second year that this Member has requested this funding for this necessary project. This Member would like to thank the distinguished Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) and the distinguished Ranking Member (Mr. EDWARDS) for their assistance in this important matter.

These funds will be used to complete the design process associated with the construction of a new headquarters and emergency operating center for the Nebraska Army National Guard. This existing headquarters facility must be relocated due to the new Antelope Valley highway/flood control infrastructure project in the city of Lincoln, Nebraska.

While this project was included in the Department of Defense's (DoD) FY2009 future Year Defense Plan (FYDP), it needs to be accelerated due to the unanticipatedly expeditious progress on the Antelope Valley Freeway and Flood Control project, which will very soon necessitate the abandonment of the current headquarters. It appears that the National Guard Bureau agrees, since initial design funding was allocated last year from existing funds, even though it was not authorized or appropriated.

The new facility will house the Joint Forces Headquarters, the Army National Guard Emergency Operating Center, the 24th Medical Company, the 105th Personnel Service Detachment, the Nebraska State Patrol dispatch and communications systems and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. Building a multipurpose facility on an existing military installation increases security for all of the components. Furthermore, housing several Federal, State and local agencies in one facility allows the Department of Defense to save scarce military construction funds. Also, bringing those various components within close proximity will facilitate better coordination among the agencies on issues of national and homeland security. Indeed, it is critically important to enhance these relationships in the current post-September 11th environment. This appropriation will allow this important project to move forward.

In addition, this Member is pleased that $497,000 in design funds is appropriated in H.R. 4837 for a critically important runway repair at Offutt Air Force Base, which is immediately contiguous to the 1st Congressional District of Nebraska. This repair project has been championed by the distinguished gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY), who represents Offutt, with this Member, and the two U.S. Senators from Nebraska.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, this Member urges his colleagues to support H.R. 4837.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, let me first take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the leadership shown by my chairman, Mr. KNOLLENBERG, and my ranking member, Mr. EDWARDS, on the housing privatization issue. I would also like to commend the leadership shown by Chairman YOUNG, and Ranking Member OBEY on this important issue as well.

As a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, I know of no other issue which is more important to our military and their families than housing. There is no other issue which has more of an impact on the quality of life of the men and women serving in the military than housing. This year we heard witness after witness testify before our subcommittee—each describing the lack of adequate housing as ''the'' major quality of life issue facing the military.

Mr. Chairman, I am proud to have two major military facilities—Ft. Benning and the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Albany, Georgia, in my district. However, just as important, I represent thousands of other military personnel who work at Moody Air Force Base and Warner Robbins Air Force Base, both of which are now adjacent to my district.

Unfortunately, according to the Department of the Army's installation status report for fiscal year 2004, approximately 71 percent of the Army's residential quarters located in the United States require some level of improvement or replacement, in order to meet the department's own adequacy standards. If you read literally, this means that seven (7) out of every ten (10) housing units located at our Army installations here in the United States do not meet the current standards for adequacy.

I am particularly concerned about the housing situation at Ft. Benning. According to the most recent data available, it is my understanding that approximately ninety percent (90%) of the family housing at Fort Benning is classified as substandard. Fortunately, Ft. Benning is scheduled to be one of the first bases to participate in the upcoming round of privatization.

Ft. Benning is scheduled to construct 4,055 much-needed family housing units. An additional 872 units are planned in FY 05 for Ft. Gordon, in Georgia as well. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, if the point of order is sustained against the language in the bill extending the program and we do not raise the cap, the program could be in jeopardy of stalling after November of this year.

That means that the units planned for Ft. Benning and Ft. Gordon in Georgia could be in jeopardy of not moving forward but not just in Georgia. Other bases, including Ft. Riley and Leavenworth in Kansas, West Point in New York, Ft. Rucker in Alabama, Ft. Knox in Kentucky, Ft. Jackson in South Carolina—all are just a few of the facilities which would be in jeopardy for the upcoming round of privatization.

It is important that my colleagues have an appreciation of the practical effects of not acting to increase the cap. Thousands of our officers and enlisted personnel will continue to reside in inadequate family housing. Our national goal of privatizing military housing will not be accomplished. In addition, the existing inventory of housing facilities will continue to deteriorate, resulting in even billions of dollars of more costs for maintenance and operations. Finally, each of the services, particularly the Army, will be unable to meet its goal of eliminating all inadequate family housing by 2007.

Not meeting this goal will further adversely affect the health, safety and quality of life of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and their families occupying these units. Privatization will provide new construction and revitalization of the existing inventory at a more rapid rate than current procedures and funding limits will permit. Privatization will also provide renovated or new quarters for our military and their families, which is comparable to housing of a similar size and quality as would be available in the local economy.

It is critical that our fighting men and women, and their families, have the best quality of life we can offer them. Their sacrifices are too great. This investment is such a small cost given what they are giving to us—putting their lives on the line—day in and day out. A decent place to live is small cost in return for their service to America. We owe them so much more.

Mr. Chairman, housing is at the core of providing a decent quality of life, and I urge the House to allow a lifting of the cap on housing privatization.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my severe disappointment of the military housing provisions in H.R. 4837 the Military Construction Appropriations for fiscal year 2005. While this legislation as a whole will support important military construction projects, it is absolutely shameful that Members of this body would seek to block lifting the cap on military housing privatization in this legislation. It is clear from the facts, which were agreed to by the Appropriations Committee, that if we do not take action now in regards to lifting the cap, then we will experience a crisis in military housing. I want to thank the ranking member from the subcommittee Representative CHET EDWARDS for all his work and dedication on the issue of military construction specifically his determination to do justice to our Nation's military families by lifting the cap on military housing privatization. It is because of his tremendous effort that the Appropriations Committee as a whole agreed that this cap must be lifted in this legislation. Again, I will say that it is shameful that we would try to undo this bipartisan effort in order to maintain a cap that can

only hinder military families from finding affordable and quality housing.

By not lifting the cap on military housing privatization we will in effect stop developers and property managers from building and renovating homes that are used by military personnel. Not lifting the cap in this legislation will affect 50,000 military families. Since its establishment in 1996, the Military Housing Privatization Initiative has been the most successful military housing program ever. In less than 10 years it has already helped over 60,000 military families, and would help an additional 50,000 military families at 27 military installations in 22 States if the cap is lifted. Under the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, the Government creates public-private partnerships to construct, renovate, and maintain military family housing. Not only has the program provided better housing for military families more quickly, this innovative military housing program has actually saved billions of taxpayer dollars. The Government saves up to 10–15 percent over the life of the project and military families are receiving improved homes in one-tenth of the time it would take using old methods of family housing construction. I find it repulsive that at a time when we are asking so much from our military families that we would try to undermine such a necessary program. It is imperative that we keep our promises to provide better and more affordable housing for our soldiers and their families. If we do not lift the cap in this legislation then a great deal of military home construction will be put on hold and many of the hopes of our brave military families will be put on hold as well.

Many efforts have been made to lift the cap on military housing privatization, first in the Budget Committee and then in the House Defense Authorization bill, however it is vital that we lift this cap now because it is just plain wrong to compromise good and affordable housing for our military families. This provision was supported on a bipartisan basis when it came through the Appropriations Committee; it is also supported by the Bush administration and a large number of organizations including: the Military Officers Association of America, the Association of the U.S. Army, the Air Force Association, and the National Military Families Association. I believe it must be clear to the entire body the need to lift this harmful cap now. The true of the matter is that our men and women of the military have always been ready when called upon and their families have always stood by courageously. How can we now turn our backs on them by compromising a tremendously successful program?

I would also like to stress my dismay that funding for existing military family housing will be $231 million less than the current level. These funds are used for maintenance and repair, furnishings, management, services, utilities, leasing, interest, mortgage insurance, and miscellaneous expenses of already existing family housing units. In 2001, the Department of Defense estimated that 180,000, 60 percent, of the 300,000 housing units it operates were substandard. While I applaud the committee's commitment to the goal of eliminating inadequate housing by fiscal year 2007, we must take significant steps to address this problem now. Clearly, by cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from the funds used to maintain existing family units, this will only magnify the problem. Again, we turn our backs on our military families when we compromise funding that is used specifically to improve their living conditions.

Again, I want to thank Ranking Member EDWARDS for his valiant efforts on this legislation under difficult conditions. It is truly disgraceful that there are those in this body who seek to undo the ranking member's work to craft an effective and bipartisan piece of legislation. It is also truly unfortunate that this appropriation had to be stretched so tight because of the administration's insistence on large tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. Once again, we see how these reckless policies have led us to restrict funding to groups of Americans who are in need of it. In this case it is our military families who will have to suffer because tax cuts for the rich apparently trump any other consideration. Even though I have always worked against these reckless tax policies I want to apologize to our military families because as Members of Congress we have failed them, even though they have never failed us. It is my sincere hope that by next year's Military Construction Appropriations we will be able to do real justice for the sacrifice made by our military families.

The CHAIRMAN. All time for general debate has expired.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Chairman, I object to the vote on the ground a quorum is not present and make the point of order a quorum is not present.

The CHAIRMAN. Does the gentleman ask for a recorded vote?

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote, and I withdraw my point of order.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair will count for a recorded vote.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Chairman, well, then, I insist on my point of order.

The CHAIRMAN. A quorum is not required to adopt a motion for the Committee to rise. The Chair will advise it takes 25 to support the request for a recorded vote. An insufficient number having risen, the request is denied; and the motion is adopted by voice vote and the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) having assumed the chair, Mr. BEREUTER, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration 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, had come to no resolution thereon.

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

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 730, I call up the conference report on 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.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 730, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of July 20, 2004 at page H 6022.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG).

□ 1400

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. YOUNG of Alaska asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference report on H.R. 2443, the Coast Guard Authorization and Maritime Transportation Act of 2004.

This conference report is the result of a very bipartisan effort. I notice this is a word being used often today on this floor, but I want to compliment especially the committee I serve on. It was worked out with the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO), the ranking members from the full committee and the subcommittee, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER), and all of the conferees; and it deserves the support of all Members.

As this body's only licensed mariner and elected Member for all of Alaska, I am extremely interested in making sure the Coast Guard has the tools necessary to carry out its many varied missions. This bill gives the Coast Guard the resources and authorities necessary to protect the safety and security of lives and property on U.S. waters.

H.R. 2443 authorizes $8.2 billion to support activities of the Coast Guard for fiscal year 2005 and includes a number of provisions which will result in a safer, more effective system of maritime transportation.

My State of Alaska contains nearly one-third of the Nation's exclusive economic zone, the Nation's largest fishery, and significant cruise ship and oil tanker traffic. Therefore, I am concerned about the ability of the Coast Guard to carry out its traditional search, fisheries law enforcement, and vessel inspection missions.

Mr. Speaker, all of us recognize the exceptional work performed by the Coast Guard, often under dangerous conditions and circumstances. I urge all of my colleagues to support the conference report.