

surroundings. I ask that my colleagues vote in favor of the HOPE VI Reauthorization Act.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT).

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California for yielding time.

I rise in support of H.R. 5347. It is necessary to extend this program, and we are extending it for 1 year, the reauthorization, and that is the best we can do. You may sense frustration in that statement, because there is a sense of frustration. I have been at this HOPE VI for a long time now, and I think we need to go back and trace a little bit of the history of how we got here.

HOPE VI is not a Democratic program. It was introduced under a Republican administration. It was the brainchild of Jack Kemp when he was Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. And the idea was that we were not going to make any progress on dealing with community issues as long as we had these tremendous numbers, thousands of people in dense public housing communities in various places throughout the country, and that the only way we could approach the problem effectively was to disperse poverty and create communities with mixed incomes, low-income people, middle-income people, and high-income people. And so HOPE VI was about community revitalization.

All of the complaints I have heard about it over the years make it sound like people don't understand how difficult it is to do community revitalization. Because every time somebody says, well, they didn't finish a project in a year, I say to them, you can do construction in a year, you cannot do community revitalization in a year. It takes time to revitalize a community.

Now, why am I so passionate about this? We have seen five communities in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, completely transformed as a result of HOPE VI. We have seen one community in Greensboro, North Carolina, in my congressional district, completely transformed as a result of HOPE VI. We have seen two communities completely transformed in the Winston Salem part of my congressional district as a result of HOPE VI. We bring a little bit of Federal money, private people come to the table, and you end up with a mixed community in terms of income, racially and otherwise.

And I can tell you, if you come into downtown Charlotte now, you will see a completely different story than you saw 10, 12, 15 years ago. You will see a beautiful community where a concentration of low-income public housing used to be. Now if anybody tells me that is not success, I say I do not know what success is. That was exactly what the program was designed to do.

And I don't understand how this President, on so many issues, including this one, will take a successful pro-

gram and all of a sudden say this program doesn't work.

Now, coincidentally, most of the money is going into Democratic districts. That is really what the debate, the subtext of a lot of this debate, has been about. We knew where the public housing projects were. They were in most of our congressional districts. We set out to try to do something about those, and we have done something about those using HOPE VI. It has been the single most successful community revitalization and housing program probably that our Nation has ever seen, contrasted with the whole idea of warehousing poor people in concentrations of low-income communities.

So I am passionate about this. I am delighted we are extending this program for a year. But, at the same time, we need to recognize there is not but \$99 million even in the appropriations bill that hasn't been passed and finalized. And every time we have had to fight this battle to reauthorize the program we have lost funding for the program, so it gets less and less and less effective at accomplishing its mission.

So I congratulate my friends for extending the program, and I ask for their support, all of our support, for extending a program that is a no-brainer. We ought to all be supporting this program.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5347 the HOPE VI Reauthorization Act of 2006.

Public housing is a necessity in communities throughout this country. With the stock of affordable housing declining nationwide because of the rising cost of land, materials and labor, many families cannot afford to buy or even rent homes.

A study in Broward County alone showed the county needs 15,000 new affordable units a year to keep pace with demand. A Miami-Dade study, based on the 2000 U.S. Census, found the county needs to construct an additional 81,400 housing units for very low- and middle-income residents between 2000 and 2015.

At the same time, the number of Americans living in poverty has risen for 4 straight years in a row. Today, about 37 million Americans live at or below the poverty level. The hardest hit are women and children, over 12 million children live in poverty.

For many of these people, public housing is often the only option available to them. We know this is true because the sad truth is that public housing stocks are often in terrible condition. I have visited public housing units in my district with peeling paint, broken floor boards and windows, dilapidated appliances and defective wiring. This kind of neglect is not unique; the are many such housing units.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the HOPE VI program is so important. H.R. 5347, the HOPE VI Reauthorization Act of 2006, will continue for an additional 5 years the program begun in 1990 to demolish run-down housing projects and to replace them with attractive, safe, fully functioning and affordable housing in mixed income communities.

Even as we reauthorize the HOPE VI program and recognize its potential to revitalize neighborhoods and communities and provide

quality housing to people who need it, we must also acknowledge the need to make sure that HOPE VI does not destroy neighborhoods in the name of revitalizing them and that we extract from HOPE VI dollars the maximum amount of housing for local residents.

Because successful HOPE VI grants require such a high percentage of local funding, they are a good way to stretch scarce Federal housing dollars. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5347, the Hope VI Reauthorization Act of 2006.

Congress created the bipartisan HOPE VI program in 1992 to restore distressed housing and build new, safe, and cohesive communities. To date HOPE VI has awarded over \$5 billion to revitalize 193 public housing developments.

In my district alone, we have three HOPE VI projects: Mandela Gateway, Lions Creek Crossing, and Chestnut Linden Court.

The HOPE VI program works because its requirement for community buy-in is a responsive, flexible, and accessible redevelopment tool that effectively addresses the multi-billion dollar backlog in public housing capital needs.

But despite the accomplishments of HOPE VI, the administration continues to try and kill it. That just doesn't make any sense.

In passing H.R. 5347 today, we send a message to the administration, to housing authorities, and to the business community that HOPE VI is here to stay.

But we can't stop with Hope VI re-authorization.

We must also fully fund our housing authority's capital and operating needs, Section 8 vouchers, and special-needs tenants like the elderly, the handicapped, and those living with HIV/AIDS.

Together these initiatives can help re-focus our attention on those who are most in need.

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Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5347, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 5637, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 6115, by the yeas and nays;

S. 2856, by the yeas and nays.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.