

standard of our friends in Washington of a heavy-handed government mandate, this amendment achieves the goal of building green without stifling innovation for new and improved green building standards.

I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, because it will take our friends who are Democrats if we are going to pass this, to please support this commonsense fix to the legislation.

Another aspect of this legislation which requires improvement is the elimination of HUD's current authority to award demolition-only grants, which would prohibit the demolition of unsuitable public housing without the replacement of those units. Mr. Speaker, clearly there may be instances when demolition-only grants are appropriate; for instance, when public housing authorities may have already assembled a financing package to fund redevelopment and replacement housing activities, but are lacking the funds for the demolition itself.

Additionally, because of their age and denigration, it is certainly possible that some distressed public housing sites would not be viable candidates for redevelopment. There are lots of places in this country where something was built 15, 20, 30, 40 years ago that might not be easily accessible to the modern conveniences of today. And these sites, though only partially occupied or completely vacant, because they put a demand in a particular area, would be excluded. In these instances, other forms of housing assistance such as section 8 vouchers may be more appropriate in a community than public housing.

To address this flaw in the legislation, I have introduced an amendment to allow HUD to retain this commonsense authority, rather than trying to tie their hands by taking some of the options that had previously been available to them off the table.

For their part, HUD has noted that these grants have provided housing authorities with resources to raze, or to tear down, distressed developments and relocate impacted families. The result is a cleared site that more readily attracts Federal or private resources for the revitalization of the property. I encourage all of my colleagues to once again support this commonsense amendment to allow HUD to retain the flexibility to respond to individual cases, particularly in those cases where a public housing authority does not even have a HOPE VI renovation grant, leaving it with fewer options in revitalization in its most distressed or otherwise not as easily used sites.

Mr. Speaker, in the last five budget proposals to Congress, this Bush administration has advocated the elimination of the HOPE VI program, citing the completion of the program's mission and ongoing inefficiencies within the programs. These programs have been assessed by the administration's objective Program Assessing Rating Tool, what is called PART, which has

deemed HOPE VI to be not performing, inefficient, and more costly than other programs that serve the same population. In addition to these fundamental problems, the PART assessment notes that "the program has accomplished its stated mission of the demolition of 100,000 severely distressed public housing units."

I include a copy of this assessment as well as a Statement of Administration Policy on this matter for insertion into the RECORD.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT: HOPE VI—SEVERELY DISTRESSED PUBLIC HOUSING

The HOPE VI program revitalizes distressed and obsolete public housing, usually replacing it with less dense housing combining a mixture of public and privately owned housing. The program awards grants through a competitive process to State and local public housing agencies for this activity.

NOT PERFORMING: INEFFECTIVE

The program is more costly than other programs that serve the same population. It also has an inherently long, drawn-out planning and redevelopment process.

The program has accomplished its stated mission of demolishing 100,000 severely distressed public housing units.

The program coordinates effectively with related programs in designing a comprehensive program to improve the community.

We are taking the following actions to improve the performance of the program:

Implementing changes to complete projects more quickly. The average time to complete a project after award is being reduced from 8 years to 7 years with further improvement anticipated.

Reducing the average cost per unit of the project. (The average grant award has been reduced from \$30 million to \$20 million to improve project management.)

Terminating the program since it has completed its mission. The remaining balance of over \$2 billion will be spent during the next several years to complete funded projects.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY—H.R. 3524—HOPE VI IMPROVEMENT AND REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

(Rep. Waters (D) CA and 8 cosponsors.)

The Administration is strongly committed to providing safe, decent, and affordable public housing to those citizens least able to care for themselves and recognizes the contribution made by the HOPE VI program toward the revitalization of public housing. However, because the program has proven over time to be less cost-effective and efficient than other public housing programs, the Administration strongly opposes H.R. 3524, the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2007.

HUD has awarded \$5.8 billion in HOPE VI revitalization funds to public housing agencies through the end of 2007. While the majority of the funds have been used to promote neighborhood revitalization, \$1.3 billion remains unspent. The program's complex planning and redevelopment process has resulted in significant delays in the execution and completion of projects, with the average HOPE VI project taking 7 years to complete. Additionally, some public housing authorities lack the capacity to properly manage their redevelopment projects. The Administration believes that sufficient program funds remain available to allow HUD to properly oversee the completion of existing HOPE VI redevelopment projects but does not believe that additional funds should be authorized or appropriated for this pro-

gram. Indeed, the last five Administration Budgets have proposed to terminate the program in favor of more efficient and cost-effective programs. The Administration's first priority is to place HUD's principal programs, housing approximately 4 million low-income households, on sure footing. In fact, the President's FY 2008 Budget proposed approximately \$28 billion for that priority.

The Administration also strongly opposes provisions of H.R. 3524 that mandate one-for-one replacement of any public housing unit that is demolished or disposed of under the HOPE VI program. It is not feasible in many communities to provide mixed-use development, including one-for-one replacement of public housing units, on the location of the demolished public housing project. Further, acquisition of additional land in the surrounding neighborhood for use in implementing a one-for-one replacement strategy may not be possible. Even if such land were available, costs to acquire and develop it would be expected to increase the cost of each HOPE VI unit.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support these commonsense amendments that I have spoken about today on the floor which we believe will better the bill, in some cases keeping the good parts that had been in and other parts allowing flexibility. We believe that, in fact, this can be a wonderful bipartisan agreement that we could reach today. However, we would ask that all of our colleagues support the Neugebauer, Sessions, King, and Capito amendments.

I also encourage every Member of this body to oppose this rule until the Democrat majority provides us with the open rule process that we were promised over a year ago. I ask all of my colleagues to vote "no" on the previous question and on the rule.

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

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on the previous question and on the rule. I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3524, and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

PERMISSION TO REDUCE TIME FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING DURING CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3524

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that, during consideration of H.R. 3524 pursuant to House Resolution 922, the Chair may reduce to 2 minutes the minimum time

for electronic voting under clause 6 of rule XVIII and clauses 8 and 9 of rule XX.

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

There was no objection.

HOPE VI IMPROVEMENT AND REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 922 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. 3524.

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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. 3524) to reauthorize the HOPE VI program for revitalization of severely distressed public housing, and for other purposes, with Ms. SOLIS in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 3524, the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2007. As you know, I introduced H.R. 3524 on September 11 of 2007.

I want to thank each of my colleagues both on the Committee on Financial Services and in the House who have joined with me to see that this important legislation passes the House. I want to especially thank Chairman BARNEY FRANK, MELVIN WATT, and CHRISTOPHER SHAYS for their original coauthorship, cosponsorship, and support of H.R. 3524.

In drafting this bill, we worked closely with the minority, resident organizations, housing advocacy groups, public housing agencies, housing developers, bankers, green building experts, and practitioners, and other Members with an interest in the HOPE VI program. The end result is a bill that I believe takes into account the needs of residents, the community, the investors and lenders, and our public housing managers. Most importantly, we have a bill that preserves and revitalizes our public housing stock.

H.R. 3524 reauthorizes and improves the HOPE VI public housing revitalization program by requiring the one-for-one replacement of all demolished public housing units, providing residents with meaningful and substantive involvement in the planning and development of the HOPE VI plan, expanding

community and supportive services from 15 percent of grants that amount to 25 percent of grant amount; prohibiting HOPE VI specific screening criteria so that public housing residents and HOPE VI aren't held to a higher standard than non-HOPE VI residents, requiring housing agencies to monitor and track the whereabouts of relocated families, and mandating that developments be built in accordance with green building standards.

Public housing residents, including those not yet impacted by HOPE VI, and housing advocates have said that this bill has been a long time in coming, and I agree with them. I would like to note why the bill before us today is so important.

First, it preserves public housing. The administration eliminated the one-for-one replacement requirement in 1996, effectively triggering a national sloughing off of our Nation's public housing inventory.

Housing authorities have consistently built back fewer units than they have torn down and, as a result, over 30,000 units have been lost as a direct result of the HOPE VI program. Stopping this bleeding was paramount in the drafting of this legislation. One-for-one replacement is not only a part of the bill; it is the heart of this bill. Limiting one-for-one to only occupied units does a disservice to families on waiting lists and to families waiting to get on waiting lists. Public housing is a community resource, and units can be unoccupied because they are not fit for humans to live in. That does not mean that there is no need for them.

Second, because of strict screening criteria, HOPE VI has become limited to the cream of the public housing crop. Some people think that the HOPE VI development represents a new and better community and should have new and better people. However, as a Congress, we must be clear that public housing is for the most in need, not just the easiest to serve.

□ 1045

HOPE VI projects have programs and services that can greatly benefit our neediest families.

In addition, in the drive to separate the wheat from the chaff, public housing agencies have implemented screening criteria that are nothing short of draconian. These criteria include everything from credit checks, home visits, work requirements, and other criteria that many nonpublic housing residents would be unable to meet. We must reject any attempt to continue to punish public housing residents for being poor and must continue to provide them with the tools, through programs like HOPE VI, to assist them in improving their lives.

Lastly, I would like to talk about why green building standards should be mandatory in HOPE VI developments. Our public housing was built poorly and inefficiently. Many of our developments are wasteful and hazardous to

the health of the residents, and many investments we make in public housing developments, which will be around for the next 40 years, should ensure that this housing is safe, sound, energy efficient and good for the environment. This is just good public policy. We owe it to our public housing residents and to the environment to make sure that we do not recreate the inefficient and harmful mistakes that went into building many of these developments in the first place.

This bill has the support of over 145 resident organizations: the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the National Housing Law Project, the Community Builders, Bank of America, the Housing Justice Network, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and others. There are a lot of good things in this bill, and these groups recognize this.

Specifically, regarding the green building provisions, although one group is not supportive, over 30 organizations, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the American Public Health Association, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities, and others, have voiced their overwhelming support for the green building requirements in the bill.

We have crafted a bill that is good for residents, housing authorities, and communities. I urge you not to be blindsided by threats from third parties and to support our Nation's low-income families and to preserve our housing stock.

Madam Chairman, I would like to say in closing that this should be a bill that receives support from both sides of the aisle. This is the kind of bill that we can truly come together around. Everyone recognizes that it is needed in all communities, rural and urban, suburban, all over the United States.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CAPITO. Madam Chairman, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Today's HOPE VI program is the direct result of the 1992 report submitted to Congress by the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing that said approximately 6 percent of the 1.4 million existing public housing apartments were severely distressed and recommended that they be removed from the housing stock.

Since Congress began appropriating funds for HOPE VI in 1992, the program has been revitalizing and replacing some of the most dangerous and dilapidated public housing units in the country with mixed-income communities. These grants play a vital role in a community's redevelopment and have changed the physical characteristics of public housing from high-rise tenements to attractive, marketable units that blend in with the surrounding neighborhood and help residents attain self-sufficiency.