I want to thank the gentleman from California (Chairman Packard) and also our ranking member, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Vieland), for their continued support for the Houston-Galveston navigation project. I also want to thank all the Members of that committee, and particularly the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Edwards), for their leadership.

For two consecutive years, the Congress has appropriated sufficient funds to complete the widening and deepening of the Houston Ship Channel project in 4 years. This fiscal year, the $300 million appropriation in this bill ensures we will maintain the optimum construction schedule.

Maintaining this schedule is important because it will add an additional $281 million to the project’s rate of investment, return on investment, and save taxpayers $63.5 million in increased escalation and investment costs.

The expansion of the Houston Ship Channel is important on many levels. The port of Houston, connected to the Gulf of Mexico by the 50-mile ship channel, is ranked first in foreign tonnage and second in total tonnage among U.S. ports and eighth in total tonnage among world ports.

With more than 7,000 vessels navigating the channel annually and an anticipated increase over the next few years, the widening and deepening is a necessary step in safeguarding the safety and economic viability of the port and the city of Houston.

The port of Houston provides $5.5 billion in annual business revenues, and creates 196,000 direct and indirect jobs. By generating $300 million annually in customs fees and $213 million annually in State and local taxes, the Houston-Galveston navigation project in 4 years, we had a horrendous backlog and horrendous inefficiency. But then this amendment passed. In fact, now unlike other Federal power marketing agencies and systems around the country, we are pretty much up to date, and it is working very efficiently and effectively, both for the Federal taxpayers and for the region.

Why would this bill repeal that? It is some sort of strange flat-earth view of competition that does not exist and cannot effectively deal with the problem and did not before we had a change in the statute.

Secondly, the bill would prevent Bonneville Power Administration and other PMAs from cooperating with the utility customers to properly maintain the regional transmission grades.

Here we are worried about system reliability across the country which carries public health and safety, and we are going to undermine that in this bill. That is not a good move for the West or even the Southeast in terms of the Tennessee Valley Authority and other PMAs. It is very damaging. In fact, it is so damaging that I will have to vote against the entire bill, and I would urge other western Members to do the same.

Finally, there is a provision that forces BPA to discontinue an important infrastructure development. BPA is installing a fiber optic network on its transmission towers to improve its communication and its dispatch of power. It is good business. They need to do it.

At virtually no incremental cost, they could provide excess capacity to remote rural communities who will never see in this century or even in the next century for 20 or 30 years a private provider stringing fiberoptics to their communities.

BPA owns 80 percent of the transmission. It does not, by policy, allow other people to access or hang things on its transmission. They are the only alternative out there. In some, again, misguided attempt to compete about some competition that does not exist, and if it did exist, I would not be up here on that particular issue and prohibit them from using their excess capacity at no incremental cost to provide services to those communities.

These are ill-intentioned. They are not overcome by the manager’s language. I urge colleagues to vote against the entire bill unless these are fixed.
Mr. CRAMER changed his vote from "yea" to "nay." Mr. GOODLATTE changed his vote from "nay" to "yea." So the resolution was agreed to. The vote of the House was recorded as above recorded. A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PACKARD. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill (H.R. 2605) making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. ROONEY) stated: Pursuant to House Resolution 261 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. 2605.

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded. Mr. CRAMER changed his vote from "nay" to "yea." There was no objection.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. ROONEY) stated: Pursuant to House Resolution 261 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. 2605.

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. 2605) making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, with Mr. Hansen 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 California (Mr. PACKARD) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. VISCLOSKY) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. PACKARD).

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as the rule will consume.

Mr. Chairman, it is my privilege to present to the Committee of the Whole for its consideration the bill H.R. 2605, making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000.

Mr. Chairman, this bill provides an annual funding for a wide array of Federal Government programs involving such diverse matters as national secu-

rity, environmental cleanup, flood control, advanced scientific research, navigation, alternative energy sources, and the nuclear power regulation.

Programs funded by this bill affect multiple aspects of American life, having significant implications for domestic security, commercial competitiveness, and the advance of science.

I am proud of the bill reported by the Committee on Appropriations without amendment, and I believe it merits the support of the entire membership of this body.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this bill is its constrained size. The measure represents an unqualified victory for fiscal austerity, conservatism, and responsibility.

Total funding for the energy and water bill in H.R. 2605 is $20.19 billion. This is more than $900 million below the fiscal year 1999 baseline for energy and water development programs. Further, it is $1.4 billion below the budget request and more than $1 billion less than the energy and water bill passed by the Senate earlier this year.

Mr. Chairman, the substantial cuts contained in H.R. 2605 are real. They are not produced by smoke and mirrors gimmicks or creative accounting. They, rather, are the result of a fiscal discipline demanding reduction in the size, scope, and cost of the Federal Government.

Despite the bill’s deep programmatic reductions, it provides adequate funding for the continuation of high priority programs, promising the greatest return on the investment of taxpayer dollars.

The cost-effective civil works program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, for example, is funded at a level significantly higher than the budget request and slightly higher than the fiscal year 1999 level. This funding is more than offset by considerable reductions in the Department of Energy.

The bill requires, for example, a reduction of $125 million in DOE contractor travel expenses. This is one-half the level of this current year. And, as my colleagues all know, we have received documented evidence of abusive travel in that Department.

Mr. Chairman, I owe a great debt of gratitude to the hard-working members of the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development. They have labored hard under difficult fiscal constraints to provide a bill that is balanced and fair.

I especially want to express my gratitude to the ranking minority member, the honorable gentleman from Indiana (Mr. VISCLOSKY). He has been extremely helpful. Together we have developed a good bill. I know there are one or two items of disagreement, but overall I think both of us support a very good bill.