

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, the Veterans Equitable Resources Allocation (VERA) is an excellent system for directing veterans health care dollars to the states where our veterans receive their care. Since its inception in 1997 the VERA program has helped to more properly and equally distribute the scarce dollars we provide for our veterans healthcare.

My state of Florida has the second largest and oldest veterans population in the nation, and continues to suffer from lack of funding for its veterans programs. We recently had a veterans nursing home that was built and ready to care for our elderly veterans but could not open because there were no operating costs. We have a great state and we welcome all our new residents with open arms, but we must have the funds to provide for these new residents.

The VERA program was developed to more equally distribute needed funds to our veterans. The program is working and should be allowed to continue to work for our veterans. We've already shortchanged our veterans in this VA-HUD Appropriations. Let's not do it again. I ask my colleagues to vote no on this amendment.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. JIM KOLBE

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 9, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2684) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes:

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Chairman, I rise to give voice to the concerns of scientists and other citizens of southern Arizona who have grave misgivings about the funding decisions in this bill. As an appropriator and a subcommittee Chair myself, I understand and sympathize with the gentleman from New York on the difficulty of writing a bill under the caps by which we are currently governed.

However, as the elected representative of some of this country's pre-eminent scientists, I must speak on their behalf and relate to you the impact these funding cuts for basic research could have.

Many of you followed the success a year ago when the Mars Pathfinder mission landed on the Martian surface on the 4th of July. The camera that provided the stunning images of that new world was built at the University of Arizona and the world was watching. In that project we proved we could do significant science for a fraction of the cost and it was the front-page story around the world.

This project was a dramatic example of the core, basic research accomplished by our na-

tional universities and grant based research. Many of these programs are funded under NASA's Science, Aeronautics and Technology Account. In this bill, that account is funded at \$628 million, more than half a billion dollars below last year's budget.

Competitively awarded space science grants in every state in the nation will be drastically cut, with the biggest cuts coming in California, Maryland, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, Alabama and Pennsylvania.

In addition to cuts to space science programs, the subcommittee's decision to cut \$150 million from the Earth Observing System (EOS) program and an additional \$50 million from the EOS Data Information System (EOSDIS) significantly impairs our ability to understand our environment.

These cuts will make it difficult, if not impossible, to process data we are collecting from Landsat 7 and that we will collect on the EOS series of satellites. It makes little sense to have spent billions of dollars building these satellites over the last decade and fail to provide the funds to analyze the data they collect.

And the impact from this lack of data analysis will hurt important sectors of our economy; Farmers won't gain advance warning of oncoming severe weather like droughts or flooding; coastal areas like the southeastern U.S. won't be able to anticipate the severity of hurricanes.

In summary, these cuts in NASA's science programs will set back our nation. They are not balanced. They pose a great threat to our future competitiveness in research and technology.

Mr. Chairman, I am supporting some of the amendments to this bill which will help restore some of the funding cut by this bill. However, I am still concerned about the level of funding and ask the chairman of the VA-HUD Subcommittee to continue to work to find funds to fully support basic, core research.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2684) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes:

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Nadler amendment providing \$305 million for 50,000 Section 8 housing vouchers for low- and moderate-income families.

Just last year Congress recognized the critical need for housing by passing the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, which

authorized 100,000 new Section 8 vouchers. The Majority's appropriation provides zero funding for these vouchers—essentially turning our work of last year into an empty promise.

In my district in New York City alone, the Majority's appropriation would support housing for 375 fewer lower-income families than in FY 1999.

HUD recently reported that the wait for public housing has increased by 50 percent over the past 2½ years. Before we race ahead with budget-busting tax cuts, we must assist families living in substandard housing.

Join me in supporting the Nadler amendment and build on our work of last year.

TRIBUTE TO RAMON SANCHEZ

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 13, 1999

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct honor to commend one of Northwest Indiana's most distinguished citizens, Ramon Sanchez, of Merrillville, Indiana. Mr. Sanchez will be honored by the Lake County Council for his exemplary and dedicated service to our community on September 14, 1999.

Born in Villalba, Puerto Rico, Mr. Sanchez is the eldest of four children born to the late Francisco and Candida Sanchez. Ramon, fondly referred to as "Ray" by his many friends, has been an active and visible leader in the Hispanic community since his arrival to the United States in 1951.

Mr. Sanchez began his career in the United States as a steelworker at Inland Steel, a job from which he retired in 1989 after 38 years of service. From 1972-1995, he served as Chief Bailiff with the Gary City Court. Most recently, Ramon Sanchez retired from the Merrillville Town Court after two years of service as Bailiff.

Outside of his professional career, Ramon Sanchez has devoted a large portion of his life to the betterment of Northwest Indiana. Mr. Sanchez is committed to improving the standard of living in Northwest Indiana, particularly in the Hispanic community. He has played an instrumental role in representing the needs of the community and has been an advocate of minority rights. Mr. Sanchez is a well recognized and respected figure in Northwest Indiana's political arena, having served the City of Gary in various capacities including a 20 year term as precinct committeeman. He has spearheaded various political campaigns and is affiliated with numerous civic organizations throughout Northwest Indiana.

While serving the community has always been an extremely important part of Mr. Sanchez's life, there can be no comparison to the dedication he has for his family. Ramon and his loving wife, Nancy, have raised four wonderful children, Amy, Ingrid, Mishelle, and Zayda. He is also a proud grandfather of nine grandchildren which provide an eternal source of joy and love for both he and his wife.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in commending Ramon Sanchez for his dedication, service, and leadership to the people of Indiana's First