CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

May 25, 1999

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

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMMUNICATION FROM HON. RICHARD A. GEPHARDT, DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LA TOURETTE) laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable Richard A. Gephardt, Democratic leader:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER,

Hon. J. Dennis Hastert,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Title 4 of the U.S.C. 2702, I hereby appoint the following individual to the Advisory Committee on The Records of Congress:
Dr. Joseph Cooper of Baltimore, MD.
Yours Very Truly,
Richard A. Gephardt.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and that I may include tabular and extra-
aneous materials on the bill (H.R. 1906) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

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

There was no objection.
AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 185 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. 1906.

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. 1906) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, with Mr. PEASE in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill. The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the Chair is permitted as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. SKEEN) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. SKEEN).

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

Mr. Chairman, today I have the honor to present to the House the fiscal year 2000 bill appropriating funds for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies. The bill we are taking up today has a total discretionary budget authority of almost $13.99 billion. This is $296 million above the current level and $531 million below the request.

In mandatory spending, this bill has $47 billion for fiscal year 2000, about $4.8 billion over current levels and $890 million below the request. Almost two-thirds of the mandatory spending in this bill is for food stamps, child nutrition, and most of the rest goes to support basic farm programs. This bill is within the allocations required by the Committee on Appropriations.

This bill is truly a bipartisan product. Mr. Chairman, constructed from hearings that began on February 10 and ended on March 18. The Committee on Appropriations has produced seven volumes of hearing records containing thousands of pages of information on the hearings, the detailed budget requests, and the answers to questions asked by Members and the public as well.

The Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies and the Committee on Appropriations held markups on May 13 and May 19 respectively, and these were public meetings with which the Members participated actively in shaping the bill.

Many Members would like to spend more than is in the bill, and so would I. We have about 400 letters to date, many of them with multiple requests, but only a handful ask for reduced spending.

Once again this year the administration proposed to pay for requested increases in farm commodity programs, without any cuts with user fees that require legislation. Once again the administration has favored budget gimmicks over reality because the main component of this legislation, user fees on meat and poultry inspection, has been strongly opposed by consumer groups, industry, and the authorizing committees for several years.

This bill does a lot of good in many areas. Farm Service Agency salaries and expenses are increased by $80 million, to improve delivery of farm programs; agricultural credit programs are increased by more than $700 million; and funds to protect our Nation’s soils are increased by $13 million. Rural housing programs are increased over last year’s level and rural telephone and electric lines are increased or held at last year’s levels.

Once again, the Food Safety and Inspection Service gets the full request, a $36 million increase. FDA has an increase of $115 million. Funding for the Food Safety Initiative is provided throughout the bill. Child nutrition programs have been increased by $367 million and the WIC Title by $81 million. P.L. 480, Titles I and II, the two main food aid titles, are restored to last year’s levels, and the full request is provided for the Foreign Agricultural Service.

I would also like to say to my colleagues that the bill so far does not have any significant provisions that would bring objections from authorizing committees, and I would strongly urge that we keep it that way.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentleman from Florida (Chairman Young) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations, and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. Kaptur), our even more distinguished ranking member on the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, for their help in putting this bill together.

I would like to recognize the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. Emerson), the gentleman from New York (Mr. Hinchey), the gentleman from California (Mr. Farr), and the gentlewoman from Florida (Mr. Boyd), our new subcommittee members who have brought a great deal of enthusiasm and creativity to this bill. I look forward to their participation on the floor today and in the conference.

Mr. Chairman, I say to all my colleagues that this is a bill that will benefit every one of our constituents every day of their lives, no matter where they live in this great country.