

SUPPORT FOR GAMBIA

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, today I show of friendship and support for the African continent. During the December recess, I visited the West African nation of the Gambia with several of my colleagues and discovered a country full of hope and motivation for advancing their country's welfare and future potential. In light of this body's efforts to pass legislation that would increase and better our economic relationship with the African continent, I was deeply impressed and my hope for Africa buoyed by the dynamism I saw in Gambia's duty-free import zone and its booming tourist industry.

In this regard, I would like to submit into the record a recent Editorial in The Journal of Commerce newspaper by Viola Herms Drath "Emphasis should be on Africa's role models" that praises Gambia, as one of a handful of African nations, that is developing systems for its own internal development seeking trade and not aid. While much work remains to be done in terms of ameliorating the country's transportation and technological infrastructure, the Gambia is well on its way toward developing constructive partnerships that will enable them to sustain and increase their development potential. I am happy to draw attention to the Gambia's very positive achievements and look forward to lending them this chamber's continued support and encouragement.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 21, 2000

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4635) 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, 2001, and for other purposes.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Chairman, I rise to offer an amendment to increase the appropriation for the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS, or HOPWA, program by \$18 million. This is \$10 million less than the President requested, and far less than is truly needed to adequately fund this vital program, but represents the amount necessary to ensure that those already in the program do not receive a cut in service. I am delighted by the bipartisan nature of this amendment and I would like to thank Mr. SHAYS, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. HORN, Mr. FOLEY, and Mr. CUMMINGS for joining me in offering this amendment and demonstrating the bipartisan support that this program enjoys.

Mr. Chairman, at any given time, one-third to one-half of all Americans living with AIDS are either homeless or in imminent danger of losing their homes. These are people who face discrimination, or have lost their jobs due to illness or, most cruelly, must choose between expensive, life-saving medications and other necessities such as shelter.

This is where HOPWA comes in. HOPWA is the only federal housing program that specifically provides cities and states with the resources to address the housing crisis facing people living with AIDS. Among the services HOPWA delivers are rental assistance, help with utility payments, and information on low-income housing opportunities.

It is also a crucial element in the effective treatment of HIV and AIDS. There is a clear link between stable housing and the ability of individuals living with HIV to live long and healthy lives. Some people have responded so well to new therapies that they have been able to go back to work after years on disability. However, these treatments require a stable living environment to be effective. To deny individuals the means to get healthy would be a terrible cruelty.

HOPWA is a locally controlled program that provides communities the flexibility to implement the strategies that best respond to local housing needs. It also supplies a low-cost alternative to acute-care hospital beds, typically paid for with Medicaid dollars, which are often the only available shelter for people living with AIDS. In fact, whereas an acute-care facility would cost, on average, between \$1,085 a day under Medicaid, assistance under HOPWA averages just \$55 to \$110 a day. So, HOPWA is not just compassionate, it is cost-effective. Currently, FY 2000 funds are serving thousands of people in 67 communities and 34 states. This is a well-run, far-reaching and successful program.

But as the success of HOPWA grows, so too does the need for funding. As a result of recent advances in care and treatment, the people currently being housed are living longer and the waiting lists for these programs are growing even longer. HOPWA would require an increase just to keep up with inflation, but on top of these strains on the program, 4 new cities will qualify for funds this year, stretching resources even thinner. The \$18 million we ask for in this amendment, \$10 million less than the President requested, is the bare minimum required if we are to ensure that those currently in the program are not threatened with a cut in service.

As for the offset, let me be clear. This is not an attack on polar research. I am a very strong supporter of scientific research and I am disappointed that more money was not provided for it throughout the bill. However, under the budget rules, we must find an offset and a slight cut to the Polar and Antarctic research program, which receives a significant increase in this bill over last year, will do minimal harm to our research programs while providing very significant benefits to the HOPWA program and the people it serves. I would also add that there are eleven other agencies that supplement the work of NSF in the arctic, spending roughly \$150 million a year, so this slight decrease will not damage our long-term research goals.

Unfortunately, under these budget rules we are forced to pit one program against another. If we were not locked into the unrealistic caps placed on us by the Budget Resolution, I would advocate a large increase in both HOPWA and polar research. However, this is the hand we have been dealt and we must select our priorities.

The housing crisis facing people living with HIV/AIDS exacts an enormous toll on individuals, their families, and communities across the country. HOPWA dollars help lessen this toll. Without proper funding for HOPWA, people with HIV and AIDS will continue to die prematurely in hospital rooms, shelters, and on the streets of our cities. I urge the adoption of this amendment.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2000

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of The National and Community Service Amendments Act of 2000, of which I am a proud original co-sponsor, was introduced last week in the House by two of my distinguished colleagues, Mr. SHAYS of Connecticut and Mr. ANDREWS of New Jersey. The bill would reauthorize the Corporation for National Service and the programs it administers: the National Senior Service Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. The bill has been drafted in close consultation with more than 200 community service groups.

This legislation is a simple extension of the existing program with a few improvements:

Codifies the cost-cutting agreement reached with Senator GRASSLEY in 1996. The Corporation for National Service has lowered its cost per-member to \$15,000 for FY 99, including a \$4,725 education award to finance college or repay student loans; and a mere \$7,421 for a living allowance.

Expands the cost-cutting "Education Award Only" model, where the Corporation provides only the education award, and the sponsoring organization provides all other support.

Eliminates controversial AmeriCorps grants to other federal agencies.

AmeriCorps, the domestic Peace Corps, engages more than 40,000 Americans in intensive, results-driven service each year. AmeriCorps members are tackling critical problems like illiteracy, crime and poverty. They have taught, tutored or mentored more than 2.6 million children, served 564,000 at-risk youth in after-school programs, operated 40,500 safety patrols, rehabilitated 25,179 homes, aided more than 2.4 million homeless individuals, and immunized 419,000 people.

In Connecticut, more than 1,200 residents have served their communities through AmeriCorps.

AmeriCorps helps solve critical problems in an effective way. It creates \$1.66 worth of benefits for each \$1.00 spent. And for every full-time AmeriCorps member, 12 regular and occasional unpaid volunteers are recruited and