CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

July 26, 2001

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER); pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 210 is an open rule which provides for 1 hour of general debate divided between the chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), and the ranking member, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), on H.R. 2620, the fiscal year 2002 Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill.

The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. After general debate, any Member wishing to offer an amendment may do so as long as it complies with the regular rules of the House. The rule makes in order one amendment printed in the report accompanying the rule and waives all points of order against that amendment.

The rule waives points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI for legislatively designated amendments to be offered to an appropriations bill containing an emergency designation.

Finally, the rule permits the minority to offer a motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, this bill provides yet another example of a carefully crafted bill from the Committee on Appropriations that strikes a balance between fiscal discipline and social responsibility. I would like to commend the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations, for making the tough decisions required to produce a thoughtful bill that meets our most important priorities.

While we can never agree on everything, this is a good bill which we can all agree addresses some of our Nation's most pressing needs. It takes care of our veterans, it addresses the Nation's critical housing needs, it helps to preserve and protect our environment, it invests in scientific research, and continues our exploration into space.

This legislation maintains our commitment to our Nation's veterans, who selflessly place themselves in harm's way so that we may enjoy the very freedoms which we so cherish. Our veterans deserve our thanks, but more importantly they deserve and have earned the benefits in this bill.

This year, the fiscal year 2002 Veterans-HUD appropriations bill provides an additional $1 million over last year's increase for Veterans Medical Health Care, bringing the total to $21.3 billion.

I am proud to inform my colleagues and, more importantly, our veterans that we have increased Veterans Medical Health Care by $4 billion over the course of the last 3 fiscal years.

This bill increases Veterans Medical and Prosthetic Research yet again, by $20 million, and provides an additional $128 million over last year's funding levels for the Veterans Benefit Administration to expedite claims processing.

Additionally, H.R. 2620 provides $100 million for Veterans Extended Care Facilities, an increase of $50 million over the President's request.

Mr. Speaker, along with providing for the needs of our veterans, this legislation makes available important resources to help the most vulnerable in our society with a very basic need: placing a roof over their heads.

Low-income families will benefit through this bill's investment in the Housing Certificates Program, which provides funding for Section 8 renewals and tenant protection.

A $1.8 billion increase over last year's funding level will allow for the renewal of all expiring Section 8 contracts and provide needed reselection assistance at the level requested by our President. A total of $15.7 billion is provided for this important program in fiscal year 2002. This includes $197 million to fund some 34,000 new Section 8 vouchers.

In my district in Columbus, Ohio, we know all too well how crucial this housing assistance is for families who are trying to lift themselves up and improve their lives.

Other needed housing programs that help our elderly, that help people with AIDS and that help the disabled are also receiving increases over last year's funding levels in this report.

H.R. 2620 also looks toward the future by preserving and protecting our environment for the next generations to enjoy.

The bill targets funding and places an emphasis on State grants to protect the water that we drink and the air that we breathe.

The State Revolving Fund for Safe Drinking Water is increased by more than $25 million from last year's level, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund is funded at $1.2 billion, equal to last year's level, and, finally, State Air Grants were increased $8 million over last year.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides important funding which maintains
our commitment to the exploration of space and the improvements of science.

I am pleased to say that the National Science Foundation is increased by some 9 percent or $414 million above the last fiscal year. This will go a long way to try to help foster scientific discovery, promote basic research, as well as increase science education.

NASA also receives an increase that will bring total funding to more than $15 billion. It fully funds the space shuttle operations and increases funding for the International Space Station programs. This will enable the United States of America to maintain our superiority in space exploration and aeronautical research.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this bill addresses an unexpected shortfall within the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and to consider what $1 million in emergency designated funding.

While, as a fiscal conservative, I am generally opposed to the use of emergency designations on appropriations bills, this bill and the amendment made earlier under this rule provides that the funds will only be made available if it is determined that they are necessary for FEMA to meet the needs of the communities adversely affected by disaster. These funds simply represent an insurance policy for some of our Nation's hardest hit communities.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill, and it deserves our support. It takes a responsible path towards addressing our Nation's most pressing needs and priorities. I urge all of my colleagues to support this straightforward and non-controversial rule, as well as this must-do piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ohio for yielding me the customary half hour and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have strong concerns about the rule and the process it represents. As I stated earlier, the Committee on Rules and the current leadership are developing a compulsive aver¬ sion to regular order. In what has come to be standard operating procedure, the Committee on Rules emerged only moments ago to set a new precedent for the Appropriations process. This is the first bill that will accommodate. We got hit with a lot more than that. Now we are facing billions of dollars in uninsured damages. That is catastrophic damage. It is the exact reason that we classify some events as legitimate emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, I have opposed and will continue opposing attempts to manipulate the process by lumping wasteful spending in with the legitimate expenses that we incur by responding to actual emergencies, but that is not the case here. The FEMA account generally has emergency funds in contingency reserve to deal with true emergencies, and the flooding from Tropical Storm Allison caused a real emergency in Houston and all through the South. We know that cleaning up the damage has nearly wiped out FEMA’s funding, so several weeks ago on this floor I op¬ posed the partisan bill that was used by some of my colleagues on other side of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that FEMA has the funds necessary to carry out their duties for the remainder of this fiscal year. FEMA has the funds to make it through the year. The responsible thing to do is to restore the funds to the account. It will enable FEMA to assist Houston’s recovery, and as we move into hurricane season it will enable FEMA to stand ready to meet any short-term contingency as well.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work of the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) as we move through this process, and I ask my colleagues to vote for the rule.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, so far, with the six appropriations bills which have passed the House, we have seen bipartisan support for every single one of them. This is the first bill that will generate considerable opposition, and I want to explain why.
Mr. Walsh. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. Walsh) chairman of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies.

Mr. Walsh. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time and for her leadership on this rule. We wanted to have made in order and he accepted that, and the bill was passed earlier in the year.

Mr. Walsh. I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. Young of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I think the moral priority that has been the last two.

I think we have a good bill, Mr. Speaker. It is a work product that incorporates bipartisanship in its truest form. The gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. Molloy) and I have worked hand in hand. Our staffs have worked hand in hand together on priorities. We had a manager's amendment in the full committee that the gentleman from West Virginia helped to write. We incorporated that, and the bill was passed out of committee on a voice vote. So both parties, all Members, supported the bill.

I think it is obviously a very complex bill. There are a lot of different issues in the bill. Perhaps the most important, as always has been the case, is veterans' claims processing. The authorizing committee asked for additional funds in medical care discretionary funds, and we provided a billion dollars over and above what was provided last year. So in the past 3 years, we will have increased veterans' medical care by just over $4 billion. That is a very substantial increase. It is a tremendous commitment on the part of the Congress to provide funds to the veterans. In each case, we have met or exceeded the President's request, dating back from the previous administration.

We also provided over $400 million for construction. This is a direct response to Members who felt that medical care centers around the country were in need of repair, major construction. This is a huge commitment that has to be the priority. It is important. It is important to do it now in the sense.

We also have provided an additional $175 million above last year to provide for veterans' claims processing. This is Secretary Principi's highest goal, to provide those resources. We are going to help him to meet that commitment to get those waiting times down for veterans' claims processing.

Mr. Walsh. I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. Walsh) chairman of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies.

Mr. Walsh. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time and for her leadership on this rule. We wanted to have made in order and he accepted that, and the bill was passed earlier in the year.

Mr. Walsh. I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Ms. Pryce of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. Walsh) chairman of the Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies.

Mr. Walsh. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time and for her leadership on this rule and for guiding this bill through the House for the third year in a row. I hope we are as lucky this year as we have been the last two.

I think we have a good bill, Mr. Speaker. It is a work product that incorporates bipartisanship in its truest form. The gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. Molloy) and I have worked hand in hand. Our staffs have worked hand in hand together on priorities. We had a manager's amendment in the full committee that the gentleman from West Virginia helped to write. We incorporated that, and the bill was passed out of committee on a voice vote. So both parties, all Members, supported the bill.

I think it is obviously a very complex bill. There are a lot of different issues in the bill. Perhaps the most important, as always has been the case, is veterans' claims processing. The authorizing committee asked for additional funds in medical care discretionary funds, and we provided a billion dollars over and above what was provided last year. So in the past 3 years, we will have increased veterans' medical care by just over $4 billion. That is a very substantial increase. It is a tremendous commitment on the part of the Congress to provide funds to the veterans. In each case, we have met or exceeded the President's request, dating back from the previous administration.

We also provided over $400 million for construction. This is a direct response to Members who felt that medical care centers around the country were in need of repair, major construction. This is a huge commitment that has to be the priority. It is important. It is important to do it now in the sense.
I am pleased that the Committee on Rules protected this provision. I am disappointed that the Committee did not grant a waiver making in order an amendment to be offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), ranking member of the full Committee on Appropriations. His amendment would have provided $1 billion in additional resources to adequately fund many of the accounts in this bill that are admittedly underfunded. As an offset, the amendment would have decreased the recently enacted reduction in the highest marginal tax rate by just .5 percent. While I might consider this a minor change, for those who supported the tax cut, it has the implication of shifting millions of dollars from the highest-income citizens in our land to benefit some of the neediest families and neediest communities in our land.

Because this amendment was not made in order, I support efforts to defeat the previous question so that the rule can be amended to permit the Obe amendment to be considered by the House.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman from Ohio for yielding me this time, especially in light of the fact that I am rising in opposition to this rule. I would point out that it is a very reluctant opposition. This is the first time that I have opposed a rule since I have been in Congress.

The fact is in recent years we have been spending too much money. The result of that is that we are in grave danger of putting us under law... increases we have had in recent years and the economic downturn, that within a few short years we could be back to raiding Medicare and raiding Social Security. We made a promise we would not do that. This rule makes that problem worse. It makes that danger worse. Let me explain why.

This bill, as we know, adds $1.3 billion in funding for FEMA. Above and beyond the $1.4 billion ordinary funding for FEMA, there is 1.3 billion additional FEMA dollars that have an emergency designation. The significance of the emergency designation is that that money does not have to be offset. So that means it is in addition to the entire budget. It is above and beyond all that we are going to spend in 2002. House rules forbid putting an emergency designation into a non-emergency bill. This rule breaks that rule. It waives that provision.

Why was that done, again I ask? It was to make sure that this did not have to be offset. That is what is wrong with this. Those of us who are going to oppose this rule do not do so because we necessarily oppose the FEMA funding. What we oppose is the fact that we are not going to be able to strike the emergency designation and require this to be offset; and as a result, we are going to increase the risk that we may, in fact, end up raiding Medicare or Social Security at some time in the near future.

I would also point out the President did not request this. Normally when the President requests an emergency, he sends a letter requesting emergency funding and designates a specific event. The President did not do that. In fact, he issued a statement of administration policy. I will quote briefly. It says: "The administration appreciates Congress’ attentiveness to the needs of FEMA. The administration is not, however, prepared to commit to a specific level of contingent emergency appropriations close to that of $1.3.

That is exactly what this does. It puts in an extra $1.3 billion. I urge my Democratic colleagues who object to not being able to offer an amendment, do not vote against the previous question only to vote against this rule. You ought to vote against the rule if you do not agree with this rule. I urge my Republican colleagues likewise.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT).

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to also oppose the rule. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) and I must read different things, but let me tell you why. This place passed out a tax cut way out there and now everybody stands up and says, “We don’t have enough money to do what’s necessary.”

We are in such a fix that the leadership from Texas has to bring us out of this country. Why? Because they want to have $1.3 billion in relief to Texas. Now, yesterday on the Foreign Ops bill, we could pass all this money, $300 and some odd million dollars to wipe out drugs in Colombia. But in this bill, because we need $1.3 billion, we take $310 million in drug money, fighting drugs, out of the public housing in this country. We worry about it in Colombia but not in our own cities. We wipe out AmeriCorps for $445 million. We are getting closer to that.

The issue here is what an emergency. The White House says that what goes on in India, where they knocked down 100,000 houses and 30,000 people died, we can give them $5 million. That is how much the great and generous and rich United States can do. In El Salvador, where they have had the worst earthquake in history, we give them nothing.

So now the message here is to those Ecuadorians and San Salvadorans is get in a bus and get to Texas, because if there is any problem, it will get taken care of in Texas. The gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN)
says that West Virginia has a few problems. Folks, get in the car and get to Texas, because that is what we are going to take care of. We are not going to take care of anything else. We are not going to take care of CDBG. We are cutting money out of there. Of course we passed this community money into the churches so we all better write a letter to our churches, send more money, because you are not going to get it from the Congress.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. Bishop).

Mr. BISHOP. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Committee on Appropriations for their hard work on the bill. I offered an amendment in the Committee on Rules which was not granted a waiver and that is very, very disappointing, because my amendment would appropriate no additional funds and it would only authorize the use of existing funds for an important program. It would have taken money from the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to establish a minority emergency preparedness demonstration program to research and promote the capacity of minority communities throughout the country to get data, information, and awareness education through grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements with eligible nonprofit corporations. These nonprofits would do research on the status of emergency preparedness and disaster response awareness in African American and Hispanic communities across the country, in rural areas, suburban areas and determine how they are impacted by natural and man-made disasters and emergencies.

Also, they would be authorized to develop and promote awareness of emergency preparedness programs in minority communities and to develop competent educational materials that could be disseminated in these communities and to organizations and institutions.

This was a good bill. It would be very helpful, particularly since in the past year there were 51 disasters in 33 different states, and this year there have been 23 disasters in 22 different states. The impact on minorities has been established by FEMA at 2 1/2 times greater on minorities than any other group.

This is a very, very much-needed operation, given the disasters we have had; and I am very, very disappointed that the rule does not allow a waiver to allow consideration of my amendment, which has been printed and is in the Record.

I urge ultimate passage of the bill, but if we can defeat the rule and perhaps allow consideration of this amendment, I certainly would be appreciative. It would be good for America, good for African American and Hispanic communities that are impacted, so greatly by our floods, tornadoes and natural disasters where there have been tremendous fatalities and loss of life over the past few years.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the gentleman that just spoke to offer that amendment when the time comes. Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. Spratt).

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, we are now in the eighth of 13 appropriations bills, and, as we drive this process to conclusion, I think it would be smart to stop and look at the fuel gauge.

That is what we have here, a gas gauge. We started out with a full tank, flush with surpluses, $35 billion this year. We did our resolution, 302(a), and gave $4 billion more than the baseline, so you size this up. We did budget resolution with a placeholder number for defense. Now we are having to come back and put in a real number for defense, and, in outlay terms, it is $12 billion.

Because we did not adequately provide for defense and because we did not provide at all for emergencies, even though the chairman of our committee wanted to institutionalize that, it appeared that a bigger tax cut was feasible. So the tax cut for this year takes out $75 billion, but for a gimmick I will mention in just a minute. So when you factor in those changes you get down to $3 billion. That is how close we are to being empty.

Now, one thing saves us, and that is we did an artificial one-time transfer of funds from September 15 to October 1. The problem is, when we go home in August, that tax cut may disappear when CBO does its update of the budget and economy. If that is true, we will really be running right on empty. That is all we have got left to provide for emergencies, to provide for other priorities that come along in this process before it is completed. That is what is wrong with the tax cut.

What happened? I do not blame the subcommittee at all. I did not get up to criticize the subcommittee. I think they have done as well as they could do with what was allocated.

But we pointed out if you went with this budget with these tax cuts and this allocation, this was going to happen to veterans. We could not fund fully the basic needs of the Veterans Health Administration. It has come to pass. We have less than they need. They have done a good job in trying to plus it up as well they could, but there is not enough there.

In the Housing Program, how could one pick a program that helps the vulnerable more than housing? We have a $20 billion backlog in capital requirements and maintenance needs. What are we doing? Taking a half billion dollars out of it. The housing projects are a haven for drugs. We are eliminating the Public Housing Drug Elimination Program.

This is a consequence of having a budget where we did not adequately provide for emergencies, we did not adequately provide for defense, we fooled ourselves about the size of the tax cut, and now we are inheriting the consequences. You see the fruits of this in the bill before us today.

I commend the committee for doing the best they could with what they have got, but these are the consequences of the tax cut and the rule attendant to it presents somewhat of a serious dilemma to all of us who are approaching this issue very carefully. On the one hand, it entitled only a sense of praise for the subcommittee chairman, the chairman of the full committee, the ranking members, for the way in which they have squeezed as much as they have into this bill, given the limited resources that they had to work with.

But that is essentially the problem. We have choked ourselves off in this country by this enormous tax cut that we passed earlier this year preceding the budget, in the craziest way of approaching fiscal policy I think we have had this government in a long, long time. What does that lead us with? It leaves us with some very serious problems we are not addressing.

The gentleman from South Carolina just made the point about housing. We have a housing crisis in this country. Many people, in urban and rural areas across America, find it impossible to get a house. Municipal workers, for example, are not making enough money to afford a house in the present market. This is a serious crisis. There is no place for them to live and raise their families.

Similar things can be said about environmental protection. This bill does the best it can, but it does not provide nearly enough money to protect the quality of the natural environment from toxic discharges and other releases into the ambient air and the general environment.

That is a serious mistake. And why? Because we have choked ourselves off with that huge tax cut, and we do not have the resources that we need to attend to vital concerns addressing our people. The same thing can be said about...
July 26, 2001

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE 14691

health care. The same thing can be said about our growing crisis in transportation. Look at any of the airports in this country and you can see it very clearly. Drive along the roads during rush hour. It becomes readily apparent. We are not doing anything to deal with the need for surface transportation, particularly rail transportation between our major cities.

So, this is a dilemma for all of us. We are not allowing ourselves to deal with these important issues facing the American people.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from New York just spoke of the inability of our budget to handle the needs of our people. I want to speak to the veterans' budget, the veteran parts of this budget, because the same is true there. We simply have let our veterans down in this budget. We have not honored the promise we have not honored our commitment, we have not honored our contract with our Nation's veterans.

Now, we are fond on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, at least on the Democratic side, of saying that you do not have a surplus until you have paid your bills, and we have not paid our bills to the Nation's veterans. We had a decade of flat-line budgeting, and, as a result, the quality of medical care declined, the waiting times for appointments expanded greatly, and the new diseases and the diseases of aging veterans could not be handled with the same professionalism as previously. So we have not paid our bills to our Nation's veterans.

Now, the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee said that we added $1 billion to last year's budget. Well, all independent analysts say that $1 billion for our veterans' health care system barely keeps up with inflation and does not allow us to make the gains that we had promised over the last decade.

I am going to make several amendments to this bill when the time is appropriate to bring the level of the budget up to a more appropriate level, especially in health care.

All the veterans' groups in this Nation got together to produce something called the Independent Budget. What they did here was a very professional analysis of what was needed to care for our veterans, not just give me more money here or give me more money there, but let us reduce the waiting times to this number of days by putting this much money in. Let us increase the number of positions in the Beneficiary Administration so we can decrease the waiting times for adjudication. Let us make sure we can have research that will deal with the new diseases, like hepatitis C and the Persian Gulf War illness. That is what this Independent Budget does, and that is what this Congress ought to do.

So, we are fond of the amendment to increase the health care budget by $1.7 billion, which is what the veterans' groups' analysis says. We will try to make improvements in the health research budget. We will try to make amendments to treat such diseases as hepatitis C and also to treat the Filipino veterans of World War II who we have denied care to for the last 50 years.

So we will make those amendments. I hope they will get the similar waiver that you have for emergency funding, that you have for other items. Let us really keep our commitment to our Nation's veterans.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in reluctant opposition to the rule. I have not been here long, but this will be the first rule that I have opposed. I am very sensitive to disasters like the one we had in Texas, but I just feel that it would be disaster to ignore the spirit of our own rules and go right back to emergency spending.

We are perilously close to dipping into the Social Security and Medicare surpluses. We promised our citizens that we would not do that. We are close to it. We need not do it.

The problem is not the tax cut, the problem is spending. We have had an average of 6 percent a year growth in spending over the past 3 years. That is the problem. We cannot simply maintain that.

I urge a vote against the rule.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON), a member of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, there you have it. You have got one group in the House who says a $4 billion increase is too much spending. You have another group in the House that says it is not enough spending. You have a group in the House who causes all reality on how many billions of dollars you can spend.

And yet this House has passed a very balanced budget, a budget that funds the priorities. It puts in money for Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid. It pays down the debt. It takes care of our normal obligations of government, such as education, transportation and health care. Then it returns dollars to the hard-working taxpayers, and then it spends money wisely.

So I think this reckless scheme of the Democrats to blame everything on a tax reduction, you know, Georgia is going to get in the form of $300, $500 and $600 checks $1.2 billion in the next couple of weeks. Now, that is $1.2 billion that is going to be spent by normal people, like Joe and Shirley Hardwick in Wilmington, Georgia, and what they are going to do with that money is doing something real glamorous like buy a dryer, or maybe buy some clothes for the kids who are going to be going back to school.

This is not going to be enough money for a nice vacation, the kind of money that the big Washington bureaucrats make up here. But, do you know what, they know how to spend their money more than I do.

That is what the debate is about here today, who should spend that money: the geniuses in Washington, the big bureaucracy who can control people's lives through their spending, or should we empower the citizens of America what this Congress ought to do.

Mr. Speaker, this is very, very important money.

In addition to that, we are going to put more money in Veterans Administration and medical and prosthetic research, in national cemeteries, in State extended health care facilities, and in veterans' hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, this is very, very important money.

We are also going to put more money in Veterans Administration and medical and prosthetic research, in national cemeteries, in State extended health care facilities, and in veterans' hospitals.
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

July 26, 2001

So I urge my colleagues to support this rule. It does comply with the budget. Our budget, again, takes care of Social Security, Medicare, the national and needed obligations of government such as education and housing and, in this budget, veterans. Then, it returns a portion of the surplus to the citizens of America, after paying down the debt.

Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleagues, this bill is in compliance with that budget that has passed both Houses, and I urge my colleagues to vote for the rule.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN).

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to oppose the previous question. If the previous question is defeated, the ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), will offer an amendment to the rule. The amendment will make in order the amendment offered by the Committee on Appropriations by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) and also at the Committee on Rules.

The amendment adds $1 billion for veterans medical care, for critical housing programs, and to partially re-store funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service, some of the issues that have been spoken to here during the debate on the rule. The money would come from par-tially the recently enacted tax cut in the top tax bracket from 38.6 percent to 39.1 percent. That is one-half of 1 percent from the richest Americans to help some of the most vulnerable Americans and communities.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of the amend-ment and extraneous materials at this point in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LA TOURETTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from West Virginia?

There was no objection.

Previous Question for Rule on H.R. 2620, FY2002 Appropriations for the VA/HUD

At the end of the resolution add the follow-ing new sections:

"Sec. . Notwithstanding any other provi-sion of this resolution, it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider the following amendment if offered by Representative Obey or his designee. The amendment shall be considered as read and be debatable for 60 minutes equally dis-vided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent. All points of order are waived against the amendment. The amendment is not subject to a de-mand for the division of the question.

General Provisions

At the end of the bill, insert the following new section:

"Sec. 427. Paragraph (2) of section 1(i) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to reductions in rates after June 30, 2001), is amended by adding after the table the following:

In the case of taxable years beginning dur-ing calendar year 2002, the preceding table shall be applied by substituting "39.1%" for "38.65%".

Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration

In the paragraph "Medical Care", strike "$21,261,567,000" and insert "$21,261,567,000" in lieu thereof.

Department of Housing and Urban Development, Public Housing Capital Fund

In the paragraph entitled "Public Housing Capital Fund", strike "$2,837,000,000" and in-sert "$2,837,000,000" in lieu thereof.

Department of Housing and Urban Development

After the paragraph entitled "homeless Assis-tance Grants; insert the following new section:

"SHELTER PLUS CARE RENEWALS

For the renewal on an annual basis or amendment of contracts funded under the Shelter Plus Care program, as authorized under subtitle D of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended, $100,000,000, to remain available until ex-pended: Provided, That each Shelter Plus Care program contract shall be eligible for renewal only if the project is determined to be needed under the applicable continuum of care and meets appropriate program requirements and financial stand-ards, as determined by the Secretary.

Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Programs and Management

In the paragraph entitled "Environmental Programs and Management", strike "$5,014,799,000" and insert "$5,014,799,000" in lieu thereof.

At the end of the paragraph entitled "En-vironmental Programs and Management", insert:

": Provided further, That the on-board staffing level of the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assistance shall be maintained at not less than the level authorized for this Office as of December 31, 2000.

Corporation for National and Community Service

Strike the paragraph following the center head entitled "National and Community Service programs, Operating Expenses" and insert the following new section:

"(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary expenses for the Corporation for National and Community Service (the "Corporation") in carrying out programs, ac-tivities, and initiatives under the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (the "Act") (42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.), $111,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2003: Provided, That not more than $50,000,000, to remain available without fiscal year limita-tion, shall be transferred to the National Service trust account for educational awards authorized under subtitle D of title I of the Act (42 U.S.C. 12601 et seq.).

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose the previous question so that we can have an opportunity to vote on this critical amendment.

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

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may con-sume.

Mr. Speaker, again, this is a good bill; and the Committee on Appropriations has done yeoman's work in bal-ancing a number of very, very important priorities. The gentleman from Florida, Mr. YOUNG, the chairman of the committee; along with the gen-tleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the subcommittee chairman; and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), the ranking member, have done a great job.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2620 responds to the needs of our veterans. It protects our environment. It keeps the U.S. at the forefront of space exploration. It provides needed funding to ensure new scientific discovery. It addresses our Nation's critical housing needs and, fin-ally, helps more Americans realize the dream of owning their own homes. This we do without reversing tax relief that we just gave to the American people; tax relief which has not even gone into effect yet.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on the rule and the underlying legislation.

Support the previous question.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the rule and the bill. For the past four years, my colleague, Mr. TANCREDO, and I have offered and amendment to the VA/HUD Appropriations bill to restore or increase the funding of the State Extended Care Facilities Construction line item. I am extremely happy to report that the Committee has fully funded the program at $100 million for Fiscal Year 2002.

This program is used to renovate and build state nursing homes for veterans. State facili-ties have proven that they can provide above quality care at a more cost efficient price than the federal government. In Fiscal Year 1998, the VA spent on average $255.25 per resident per day to care for long term nursing care residents, while state veterans homes on average spent $40.00 per resident. This continued in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, the State Extended Care Facili-ties Construction program addresses the issue of long-term care for our nation's vet-erans. With the ranks of those requiring VA care growing on a yearly basis, states already face huge financial burdens in helping to care for our veterans. In Illinois, the waiting list for admittance to the LaSalle and Manteno state extended care facilities are as long as two to three years, and many ill veterans go un-treated or are under-treated due to the lack of beds.

Additionally, this funding will help pay the millions of dollars in back payments to state care facilities. In Illinois alone, last year over $6 million was owed to the state for construc-tion projects to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other facility updates. This funding helps with the payback of un-funded grant payments, and helps improve the supply of long term care for our veterans in the future.

There are two other programs that were not funded under this bill and it is my hope that we can work with Chairman WALSH and ap-pointed conferees to have these provisions in-cluded in the final bill. I am requesting $800,000 through a HUD Special Purpose Grant or Community Development Block Grant
The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it. Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members. The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 204, not voting 10, as follows: 

[Table of Members voting]

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

July 26, 2001

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members who have amendments to offer to the VA–HUD bill to please present their names at the close of the general debate on the bill. Hopefully, we would be able to finish this bill tonight.

I would also say that our leadership has made the decision that if we cannot finish the bill tonight, we would come back tomorrow to finish this bill, but we need to finish it before the beginning of next week.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Let me simply say I share the gentleman’s desire to try to find a way to reach some type of understanding on this bill, but we have a practical problem.

The problem is that there is considerable feeling on this side of the aisle that it is a mighty strange ask to forge cooperation from the minority in setting a time immediately after a martia–law approach to this House was just rammed down our throats.

So while I will certainly work with the gentleman and I will urge every Member who has a potential amendment to the VA–HUD bill, by the time the deadline for the amendments is over, get the text of those amendments to both sides so that we have some idea of what the universe of amendments is and we can try to work out a proposed timetable. I am not very optimistic at this point that we can get clearance on our side of the aisle.

I am told, for instance, that our leadership at this point is not contemplating providing clearance, but I would like us to continue to try to work this out. I know the possibility has been raised by myself of trying to get a time limitation that would make certain that we would finish this bill. If we cannot finish it today, we can make sure that the parliamentary assurance that we could finish it early on whatever day it was continued to.

I would hope, in light of the requests we have had from both sides, that that would not be tomorrow; that if we could not finish it tonight, it would go request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Chair for allowing me this time to advise the Members that we will do the best we can to expedite the conclusion of this bill today, if possible. It is a lengthy bill, and there are a lot of amendments. If the Members will cooperate and help us in assembling a list of all the amendments we will have to consider, we ask the Members who have amendments to offer to the VA–HUD bill to please present their names at the close of the general debate on the bill.

Mr. OBRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members who have amendments to offer to the VA–HUD bill to please present their names at the close of the general debate on the bill.