CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

July 26, 2001

Ms. BROWN of Florida and Mr. LAMPSON changed their vote from "no" to "aye." So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2620 and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LA TORRETE) is ordered to take note of the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. YOUNG. 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 them 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 this bill tonight, then we would come back tomorrow to finish this bill, but we need to finish it before the beginning of the next week.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman for 1 minute.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Chair for allowing me this time to advise the Members that we could finish it early on what we could have done if we had a time limit that would make certain that we would finish this bill. If we could not finish the bill tonight, then 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 them at the close of the general debate on the bill. Hopefully, we would be able to finish this bill tonight.

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I yield the gentleman for 1 minute.

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...
over to Monday or Tuesday. But I frankly do not care. I will be here either time. But I think people on the majority side need to understand that it is very difficult to get clearance on this side of the aisle after martial law has just been rammed down our throats. That is not usually the way in which the majority in this House elicits the cooperation of the minority in changing the rules.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman that I do appreciate his comments and I do appreciate the way we have been able to cooperate on the previous appropriations bills to have the time limit agreements so that no Member would be denied an opportunity to say what they have to say, but that we would try to do it in an expeditious manner.

As a former friend, Moe Udall, used to say on many of these debates, anything that needs to be said has already been said. The problem is not everyone has said it yet. So with the cooperation of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) and both sides, we would be able to expedite the consideration of this and get done today.

Mr. OBEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman continue to yield?

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to point out to the House that each of the previous regular appropriations bills has been supported on a bipartisan basis by the majority and minority. This is the first bill that we run into trouble on because, in our view, the allocation provided to the bill is insufficient, which means we will be starving housing, we will be starving veterans care and environmental enforcement.

Nonetheless, we had indicated our intention to work with the majority to try to work out time limits, but a little thing called martial law has blown that up. And I wish that people who have no responsibility for managing bills in this place, and I am speaking specifically of the leadership on the other side of the aisle, I know they like to wave magic wands and tell the committee to get the work done, but I wish that people who have an interest in seeing that work done in a timely fashion would work in a more cooperative manner with this side of the aisle if they are asking me to be able to get cooperation on this side of the aisle so we can do what the majority leadership wants to do.

It is sometimes hard to help people who do not want to help themselves.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Members for the bipartisan support on this rule. It was somewhat contentious, but we are prepared to take up the rule.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 210 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. 2020.

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. 2020) 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, 2002, and for other purposes, with Mr. SHIMKUS in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

Under the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

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

Mr. Chairman, it is a privilege today to present for House consideration H.R. 2620, the Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year 2002. In the interest of time, I will try to be brief.

I would, however, like to begin by telling my colleagues that I believe this is a good bill and that the Administration has indicated that they support its passage. Just as presented in each of the past few years, this bill represents a joint effort of both myself and the ranking member, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN).

While we clearly have not agreed on every single aspect of the bill as reported, it nevertheless represents a true collaboration of effort for which I am very grateful.

With the House's indulgence, I would like to outline the highlights of the proposal.

First and foremost, this proposed bill is within the 202(b) allocation, budget authority and outlays, that approved by the committee. The bill's discretionary spending totals $85.4 billion in new budget authority, which is an increase of just over $2 billion above the budget act and some $4.8 billion over last year's bill.

I note for the House that this level of discretionary spending includes emergency spending of $1.3 billion for FEMA disaster relief, which was amended during the full committee markup by the majority whip. The committee has tried to balance the President's proposal increases throughout the bill.

Discretionary veterans program will increase by $1.6 billion compared to last year, with $1 billion going to veterans' medical care and the remainder spread to research, processing veterans compensation, pension and education claims, operating our national cemeteries and, most significantly, increasing the necessary construction at VA facilities by some $494 million. That is a direct response to Member requests, and we think it is a high priority. The proposal is well within the scope of the amount allocated in the budget resolution.

Housing programs will increase by $1.2 billion compared to 2001, with increases in the housing certificate fund, section 8, public housing, operating subsidies, the HOME investment partnerships, the housing for the elderly and disabled programs, and the lead hazard reduction program.

It is important to note that this proposal also includes some very difficult, but I believe extremely important and highly defensible choices and changes in policy direction. They are represented by reductions in the Public Housing Capital Fund and the drug elimination grant programs. Neither of these programs is serving the best interests of the people they were intended to benefit. It is our job, albeit a difficult one, to take whatever steps necessary to remedy the situation.

In the case of capital funds, it means getting tougher on public housing authorities to spend the dollars intended for the residents in the public housing authorities' properties. There are literally hundreds of millions of dollars worth of code violations and hazards in these buildings that are not getting fixed.

In the case of the drug elimination grant program, it means taking an honest look at whether HUD is the best entity to run a law enforcement program. Based on HUD's track record, I do not believe that it is.

Mr. Chairman, I know these two items will part of the debate at length throughout the development of this bill in the House and in conference with the Senate.

EPA funding increases some $229 million over the budget request, although a decrease below last year's funding level. This proposal continues to provide strong research programs as well as increased resources for the many State categorical grants and significant resources for clean water and drinking water, water resources research and congressional priorities for water projects and infrastructure grants.

FEMA operating expenses will increase by nearly $135 million over last