

\$68.5 billion. That is \$3.4 billion below the President's request. It is \$1.2 billion below the 1999 funding level.

Much has been said already tonight about veterans' medical care. Mr. Speaker, I know that Members know there is no higher priority in this Congress than our commitment to our veterans, and to meeting and keeping the promises that we made. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we raised the President's request for veterans by \$1.7 billion.

My colleague stated earlier that we have left the veterans short. If we had left the veterans short, what did the President do, Mr. Speaker? This is the request of the authorizing committee, fully funded, at \$1.7 billion. This is the budget resolution level of funding.

I have with me today a packet, a letter and some attachments that I have provided here on the Republican leadership desk that is available to all Members. I hope they would take advantage of it.

If I could just briefly read a couple of lines from it, in addition to the \$1.7 billion increase for medical care, H.R. 2684 provides an increase for the medical and prosthetic research account, provides additional claims analysis in the Veterans' Benefits Administration, and doubles the request for the State extended care facilities grants program.

H.R. 2684 also fully funds the budget for the National Cemetery Administration, the State Cemetery Construction Program, and the Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims. This is a dramatic increase, Mr. Speaker. There has never been, never been an increase as large as the increase that is incorporated in this bill for veterans' medical care.

For those who would suggest that we have not supported our veterans, I would remind them that in the 1990 budget of this House of Representatives, VA medical care was at a level of \$11.3 billion. If this bill is enacted, Mr. Speaker, that amount will increase to \$19 billion. That is a 70 percent increase over this past decade. No other Federal department, to my knowledge, has had those kinds of increases, nor that level of commitment from the Members of this body.

Mr. Speaker, I would also offer for consideration and include in the RECORD letters from the National Commander of the American Legion and the national legislative director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who urge all Members to support this bill, to support this level of funding. It is their consideration that this is the proper level of funding.

I would ask all Members to consider those important veterans' service organizations when they vote.

Mr. Speaker, veterans health care and the Veterans Administration is not the only aspect of this bill. It is a very broad-reaching complex bill. It includes HUD. And in the area of HUD funding, we have fully funded the Section 8 housing voucher program, which is a good program, a successful program. We have fully funded senior and disabled housing in this bill.

Have there been cuts? There have been cuts, Mr. Speaker, but we had to find places within the budget to reduce spending in order to meet our spending allocations. None of the cuts are draconian cuts.

Mr. Speaker, the most difficult and severest of cuts were in the NASA budget. However, the committee went back in and put \$400 million back into the NASA budget. We are still below the level that we need to make these commitments, but I would remind my colleagues in all of these, in FEMA, EPA, the National Science Foundation, we are in the third inning of a 9-inning ballgame. We have a long way to go.

I would ask my colleagues to work with us on this as we go towards conference to try to provide, if possible, additional resources to meet those commitments.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, today this House passed a tax bill that is not real. It is a campaign document more than it is legislation. This bill is not real, either. It is another political document that is not legislation.

We all want to be able to cut taxes, but the majority party apparently wants to push its political plans so hard that they are willing to say no new dollars for social security, no new dollars for Medicare. Now they are willing, in this bill, to crush our ability to conduct science, except for the station and the shuttle. They are willing to trash one of the President's top priorities, AmeriCorps. They are willing to take a half a billion dollar cut in public housing. They are willing to take \$3 billion out of the Labor-Health-Education appropriation bill to pay for this bill.

The majority party is telling the country that to pay for their tax scheme and to pay for this bill, they are willing to cut education, cut health care, cut the National Institutes of Health by one-third. Members know that is a phony promise. That is a false promise. It is a phony budget.

Mr. Speaker, we asked the Committee on Rules for one amendment, to delay for one year the capital gains gift to the high rollers of this society, and use that money to pay for additional veterans' health care, because the President's request was inadequate and so is this bill on the item of health care. But the majority party says no, we cannot do that, because we will bend jurisdictional rules.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to my friends on the majority side of the aisle, they have obliterated budget rules. One day they use CBO spending estimates. The next day they use OMB spending estimates. The next day they make the most laughable claims that routine activities like the Census are emergencies in order to cover spending.

If they can do all of that, it seems to me that they can bend their rules a little to help veterans who did not bother about budget rules when they answered their country's call.

In the words of the old song, "Whose side are you on?" Are we on the side of the high rollers, or are we on the side of the schoolkids, on the side of sick people, and on the side of veterans?

What Members do on this vote will speak more loudly than all of the summer speeches we give when we go home tonight after this session is over. I urge Members to support the Paralyzed Veterans of America, support the Disabled American Veterans, support the Vietnam Veterans of America. Vote no on the previous question on this rule. Get a new rule. Put veterans ahead on the train, rather than having them ride in the caboose.

I urge Members to vote no on the previous question on the rule.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL).

(Mr. PAUL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for this rule. It is a fair rule. There is plenty of room for debate and room for amendment.

I would like to congratulate the Committee on Appropriations for doing something very important in this bill by deleting all the funding for the Selective Service System. I think that is very important.

As was described by the gentlewoman earlier, there will be an attempt early on. The first amendment that will come to the floor will be to put that money back in.

I would like my colleagues to consider very seriously not to do that, because there is no need for the Selective Service System. There is only one purpose for the Selective Service System. That is to draft young 18-year-olds. That is unfair.

There is no such thing as a fair draft system. It is always unfair to those who are less sophisticated, who either avoid the draft or are able to get into the National Guard, or as it was in the Civil War, pay to get their way out.

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The draft is a 20th century phenomenon, and I am delighted to see and very pleased that the Committee on Appropriations saw fit to delete this money because this, to me, is reestablishing one of the American traditions, that we do not believe in conscription. Conscription and drafting is a totalitarian idea.

I would like to remind many of my conservative colleagues that, if we brought a bill to this floor where we would say that we would register all of our guns in the United States, there would be a hue and cry about how horrible it would be. Yet, we casually accept this program of registering 18-

year-old kids to force them to go and fight the political wars that they are not interested in. This is a very, very serious idea and principle of liberty.

So when the time comes in September to vote for this, I beg that my fellow colleagues will think seriously about this, the needlessness to spend \$25 million to continue to register young people to go off to fight needless wars. They are not even permitted to drink beer; and, yet, we expect them to be registered and to use them to fight the wars that the older generation starts for political and narrow-minded reasons.

So when the time comes in September, please consider that there are ways that one can provide for an army without conscription. We have had the reinstatement of registration of the draft for 20 years. It has been wasted money. We can save the \$25 million. We should do it. We should not put this money back in. We do not need the Selective Service System.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), the chairman of the Democratic Caucus.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, this rule should be defeated. Members of the Republican Party have shamelessly turned their backs on the veterans of this Nation, and they have done so in this rule and this bill.

My Republican colleagues have shown, by failing to make in order the Edwards amendment, that they are perfectly willing to sacrifice the health care for the veterans of this Nation. For what, Mr. Speaker? For a capital gains tax cut that will provide the lion's share of its benefits, some 76 percent to those Americans making over \$200,000.

Our veterans who depend upon the Veterans Administration for their health care have sacrificed much for their country and are now being asked to sacrifice yet again to the very wealthiest in this Nation. In my book, Mr. Speaker, that simply does not add up.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) asked the Committee on Rules for the right to offer an amendment to the VA-HUD appropriations bill that would increase veterans health care by \$730 million and delay the capital gains tax cut for 1 year. While the Committee on Appropriations is to be commended for adding more funds to veterans health care, the money available simply will not cover the need. Yet, the Republican majority is willing to ignore this critical need all in the name of preserving a tax cut that will provide most of its benefits for the very richest among us.

For that reason, I must oppose this rule. I cannot in good conscience go home to my constituents next week and tell them I am supporting cutting veterans health care so that those who have all they need and want, who can afford the very best health care available, might enjoy a benefit of a tax cut.

This is a shameless situation, Mr. Speaker, and one I know my constituents will not soon forget.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH).

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I really feel compelled to comment. This bill is real. This bill involves many difficult decisions and very hard choices, and it is prioritizing. This bill does not have anything to do with a tax cut. It is not a revenue bill. This is a spending bill.

I would suggest, what is real? What is real about the offset that is being proposed by the minority to fund the veterans medical care? They are suggesting that we use revenues from a tax cut that they have urged and that, indeed, the President has pledged to veto. Is that real? No. Is it disingenuous? Absolutely.

Now, if there is a real effort to provide veterans with additional funds, then make the hard decisions. That is what we did. We made hard, tough decisions. These were not fun.

I do not particularly like the reductions that we had to make in NASA. I like to look forward, and the subcommittee is the same way. We believe in the research and the science that is occurring there. But those were hard decisions. We did not just pull a figure out of a hat like a proposed tax cut.

Now, if there was some support on the other side for the tax cut, maybe it would be more real. It still is fiction. But the fact is, if there is going to be an offset, let us offer a real offset. What we have done is put \$1.7 billion on top of the frozen budget that the President has offered for the veterans for the last 3 years. This is a true commitment.

The Congress has been a friend to the veteran. It is obvious in this bill that this was a priority of the subcommittee. I would say once again this is very real. Is it completed? No. This is a work in progress. But these are real decisions. I would ask that, if there are changes to be made, then real offsets, real suggestions, real decisions need to be made here.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the former ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, a Congress that can pass a risky trillion dollar tax cut today surely should be able to adequately fund veterans health care tonight.

I want to genuinely thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the chairman, and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN) for their work to end a hard freeze on veterans health care, given a budget devastated by massive irresponsible tax cuts.

Honestly, they did as well as anyone could. However, I rise tonight in opposition to this rule because it prohibits this House from adequately funding veterans health care.

A Congress that can find a trillion dollar tax cut just 9 hours ago to cut taxes mainly for the wealthy surely, surely can find one-tenth of 1 percent of that amount to keep our Nation's commitment to veterans, to middle- and low-income veterans, veterans who are waiting months for basic health services if, indeed, they have not been cut off from those services already.

The question before us, Mr. Speaker, is very straightforward. Whose side are we on? Are we on the side of veterans tonight who have fought, sacrificed, and suffered to defend our Nation, or are we going to be on the side of the wealthiest Americans who do not really need a tax cut to affect their life style?

Is this Congress going to fight for veterans who have fought for us on the battlefield, or are we going to fight for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans?

Some say this is an open rule. But the truth is this rule shut the door on the Edwards-Stabenow-Evans amendment that would provide 730 million real dollars more for veterans health care.

Our amendment is supported by organizations such as the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the American Legion because they know this money, and they have said this money, is necessary to adequately fund veterans health care.

The Edwards-Stabenow-Evans amendment is paid for by simply delaying until January 1 of 2001 the just-passed capital gains tax cut. It is a fiscally responsible straightforward amendment. It says that we think that providing more adequate health care for veterans is worth delaying one-tenth of 1 percent of the Republican tax cut, especially when we note that 76 percent of the just-passed capital gains tax cut goes to individuals making over \$200,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, by voting no on the previous question, we can allow this House to vote its will on whether to put \$730 million more into the veterans health care system. Have we not already asked our veterans to sacrifice enough on the battlefield? Must we ask them to sacrifice needed health care services to help pay for a tax cut for our wealthiest Americans?

Let me finish, not with my words, but the words of the national commander of the Disabled American Veterans: "It is shameful that veterans cannot receive a \$3 billion increase in veterans health care at a time we have a \$1.1 trillion surplus expected and a \$792 billion tax cut proposal."

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

I am having a hard time following the logic here. We are increasing funding for veterans medical care by \$1.7 billion. That is \$1.7 billion more than the President asked for, and it is the amount that was authorized by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The gentleman is acting as if we are cutting spending when we are increasing it by 10 percent. If there is some cause and effect between the tax bill and this increase, one would think the veterans would push for tax relief legislation every year.

Mr. Speaker, there is no logic here.

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

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW).

(Ms. STABENOW asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening asking my colleagues to oppose the rule for VA-HUD, because it does not allow a vote on the Edwards-Stabenow-Evans amendment.

The VA estimates that the adoption of our amendment would have allowed an additional 140,000 veterans to receive the health care that they need. Instead, this budget continues to underfund these critical services for our veterans.

Today, there are 20,000 fewer VA medical staff than there were 5 years ago. The dollars that we are talking about tonight are just attempting to get us back to where we were, and it does not even do that.

Due to staffing shortages, for example, a veteran in Tennessee with multiple sclerosis was forced to wait 4 months to be seen by a doctor. We have veterans across this country that travel over 300 miles just to get an X-ray.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO).

(Mr. VENTO asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this rule and to the bill that is to follow it. Frankly, it does not reflect the values or priorities that this Congress should be setting. We started with a make-believe budget, and now we are passing make-believe spending bills.

But the cuts in here that are being proposed I think speak to the values of where we are going. We have an obligation in this society to help those that are in need. This budget cuts housing \$1 billion below what it was last year.

Furthermore, it goes on in the supplemental spending measures that we have had. We have repeatedly used the housing budget as a honey pot to fund other programs, continually taking money out of them and denying the funds that are needed to house people in this country.

It is \$2 billion below what the President asked in the housing programs. Of course it eliminates the AmeriCorps. It cuts into the regular and general science programs. This is a budget that has repeatedly denied the opportunity to respond to the needs of the neediest in our society, those that need housing.

I hope we can reject this rule and reject the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule which will put in place a convoluted process to consider a seriously flawed bill when we return in September. This bill gives short shrift to housing and community development programs, to proven programs like AmeriCorps, and others of import to the science and environmental communities.

This rule will allow the consideration of a bill that will continue the theme of the past few years: making housing the honey pot for budget spending increases elsewhere and tax cuts for special interests and the wealthy. The VA, HUD and Independent Agencies bill has been irreparably harmed by the flawed process set up by the initial budget blue print drawn by the Majority who thumbs their noses at the realities of funding needs in social programs, ensuring confrontation this fall with Democrats and the Clinton Administration.

Unfortunately, the VA-HUD Appropriations bill cuts well over a billion dollars in funds from HUD's budget last year and is some \$2 billion below the Administration's request. It is a sort of water torture of cuts—a drip here, a drip there—but in the end, the programs are suffering from the budget drought.

Since last week, the overall VA-HUD bill has lost some of the emergency spending gimmicks that other bills retained, such as calling the Decennial Census an "emergency." So, the GOP Majority appropriators chose instead to gouge yet deeper into the Labor-HHS-Education 302(b) allocation of funds in order to spare the popular Veterans and NASA programs. Predictably, the powerless in our society, the housing and community programs have been left with cuts to key programs, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the McKinney Homeless Assistance programs, HOPWA, and public housing. This bill would provide no new housing assistance despite the commitments to authorize 100,000 new vouchers made in the 1999 budget authorization and the Administration's request to fund such units. This is at a time when millions of people are on waiting lists for housing are on the streets, and according to a Department of Housing study, 5.3 million families have worst case housing needs.

The real emergency, the real needs of the VA-HUD bill should be preserving our federally-assisted housing from the "opt-out" or prepayment phenomenon by matching state programs to keep buildings affordable, or marking up market rents so landlords stay with our successful programs. The real housing needs of this country will not be met under the VA-HUD Appropriations bill that this Rule would bring before the House.

This spending measure makes no effort to reconcile the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars of rescinded Section 8 monies that have been usurped for emergency spending this year and the last. This year, for example, we lost \$350 million in Section 8 that is made up, if at all, on the backs of other critical housing program like the CDBG block grant which serves low- and moderate-income folks in cities across the country.

While the House has now passed the Conference Agreement providing for a trillion dollar tax cut pie for those who are well off, we are left in housing accounts with nothing but a bad taste in our mouths because the commitments to bring affordable housing opportunities to more people have been broken. We cannot stay even in funding for housing pro-

grams with the spending levels in this bill, and this future spending policy path provides no light at the end of the tunnel for the housing crisis.

While the Committee may claim inadequate appropriation authority under the budget, the fact is that there are 215 earmarks spending money on special interest projects. The conclusion of this bill is to deny funding for housing and other needs but to buy off votes to pass it with projects and earmarked funds!

I urge a "no" vote on the rule.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The Chair would inform both managers that the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) has 10½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY) has 15 minutes remaining.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Benefits of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the veterans of San Diego, California, I rise in opposition to this rule.

Mr. Speaker, this bill simply does not address the emergency our veterans are facing. Keeping the promises that we made to our veterans is an emergency; providing veterans health care is an emergency.

It is vital to improve the Montgomery G.I. Education bill, reducing incredible backlog in claims, provide care to those facing illness of unknown causes from the Persian Gulf War.

Not only has this bill failed to address these critical needs, it has compounded this emergency situation by approving hundreds of dollars of individual congressional projects, most of which pale in importance to the health care of our veterans.

So our veterans can wait months for a doctor's appointment, die from hepatitis C because care is being rationed, live on the streets because there are no services to help them get back into productive lives.

But this bill answers these needs by putting \$1 million into a machine to grow plants in space and a half million dollars into improving paints for ship bottoms. Well, improve my ship bottom. Defeat this rule.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ).

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Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the rule. I support the efforts of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), and during the committee process, I want to just share with my colleagues, that we had a substitute motion to try to put \$3.1 billion that was needed in this particular piece of legislation and that particular motion was not even allowed, despite the fact that it was a proper motion.

I want to also indicate that there is a tremendous need out there. These resources are not sufficient. We are going