

State of Maryland [Mr. EHRLICH], a member of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services.

Mr. EHRLICH. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 2, and I commend the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO], the chairman, for his great work again this year as he did before in the 104th Congress.

Mr. Chairman, this bill represents a bold step forward with respect to our housing policy at the Federal level. But that is not why I am getting up this afternoon. I am getting up because of some of the things I hear from the other side of the aisle.

This is not about good or bad, Mr. Chairman. It is not about who cares about the poor and who does not care about the poor; it is not about class welfare and who is middle class and what parents you came from or if you have a trust fund or not. It is about a profound philosophical difference between the parties in this town.

I see my friend from Baltimore sitting over there, he is going to speak in a minute. We served in the Maryland legislature together and we did not agree on much. We are friends. We both have a common motivation, which is to help people. We have a philosophical difference on how we get there, and that is what this debate is all about. No one is good or bad, regardless of how they come down on the philosophical side of this issue. It is about self-sufficiency and self-help, and opportunity and responsibility and accountability. It is about accountability and responsibility and how we get there.

On this side of the aisle, we think a work requirement is good for people. Some folks disagree. We all come to this in good faith.

H.R. 2 removes disincentives to work, it creates pride where pride should be, it creates healthy environments to live it, and it is consistent with the Republican philosophy that local communities should be able to propose and implement local solutions.

I understand there are folks in this town, folks over there, friends of mine, who do not share that philosophical orientation. I think they have had a lot of time to be in power. We think on this side of the aisle their solutions have not worked. We all bring good faith, Mr. Chairman.

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Mr. Chairman, I will be glad to talk to my friend, the gentleman from Baltimore, and my friend on the third floor of the Cannon House Office Building later on this as well.

I want to commend the subcommittee, I want to commend the full committee, and I want to commend the opposition. This is a good debate. It certainly shows the different beliefs that we, each of us respectively, bring to this very important issue for the American people.

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to my good friend, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO].

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2, the Housing Opportunity and Responsibility Act. Simply stated, the bill fails to help those whom public and assisted housing was created to serve. I urge my colleagues to oppose the bill and support the Kennedy substitute to ensure that local housing authorities serve Americans with the greatest housing needs.

Mr. Chairman, there is bipartisan consensus that public housing needs to improve. We all agree that public housing must be safer and work better. We all agree that HUD must be streamlined and refocused. But true reform, true reform, would not abandon our Nation's most vulnerable citizens, and that is what this bill does.

Not only does this bill fail in its most basic mission, helping the poorest of the poor, but it also creates new obstacles to finding shelter. The bill institutes mandated voluntarism for residents of public housing. This bill requires forced labor in exchange for subsidized shelter, a requirement that does not exist for any other Federal assistance.

The only acceptable use of forced labor is as a punishment for a crime, and it is not a crime to be poor. We do not require the CEO's of the major lumber companies to volunteer in exchange for subsidizing their logging on public lands. We do not require tobacco farmers to volunteer in exchange for Federal crop insurance. We do not force flood victims to volunteer when we help them to rebuild their communities. Public and assisted housing residents are not criminals. They hold jobs. They raise families. Many participate in residential and community activities.

H.R. 2 is bad policy. My colleague earlier talked about who is bad and who is good. The individuals are not bad or good, but there is good policy and there is bad policy. This is bad policy. It provides assistance to families with the means already available to them to find housing. It takes shelter away from the poorest of the poor. It adds mandates on local housing authorities. Be assured, this bill would keep children and elderly individuals out of public and assisted housing. Please oppose H.R. 2 and support the Kennedy substitute.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. PAUL].

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Chairman, it was mentioned earlier that we have two visions about the housing program. Unfortunately, I see so little difference between these two visions. One, I see that the bureaucracy is centralized, spending a lot of money and not doing a very good job. The other vision is that if we decentralized bureaucracy and spent even more money, that somehow or another we will improve the public housing of America.

However, I do want to challenge the statements here that all of a sudden

something is being cut, because the way I read the figures, actually we are increasing the amount of money. That should satisfy some opposition, but it would not satisfy me if we are spending more money. We are supposed to be spending less money. But according to the CBO figures, we spent \$25 billion last year on HUD funds, most of it going into public housing, and this year the proposal is that there will be \$30 billion. As we look at these figures on out, by the time we get to the year 2002 we are up to \$36 billion.

So there are no cuts. There is a 20-percent increase this year. So I do not see how these funds are being slashed. I would like to see the funds cut and spent a different way. I think private enterprise is a much better way to build houses. There is no proof that this 30-year experimentation of \$600 billion has been worth anything. We have spent \$5 trillion on the war on poverty, and rightfully so. There are a lot of people complaining there is still a lot of poverty, still a lot of homeless, still a lot of people not getting medical care. I think that is true, but I think it represents the total failure of the welfare state.

It is coming to an end. Unfortunately, no matter how well intended, and the gentleman from New York [Mr. LAZIO] has done tremendous work, and has worked very hard to improve this situation, I wish I could share his optimism. There is no reason, Mr. Chairman, to be optimistic about this bill, if it is passed or not passed. We have to address the subject of how we deal with this problem.

Mr. LAZIO of New York. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF], who also heads the housing caucus in the House of Representatives.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 2. H.R. 2 will fundamentally change public housing throughout this Nation. For too long Washington, DC, has regulated public housing authorities, tying the hands of local housing authorities with Federal preferences and excessive regulations. Today we are taking steps to deregulate, to decentralize public housing, to give local housing agencies greater flexibility and control, and reduce the concentration of the poorest families in the worst housing projects.

H.R. 2 will reward well-run public housing authorities, but will not tolerate chronically bad public housing authorities that have used taxpayers' dollars irresponsibly. This is not just a quick fix or an extreme solution, it is a real solution that will end public housing as we know it, and begin a new era of greater personal responsibility for residents and local responsibility for communities.

Without these changes now, our public housing stock will continue to deteriorate. I want to thank the chairman, the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. LEACH], and the subcommittee chairman, the