TODAY'S MILITARY SMALLER, LESS CAPABLE, OVERWORKED AND LESS READY THAN 8 YEARS AGO

(Mr. HANSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, last week Vice President GORE mislead every American again. I am not talking about raising chickens. AL GORE claimed that our military is the strongest in history. Our military is the best in the world today, but it is simply not true that our military today is the strongest in history, not even by recent history.

One only has to look back to the 1980s to find a military force 40 percent larger, with a much more robust capacity that could easily have engaged two major threats on two separate fronts at once. Today, the Joint Chiefs tell us that fighting two fronts could only be accomplished with high risk and significant loss of life.

Looking back at World War II, the United States fielded an Army of over 8 million soldiers and airmen. The United States was fighting on three separate fronts in three separate geographical areas of the world, and we were winning all three.

It is laughable to consider today's force equal. If AL GORE believes today's military is the best in history, he obviously has not talked to thousands of soldiers, airman and Marines who are leaving in total frustration.

By any measure, today's military is smaller, less capable, overworked and less ready than it was 8 years ago. Anyone aspiring to be Commander in Chief should know that.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4205, FLOYD D. SPENCE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 616 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 616

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 4205) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2001, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, only yesterday the Committee on Rules met and granted a normal conference report rule for H.R. 4205, the Fiscal Year 2001 Department of Defense Authorization Act.

The rule waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration.

1030

In addition, the rule provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

This should not be a controversial rule. It is the type of rule that we grant for every conference report that we consider in the House.

But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, this should not be a controversial bill. Once and for all, we are taking care of military retirees by giving them TRICARE for life and by improving their prescription drug benefit. Our military retirees were promised lifetime health care coverage when they enlisted, and so it is about time that we fulfilled our promise to them.

Also, at long last, we are taking care of our men and women in uniform. We are getting them off of food stamps and out of substandard housing.

Finally, we are providing for our Nation's general welfare by giving our military the tools they need to win on the battlefield.

I urge my colleagues to support this rule and to support the underlying bill. Now more than ever we must provide for our national security.

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and in support of the conference report. Mr. Speaker, this conference report provides the authorization for the Department of Defense in fiscal year 2001 and, in doing so, it provides for the defense of the United States and for the defense of freedom and democracy around the world.

This conference report ensures that our military forces continue to be second to none, and it ensures that now and in the future our forces will be able to meet the demands of every mission they are assigned.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report addresses the real needs and the real priorities of our Nation's armed services and is, therefore, a conference agreement that every Member of this body should support. But at the same time, every Member should be aware that meeting these needs and priorities comes at a price. I happen to be one who believes the price of defending our Nation and ensuring peace around the world is one worth paying.

This conference report authorizes $310 billion in spending for the Department of Defense and its programs, addressing shortfalls in readiness, funding in modernization programs, and improving the quality of life for our military personnel and their families.

Mr. Speaker, no one can argue the fact that our military stands second to none in the world. No campaign rhetoric can truthfully say that our Armed Forces are not up to the job. But there is no denying the fact that improvement of readiness capabilities and continuing modernization are constant requirements to ensure that we do not fall into a condition that would find us shorthanded in an emergency.

All that requires money, money that must come from a Federal budget with hundreds of competing interests. We must remember that education for our children is also a national priority, that protecting Social Security and Medicare and providing a Medicare prescription drug benefit for senior citizens is a national priority, and that reducing the national debt should continue to be a national priority.

Americans understand this, and they know full well the folly of cutting taxes while increasing spending. I would remind my colleagues in this House that we have gone down that road before. I am committed to ensuring that our Armed Forces are the best trained, best equipped, and the most ready in all the world. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that those forces are protecting a Nation that has other pressing needs. Let us not shortchange our military, our children, or our senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report contains many important provisions, but chief among them is one that keeps a promise made to the men and women who have chosen the military as a career and have served faithfully and well for 20 years or more.

When I am back home in my district in Texas, I often have the opportunity to meet with some of the many military retirees who live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and, more often than not, they raise the issue of the lifetime health care they were promised when they chose to make the military a career.

Cuts in the military budget and base closings have decreased the number of facilities where military retirees can go to receive health care. Even if those facilities are available, they must often wait far too long to see a doctor.

At the beginning of this Congress, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), two Democratic Members, offered comprehensive plans to address these inequities in the military health care system for those men and women who have dedicated their careers to defending our country.

Mr. Speaker, while what is in this conference agreement falls short of the original proposals made by the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), I am gratified that this conference report restores to military retirees benefits they were promised and in doing so begins to make good on

the commitment made to all of them as they embarked on their careers.

This conference report provides permanent lifetime TRICARE eligibility for Medicare-eligible military retirees and their families beginning in fiscal year 2002 and restores the prescription drug benefit by allowing those retirees who cannot access a military treatment facility to participate in the Department of Defense mail order and network retail pharmacy program.

While this benefit is not extended to retirees before they reach Medicare eligibility, the provisions in this conference report represent an important start and one that I say is long overdue.

I encourage the Committee on Armed Services to continue to work on this issue and to especially strive toward ensuring these benefits can be used by retirees who live in rural areas, to ensure that reimbursement rates are adequate, and to provide a benefit for military retirees before they reach the age 65.

We made a promise to those men and women who were willing to put their lives on the line for their country. Now, we have an obligation to live up to it. I am extremely gratified that this provision will become law, and I want to thank the chairman and ranking member for their willingness to see this through.

Mr. Speaker, retention of a trained and ready fighting force is one of the greatest difficulties facing the military today. Long deployments and better offers in the civilian world have taken a toll on the number of military men and women who are willing to stay in and continue to serve.

While retention is improving, this conference report makes significant improvements in the military standard of living which should further assist in reducing the number of service personnel who leave.

The conference report provides a 3.7 percent increase in basic pay, establishes a targeted subsistence payment for those personnel who struggle hardest to make ends meet and provide for their families, provides housing allowances which will assist junior military personnel to find suitable housing for themselves and their families, and provides active duty special pay and bonuses.

These are all important components in the ongoing efforts of the Congress and the administration to recruit and retain the men and women we need for our military forces.

This conference report also increases readiness accounts and importantly includes $222.8 million for spare parts for aircraft squadrons in an effort to stop the cannibalization of aircraft that has occurred in the past.

The conference report provides an increase in funding for live-fire training ammunition for the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps and significantly increases the funding for improvements for training facilities for the National Guard and reserves.

The conference report also funds the weapons programs that are so critical to our military, and I am especially gratified that the conference has included $305.5 million for F–16 modifications and improvements for the Air National Guard.

Looking forward to the future, the conference has provided $2.5 billion for procurement of 10 F–22 fighters, the next-generation Air Force fighter which will ensure our air superiority over any force we might encounter.

Also included is $1.4 billion in research and development funding for the F–22 program. The conference includes $1.2 billion for the acquisition of 16 MV–22 Osprey and $358.4 million for four CV-Osprey.

In addition, the conference includes $154.2 million to accelerate the radar development for the CV–22 Special Operations Variant.

These are all valuable investments in the fighting capabilities of our Armed Forces, and I am pleased that they are included in this agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I should note this conference does contain a significant new compensation plan for those Energy Department employees who are exposed to dangerous levels of radiation, beryllium, and other toxic substances while they work on the Nation's nuclear weapons program.

The agreement calls on the Congress to enact a compensation program by next July 31. I would hope that these workers can count on the Congress to act quickly in the 107th Congress to enact a legislative compensation program to assist them.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very good conference agreement. It was signed by all conferees, making it a truly bipartisan agreement. I encourage all Members to support this rule and to support the conference agreement which provides so much to every American.

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

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES).

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule and conference report. Since I came to Congress almost 6 years ago, the Congress has made rebuilding our military a top priority. Each year we have been able to make great strides towards this goal, and this bill is another critical example of our efforts.

This defense bill is a great credit to the outstanding leadership of the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) and also the strong leadership of the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), our ranking member.

More importantly, it is a fitting tribute to those who serve our Nation in uniform and to those who have served.

This legislation takes concrete steps toward providing the proper resources to equip and train the military of today, as well as making the investments needed to support the military of tomorrow.

It provides the proper financial support for our military personnel by providing a 3.7 percent pay raise for those in uniform and by reforming the pay tables for those critical mid-career, noncommissioned and petty officers.

This legislation invests heavily in the important quality of life and health care accounts to ensure that we are not only able to recruit the best and brightest men and women in the military but also to keep them. That is extremely important to the defense of this Nation.

Finally, by expanding access to TRICARE and by providing a pharmacy benefit to our Medicare-eligible retirees, this Congress is ensuring that a promise made is a promise kept.

Despite these great accomplishments, we must also recognize that we still have much work to do. We must continue to address modernization and readiness accounts. We must eliminate the inequity caused by the prohibition against receiving retiree pay and disability pay. We must continue to invest in the most important aspect of our military, our people.

I thank the chairman and ranking member. I urge my colleagues to pass this important legislation for our men and women in uniform, past present and the future.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and the conference report. I commend the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), ranking member, for their hard work in putting together this legislation.

This conference report contains a prescription drug benefit for seniors on Medicare, but only those seniors on Medicare that are military retirees. Like the Democratic Medicare prescription drug plan, on which the majority refused to allow a vote, this bipartisan prescription drug benefit is guaranteed and administered by a Federal agency.

Unlike the Republican prescription drug plan, this bipartisan drug benefit does not throw military retirees to the whims of the private insurance companies that say they will not offer such insurance anyway.

Like my bill, H.R. 664, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act, this bipartisan drug benefit gives seniors who are military retirees access to the best prices negotiated by the Federal Government: the Federal supply schedule price, the VA price, or an even lower price.

Now, some in this body call H.R. 664 a price control bill. It is not since it does not set prices. It allows the government to negotiate lower prices on

drugs. But if one believes H.R. 664 involves price controls, then surely this Department of Defense drug benefit involves price controls. Both bills use the same mechanism.

When this bill with the prescription drug benefit passed the House in May, 353 Members voted for it, including 208 Republicans. I ask those Members the following questions: If Congress can provide a government-run prescription drug benefit to one segment of the Medicare eligible population, military retirees, why cannot it offer the same kind of benefit to the rest of our Nation's seniors?

If Congress offers some seniors on Medicare discount drug prices negotiated by the Federal Government, why cannot it offer the rest of our seniors on Medicare the same discount prices?

The answer is we can. The reason we do not is the undue hold the pharmaceutical industry has over the majority of this Congress.

Military retirees need and deserve this bill's prescription drug benefit. I support it with enthusiasm. The tragedy is that Republicans will not do the same for all other seniors on Medicare.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH).

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to salute everybody that made this authorization bill work. It is a bill to be proud of.

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), the committee staff, members of the conference committee all came together and made a big difference on an issue that I have been hearing about, not only since I first got elected in 1994, but heard about from my grandfather who fought in World War II, who gave his entire life to the military, and yet, when he died, he was upset because his military and also his government did not keep the promises that they made to him about military health care.

Well, this bill makes a big difference and moves us in that direction where a promise made to our brave fighting men and women when they first enlisted is now being kept.

Again, everybody involved in this process should be saluted: certainly the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE); his tireless committee staff; members of the conference committee; the gentleman from Indiana (Chairman BUYER) on the House side that made a big difference. On the Senate side, of course, so many Senators helped out; but also people like the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. PICKERING), who, along with me and some others, have been fighting and talking with the leadership about how important this is; the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), who has been fighting on military health care for so long; the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES); and so many others who understand we need a health care fix for our military retirees, and this does it.

1045

It does several things. First of all, it is permanent. So it tells our military retirees that they can give up their supplemental health care insurance, that they are going to be taken care of. It also gives continuity to those who are going to enlist in this TRICARE plan by allowing them to stay with their physicians that they are with right now. How important that is.

I will tell my colleagues that when I first held TRICARE hearings across my district back in 1997, I heard so many military retirees and their families telling me that they cannot afford to get into any TRICARE plan because they do not know how long it is going to last. Because of the fight of the House conferees who said we must make this benefit permanent, we must set up a trust fund and keep it in mandatory spending, because of that, this program will not be doomed to failure. This program will work, and it will keep the promise that was broken to my grandfather and millions of military men and women and their families and dependents who counted on the promise being kept.

Today is a great day, and I am proud that I am going to have an opportunity to vote for this bill, a bill that I believe my grandfather would be proud of, were he still alive.

I am also proud of another provision in here regarding a school project started by Hunter Scott. He was an eighth grader in my district when he started this fight, and now the crew of the U.S.S. Indianapolis is going to be recognized for their bravery and their work in the closing days of World War II, and also it will be an honor to Captain McVay, too.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS), who has helped lead the way on this issue of health benefits for our retirees.

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I appreciate his comments very much.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the defense authorization conference report. This bill will help promote a first-class military. When we pass this bill today, a great victory will be won for our military retirees.

The problem is that the military retirees health care system fails to care for many of its people. This defense bill takes a giant step in correcting this injustice for our military retirees. They devoted their lives to defend this democracy. Many of them served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. And when they joined the service, they were promised lifetime health care, just like the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) was talking about awhile ago, and they were hopefully getting it at military bases.

In the old days, this system worked pretty well. But changes in the law made it very difficult to get and base closures eliminated care for many retirees and their families. Civilian retirees can join the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan, which offers lots of health care options. At 65, FEHBP supplements Medicare and provides a very nice health care package when they need it the most. But TRICARE, the military health plan, ends at age 65. Military retirees get Medicare but nothing else if they cannot afford supplemental insurance.

To correct this sad situation, and I want to mention my colleague on the other side of the aisle, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), and Senators TIM JOHNSON, JOHN MCCAIN, and our esteemed colleague, Paul Coverdell, introduced the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act, H.R. 3573. The Keep Our Promise Act has united military retirees and families across the country. Their billboards, bumper stickers, e-mails, phone calls, and letters to newspapers and Congress have educated us to their plight. Their persistence has gained the Promise Act 306 cosponsors in the House and 36 in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, we would not be here today debating this issue today without the grass roots support for the Shows-Norwood Keep Our Promise Act. The defense bill accomplishes part of what the Keep Our Promise Act would do by extending TRICARE to military retirees beyond age 65 as a supplement to Medicare. This is a great step in the right direction, but the defense bill does not do everything the Promise Act would do. The Promise Act would offer military retirees the option to participate in the FEHBP, because many retirees are not well served by TRICARE.

So while we congratulate ourselves on a job well done, we must remember that this defense bill only begins to make good on the commitment we made to our military retirees. We need to pass the rest of the Keep Our Promise Act. It is the right thing to do. And I promise my colleagues that military retirees across the country will keep fighting for the benefits they were promised, earned and richly deserve.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS).

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and I rise in support of the rule and in strong support of the underlying legislation that will authorize spending for our Nation's military and spending for the Department of Energy's nuclear sites.

This legislation represents a great leap forward in our Nation's military, and I would like to especially congratulate the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for their great effort over the past 6

years to ensure that our Nation's military is the best prepared in the world. It is only appropriate that this legislation before us today bears the name of our colleague, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE).

Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus specifically on one provision that I am especially pleased was included in the final conference report. In the 1999 National Defense Authorization Act, the Congress created the Office of River Protection to manage the Nation's largest environmental cleanup project, which is in my district. The River Protection project is charged with the safe cleanup and vitrification of 54 million gallons of highly radioactive liquid waste that is stored in 177 underground storage tanks at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in central Washington. Over one-third of these tanks have leaked over a million gallons to the ground, which could potentially endanger the Columbia River and the salmon populations within the Hanford Reach.

The Office of River Protection was established to provide a streamlined management structure that would manage the program primarily at the site to allow for quick decisions and to cut through the DOE bureaucracy that too often impedes cleanup projects. Specifically, the head of the Office of River Protection was charged with managing all aspects of the River Protection project and was to report directly to the Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management.

Unfortunately, DOE headquarters has not followed the intent of this 1999 legislation and continues to micromanage the Office of River Protection. This micromanagement has contributed to unprecedented frustration among the stakeholders, the State of Washington, other Federal agencies, Congress, and certainly the Tri-Cities communities that I represent.

This year's defense authorization bill contains an amendment I offered in conference to clarify the role of the head of the Office of River Protection. The amendment clearly states that the Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management shall delegate in writing responsibility for the Office of River Protection to the head of that office. Such delegation shall, at a minimum, include authorities from contracting, financial management, safety, and general program management equivalent to the authorities of other operations offices of the Department of Energy. This delegation must be completed and submitted to Congress within 30 days.

I want to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker, to the Department of Energy that Congress has taken this step because of our continuing concerns with the micromanagement of the office. It is time to put an end to this. I expect the Department to immediately provide the necessary authority to the head of the office for budgeting, contracting, and staffing.

Further, I believe the Department must transfer the regulatory unit, now under the management of the Richland Operation Office, to the head of the Office of River Protection, to comply with this legislation. Now is the time for the Department to recognize the unique mission that Congress has provided to the Office of River Protection and to assist, not hinder, the office to its completion of this vital project.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment would not have been possible without the support of the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) and others that were on the conference. I also want to thank specifically the staff, Pete Berry and Steve Thompson, for assisting my office in working through this legislation.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this rule and the underlying bill.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

We have heard several reasons for supporting this bill, including the pay raise for our armed forces and the health care for our retirees. I want to add one more reason to vote for this bill, and that is because of the provisions which enact an important agreement to save the drinking water for 25 million citizens in the Southwest United States.

These provisions would move the largest uranium mine tailings pile that has ever threatened a drinking water supply in the U.S. The dangerous radioactive waste currently sits only 750 feet away from the Colorado River near Moab, Utah, where it threatens the drinking water of one-seventh of the United States, including people who live in Las Vegas, Arizona, and the Southern California urban areas of Los Angeles and, of course, the city I represent, San Diego.

I want to thank my colleagues, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) and the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CANNON), for their leadership in moving this pile, which is as big as 118 football fields, rather than what was previously suggested, which was capping it in place. We have all fought for 3 years to prevent the Nuclear Regulatory Commission from doing just that, capping the pile, because that would ensure that the poisonous waste would continue to leach into the Colorado River for almost 300 years.

This bill gives jurisdiction to move the pile to the Department of Energy, which has the expertise and experience to relocate it to a secure, permanent, location, safely away from the Colorado River. I want to congratulate all those who have worked so hard to cement this agreement into law instead of allowing the capping of this huge pile of nuclear radioactive waste where it would nearly forever pollute the Southwest's drinking water. I urge the passage of this bill.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM).

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and I rise in support of the Floyd D. Spence Authorization Act and encourage the adoption of this rule.

This legislation contains many provisions that are important to the defense of this great Nation and to our veterans. However, I want to speak briefly on title 36 of the bill, which establishes the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program to provide timely, uniform, and adequate compensation to employees or their survivors for illnesses incurred during the performance of their duties for the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons program.

The legislation requires the President to submit to Congress by March 15 of next year a legislative proposal that identifies the types and amendments of compensation for individuals whose health was adversely affected by their work at DOE facilities, and the procedures for providing those benefits and compensation. If Congress does not act by July 31, 2001, to enact a compensation program, eligible employees exposed to beryllium, radiation, and those working in gaseous diffusion plants will be entitled to a lump sum payment of $150,000 and medical care for their disease.

I want to thank Senator FRED THOMPSON of Tennessee and Senator GEORGE VOINOVICH of Ohio for their leadership and dedicated efforts on behalf of these workers. Without their efforts, we would not have this legislation today nor any other compensation legislation.

Additionally, the bicameral bipartisan compromise that was reached on this program could not have been realized without the tireless efforts of the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY), the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD), and their dedicated staffs, as well as Mr. Aleix Jarvis of my staff, who I want to thank for his efforts.

I represent the Savannah River site. The workers there and at DOE facilities across the Nation dedicated their lives to winning the Cold War. They did what their country asked of them. Unfortunately, the Government was not always aware or up front about what they were being exposed to and the dangers it presented to their health. Today we acknowledge our mistakes, and I think it is only right that we correct this wrong.

1100

This is a good bill. I think it is only fitting that this legislation that does so much for so many years by so many

bears the name of my friend and colleague, fellow South Carolinian (Chairman SPENCE) who has fought tirelessly for both the men and women in uniform and for those who once wore the uniform.

I encourage adoption of this rule and passage of the bill.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL).

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule, H. Res. 616, which will allow the House to consider H.R. 4205, the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for 2001.

I am pleased that the Committee on Rules crafted a rule that will waive all points of order against the conference report. A blanket waiver is efficient and would be consistent with the actions of this committee in the 106th Congress.

I also want to commend the members of the House and Senate Committee on Armed Services and applaud the conferees for their deliberation and consideration of important measures included in the legislation.

I am pleased that the conferees retained language from the Senate bill that establishes new and important resources for our Nation's firefighters. The provisions in my legislation, H.R. 1168, the FIRE Act, are included in the DOD authorization bill. The level of authorization may not be what we wanted it to be, but this is a beginning for our firefighters.

We have dedicated our efforts, Mr. Speaker, to the six heroes who died in Worchester, Massachusetts, the firefighters. The $100 million that is authorized for this year and the $300 million that is authorized for 2002 are significant attempts to help the 32,000 fire departments and the million firefighters throughout America.

Paid, combination, volunteer departments and emergency medical technicians will be eligible to apply for these grants.

When appropriated, fire departments can hire personnel, purchase new and modernized equipment, provide fire prevention education programs and wellness programs for our firefighters to modify outdated fire stations. It sends the dollars directly to the departments to the communities in need through competitive grants without going through the State red tape.

I want to thank all 284 cosponsors in this House, Mr. Speaker, for this important legislation and for their support and interest. I especially would like to thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER). This is a victory for our firefighters. I am honored to have been part of it. And again, I want to thank the committee, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN).

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this conference report and the rule that brings this bill to the floor. I want to thank my good friend the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) for yielding me the time.

There are many important functions of our Federal Government, Mr. Speaker, but probably no more important or more legitimate function than providing for our national defense. And I think it is very, very appropriate that this very strong pro-defense bill is named after our good friend, the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman FLOYD SPENCE) who has been such a leader in this area for so many years.

But I particularly want to thank the conferees and everyone who has worked so hard on the provisions for the sick nuclear workers that the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) just detailed.

While Oak Ridge is in the district of my friend, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP), about half the people who work there live in my district. Over the years, several Oak Ridge nuclear workers suffering from beryllium disease and other health problems related to their work with radioactive material have come to me for assistance, and we have always tried to get them the help we could. But more needed to be done.

I especially want to congratulate my constituent Ann Orick who really led the fight to call attention to the plight and the problems of these sick workers. And I want to commend the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) and Senator THOMPSON who really led the battle in this Congress to see that appropriate action was taken. I was pleased to assist them in their heroic efforts.

Now, hopefully, these workers will receive compensation and, much more importantly, medical treatment for their illnesses. They served our country well and they deserve no less.

I want to urge adoption of this rule and adoption of this conference report.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP).

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

Mr. Speaker, 3 years ago a bipartisan majority here in Congress passed the Defense budget that substantially increased funding for the Armed Forces, launching a rebuilding process that is gradually addressing the deficiencies in readiness and quality of life in military service that had developed over many years of post-Cold War downsizing.

Rebuilding has not been as fast as I would like and certainly not as fast as the men and women at the bases located in the part of Georgia that I have the privilege of representing would like. But, on a bipartisan basis, we are moving in the right direction.

For one thing, this bill authorizes a reorganization plan prepared by Army Secretary Caldera to shut down the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, and to open a new program with a restructured curriculum and with a strong independent oversight that includes congressional representation on the school's board of visitors.

This program, which teaches professionalism and the principles of democracy to Latin American military and government personnel, is an important instrument of U.S. policy in our hemisphere; and I commend Congress for its farsighted action on this issue.

The bill also is commendable for stepping up the process of raising the quality of life for all Americans who are serving in our military and for those who faithfully served in the past. This includes the health care benefits for our veterans. And for active duty personnel, it includes a pay raise, new housing facilities and allowances, new reenlistment incentives, new child care centers, new educational assistance and establishment of a thrift savings plan, not to mention the funding for new equipment and weaponry that will greatly improve working conditions and our readiness.

Mr. Speaker, this bill keeps our country moving in the right direction, and I urge all of our colleagues to give it their full support by voting for this rule and voting for the bill.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON).

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman (Mrs. MYRICK) for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the rule for the Fiscal Year 2001 Floyd D. Spence Defense Authorization Act.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the conference, I am proud of the bipartisan bill the House and Senate agreed upon. Over the last 8 years, the Clinton-Gore administration has cut defense spending to historic lows. In fact, the Service Chiefs have testified that there is still a mismatch between resources and requirements. The services are migrating funds from modernization accounts to operations and support accounts to maintain current readiness.

This bill tries to lessen the current Clinton-Gore impact on long-term readiness by increasing procurement accounts by $2.6 billion and increasing research and development accounts by $1 billion.

The bill includes $688.6 million for the Joint Strike Fighter. Boeing recently flew their concept demonstrator at Edwards Air Force Base, and their competitor, Lockheed Martin, is scheduled to fly their version later this month.

We have included language in the bill which will require the Department of Defense to perform a cost study of final assembly and checkout alternatives for the Joint Strike Fighter program. Studies have been done that show that $2.2 billion can be saved by building the Joint Strike Fighter in California. The

Joint Strike Fighter may be the last manned fighter ever built and is expected to be the fighter of choice by all three services and our allies, as well. The Joint Strike Fighter is important to our defense and to our economy.

Also included is $115.3 million for research and development to modify the B–2 fleet. The B–2 Spirit of America is the Air Force's only all-weather, stealth, long-range bomber. The funds will be used to enhance the B–2 capabilities making it far more capable even than it was in Allied Force.

A Link 16 and Center instrument display will give connectivity for in-flight re-planning. New bomb racks to carry state-of-the-art weapons will increase its lethality, and maintainability upgrades will increase its survivability.

These are just a few examples of modernization efforts we have funded this year. Others have spoken of other things we have done to improve our readiness and enhance the quality of life for our troops. This is a good bill and a good rule, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. UDALL).

(Mr. UDALL of Colorado asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I support this rule. I also will support the conference report.

The conference report does include some things that I do not like. It omits some things also that I think should been included, especially the hate-crimes provisions that were in the Senate bill and that the House instructed the conferees to accept.

But I will support it because it includes vital legislation to set up a system of compensation and care for current and former nuclear weapons workers made sick by on-the-job exposure to radiation, beryllium, and other dangers.

This has been a priority for me. For over a year, I have been working with colleagues from both sides of the aisle to achieve its enactment, and I am very pleased that the House today will be voting on it.

This is a very important matter for our country. It is particularly important for many Coloradans because our State is home to the Rocky Flats site, which for decades was a key part of the nuclear weapons complex.

Now that that site's military mission has ended and we are working hard to have Rocky Flats cleaned up and closed, we need to work just as hard to take care of the people who worked there.

The people who worked at Rocky Flats and the other nuclear weapons sites were part of our country's defense just as much as those who wore the uniform of an armed service. They may not have been exposed to hostile fire, but they were exposed to radiation and beryllium and many other hazardous substances. And because of that, many have developed very serious illnesses while others will develop such illnesses in the future.

Unfortunately, they have not been eligible for veterans' benefits and they will be excluded from other programs because they technically worked for DOE contractors and for far too long the Government was not on their side.

To explain what I mean, let me summarize part of a recent statement by Dr. Lee Newman as it affects nuclear weapons workers. Dr. Newman says these workers were ''failed by the Federal Government in at least eight ways.''

The Federal Government failed to adequately warn them. The Government failed to adequately protect them. The Government failed to institute medical monitoring. The Government failed to support investigation of a beryllium disease epidemic affecting them. The Government failed to support compensation claims they filed. The Government failed to do enough to reduce exposure, provide education, and detect early disease. The Government failed to support adequate research on treatment. And the Government failed to study and act on other occupation illnesses, including ones now covered by the conference report now before us.

Now, the good news is that things have changed. Secretary Richardson and the administration have reversed a decades-old policy of opposing workers' claims. Now we in the Congress need to finish the job. Today, by approving the conference report, we can start to do just that.

I am not saying this is perfect legislation. In fact, I think it can be further refined to include wages that workers lost because of these illnesses. But we are nearing the end of this Congress and time is of the essence, so we should adopt this rule and pass the conference report in order to take this essential first step.

Mr. Speaker, we must pass this conference report today.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD).

Mr. WHITFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I, like others, rise in strong support of this Fiscal Year 2001 Department of Defense conference report.

I support this bill because we must reverse the downward spiral in defense spending that we have seen for more than a decade. That spiral has seriously undermined our readiness, modernization, recruitment, and retention efforts.

It has been my honor to represent the men and women serving in the military at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky. This legislation is important to them because it provides those soldiers a 3.7 percent pay raise and provides up to $500 a month to assist soldiers and families who are forced to live on food stamps.

For our military retirees, this bill finally fulfills the promise made when they joined the service years ago. It guarantees a lifetime health care benefit for all retirees and their eligible family members. For Department of Energy contract and vendor employees, this bill establishes the first Federal program to compensate workers who have or will contract beryllium disease or certain cancers resulting from radiation exposure.

At a minimum, workers will be entitled to a $150,000 lump sum payment plus medical expenses. For the employees that I represent at that Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant who have been unknowingly exposed to contaminated uranium, plutonium, neptunium, and other hazardous substances while producing the materials needed to sustain our nuclear weapons arsenal throughout the Cold War, approval of this compensation package was a hard-fought and long-overdue victory.

1115

I want to thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), and all of those on both sides of the aisle who worked on this important compensation package, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP), the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) on our side, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. UDALL), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KANJORSKI) and others. This is an important piece of legislation. It corrects some long overdue inequities.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this Department of Defense conference report.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ).

Ms. SANCHEZ. I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Committee on Armed Services, I rise in strong support of the National Defense Authorization Conference Report, H.R. 4205. I would like to thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), subcommittee chairs, ranking members and all committee staff who have worked so hard to get this bill ready.

This year's bill makes great strides towards improving modernization, quality of life and military readiness. First, military health care is getting on the right track, but there is still a lot we need to do. Second, recruiting and retention are showing signs of improvement, but it will be a constant challenge during strong economies and changing demographics.

One area that I have been working on is to better inform our service members about the true value of the total compensation that they get in the military. If younger service members fully understand the value of all their benefits, then they may opt to stay in military service more often.

Third, I would like to commend the committee on their work in improving

the research and development accounts, specifically science and technology. R&D is the future of this Nation's defense. We should not shortchange our future to fund today. Research and development is critical because it maintains our technological edge and helps our service people with the growing and changing needs of our national security.

Finally, I would like to commend the committee for looking at California as a potential production site for the Joint Strike Fighter. Building the Joint Strike Fighter in California would save taxpayers billions of dollars through State-sponsored economic incentives and by using existing production facilities. If we are asking taxpayers to support the best manned, equipped, and trained fighting force in the world, actually in the history of the world, then we must ensure that it is as cost effective as possible for taxpayers.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK).

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I note with dismay but unfortunately not with surprise that the hate crimes bill which got a majority vote in both houses is absent from this bill.

Let me say we have seen this scenario before, Mr. Speaker. A majority vote, according to the rules, for a certain result and the people in power blatantly ignore the wishes of the majority. Now, that describes two recent situations: the Serbian presidential election and the conference committee on the defense bill. In the case of the Serbian election, when the Milosevic regime refused to pay attention to majority rule, the people found a way to remedy it. Here, a majority in both houses voted, a significant majority, for the hate crimes bill. Yet the people in power, emulating Milosevic, have decided to repudiate the results of the election. I hope a similar result will ensue.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of both the rule and the conference report for the Floyd Spence National Defense Authorization for Fiscal Year 2001.

First let me congratulate Chairman SPENCE, Ranking Member IKE SKELTON, and all the conferees for their hard work and dedication to the men and women who serve in our armed forces.

I know that this was a difficult conference, with many hard issues to resolve, however the end product before us today has certainly been worth the wait.

Mr. Speaker, I am specially grateful to the conferees for including important provisions, which address the needs of thousands of workers, including workers in my home state of Ohio, who were exposed to dangerous levels of radiation, beryllium, and other toxic substances while working on our nation's nuclear weapons programs.

While these workers never served in our military, they nevertheless helped us to win the Cold War.

Sadly, many of these workers today are suffering from debilitating diseases directly related to plant conditions.

The compensation package, included in this conference report represents a major step in recognizing their service and will provide needed help and assistance to these individuals and their families, who are suffering from illness due to exposure.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to commend the conferees for helping to keep our promise to our military retirees, their families, and their survivors by: Restoring military healthcare as a benefit for life; Providing comprehensive pharmacy benefits; Extending the Tricare Senior Prime Program; and, Reducing the healthcare "out of pocket" expenses for all our military retirees from $7,500 to just $3,000.

We can never fully repay the debt of gratitude we own the men and women who freely choose to serve in our armed forces.

However, these needed provisions maintain our commitment, improve their quality of life, and will truly make a difference in the lives of those who served and sacrificed for our nation with honor and distinction.

I urge all my colleagues to support this rule and this very important conference report.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the rule, adoption of the conference report, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 616, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 4205) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). Pursuant to House Resolution 616, the conference report is considered as having been read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of October 6, 2000 at page H9053.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE).

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, the fiscal year 2001 defense authorization bill has been a bipartisan effort from start to finish. In May, the bill was reported out of the Committee on Armed Services on a vote of 56–1. Later in May, the bill passed the House on a vote of 353–63. Now, I am pleased to report that all Armed Services Committee conferees in both the House and the Senate have chosen to sign this conference report in the latest reflection of the broad bipartisan support for this legislation.

This is not to mean that this has been an easy process. We faced having to reach agreement on over 800 legislative provisions, dealing with a broad range of topics, many having little or nothing to do with defense. However, with the strong cooperation of all Members on both sides of the aisle and a determination to once again complete our work prior to adjournment, we are able to present to the House a strong agreement that furthers the national security of this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation represents 6 years in a row that Congress has increased the level of defense spending requested by the President. Consistent with the budget resolution, this bill authorizes $4.5 billion above the budget request in order to address urgent shortfalls in key readiness problems, modernization and personnel accounts. The four military service chiefs, in testimony before the Armed Services Committees, have repeatedly itemized these shortfalls in great detail. While this bill will not eliminate these shortfalls, it will go a significant way toward addressing the most urgent of these requirements.

I have said many a time that we are facing a military crisis in this country. Notwithstanding the efforts of Congress, the readiness and combat effectiveness of our Armed Forces continue to decline. Irrespective of who wins the election in November, America faces a fundamental national security choice next year. Either we accept our role as the sole global superpower and step up and provide our military with the associated necessary resources, or we decline this difficult responsibility and start to walk away. I believe the choice should be clear, but continuing to attempt to fulfill our superpower responsibilities on the cheap is simply no longer an option. We are running our military into the ground, continuing to lose our most valuable national resource, our men and women in uniform, and falling further behind the urgent need to recapitalize the force.

With that admonition, Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly cover two aspects of the conference report that deserve particular attention. Others will highlight the other important provisions in the conference report.

First, this bill continues the work started by Congress last year in addressing the serious problem facing our military retiree programs. Last year, we successfully reformed the military retirement system and restored confidence in a program that had lost its appeal in attracting and retaining our best and brightest Americans into military service. This year, we continued this support by tackling an even thornier problem, the military health care system, and, in particular, access to adequate health care by the oldest

portion of our military retirees, those who currently lose access to military care when they become eligible for Medicare.

This conference report allows Congress to finally fulfill the pledge given to millions of military retirees that they would receive lifetime medical coverage in exchange for their selfless military service to the Nation. The conference agreement would establish a permanent program for all Medicare eligible military retirees and dependents to receive lifetime coverage under the TRICARE health care program. The bill would also provide a much-needed expansion of prescription drug coverage to ensure that all retirees have full access to this critical military benefit.

Finally, the conference agreement recognizes the need to continue to aggressively improve the TRICARE system program as it takes on an expanded beneficiary population.

Mr. Speaker, the second area I wanted to briefly cover involves the difficult question of how best to compensate Department of Energy and contractor employees suffering from the ill effects of exposure to radiation and other hazardous substances. This becomes one of the most difficult issues in conference and it raises a series of very complex and difficult policy questions. However, I am pleased to note that the conference agreement includes landmark legislation establishing a new energy employees occupational illness compensation program. This program establishes statutory eligibility for workers exposed to radiation, beryllium and silica in the course of carrying out their work in the United States nuclear weapons complex. I believe this is a just and fitting response by Congress to the tragic situation facing these courageous Americans who played an important but often unrecognized role in helping us win the Cold War.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report is a result of hundreds of compromises with the Senate. In this regard, the outcomes are not all what we would like them to be. However, it remains a sound and balanced proposal that deserves the full support of my colleagues. That is what conferences are all about, compromise. We are able to bring this legislation today before us as a result of the hard work and commitment to success by all conferees in both parties on both sides of the aisle, from both houses. In particular, the critical roles played by the Committee on Armed Services subcommittee and panel chairmen and ranking members deserve mention. We unfortunately lost our good friend and Readiness Subcommittee chairman Herb Bateman before we began the final work on our bill. But Herb's characteristic imprints are all over this bill and its many provisions to shore up sagging military readiness. I also want to thank my friend, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), for another very productive effort in guiding this bill through the process in an open and bipartisan fashion. In our committee, bipartisanship is not merely talk. It is the only way to approach the very difficult national security issues we must address.

I also want to thank Chairman WARNER and his colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee for sharing our mutual commitment to complete the conference report in spite of overwhelming odds. It is this continued bipartisan and bicameral commitment that allows Congress to provide this critical legislation every year.

Finally, I want to single out the extraordinary efforts of my friend and colleague the gentlewoman from Jacksonville, FL (Mrs. FOWLER) who as a senior member of the committee and of the House leadership team has been an indispensable ally in helping us arrive at the best possible outcomes on so many issues.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is important to our troops, to our military families, to our military retirees, and to the continued protection of our national security. It deserves a strong vote of confidence in this body. I would ask my colleagues to vote accordingly.

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

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference report to accompany H.R. 4205, the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001.

1130

It is appropriate that this bill has been named in honor of our distinguished chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE). I want to commend him for his leadership throughout the long and sometimes difficult deliberations on this legislation. We produced an excellent bill for national defense, and this conference report deserves the support of all the Members in the House.

This conference report builds upon the President's budget proposal for defense and makes important improvements in military quality of life, readiness, and modernization programs. Moreover, this bill will keep the promise of lifetime health care for all military retirees. We have been working to make this the year of military health care, and I am proud of those Members of our committee on both sides of the aisle who worked so diligently to improve health care for our military retirees, as well as for the active duty service members and their families.

I want to especially recognize the efforts of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) and the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), the chairman and ranking member of our Subcommittee on Military Personnel, and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), who has been a leader in this effort from the beginning.

For military retirees, the conference report provides permanent medical coverage under TRICARE for military retirees over age 65; expands and makes permanent TRICARE Senior Prime, also known as Medicare Subvention, provided Congress approves a new agreement; establishes a permanent pharmacy benefit with access to the national mail order program and retail pharmacies; and reduces catastrophic expenses from $7,500 to $3,000 for retired TRICARE beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, for active duty service members and their families, the conference report provides TRICARE Prime Remote to active duty family members; eliminates copayments for active duty family members in TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Prime Remote; phases in chiropractic care to active duty personnel; reimburses certain travel expenses for military families who must travel to a referred specialist; eliminates certain referral requirements for specialty care; and improves TRICARE claims processing and reduces costs.

In addition to these health care improvements, I am pleased that the conference report includes increases in funding for the procurement of weapons, ammunition and equipment, for research and development, and for operations and maintenance.

The conference report supports the important Army transformation initiative, recognizing the need for the Army to build a medium weight force that is capable of quickly deploying to a full spectrum of contingencies.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that this conference report includes authorization for the Energy Employees' Occupational Illness Compensation Program. This program will help compensate those thousands of workers who become ill from exposure to dangerous levels of radiation, beryllium, and other toxic substances while they worked in our Nation's nuclear weapons programs. These workers are the unsung heroes of our victory in the Cold War, and it is only appropriate that we acknowledge their sacrifice and compensate them for their illnesses.

Mr. Speaker, this conference report is the result of cooperation and compromise between the House and the Senate and between Members of both sides of the aisle. It deserves strong bipartisan support, and I urge all Members to vote for the approval of this conference report, which is named appropriately so for our chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE).

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the chairman of our Subcommittee on Military Procurement.

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

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman, the gentleman from

South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) also for his great leadership in maneuvering this bill through some pretty tough waters here in the last several weeks, and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for his leadership; and also for my ranking member, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY), who worked as my partner to help put together the procurement package that is manifest in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, let me just run over a few things that we did for the services. The Army General Shinseki needed a light armored force that could be quickly moved around the world to react to emergencies. We do not have that capability right now. We have heavy armor, and we have soft bodies in the airborne groups. We do not have that ability to move a light armor around; and he is working to develop that transformed Army, and we rewarded his initiative with some money to put these first several brigades of new Army units together.

He is moving out on that program. With respect to the Navy, we preserved the option to keep some 688 submarines that otherwise would be junked or retired because of refueling costs. We put in money to refuel them so we can get that attack submarine force up from the 56 or so boats that we have now up to around 65 or 70.

With respect to the Air Force, we reinstated the caps for the F–22; but we gave a little breathing room, a percent and a half of breathing room, for EMD so they can have a robust testing and manufacturing program for the F–22. We think that is important for the Air Force.

Now we still have major problems with procurement, and we are spending $30 billion too little annually to upgrade the force structure that we have now to keep modern equipment in the force structure that we have now.

The Joint Chiefs testified the other day, General Shinseki, that we are $3 billion short on critical ammunition supplies for the Army. The CNO testified that we have about a 50 percent shortage of Tomahawk missiles and the Air Force said we are 50 percent short of munitions. We have a lot of ground to make up. We are going to try to do that in the next year or so, but this was a good bipartisan bill and a good start.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY).

Mr. SISISKY. Mr. Speaker, my colleague and friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), did not tell the whole story; but this conference report includes over $63 billion for procurement. That is a lot of money, but I believe it gets America more than the number might indicate. In fact, I would call this America's first true post-Cold War defense budget.

The reduction in the size of our military forces begun in 1990 is largely complete. Troop numbers are stable, and this year's authorization uses the power of technology to equip those forces to do a more effective job and with less risk to our troops. It begins to outfit those troops to meet the missions they are likely to face today and tomorrow. We authorize and fully fund the Army's bold effort to become faster and more mobile without losing its punch. The Air Force will move into the 21st century with the immensely capable F–22 fighter; and the Navy gets new technology, ships and creative ways to buy them that will defend the taxpayers' wallets.

The procurement program in this bill does not provide all the answers, but it should eliminate a lot of questions about whether America's military is ready for today's challenges.

Finally, let me commend my friend and subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), for the cooperation he and the staff showed in putting our title together. I commend to the attention of other Members the fact that the staff of the Committee on Armed Services is bipartisan in intent and in effect. In large part, this is why this bill turned out so well for the country and for Members interested in national defense.

The bottom line is, we must never forget why we are here and what this bill is really for. This bill supports the great young military men and women who protect our freedom. It provides equipment and training, keeps commitments for health care and supports their families. I ask all my colleagues to support this conference report.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON), for the purpose of a colloquy.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this will be very brief also. I want to clarify an aspect of section 3303 of the conference report which provides in part for the cleanup of uranium mill tailings from the former Atlas uranium mine.

The bill language directs the Secretary of Energy to prepare a remediation plan with the help of the National Academy of Sciences to determine the right way to remediate this site. Elsewhere in this provision is other bill language which appears to define remediation as being relocation of the tailings pile. I am concerned that someone might view this language as authorizing removal of the tailings pile regardless of the findings of the NAS or the remediation plan developed by the Secretary.

My understanding is that we are authorizing an objective threshold determination by the Secretary of Energy, with the advice of the National Academy of Sciences, on whether or not the Atlas pile needs to be moved, and that only if a determination to move the pile is made would the condition apply that the pile must be moved out of the Colorado floodplain to another location in the State of Utah.

Is this the understanding of the gentleman of how this provision will operate?

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BARTON of Texas. I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON) for his inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is correct. We expect the Secretary will develop a remediation plan that fully considers the recommendation of the National Academy of Sciences in order to reach an objective determination by the Secretary on whether the pile should be relocated or simply treated in place.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Armed Services for his response.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say I adopt the remarks made by the ranking member and the chairman as well as my friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY), with respect to this bill. I am a strong supporter of its provisions as it deals with readiness and as it deals with quality of life for our members of the armed services.

I want to talk about really an extraneous provision on this bill which I am very pleased with. The National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control issued a report in 1973 called America Burning. For the Fire Service, this was a turning point in its 350-year history. This is another turning point. The fire package attached to this conference report is a scaled-back version of legislation offered by my good friend, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL). The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL) has championed his fire act tirelessly for the past 2 years. Some told the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL) that it would not happen.

I note that on the floor today, as well, is my good friend, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), who cochairs the Fire Service Caucus with me. He and I are still working on getting an additional $100 million in emergency funds available for our fire fighters.

To the credit of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL), he never lost faith. He pushed and working together with all of us in the Fire Service Caucus, and I note the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) is also on the floor with me. We have one of the finest pieces of legislation for fire fighters this Congress has ever passed, and I thank the chairman. I thank the ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), and Senator

WARNER as well, for their leadership and help on this, and congratulate the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) for his work on this as well.

To his credit, he never lost faith. He pushed, cajoled, and lobbied tirelessly to move his legislation forward. As a cochair of the Fire Caucus I would like to thank him, the Fire Service organizations and literally thousands of fire fighters from across the Nation for all their hard work.

I would also like to thank my fellow cochairs ROB ANDREWS, CURT WELDON, and SHERRY BOEHLERT for all their leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before this is a watershed moment for the Fire Service and I urge all my colleagues to support the conference report.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), the chairman of our Subcommittee on Military Research and Development.

(Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank our distinguished chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), for this conference report. No one has done more in this Congress over the past 6 years and beyond on behalf of America's national security than the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE). He has been a tireless advocate for our military, and it is appropriate that we name this bill in his honor. It has been my pleasure and honor to serve with him and under him.

Equally, I am proud to serve with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), a real gentleman and someone who is always doing what is best for our service personnel. I want to pay special attention to those Members who will not be coming back with us. We lost Herb Bateman this year, one of our real giants in the Congress. We all miss him because of his leadership on defense issues.

I want to add our thanks to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) for their service on the committee, but I want to especially single out my good friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. PICKETT). He has been my ranking member on the subcommittee for 6 years. I am proud of the fact that we have never had a split vote on any issue in 6 years. Now, that speaks to how we can work together with almost 30 members of the committee on issues that are important to America's security.

I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. PICKETT) for being an outstanding American. I appreciate his work.

In terms of the overall bill and R&D, we made the best of a bad situation. In my opinion, this bill is not adequate to meet the defense needs when we couple the decreasing defense spending with massively increasing use of our troops and a total disregard for proliferation. Therefore, our rogue state enemies have technologies that we did not expect them to have for 15 or 20 years because arms control agreements have not been enforced. In the R&D area, the administration cut R&D spending by 25 percent over the last 8 years. We have gradually tried to reverse that. This year's bill adds a billion dollars under the R&D account lines.

1145

We focus on the three newest threats that we see emerging in the 21st century:

One, the threat of missile proliferation. We increase funding for both theater missile defense and national missile defense;

Two, the threat from the use of weapons of mass destruction, and we increase funding significantly in that area;

Finally, the threat from information warfare or cyberterrorism. We increase funding in that area. We created a special core of young people to deal with the issue of information dominance and cyberterrorism.

We also deal with the issue of establishing a Federal-wide national data fusion center.

Several Members have talked about an add-on to the bill. Contrary to what has been said, it was an entirely new initiative for our domestic defenders. It has not just one part, but seven key parts.

First of all, it takes technology from the military and establishes a deliberate mechanism with the fire service groups to transfer that technology to our domestic defenders.

Number two, it elevates our fire and EMS community to get first access to surplus equipment that the military no longer has a need of.

Number three, it includes the bill authored by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY), our good friend, which I cosponsored with him, to deal with a $10 million authorization for Hepatitis C demonstration projects in both our cities and within the military emergency response community.

Number four, it has the military look at the whole access of frequency spectrum, and to deal with that.

It also includes a provision for funding.

These are all new initiatives. It is the domestic defender package. I am proud that this Congress for the first time in 40 years did something besides talk about the fire service in America.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ).

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

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4205, the Chairman Floyd Spence National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2001.

I would like to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member, for a good, good job, and of course the other Members and the staff.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the significant contributions of our recently deceased subcommittee chairman and colleague, Herb Bateman. He contributed immeasurably to the committee, the Congress, and the Nation. Few have been willing to take the extra steps and extraordinary measures he took while serving this great Nation. We will sorely miss him.

We will also miss the active participation and support of my good friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. PICKETT), the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER), and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT), who have chosen not to return to this body next session. We wish them well.

Mr. Speaker, on balance, I believe the readiness portion of the bill is a significant and prudent step in the right direction. It is not all that I would like to see, but we could definitely not satisfy all the different requests that we had.

This year, just over $1 billion have been added to the readiness accounts. Members will find increases for those activities that contribute directly to increased readiness. Funding has been included for flying hours for the Air Force and Naval Reserve units, depot maintenance for active and reserve components, real property maintenance, the Marine Corps' corrosion control program, army range modernization, impact aid funding, cold weather equipment for personnel, and other items too numerous to mention here.

Many of the programs we were able to fund in the bill address the Services's unfunded requirements.

There are also a number of policies that will have a direct impact on readiness. For example, we tasked the Department to provide the Congress information on requirements to reduce the backlog in maintenance.

I ask my friends and colleagues to support this nonpartisan bill. It is a good bill. We request their vote.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER), chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

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

I do not believe I could take 3 minutes to describe all of the work that has been done in the personnel section of this bill, so I want to take a moment and pay some tribute and thanks.

I want to thank in particular the chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), because when the Buyer proposal to extend health care for life to the military retirees came up, they said yes. They backed it up.

Then they went to the leadership, and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), the Speaker of the House, said yes, and put the pressure then on the Senate; not that the Senate did not

particularly want to go in that direction. They have their own problems in the Senate. But in fact, the conference committee came together, and we are keeping faith with America's veterans.

Let us talk about motive for a moment. I am going to make an appeal to the country. Why should we be doing this? I think it is very simple. The motivation behind my efforts is this: When I think of the World War II and the Korean War veterans, who are now over 65, they fought for freedom.

They were truly crusaders. They fought for no bounty of their own. They protected the borders and the interests of our Nation, as they also sought freedom for people around the world. Yet, when they came home and then they retired, and now they are over 65, they are not free. How ironic that those who fought for freedom are not free.

People say, ''What do you mean, Steve, they are not free?'' They do not have freedom of movement. They retired next to a medical treatment facility. Then we go through a base closure, and then all of a sudden they lose that retirement benefit.

This bill gives freedom, freedom to those who fought for it. They now do not have to live next to a military medical treatment facility. They can live anywhere they choose around the country. If they want to go now to be with their children so they can spend out the years with their grandchildren, they can do it.

We also included in here a pharmacy benefit that is an earned benefit. What we sought to do is to give that over 65 military retiree the greatest arena of choice. So now they can go to the medical treatment facility for their drugs if they like, they can utilize the mail order pharmacy. We have a retail network. Then if they do not like the formulary, the list of those drugs, they can even go to an out-of-retail network.

I am going to throw a caveat out here on all the good things we have done on health care. I am going to speak directly now to the seniors who are about to use this program. There are no co-pays and there are no deductibles. If the utilization rates get out of whack, we are going to come back here and impose co-pays and deductibles. They have been extended by this Congress as an earned yet generous benefit. Do not abuse it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Virginia (Mr. PICKETT), who has chosen to leave this body, but leaves a tremendous record of service to our Nation.

Mr. PICKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me. I appreciate the kind remarks from the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON). I also want to thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) for his leadership on the Committee on Armed Services, and particularly I want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Research and Development, for being such a pleasure to work with on this subcommittee.

The conferees are to be commended for this conference report, and in particular, for the military research and development program. The level of authorization for R&D provided over and above the administration's request, some $1 billion more, provides an impressive total of $38.8 billion for research, development, tests, and evaluation. The report strikes an excellent balance between mature R&D programs and investment for additional leap-ahead technologies.

Major programs, such as the F–22 Raptor, Comanche, and Army Transformation Plan, will continue as programmed. In addition, the report deals responsibly with the Joint Strike Fighter program, given recent program slippage, and also robustly funds anti-submarine warfare initiatives.

The outcome for the DD–21 program should give the Department ample room to make successful adjustments in this program. Investments for leap-ahead technologies included in this conference report represent an even greater commitment to confront the evolving asymmetrical threats of the future.

The conferees agreed to provide additional assistance for combatting terrorism, for overhead reconnaissance capabilities, and for enhancing the security measures for information systems.

Other provisions also provided additional investments for an assortment of promising battle management systems, next-generation night vision capabilities, radars, lasers, and sensors.

This is a conference report that strikes a constructive balance between short-term and long-term investments. I urge its adoption.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Jacksonville, Florida (Mrs. FOWLER).

(Mrs. FOWLER asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my strong support for the conference report on the fiscal year 2001 defense authorization bill. This will be my last time to come to the well to support a defense authorization bill. This is the eighth one in my eighth year, and this is one of the best we have had.

I want to thank the generous and kind remarks that were made by my chairman and some of the members of the Committee.

I first want to pay tribute, again, to a really dear departed colleague, Herb Bateman, who worked so hard on the readiness portion of this bill. Herb's contributions to this legislation were critical, and this bill may be the best evidence ever of his unyielding commitment to our Nation's military readiness and our men and women in uniform.

Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, we do have a readiness crisis in our military today. Last year, during a visit to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, I learned that only four of 21 P–3 aircraft based there could even get off the ground due to spare parts shortages and other maintenance shortfalls.

I checked back on the status of the wing just last month, a year later, to see how many of those aircraft now were rated mission capable. The number had risen. Now seven out of the 21 could fly, but of those seven, only two were fully mission capable.

Meanwhile, this administration's own Defense Science Board Task Force on Quality of Life has found that the majority of our military and family housing is unsuitable. The current Navy building replacement rate is roughly 175 years. In the Air Force alone today, we have a real property maintenance backlog of some $4.3 billion. Our most recent readiness reports indicate that over half of the Army's combat training centers scored the lowest possible rating, a C–4.

I want to just quote a General commanding one of those elite training schools: ''This mode of operation cannot be sustained another year without incurring unacceptable safety risks and severe training quality degradation.''

These are not the exceptions, these are the rule. They should remain troubling to every Member of this body. This outstanding bill goes to correct some of these troubling readiness issues.

Among other things, this bill would authorize a $1 billion increase in funding for critical readiness accounts, including an additional $335 million for Depot Maintenance; $223 million for spare parts; and $428 million for real property maintenance. These budget adjustments reflect badly needed increases to deal with serious readiness problems facing our military today.

Aside from authorizing key programs, this bill contains many important policy measures aimed at improving our ability to track military readiness. Moreover, the bill includes a modified version of H.R. 3616, the Impact Aid Reauthorization Act of 2000, including provisions to speed payments to heavily impacted school districts, authorize the Secretary of Education to provide grants to school districts unable to raise funds through local bond efforts to renovate and repair schools, and other key steps.

This outstanding bill strongly merits the House's support. It contains landmark legislation to provide health care and pharmacy benefits to our military retirees, addresses the health care needs of our nation's nuclear workers, and achieves significant savings through multiyear procurement authorities. It is a fitting tribute to the man for whom it is named, Armed Services Committee chairman FLOYD D. SPENCE, who has labored tirelessly for months to produce the excellent bill before us today. I also would take a moment to express my deepest appreciation to the committee staff for their hard work. I urge adoption of this outstanding legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill merits the House support.

I want to thank the chairman, who has worked tirelessly to bring this bill to the floor and for whom it is named, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE). He has spent many hours on this.

I thank the ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), for all his hard work.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), who did so very much to further the health care issue along that is reflected in this legislation.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the previous speaker and every speaker, every person who serves in this body, that Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution says it is Congress' job to provide for the national defense. It goes on to say in Article 1, Section 9 of the Constitution that no money may be drawn from the Treasury except by consequence of an appropriation by Congress.

If there are too few ships, if there are too few planes, if the people are underpaid, living in poor housing, it is because Congress has failed its job. It is that simple.

Mr. Speaker, the day the Republican majority took over Congress, there were 392 ships. At this date, it is 318. In the last 6 years the Democrats ran the House, there were 56 ships put in the budget. In the past 6 years, the Republican Congress has put in 33.

1200

We have done some great things on health care. We have done some great things on other things, but there is a heck of a lot of work to be done. Tonight there will be a presidential debate. Both candidates will unfortunately spend all their time talking about tax breaks of a nonexistent surplus.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind them that until we get kids out of 30-year-old helicopters, till we get those young Americans who are serving our country out of 30-year-old airplanes, until we get to a point where we are going to have more than a 200-ship Navy, because at the present procurement rates, that is where we are going to be at no time at all, then there is no money for tax breaks, because the highest priority for this Nation, the highest priority for this Congress should and must always be to provide for the common defense.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to vote for this bill because it does a lot of good things, but before one of my colleagues comes to this floor and says we have plenty of money for tax breaks, let me remind them of all the work that still remains to be done.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER), the chairman of our Committee on Rules.

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation, which is very aptly named for the distinguished gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, and I want to congratulate the gentleman for the hard work he has put into this.

This is, as has just been pointed out by statements that have been made here, a measure that enjoys bipartisan support. We are extremely proud over the past several years we have been able to take on this issue of rebuilding our national defense. It has been a very high priority. It was stated here very clearly by the gentleman from Illinois (Speaker HASTERT) at the beginning of the 106th Congress that as we looked at the four issues with which we were going to deal, improving public education, providing tax relief to working families, saving Social Security and Medicare, clearly, as has been pointed out, rebuilding our Nation's capability has been a top priority. That is exactly what this legislation and the conference report which we are considering will be doing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to especially express my appreciation for a very important provision in this measure which deals with the issue of exportation of the export of computers. I believe that we have come to a very important compromise on this, which does reduce the time level, but at the same time, underscores our commitment to our national defense. I appreciate my colleagues for doing that, and I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for joining with me in that effort.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), who is in the forefront of the military retiree effort, the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

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

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report for the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act. I say to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), I like the sound of that title. I urge my colleagues to support this important measure.

I want to recognize the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) for his leadership and stewardship of the past several years. While he will step down as chairman next year, I know that he will continue to contribute to the committee's efforts to improve the quality of life for our service members and their families and provide for a strong national defense.

I would also like to acknowledge the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member, for his guidance and leadership. Both individuals have placed the security of our country above partisan struggle and have continued the committee's tradition of bipartisanship and cooperation.

As the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, I am proud to say that the conference agreement before us includes quite a list of accomplishments in the personnel arena. We are sending a strong signal to the men and women in uniform that we have listened to their concerns about their need to provide for a quality of life for themselves and their families, and we have taken the steps to address those concerns.

I also am particularly pleased that a number of health care provisions that I proposed have been adopted. I want to recognize the efforts of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel chairman, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER), for his dedication and commitment to improving the lives of our service members.

Working together, and I want to emphasize that point, Mr. Speaker, working together, we have made major strides in providing for our service members, retirees, and their families.

Finally, I would like to thank the full committee staff and, in particular, the Subcommittee on Military Personnel staff, including Debra Wada, Nancy Warner, John Chapla, Mike Higgins and Ed Eyatt. It is a terrific team, Mr. Speaker, one that this body can be proud of; and it exemplifies the kind of staff work that the entire community of people throughout the United States can be proud of. The scope of their assistance is immeasurable.

Let me conclude, Mr. Speaker, by referring to one of the most important aspects of the bill, which is the promise that we keep our Medicare-eligible military retirees to restore access to lifetime military health care. The gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) has gone into this in some detail.

The conference agreement allows the Medicare-eligible retirees who are currently forced out of the system when they turn 65 to continue their coverage under TRICARE. Mr. Speaker, I realize I am at the end of my remarks, but I would like to emphasize as I close that the bipartisanship that we have enjoyed I hope will continue regardless of what happens in November, and I for one am pledged to it.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, I feel it is necessary to remind our colleagues that it was the administration that cut the defense budget and this Congress has added back $60 billion over the past 5 years, and we still need to do more.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY), who is the chairman of our DOE panel.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report, but I also rise in appreciation of the work of the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) as he has guided this committee over the last 6

years. I think it is fitting to honor him in the title of this bill, which helps make our country stronger and safer, because that is exactly what he has done as well.

Mr. Speaker, as we have heard, this bill takes a big step forward towards keeping our commitment to military retirees. I think it is the most significant progress we have made towards keeping that commitment. The bill also does right by those who have served our country in the nuclear weapons complex, and I would like to particularly thank two of my constituents, Mr. Pete Lopez, who came to Washington from Amarillo, Texas, to help testify about that proposal, and also Frank George, who has helped guide us to make sure that we did something that really helped.

This bill also includes some refinements of the National Nuclear Security Administration, which this Congress passed last year. And I particularly would like to thank the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER) and the other members of the panel who have worked over the past year to try to make sure that the law was followed and that the country's best interests were also advanced.

The panel will have a report released this week which gives full detail of our recommendations for the future; but in this bill, we prohibit dual hatting of employees by the Department of Energy and the NNSA exactly as Congress voted earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, we also included that the NNSA administrator will be removed from political pressure and he has a specific term of years to help make sure that he can do what is right, regardless of who wins the election. We require specific budget and planning to help put some stability into the nuclear weapons complex, including in that crucial area of infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, just within the past week or two, there has been a report released that shows our infrastructure in the nuclear weapons complex is deteriorating. This will help make sure that we do not take money out of this pile to put over here and allow our infrastructure to continue to deteriorate.

There is a lot of work left to make sure our nuclear deterrent is strong and effective, but this bill takes a step forward. I recommend it to my colleagues.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), who is a member of our committee, the Committee on Armed Services, and also ranking member of the Committee on the Budget.

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

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for yielding the time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the conference report on H.R. 4205, and I commend my colleague from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) for his weeks of labor on this bill and on 29 other bills, I believe, over the 30 years that the gentleman has been here.

This bill bears his name in recognition of his years of patriotic, diligent, effective service as chairman of the Committee on Armed Services; and it is a bill worthy of his name.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased in particular with the provisions of this bill that deal with retiree health care. I want to commend on our side, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) for taking up this issue, pushing it, persevering and also the conferees for bringing it to fruition with a generous package of improvements to the health care we offer to our military retirees.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned, I am concerned that these provisions by shifting so much spending from discretionary to mandatory will not leave the Pentagon with any cost-containment incentives. I think that will bear our watching and oversight in the future. But on balance, we owe it to our military retirees to continue medical coverage after the age 65.

It is an outrage that we have terminated it, and I strongly support these provisions to right that wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the conference report on H.R. 4205. I commend my colleague from South Carolina, Chairman SPENCE, for his work on the bill. Indeed, it bears his name in recognition of his years of diligent service as Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and it is a bill worthy of his name.

I am pleased in particular with the bill's provisions on military retiree health care. I want to commend Representatives SKELTON, ABERCROMBIE, and TAYLOR for pushing this issue early on, and the conferees for working out a generous package of improvements to the health care offered our military retirees, particularly Medicare-eligible retirees.

With passage of this bill, retirees 65 and older will no longer have to abandon doctors they have grown to know, and or be forced into HMOs or under-served Tricare networks. Instead, for the cost of their Medicare Part B premium, retirees can stay with their own doctor, and Tricare will serve as a Medigap policy, paying their co-payments and deductibles for costs Medicare does not cover.

I am concerned that these provisions do not provide the Pentagon with any cost containment incentives. But on balance, we owe it to our military retirees to continue medical coverage after they reach age 65, and I support these provisions.

While I support the provisions for military retirees and the bill overall, as Ranking Member of the Budget Committee, I must point out that this bill exceeds the budget resolution. I do not blame the Armed Services Committee for this departure. To the contrary, this bill illustrates the dangers of adopting budget resolutions that are not realistic. Just as the appropriations targets will be exceeded this year by tens of billions of dollars, this bill alone will exceed the budget resolution's mandatory allocations by $20 billion over five years. In the future, if we want our budget process to have meaning, we must be more realistic, as we were in the Democratic budget resolution I brought to the floor last March when we provided an increase of $16.3 billion for retiree health care.

The conference report also contains language recommending that the President advance Admiral Husband Kimmel and General Walter Short posthumously to their highest wartime ranks of four-star admiral and three-general. Kimmel and Short were the Hawaiian commanders scapegoated for the success of the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Official investigations have exonerated them from dereliction of duty charges. Nevertheless, Kimmel and Short were singled out for exclusion from the benefits of the Officer Personnel Act of 1947, which allowed World War II flag-level and general officers the privilege of retiring at the highest rank attained during the war. This sole exclusion only perpetuates the myth of their responsibility for the disaster at Pearl Harbor.

I have worked for this issue for years. The Senate actually approved this provision last year, but it did not make the conference report. I am grateful now that we have reached a just conclusion. I want to thank Chairman SPENCE for his support, and also thanks to those in the other body who helped ensure passage of this amendment, especially Senators KENNEDY and ROTH.

In addition, the conference report includes reauthorization of an important ''Buy American'' provision for equipment components the Defense Logistic Agency has determined to be mission-critical: ball bearings. This standing provision of the law stood to expire this year, and I appreciate the support of Procurement Subcommittee Chairman HUNTER on this reauthorization.

These are just a few examples of the important provisions of the conference report. This conference report moves us in the right direction in regard to military personnel, readiness, modernization, and military construction. I urge my colleagues to approve it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Guam (Mr. UNDERWOOD).

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

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference report on H.R. 4205, and I would like to especially thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), the chairman, and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member, for their leadership in providing our hard-working men and women in uniform the tools and resources necessary to protect our national security and in providing for an intelligent, bipartisan plan for our armed forces which meets our security needs.

This agreement provides $309 billion, $4.5 billion more than requested. It provides for a 3.7 percent pay increase for military personnel in 2001 equal to the administration's request; and most significantly, it provides for lifetime health care for military retirees and their eligible family members and restores much-needed pharmacy access

to all Medicare-eligible military retirees.

These new medical benefits are an entitlement finally delivering a promise made to our military retirees and frees them, as mentioned by the leadership of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, both the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) and the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE). Finally, it frees them to move around anywhere in the country so that they can be with their families as they plan.

It also adds over $1 billion to various readiness accounts. This measure also endorses essentially the agreement between President Clinton, the Secretary of Defense, and the Puerto Rican Government regarding Vieques, including $40 million in economic assistance, an additional $50 million if the residents vote to resume live fire training in a required referendum.

Importantly, for my people, for Guam, this provision establishes a memorial on the Federal lands near the Fena Caves in order to honor those Guamanian civilians massacred by the occupying military forces of Japan in July 1944, and it also makes a commitment to include the territories in missile defense plans, so that strategically valuable places like Guam will not be left defenseless.

Overall, H.R. 4205 is a step in the right direction for our military forces. It meets our challenges in a post-Cold War world. I encourage all Members to support this important measure.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER), a member of our Committee on Armed Services.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for yielding the time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4205, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001. And I also want to thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member, for their leadership.

I would like to offer my best wishes to all the retiring colleagues from this committee, especially the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. PICKETT), my friend.

I want to specifically address the provisions of the act relating to the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration.

Mr. Speaker, the establishment of the Committee on Armed Services' NNSA oversight panel is a clear message of Congress' intent to more aggressively exercise its oversight responsibility in an area that is crucial to our national security.

This resurgence of meaningful interest in the DOE defense nuclear activities will have a lasting impact on an activity that has been entangled in bureaucratic kudzu since its inception.

Starting with the establishment of a 3-year term of office for the NNSA's first administrator, General Gordon, the provisions of this bill represent an important step towards building an agency that runs efficiently and that effectively protects our Nation's nuclear secrets. Within the resources available, this bill redresses issues relating to funding shortfalls in the production facilities and the laboratories.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the bill includes a significant increase over the budget requests for the National Ignition Facility at Lawrence Livermore. In fact, it also provides some limited relief for the significant infrastructure improvement backlog.

Unfortunately, this bill does not provide relief for all the challenges the administration faces. I look forward to the study and enactment of specific legislation that will ease the difficulties of recruiting and retaining the world-class scientific minds that the laboratories need and this Nation deserves.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to note for the full House that the panel's accomplishments would not have been possible without the strong leadership of the panel chairman, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY), and the cooperation and support of our colleagues on the panel.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to strongly support H.R. 4205.

1215

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Augusta, Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD).

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE) for a job well done over the last 6 years. I thank him for fighting every day to keep our military from deteriorating and particularly thank him for this bipartisan conference report. I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON). It is enlightening to us all to see this bipartisan conference report. That may be why it is good.

There are many good reasons to vote for this particular conference report, but let me just isolate one. I do not think it is any surprise to any Member of this Congress that there has been a great deterioration in the health care benefits of our retirees.

I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE), the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER), the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER), and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) finally for helping us right some wrongs.

Today they have given us the opportunity to change direction and take the first step in fulfilling our promises we made to our Nation's retirees.

George Washington, addressing the Continental Army before a battle during the Revolution, perhaps sums up best what we owe those who serve. ''The fate of unborn millions will now depend upon God, on the courage and the conduct of the Army,'' so says George Washington.

When I think about these words and return to these words after seeing the volatile events of the 20th century, I realize they could not be more appropriate. Around the world, the courageous sacrifices of the American soldiers have lit the flame of liberty where once there was darkness and preserved this same flame within our borders so that generations to come will be able to walk free under its light. These are truly remarkable achievements for which we are today showing we are grateful.

Our retirees bravely answered the call to duty when our country needed them, and we should and we must be there for them when they need us. I urge us all to vote for this conference report, bipartisan as it is.

However, I must speak quickly to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR). It is no secret to anyone that, under the leadership over the last 6 years of the Republicans and of the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), we have tried to stop the deterioration of the military. The problem has been a Presidential budget and the fact that we could not override with a veto.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR).

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, for the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), the good doctor, I would remind him that, again, article 1, section 8 calls upon the Congress to defend the Nation. Article 1, section 9 says that no money may be drawn from the Treasury except by appropriation by law. If there is not enough money in the defense budget, it is Congress' job.

The President may not have asked for enough, and I will agree with that, but the bottom line is this Congress has passed over $900 billion worth of tax breaks the President did not ask for. We do lots of things the President did not ask for. The bills the President vetoed on defense were over social issues, never underspending.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

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

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the legislation, and I commend and thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) for legislation that bears his name and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON). It is an honor to serve with each of these gentlemen and the other subcommittee chairs and ranking members as well.

I am particularly gratified that this bill which reflects the finest bipartisan tradition of this House graciously includes three items in which I have expressed an interest and devoted energy.

The first is legislation I authored with respect to preventing

cyberterrorists. I believe that one of the most lethal threats to this country's security is one of the most silent. It is the work of those with laptops instead of missiles who would threaten our air traffic control system, our banking system, our other critical infrastructure.

Because of the bipartisan cooperation, we were able to include legislation that I wrote that creates for the first time a loan guaranteed program that will help those in the private sector that maintain that critical infrastructure to upgrade it so that we are less vulnerable to attack.

Second, the legislation very graciously includes legislation I worked on to create a center for the conversion of domestic and civilian networking and telecommunications technology for the use of the military. That center will be located in my district in Camden, New Jersey, and I believe it will benefit our country for generations to come as a result of the leaps forward that will occur.

Finally, I am pleased to join with the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), our long-time mentor on this subject; the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER); the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL); and others in achieving a first step toward a sufficient level of funding for America's first responders in the fire and emergency services community. The work that we have done on this bill is very gratifying, and I am pleased to see it also has gone forward in a bipartisan way.

I want to especially thank Terry Gillum in my office for his work on this legislation. I urge its adoption.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS).

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, the conference report contains a provision on an issue that I have been working on for over 15 years, the concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation.

A law enacted in 1891 requires a disabled career military veteran to waive the amount of his retired pay equal to his VA disability compensation. Military retirees are the only group, only group of Federal retirees who must waive retirement pay in order to receive VA disability compensation.

My legislation, H.R. 303, which has 321 cosponsors, would eliminate the offset entirely. The Senate provision drafted by Senator HARRY REID would do the same.

Some Members are concerned that complete elimination is too expensive. But in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, no amount of money can equal the sacrifice our military men and women have made in service to their country.

Last year's authorization act included a provision to authorize a monthly allowance to military retirees with severe service-connected disabilities rated by the Department of Veterans Affairs at 70 percent or greater. Only individuals retired for longevity qualify for monthly benefit.

This conference report expands the eligibility for these special payments to those individuals retired for disability by their service. This is not enough, but it is some progress.

I want to thank my colleagues, the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE), the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER), especially the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER), the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) for their assistance in including this provision in the conference report. We must all work together towards complete elimination of the offset in the next Congress.

The original law, Mr. Speaker, is 109 years old and discriminates against service members who decide to make the military their careers. We must encourage personnel to remain on active duty. The old offset statute discourages them from doing so, and it is time to change it.

I urge my colleagues to support the conference report for H.R. 4205.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) has 2½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) has 6½ minutes remaining.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH).

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Science subcommittee that oversees the fire administration, I rise in support of this legislation, particularly because of the important provisions included that will assist our Nation's first defenders, our firefighters and emergency service personnel. It incorporates provisions of a bill I introduced earlier this year called the Hero Act, H.R. 4146.

Look, this Nation is well served by the 1.2 million men and women who work as fire and emergency service personnel in over 32,000 fire departments. Local firefighters, 80 percent who are volunteers, put their lives on the line every day for their communities and area residents. This legislation marks a new beginning. Our firefighting volunteers contribute billions of dollars worth of time and they need our help now.

It is important that local, State, and the Federal Government step up to the line and give more support and help to our firefighters.

They play a crucial role protecting and preserving our lives and our property . . . a dangerous role—an average of nearly 100 firefighters a year lose their lives in the line of duty. 80 percent of those who serve do so as volunteers.

And so I'm pleased that this legislation demonstrates our commitment to our first responders by establishing a competitive grant program at the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist volunteer and paid fire departments across this country purchase equipment, improve training, hire firefighters, fund emergency medical services, and establish fire prevention and safety programs.

In this bill, we're also increasing the authorization for the USDA's Volunteer Fire Assistance Program and establishing a grant program to help fund burn research and burn recovery. These are two very important steps and are two elements of my bipartisan Helping Emergency Responders Operate, or HERO, legislation I introduced earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, we see our firefighters and EMS personnel responding to emergencies every day, more than 18 million calls a year. From car accidents, to brush fires, to large scale disasters, emergency responders are first on scene, first to react, first to provide the assistance we've come to take for granted. I'm pleased to support this legislation that brings some much needed assistance to those who literally put their lives on the line for us each day.

Today's passage of several fire-related measures is a milestone victory for local firefighters. These projects constitute the largest and most comprehensive package of legislation to aid the fire service in the history of the country.

Local firefighters, 80% of whom are volunteers, put their lives on the line every day for area residents. Increasingly, fire departments are having trouble making ends meet—with many departments forced to raise money through chicken dinners and other fundraising efforts.

This legislation marks a new—and well-earned—commitment from the federal government to our nation's firefighters. Never before has the federal government taken steps even approaching this magnitude to aid the fire service. It is about time that America's heroes receive the assistance they so desperately need.

Headlining the package is an unprecedented $460 million authorization which would create a grant program to send much needed funds directly to local fire departments. This language, dubbed the Domestic Defenders Initiative, is attached to the Defense Authorization bill, scheduled to be voted on today. Besides the new grant program, the bill also includes authorized funding for the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program, burn research programs, a study of Hepatitis C occurrences in firefighters, and a study of Department of Defense spectrum potentially available for sharing with local fire and EMS agencies. Additionally, there is language that improves the opportunities for fire departments to obtain excess Department of Defense property. Finally, a task force is created to identify defense technologies that can be put to civilian use by local emergency response.

The House of Representatives is also committed to approving a $100 million appropriation for fire departments in one of the upcoming appropriations bills, most likely VA/HUD. While the authorization mentioned above would still be subject to future appropriations, this $100 million legislation would constitute immediate relief for needy fire departments. It is a similar package to that passed by the

House on the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill in March.

Finally, the House and Senate both recently passed the conference report to the Interior Appropriations bill. This legislation includes $2.9 billion in funding for wildfire related activities. This year has undoubtedly been one of the worst wildfire seasons in recent years, and this funding is critical to helping local fire companies respond.

In addition, legislation has recently been introduced in Congress that would make volunteer firefighters eligible for funding under the AmeriCorps program. Congressman CURT WELDON (R–PA), the sponsor of the bill, has spoken with Harris Wofford, president of the Corporation for National Service, who has indicated his support for the legislation and his intention to work to include volunteer fire companies in AmeriCorps.

Individually, these initiatives represent steps forward for America's fire service. Together, they demonstrate that the Republican leadership in Congress is committed to reversing the years of neglect endured by America's first responders for so long.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have no additional requests for time. However, let me take this opportunity to, again, compliment the gentleman from South Carolina (Chairman SPENCE). This legislation is properly named for him. Thanks to all of those on the committee, those who have worked so hard in the bipartisan manner that we have.

I just have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have a marvelous staff. The long hours, the weekends, the days that they put in have helped glue together this outstanding piece of legislation. I take this opportunity to thank them.

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

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me say in closing that I appreciate the work of everyone on both sides of the aisle, especially the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), we have talked about earlier, and also the staff. People do not realize how important the staffs are. They do the work while we are doing other things. They are involved in details, working these things out for us. There is no way one can tell how much work they do in this respect.

Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. PICKERING).

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Department of Defense authorization bill. Let me first commend the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member. They are examples of what Members of Congress should be.

This legislation is an example of what legislation should be. It goes a long ways in helping restore the promise made to our retirees to provide permanent health care benefits for our military retirees with no deductibles, no copays. We are moving to keep the promise.

We are taking a very important step of providing a prescription drug benefit for all Medicare-eligible military retirees. We are increasing the pay by 3.7 percent. We are trying to target economic assistance to those young enlisted men and women, our soldiers and sailors who, many times, are still on food stamps. We are trying to help keep that from happening. It is a travesty that some of our men and women serving have to be on food stamps.

But we are also doing important things in our firefighter legislation that will save lives and save properties in our rural communities, our small towns and our cities; the expansion of the G.V. Sonny Montgomery G.I. bill for educational opportunities; in my State expanding the authorization for the T–45s, the new trainer jets that will be at the Merridian Naval Air Station; the expansion of the National Guard Challenge Program to help troubled youth; the expansion of the Counterdrug Initiative, which is an important part of my State's contribution.

This is good legislation. It is a good step. We are doing the right thing. I want to commend the committee for their good work.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose the FY 2001 National Defense Authorization Act, and wish to clarify the rationale for my position. I feel it is very important to make my position clear; because, while I oppose this legislation, there are a number of important provisions within the larger bill that I strongly support. In its totality though, I could not support a bill that emphasizes procurement disproportionately over the long-term needs of our servicemen, women, and military retirees. While I understand why many support this bill, because it includes several provisions that are the result of hard-fought efforts to improve the living standards of our military personnel; I cannot support the indisputable fact that this bill continues a trend of prioritizing weapons systems and keeping this nation's defense policy on an unwise course.

I strongly support Military Retiree Health care benefits, which would grant lifetime health care for retirees and their families. At a time in our country when 44 million people are uninsured, it is our responsibility to assure that the men and women who have served our country are guaranteed health care benefits. I also support pharmacy access to all Medicare-eligible military retirees that was included in this legislation. Additionally, I am an ardent supporter of a pay raise for our service members who work extremely hard and demonstrate their dedication to our nation through their work in deployments throughout the world.

Unfortunately, the FY2001 National Defense Authorization Act includes excessive spending on military hardware and has led me to oppose the overall bill. This measure includes $4.8 billion for ballistic missile defense programs. The continuation and expansion of this program not only threatens our treaty obligations with other nations, it has the potential of sinking billions of more dollars into untested and unreliable technology. Neither this legislative body, nor the nation, has had the type of extensive debate demanded by such a major shift in defense policy. How can we continue to go down a path that will lead to a radical shift in our defense posture without a clear debate?

Moreover, this bill continues a disturbing trend of spending huge sums of money on defense programs, while ignoring the needs of families in the U.S. This measure, totaling $309.9 billion, represents about one-half of total discretionary spending. At a time when no one is presenting a significant military threat against our shores, is this the time to invest in massive new weapons systems? This bill includes $2.5 billion for the F–22 fighter; $689 million for the Joint Strike Fighter; and $2.9 billion for the next generation F–18 E/F. I ask my colleagues, is this justified given the current or future climate in international affairs?

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the House is recognizing the important service of the men and women in uniform, as well as veterans, and providing them the benefits they need and deserve. I am heartened that we have finally shifted at least some of our attention to the people who serve our country. It is my hope that in future years, we will continue to recognize the value of the service men and women, while also recognizing that we should not pour unlimited amounts of money into military hardware that we do not need.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express some concerns about the Conference Report on the FY2001 National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 4205.

This bill would do many positive things for our nation's veterans and defense workers. It would provide a 3.7% pay increase for military personnel. It would provide lifetime health care for military retirees and their eligible family members beginning in FY2002. It also authorizes a compensation plan for personnel made ill by exposure to toxic or radioactive materials when working on nuclear weapons programs. I fully support these efforts to help the men and women who have served our nation.

There is, however, one provision in this Defense Authorization Act that I find extremely troubling. The bill requires the Secretary of Defense in conjunction with the Secretary of Energy to conduct a study relating to the destruction of hardened and deeply buried targets possibly using a low-yield nuclear weapon. This report could be the first step in a program to develop a new nuclear weapon, likely requiring a new round of nuclear weapon testing.

I am troubled by the inclusion of this provision for two reasons: (1) current law prohibits the research and development of such devices and (2) this report could be the precursor to renewed testing of nuclear weapons, undermining the United States efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. I am not alone in my concerns about this provision. Twenty-seven Representatives and myself signed a letter to House Armed Services Ranking Member Skelton saying that he should not consider a nuclear option because it has far greater implications that would undermine our national security.

The precedent on this issue is clear: the National Defense Authorization Act for FY1994 (Section 3136 of Public Law 103–160) prohibits the Secretary of Energy from conducting research on and development for the production of new low-yield warheads. The new report language represents the first step toward

ending that ban on research and development and could ultimately lead to efforts to renew nuclear testing. As a hint of the events to come, the new provision would authorize ''limited research and development that may be necessary to perform those assessments.''

Furthermore, this language undermines United States' international nuclear arms control and nonproliferation efforts. The United States is seeking to end nuclear weapons programs in the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, Iran and Iraq, and to restrain Indian and Pakistan from further testing and development of nuclear weapons. Restricting the ability to test new weapons is an important tool in preventing these nations from actually completing work on a new weapon. Enforcing this moratorium requires considerable international cooperation and pressure spearheaded by the United States government.

This provision on low-yield nuclear weapons sends a troubling signal that not only is the United States unwilling to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, but the U.S. may consider a resumption in testing. This will give the green light to nations with fledgling nuclear weapons programs to begin openly testing. The implications for our national security are far more threatening from this action than from the failure to develop such a low-yield nuclear weapon.

If existing weapons do not provide the United States with the ability to deal with hardened targets, conventional, not nuclear munitions should be considered. To put it simply: the Secretary of Energy—and the nuclear weapons research at his disposal—should not take part in this process. Unfortunately, this conference report does not eliminate that involvement, but rather requires the Secretary to participate in this study. Such an important decision should be made openly and not in the guise of a reporting requirement that also happens to authorize limited research necessary to conduct the required assessment. This is nothing more than a nonproliferation wolf in report's clothing.

I urge Members to consider carefully the implications of such a proposal. Because of this provision and the authorization for continued testing of a failed National Missile Defense program, I must oppose this conference report.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, the Defense Authorization Conference report contains provisions that I along with a majority of my colleagues and the American people strongly support. Those provisions would greatly benefit our nation's military personnel and veterans. I strongly support measures in the bill that will provide lifetime healthcare for military retirees and their families and restore pharmacy benefits to Medicare-eligible military retirees. I am also pleased that our fighting men and women will receive a well-deserved pay raise of 3.7%. In addition, providing our active service personnel with additional economic assistance and lowering their out-of-pocket housing expenses are critical measures that were included in this bill.

Unfortunately, the conference report includes billions of dollars for costly weapons systems that will not improve our security or military readiness. In addition, it includes billions of dollars for a national missile defense program that has never been proven effective, and I believe would lead to Cold War II. These funds would be better spent to heighten our commitment to our military personnel and veterans and to better meet their needs, among other things. Extra funding for our veterans would guarantee that valuable resources would be available to enhance their quality of life and fulfill our obligation to our service men and women. It is the least we can do.

For those reasons, I did not support this year's Department of Defense Authorization Conference Report. However, I will continue to support our military personnel and veterans and a strong national defense based on sound policy.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the National Defense Authorization Act, but I do so with mixed emotions.

This legislation contains a number of very important programs that deserve the full support of this Chamber.

I am pleased that this package contains a new—and long overdue—entitlement of lifetime health care coverage to our nation's military retirees. For decades our recruits to the Armed Forces have been promised this benefit, only to have our Federal Government not live up to its promise.

The brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to the defense of our nation, who represent our first line of defense, who stared communism down and introduced hundreds of millions of people of the world to a concept we often take for granted in the United States—democracy—deserve this important benefit.

It is also my hope that this Congress will now use this new health care entitlement program as a basis to provide a prescription drug program for all Americans.

This Congress has continually refused to provide a drug benefit to millions of other Americans who work just as hard as our military personnel. Our retired policemen, laborers, secretaries and seamstresses should also have the guarantee of a prescription drug benefit under Medicare.

This Conference Report provides a much needed 3.7% increase in pay to our nation's Armed Services. This increase will help boost the standard of living for our military personnel and their families.

Similarly, to address the concerns of the people of Puerto Rico, I am pleased that this legislation encapsulates the basic agreement worked out between the Navy, the People of Puerto Rico and the President.

I have worked diligently over the past year to see a fair and just solution to the live fire testing at Vieques in Puerto Rico. President Clinton, Governor Rossello and the U.S. Navy have worked together in good faith to resolve this situation.

I am pleased that the Congress is not trying to stop this progress.

On the global front, this legislation also lifts any restrictions on the United States when protecting our nation's vital interests internationally and protecting against genocide in places like Kosovo.

Our Constitution defines the roles of both the Commander-in-Chief and the Congress with respect to our nation's military involvement. It is not the role of Congress, in an effort to embarrass this President and weaken our nation's resolve in facing down dictators, to try to change this Constitutionally defined role in this legislation.

Our military is the strongest and best trained in the world, and this legislation will continue to build on our past successes and ensure even greater successes in the future.

But I must also register my strong disillusionment at the actions of the Republican Conferees on this legislation.

Although strong, bi-partisan majorities in both the Senate and House acted to attach language to this bill to expand the definition of hate crimes, this Republican Leadership again showed their true colors and stripped it from the bill.

This Congress had the opportunity to make it easier for Federal law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute cases of racial and religious violence, and would permit Federal prosecution of violence motivated by prejudice against the victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

But again the Republicans ignored the will of Congress and the will of the American people and again kowtowed to the most extreme elements in American politics—people like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson.

A few weeks ago, 41 Republicans marched to the floor and voted to include Hate Crimes language in this bill. Then they all heralded this vote in press releases to their local media outlets, hailing their celebration of diversity and tolerance.

Now comes the true test of tolerance and political moderation. Will these same members again demonstrate their self-touted moderation and stand up to their Republican Leadership and demand a vote on the Hate Crimes bill.

We must continue to pressure the Republican Congressional Leadership to understand that bigotry is not acceptable.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support today of the Fiscal Year 2001 Defense Authorization bill.

I am proud to support this legislation because of the long awaited health benefits for military retirees that in includes.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many military retirees in my district of Central New Jersey who were promised lifetime military health benefits when they entered the service. For many years, this promise has not been kept. Military retirees were only allowed to keep their military health care until they turned age 65, after which time the only coverage they had was Medicare.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Medicare is a great program. It has helped to keep millions of beneficiaries out of poverty. But we know, Mr. Speaker, that many seniors have additional coverage during retirement through coverage provided by their employers. For military retirees, who sacrificed their lives and careers for military service, their employer is the federal government.

Like many other Members of this chamber, I believe we owe our military retirees the lifetime health coverage they were promised, and access to the best and broadest health care coverage available.

This year's defense authorization is an important first step towards keeping that promise and providing that coverage.

For this reason, I am proud to support this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

By taking this action today, Mr. Speaker, we are letting all our military personnel—past, present, and future—know that their government will keep its promise and provide the health care protection they and their families need—for life.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this conference report. I support several important provisions of the bill, including a Department of Energy (DOE) defense worker compensation program and a pay raise and expanded health care choices for our men and women in uniform. However, the legislation is so laden with special interest pork projects that I fear it will undermine our ability to be fiscally responsible and pay down our national debt while, at the same time, adequately funding the Nation's highest priorities.

Where are our priorities in this Congress? The 106th Congress is drawing rapidly to a close, yet our Nation's schools are crumbling and overcrowded, there are 11 million uninsured children in America, and our seniors lack comprehensive prescription drug benefits. We are not addressing these today, nor are we authorizing $310 billion—or anywhere close to that amount—to address these critical issues facing every American family. Instead, Congress will pass a Defense Authorization Conference Report that includes $4.5 billion more funding than the administration requested and $21.1 billion more than last year's funding level. Over half of the additional $4.5 billion tacked on in this conference report—$2.6 billion—goes toward procurement. I would venture to guess that many of the Members who supported this bill today will be surprised as the special interest projects are revealed in coming days. Unfortunately, I fear this conference report is a reflection of the skewed priorities of the leadership in this House. We have failed to address the real issues facing the American people.

There are good provisions in this conference report. I strongly support the establishment of a program that finally recognizes the vital contributions of Department of Energy contract workers who risked their personal health to help protect our Nation. For too many years, the government has denied that these workers were suffering from catastrophic and chronic illnesses that resulted from their work at defense facilities such as Rocky Flats. Earlier this year, Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson announced the Department's intention to belatedly remedy this problem and seek to implement a compensation program to aid sick workers. Also, a number of my colleagues and I have supported legislation required to authorize a compensation program. I am a proud cosponsor of Representative ED WHITFIELD's (R-KY) bipartisan legislation H.R. 4398. I regret that Congress failed to fully consider and pass H.R. 4398, which I believe would have been the proper approach to address this important issue. I regret that Congress has failed to act and to bring this important legislation before us for proper consideration and action.

I am pleased that this conference report includes a 3.7 percent pay raise for military personnel. I believe our military forces deserve fair compensation for the job they do and for the risks they take on behalf of our country. This is why I am a cosponsor of legislation that would provide for a 4.8 percent pay increase to members of the Armed Forces and open the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program to active-duty personnel. It is vital that when our armed forces are called to duty they can be assured that their families are secure and able to pay the bills back home.

As a cosponsor of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999, I was very pleased that this legislation was included in the Senate version of this H.R. 4205. I would like to note that the House also passed a motion to instruct the conferees to include this provision as part of the final conference agreement. However, the leadership blatantly ignored the will of the House and stripped the Hate Crimes language out of the bill. It is well past time for legislation that makes hate crimes against gays and lesbians, women, and people with disabilities a Federal crime. Every hate crime that occurs in this country is an attack on American values, and it is a disgrace that this language was stripped out of the bill.

I hope that, in the final days of the 106th Congress, we can address some of the critical issues facing our Nation today, rather than continuing on the current path which has resulted in a rudderless, haphazard attempt to legislate for a few special interests.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 4205, the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 Conference Report. While Federal constitutional authority clearly exists to provide for the national defense, global militarism was never contemplated by the founders. Misnamed like most everything else in Washington, the ''Defense'' Authorization Act thus funds U.N.-directed peacekeeping in Kosovo and Bosnia to the tune of $3.1 billion dollars, $443 million in aid to the former Soviet Union, $172 million for NATO infrastructure (the formerly defensive alliance which recently initiated force against Kosovo), and $869 million for drug interdiction efforts by the U.S. military in an attempt to take our failed 1920's prohibition experiment worldwide.

Certainly a bill authorizing use of resources for the national defense which also properly compensates those military personnel necessary to maintain it would be not only constitutional but most appropriate. Contrarily, a bill which continues our elitist and failed policy of policing the world all the while creating additional enemies of the United States is neither constitutional, justifiable, supportable, nor prudent. By avoiding such a police-the-world approach, which destroys troop morale by isolating them from their families and spreading them dangerously thin, considerably less money could be authorized with seriously improved security results.

Meanwhile, H.R. 3769, my bill to prohibit the destruction during fiscal year 2001 of missile silos in the United States, fails to even receive so much as a hearing. While I understand that to comply with questionable, but ratified, disarmament treaties, certain missiles may need to be deactivated, it seems ill-advised to spend money to also destroy the missile silos which may be strategically vital to our national defense at some date in the not-so-distant future.

I encourage my colleagues to rethink the United States' 20th century role of global policeman and restore instead, a policy of true national defense which will better protect their constituents, keep their constituent's children safer and out of endless global conflicts, and reassume for taxpayers some semblance of fiscal sanity.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the priorities represented in this bill are misplaced. It spends $310 billion, over half of our discretionary budget. This is $4.5 billion more than the President requested and $21 billion above the amount appropriated for fiscal year 2000.

We are spending too much in this bill on too many unproven technologies, duplicative systems, and, in some cases, congressional add-ons that our military leaders don't want. We are spending enough on things like environmental remediation of past actions. For example, the estimated pricetag for clean-up of the unexploded ordnance that contaminates millions of acres of land and internal waterways is over $100 billion. The funding in this bill for environmental restoration is a mere $1.3 billion, less than half a percent of the total.

We don't need three brand-new advanced fighter jets. We will have military air superiority over all potential adversaries for years to come with our current planes. We will spend over $300 billion over the next 10 to 20 years on the Air Force's F–22, the Navy's F–18 E/F, and the Joint Strike Fighter. We are doing this rather than made the hard decisions we need to in order to make proving for our national defense more cost-effective.

It is also troubling that the hate crimes provision was not included in this bill. The Senate added it to its defense authorization and we in the House voted in a bipartisan fashion in favor of a motion to instruct conferees to include it in the conference report. This does not reflect the will of the Congress.

For years we made commitments to military retirees that they and their families were entitled to lifetime health care. I am pleased that we have made good on that promise in this bill by providing lifetime health care for military retirees and their eligible family members, as well as pharmacy access to all Medicare-eligible military retires. But this could have been accomplished within the context of a better bill.

Because of the many failures of the bill, I was forced to vote against it. America has the best-trained, best equipped and best-prepared military forces in the world. Our forces are ready to defend America's interests wherever they are threatened. That will continue only if we're careful about the investments we make.

We need to seek peace from all the threats of the new century. This bill spends too much on the wrong things and not enough on cleaning up from out past activities and preparing to transition to fight tomorrow's wars. This is the key not only to security abroad, but to livability at home—to make our men and women in uniform and all our families safe, healthy and economically secure.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4205, the FY 01 Defense Authorization bill. Of particular interest to my constituents in southwest Ohio—particularly those in western Hamilton County—is the provision based on legislation that I have cosponsored that establishes a new Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program.

This program will assist workers exposed to radiation, beryllium and other toxic substances in the course of carrying out their work in the U.S. nuclear weapons complex. Many of these workers have become sick from illnesses that can be traced to that exposure. The former Fernald Feed Materials Production Center, which is located in my district, was part of our nuclear weapons production complex for nearly 40 years from 1951 to 1988. Too often, these workers were not even aware of the hazards they faced in their jobs—hazards that have frequently had serious health effects.

What we are considering today will provide covered workers and their survivors at Fernald and around the Nation with the compensation they deserve that guarantees a specific minimum benefit and medical expenses. I urge

my colleagues to support this important and long overdue program.

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Speaker, I will be unable to vote on rollcall vote 522 today. Were I present, I would vote ''yea'' on the Defense Authorization Conference Report because it provides much needed resources to our active duty personnel.

This bill does many positive things, and I commend the chairman and ranking member for their leadership. As my voting record indicates, I strongly support the efforts being made to improve the quality of life for our active duty military and retirees. I have also supported efforts to continue to provide our men and women in the armed services with the resources they need to continue to defend our interests with the most technologically advanced weapons available.

Providing a 3.7 percent pay raise, expanding the housing allowance, allowing active duty personnel to participate in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), providing increased subsistence funding, and several additional bonuses and benefits, will help in our efforts to recruit and retain the most capable military in the world.

Additionally, this bill provides several important provisions for our military retirees. Expanding TRICARE to Medicare eligible retirees, expanding the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program, and expanding the TRICARE subvention pilot will go a long way in providing relief to our veterans and military retirees.

However, I am greatly concerned about the inadequate provisions regarding the issue of ''concurrent receipt.'' I am one of 321 cosponsors of H.R. 313 which calls for the complete repeal of this unfair provision. Many veterans in my state are affected by this unjust law and it ought to be repealed. I understand the constraints that the Congress is operating under. However, I urge this Congress to do the right thing and pass H.R. 313 as stand alone bill and give our veterans what is owed to them.

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for all that this important legislation achieves. It represents a far-reaching effort to honor some of the promises made to retired servicemen and women, it begins to provide our active and reserve personnel with world-class compensation and training, and it continues to keep our commitment to providing the equipment and materiel necessary to protect the interests of this country. For all these reasons and more, this legislation ought to pass with the support of members on both sides of the aisle.

But Mr. Speaker, I do want to mention how disappointed I am that the conferees could not negotiate a settlement on the so-called concurrent receipt issue, under which military retirees have their monthly retirement pay reduced by the amount of any disability payment they may have the misfortune to have earned.

Military retirement pay is earned for length of service, while a veteran's disability payment compensation ought to be regarded as a payment to a veteran in response to injuries or diseases that happened or were aggravated while on active duty. These are not the same thing and should not be offset against each other.

Moreover, a service member who incurs an injury and then goes on to work for a private company is not precluded from receiving that company's full pension benefit and the full disability payment. In essence, the message we send is that servicemen and women are far better off going to work for someone other than the United States if they receive an injury while performing their duty. It seems to me that these people, the very people who have demonstrated their willingness to place themselves in danger, ought to be encouraged to continue with the military—if their disability allows—not discouraged.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I support this legislation because it does address several critical aspects of veterans health care and because I believe the provisions addressing other critical defense needs are too important to reject. Fittingly, I want to note that the very veterans, support organizations, and associations that are most penalized by the failure to address the dual compensation issue all support this legislation because of the security it will provide for the current men and women who provide our shield. Hopefully, that support—more than my own—will impress my colleagues and will be remembered when the next Congress takes up the dual compensation issue.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I support the Defense Authorization bill because it includes many important provisions including measures to improve health care for our nation's military retirees. However, I rise today to criticize the Republican leadership for their removal of hate crimes provisions from the conference report. Majorities in both the House and the Senate voted to include this language which would have added needed protections against hate crimes based on sexual orientation, gender, or disability to federal law.

Tragic murders that grab the nation's attention such as the dragging death of James Byrd in Texas and the brutal beating death of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming are, unfortunately, not isolated incidents. According to statistics kept by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence programs, 29 Americans were murdered in 1999 because they were gay or lesbian and there were more than 1,960 reports of anti-gay or lesbian incidents in the United States, including 704 assaults. And according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in 1996 there were over 8,700 reported incidents of hate crimes based on race, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Crimes based on hate are an assault on all of us, and we must enact stronger measures to prevent and punish these offenses.

Opponents of this measure have argued that this is an issue that should be left to the states. However, Congress has passed over 3,000 criminal statutes addressing harmful behaviors that affect the nation's interests, including organized crime, terrorism, and civil rights violations. Thirty-five of these laws have been passed since the Republicans took control of Congress in 1995.

Others have argued that there is no need for federal Hate Crimes legislation because assault and murder are already crimes. However, the brutality of these crimes speaks to the reality that when a person is targeted for violence because of their sexual orientation, race, or other group membership, the assailant intends to send a message to all members of that community. That message is you are not welcome.

This effort to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation is a different type of crime, and it demands a different kind of response. All Americans have a right to feel safe in their community.

The hate crimes provisions that were stripped from this conference report by the Republican leadership would have countered this message of intimidation with a strong statement that our society does not condone and will not tolerate hate-based violence.

In addition to a bipartisan group of 192 House cosponsors, these provisions are supported by 175 civil rights, religious, civil and law enforcement organizations, including the National Sheriff's Association, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association, the National Center for Women and Policing, and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.

Passage of this bill would not have ended all violence against those communities who are targets of hate violence. But it would have allowed the federal government to respond and take action by investigating and punishing the perpetrators of crimes motivated by hate. The Republican leadership has missed an important opportunity. I urge them to reconsider their opposition to these protections and pass the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2000 before the end of the session.

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I come here today in support of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2001. This legislation is named for a great American who is second to none in supporting our soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen. Under FLOYD SPENCE's leadership this is the fifth year out of the last six in which Congress has added to the Administration's budget request. FLOYD SPENCE—as far as I am concerned—is Mr. National Security. I look forward to serving with him for many more years.

The defense bill before us seeks to address many problems. Serious training deficiencies and equipment modernization shortfalls, made worse by longer and more frequent deployments away from home, have placed increasing strains on our armed forces. Also, the increasing use of America's military on missions where vital U.S. national security interests are not at stake has reduced readiness, affected recruiting and retention, and lowered morale. This bill will not completely fix these problems, but it will help.

Included in this bill is a 3.7% pay raise for our military personnel. The bill increases the military procurement accounts by $2.6 billion, and the research and development accounts by $1 billion. In critical readiness accounts, the Congress has increased authorization funding for the sixth consecutive year. There are increases in funding for National Missile Defense research and for improving the training and readiness of the National Guard and the Reserves. Also, this legislation includes—something particularly important to me—authorization funding for the Crusader program at over $355 million.

And last, but certainly not least—there is TRICARE health insurance for military retirees over 65, including a drug benefit. This revised TRICARE program will take effect beginning in FY 2002 and is open to military retirees and their eligible family members. Under the plan, beneficiaries could keep their current Medicare provider, and use TRICARE as their Medicare supplement to pay any costs not covered by Medicare. Beneficiaries would pay no co-payments or deductibles. The plan also includes no enrollment fees or premiums for all Medicare-eligible beneficiaries. This Congress continues to work to meet the promise that was

made for health care as an earned benefit for 20 or more years of honorable military service.

The bottom line is—this defense authorization bill will fund the Department of Defense at approximately $310 billion—$4.5 billion more than requested by the Administration. Again, I want to thank Chairman SPENCE for his leadership of the House Armed Services Committee, and the kindness and courtesy he has shown not only to me, but everyone associated with this committee including members, staff and those appearing before his committee.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased that the Department of Defense (DOD) authorization act we have before us today makes a number of long awaited, critical improvements to the health care system for our nation's military retirees.

These individuals selflessly sacrificed and served our country in order to protect the freedoms we all enjoy. This legislation marks an important step toward providing military retirees with the health care they earned and were promised.

However, I am voting against the bill because, as good as the health care provisions are, they don't go far enough. In addition, I am concerned about the astronomical level of overall spending authorized by the bill a decade after we won the Cold War.

Let me briefly return to the health care provisions I support. I am pleased the conference report extends TRICARE to Medicare eligible retirees with no co-pays or deductibles. There will also be no enrollment fees or premiums for Medicare eligible beneficiaries. This is one of the provisions in an important bill I cosponsored, the Keep Our Promise to Military Retirees Act.

The conference report also expands the mail order pharmacy benefit to all beneficiaries, including those over 64 years of age. This too is similar to legislation I cosponsored, the Retired Military Pharmacy Benefits Act. Expanding the mail order pharmacy program will allow retirees in Oregon, who don't live close to a military base, easier access to necessary prescription drugs.

I was also pleased the conference report included a number of other quality of life improvements such as a 3.7 percent pay raise, an accelerated reduction in out-of-pocket housing costs, and targeted supplemental food allowances for the most needy personnel.

However, the conference report left out two improvements I have advocated. First, the conference report dropped a provision that was included in the Senate version of the bill to repeal the VA disability compensation offset. I am cosponsor of legislation, H.R. 303, to repeal this offset and contacted members of the conference committee encouraging them to retain the Senate provision. Veterans deserve to keep all of the benefits they earned. I was disappointed this provision was not included in the final version of the bill.

I was also disappointed that the key component of the Keep Our Promise to Military Retirees Act, opening up the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP) to military retirees, was not included in the conference report. I have heard from many residents of Oregon who are having difficulty finding providers who accept TRICARE due to low reimbursements rates and burdensome regulations. That may be why TRICARE is sometimes derided by retirees in my district as ''try to get care.'' Therefore, expanding TRICARE as this bill does, may not benefit a number of Oregonians. A more complete option would be offering our military retirees the same health care that Members of Congress and our staffs have access to, the FEHBP. The FEHBP works well in Oregon and would ensure military retirees have the health care security they've earned and deserve. I will continue to fight to make this option available.

I am concerned with the overall level of spending authorized by this bill. The bill authorizes $309.9 billion for fiscal year 2001, or more than half of all federal discretionary spending. This is $4.5 billion more than the President requested and $21.1 billion more than last year. We are still funding the Pentagon at 90 percent of Cold War levels a decade after we won.

U.S. military spending must also be viewed in the context of what our allies and adversaries spend. The U.S. is spending more than all our adversaries or potential adversaries combined and more than we spend at the end of such Cold War presidents as Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, and Carter.

Further, as former Secretary of Defense under President Reagan, Larry Korb, points out, ''The U.S. share of the world's military spending today stands at about 35 percent, substantially higher than during the Cold War. In 1985, at the height of the Reagan build-up, the U.S. and the Soviet Union spent equal amounts on defense. Today, Russia spends only one-sixth of what the U.S. spends on defense. If one adds in the spending of U.S. allies, the picture becomes even more favorable to the United States.'' In fact, the U.S. and its allies account for 65 percent of the world's military expenditures.

Russia today spends 85 percent less on its military than the Soviet Union. The combined expenditures of our potential adversaries, as identified by U.S. intelligence agencies, is $13.8 billion, or about four percent of the U.S. budget.

In just two days, the Pentagon spends more money than the Iraqi military does in an entire year. In just 16 days, the Pentagon spends more money combined than Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Sudan, and Cuba. In 108 days, the Pentagon spends more than all of these countries plus Russia and China.

The U.S. military must remain the highest trained, best skilled, and most technology sophisticated military in the world. However, this can be done with a smaller budget. To do so requires better management, not more money.

The Pentagon budget needs to be reevaluated in light of our current national security threats. Cold War weapons systems that serve no national security purpose but merely serve to justify increased budgets should be eliminated. Defense experts of all political stripes both inside and outside government have suggested eliminating or reforming a number of programs like the F–22, the Crusader Artillery system, the Comanche helicopter, and others in order to reduce costs and have a more efficient and deadly military force.

Also, as Senator MCCAIN has repeatedly pointed out, the defense authorization and appropriations bills often include billions of dollars in pork projects that are unrelated to national security requirements. This bill is no exception. In this bill, Congress provided the Pentagon billions in unrequested funding such as $150 million for two F–15 aircraft, $125 million for 12 additional Blackhawk helicopters, $51 million for two additional F–16s, and $90 million in additional funding for the DDG–51 Destroyer program.

Finally, rather than showering the Pentagon with tens of billions of additional dollars for weapons systems of dubious value and quality, it would be useful to make a serious commitment to eliminating the tens of billions of dollars of waste at the Pentagon. As Representative KASICH, Republican Chairman of the House Budget Committee, noted in a February 2000 report titled Reviving the Reform Agenda, the General Accounting Office annually uncovers billions of dollars going to waste at the Pentagon. It weakens our national defense to have this waste and hurts the morale of our men and women in uniform since it steals funds that could otherwise be spent to boost their quality of life.

Mr. Larry Korb, who, as I mentioned was an Assistant Secretary of Defense under President Reagan, has developed an alternative defense budget that would be sufficient to meet our national security needs while not strangling and starving the rest of the federal budget. His proposal makes prudent reductions in spending by targeting unneeded weapons, unnecessary deployments, and a downsizing of our forces in recognition of our victory in the Cold War. Mr. Korb's proposal is a serious one that deserves intelligent discussion and consideration in Congress.

Again, I congratulate the conferees for the improvements they made on access to health care for military retirees, but I cannot support a bill with the unjustifiable level of spending on weapons systems of questionable value and quality.

The Pentagon budget should be based on a realistic assessment of our national security needs, not the wishes of powerful defense contractors or Pentagon brass. I bet the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Health and Human Services have a funding ''wish list'' too. But, Congress scrutinizes their every request and forces them to prioritize. The Pentagon should be no different.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4205 and I would like to thank my good friends, Chairman FLOYD SPENCE and Senate Chairman JOHN WARNER. Section 813 of this bill includes legislation that I introduced, H.R. 3582, the Federal Flexibility Act of 2000. H.R. 3582 passed the House on May 2 of this year and my good friend, Senator WARNER attached to the Defense Authorization bill in the Senate. H.R. 3582, now Section 813, will provide northern Virginia with important relief for its continued information technology worker shortage and continue the important procurement reforms this Congress began in 1995.

H.R. 3582, the Federal Flexibility Act of 2000, will address an ongoing problem in federal IT contracts. Section 813 of this bill is necessary because federal contracting officers frequently write into IT contracts minimum personnel requirements that hamper the ability of contractors to find qualified personnel to perform the contract. Oftentimes this means government contractors can not hire personnel who they believe could successfully perform the work but instead search for qualified resumes. This is a burden on the IT industry and contributes to the chronic worker shortage faced by the technology industry because the Federal Government is the largest purchaser

of IT products in the world—spending about $32 billion on goods and services each year.

The Fed-Flex Act requires Federal agencies to justify the minimum personnel requirements frequently written into government contracts. Federal agencies have been experiencing ''credential creep'' in the way they write contracts. The problem has become so significant that the Virginia Secretary of Technology, Don Upson, found in a report issued by his office this past September that these minimum personnel requirements are the second largest contributor to the IT worker shortage in my home state. This report, titled ''A Study of Virginia's Information Technology Workforce,'' strongly recommended that both the government and private sector companies objectively evaluate alternative forms of training, and focus on investments in training rather than degrees or resumes. The nationwide shortage of IT workers is estimated at 364,000, and it is estimated at over 24,000 for the Northern Virginia region alone.

What these minimum personnel requirements mean for the government is that Bill Gates or Michael Dell cannot contract with the federal government. Since neither one of them holds a college degree, many federal agencies would not allow them to perform IT work for the government. When federal agencies write credential creep into contracts, they hinder the ability of federal contractors to hire qualified personnel who get the job done, and increase the total cost of the contract to the government.

In this era of serious labor shortages in nearly every sector of our economy, this practice drives up prices and limits the flexibility of offers. The government will get better results if it issues performance-based statements of work and leaves it up to the offeror to propose how they will satisfy the requirement. The government should hold the winning offeror accountable for the quality of the cake, not dictate the ingredients that go into the recipe.

Another recent workforce study released by the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) found that US companies anticipate a demand for 1.6 million IT workers in the next year. According to that study, about 50% of applicants for those jobs will not have the skills required to perform the jobs meaning that up to 850,000 of those slots could go unfilled. The private sector knows it must adapt to address this shortage and invest in training that will allow them to get the job done—let's make sure the federal government is not the stumbling block. The Fed Flex Act requires agencies to realize that key skills are what matters most to mission accomplishment within agencies not how those skills are acquired.

Recently, there has been ongoing debate about solving the labor shortage in the United States and lifting the cap on H1–B visas. I am a strong supporter of lifting the visa cap and an original cosponsor of my colleague, Representative DREIER's H.R. 3982, the HI–TECH Act, which raises the cap to 200,000 for H1–Bs. But we all know this is a short-term solution. We need to recognize the new types of training employees receive and encourage American businesses to hire employees who have received less traditional methods of training. We also need to encourage our federal government to be a leader in solving the worker shortage and not remain behind the curve as is so often the case.

The Fed-Flex bill I authored recognizes the investment that firms make in their employees today. Many IT firms spend a significant amount of time and dollars training their employees to be up to speed on the latest products and services. The Fed-Flex Act would require agencies to justify the use of such minimum mandatory personnel requirements before imposing such requirements in a particular solicitation for IT services. Where the contracting officer determines that the agency's need cannot be met without such requirements, the legislation would not preclude such requirements. Moreover, the legislation would not preclude agencies from evaluating the advantages that may be associated with a particular employee's experience or education, including participation in an in-house training and certification program. This bill continues the many successes of recent procurement reforms and redirects government to focus on products, not process.

Earlier this year, a study released by the American Association of Community Colleges indicated that twenty percent of Community College attendees are pursuing degrees to work on technology issues. With the worker shortage we face across the nation, it is of great concern to me that the federal government could prevent these highly-motivated young people from pursuing a technology career. Credential creep is a federal government-wide problem. We have fallen behind in recruiting IT workers for the federal workforce and training federal workers to take part in the information technology revolution. Yet, the government often demands college degrees for entry level positions that might be filled by individuals who have received another form of job training. I believe that Fed-Flex bill is important to address an immediate need within the government but I am also committed to working closely with my friends in the federal workforce community to look at their credential creep problems.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out the many organizations that have supported the inclusion of FED–FLEX in section 813 of H.R. 4205. It is supported by ITAA, AEA, the Contract Services Association, the Professional Services Council, and CapNet. I would like to quote from a letter sent over by Harris Miller, the President of ITAA, ''The Federal Contractor Flexibility Act is a homerun for practical, efficient, and effective government contracting.'' I would also like to submit a copy of the ITAA letter for the RECORD.

Section 813 of this bill will ensure that contracts are performance-based rather than process-driven. In my conversations with local Chambers of Commerce in northern Virginia, and national procurement organizations, I have heard many instances where these personnel requirements have hampered companies' ability to work with government. I have also been presented with evidence that these minimum personnel requirements have been used at various government agencies to favor incumbent contractors rather than promote open competition. I have even heard of an instance where the contract employees who unpack computers at some agencies are required to hold a college degree.

Mr. Speaker, I have also received contract examples from the Departments of Defense and Treasury, and the General Services Administration that include minimum personnel requirements. The Defense Department includes these cumbersome requirements for entry-level IT positions that include such basic tasks as data-entry, and they do not give contractors any opportunity to apply for a waiver. The Treasury contract includes these requirements but then says a company may apply for a waiver after contract award although the waiver requires a significant amount of paperwork to get approved. The GSA requirement is on an IDIQ contract that would effect several companies that the same time and drive-up costs of all of the competing kids.

Mr. Speaker, again I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation. The inclusion of H.R. 3582 in this conference report will provide important relief to Virginia and government contractors across the nation. It will also provide a tremendous cost-savings to the government.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the conference report for H.R. 4205 authorizes $309.9 billion for the nation's defense activities for FY2001, $4.6 billion more than the President's request. The conference report provides significant improvements to the quality of life of military personnel, retirees, and their families, military readiness, and modernization programs. In particular, the conference report provides a much needed 3.7% military pay raise and other important bonuses, as well as retention and quality-of-life programs for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. In addition, the conference report establishes a targeted subsistence payment, up to $500 per month, to assist the most economically challenged personnel. I believe this report includes provisions that are critical to maintaining and sustaining our military readiness by focusing on the most important feature of our military; the men and women in uniform.

More importantly, the conference report includes substantial improvements in TRICARE benefits for all beneficiaries of the military health care system. The conference report authorizes a restructuring of the military health care program and provides permanent lifetime TRICARE eligibility to Medicare-eligible military retirees and their family members beginning in FY2002. The report also provides a comprehensive pharmacy benefit to Medicare-eligible beneficiaries, reduces the maximum annual out-of-pocket expenses for all retirees form $7,500 to $3,000, eliminates co-payments and deductibles for active duty families and their beneficiaries, and eliminates TRICARE enrollment fees or premiums for Medicare-eligible beneficiaries. Additionally, the report authorizes an expansion of the Department of Defense's (DOD mail order and network retail pharmacy programs, the ''TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Program'' to allow all beneficiaries to participate, including those over the age of 64, without enrollment fees. Military retirees over the age of 64 will be able to choose out-of-network pharmacies, and pay a deductible of $150 per year.

In addition to these important provisions, the conference report also authorizes the development of the United States Marine Corps Heritage Center at Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia. This report permits the Department of the Navy to accept, without compensation, a land transfer from the Park Authority of Prince William County. The Marine Corps Heritage Center will be developed by a joint venture between the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation. It is my strong belief that the Heritage Center represents the kind of partnership between federal and local government and the private sector which should be encouraged more often.

The Marine Corps Heritage Center will be situated on 135 acres in Locus Shade Park, presently a county-owned site adjacent to the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia. The 460,000-square-foot Heritage Center will be used for historical displays for public viewing, curation and storage of artifacts, research facilities, classrooms, offices, and associated activities consistent with the Marine Corps University. In addition, the main building will include a museum, visitor center, gift shop, restaurant, exhibits, and possibly a movie theater. Funding for the Heritage Center will be provided almost entirely by private sources.

I believe the Heritage Center will provide visitors with valuable information and insight about the Marine Corps and its long tradition of service to America. Given Virginia's rich history and the Marine Corps' legacy, it is only fitting that Virginia will be host to the U.S. Marine Corps Heritage Center.

I urge all of my colleagues to support the conference report to H.R. 4205, as this important legislation will fulfill America's vital military needs for FY2001. In addition, I would also like to commend the conferees and their staffs, whose hard work and diligence brought this conference report to the floor.

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report. I want to commend the efforts of Chairman Spence for accomplishing many important goals in this bill that should have been done long ago.

Since last spring, I have been visited several times by workers who got sick working at Oak Ridge. Mack and Ann Orick, Harry Williams, Jan Michelle and Janine Voner are representative of thousands of people who worked on our nation's nuclear weapons programs at facilities like Oak Ridge. They have played a central role in defending the United States over the past fifty-plus years. They have rightly been called ''Cold War heroes.''

Like the Oricks, Harry Williams, Jan Michelle and Janine Voner, many of these heroes have paid a tragic price for their role in defending their country. Thousands have been afflicted with debilitating and sometimes deadly diseases due to exposure to hazardous waste and radiation.

These sick workers, and the families left behind by workers who contracted terminal illnesses, should be compensated for their sacrifice. In fact, compensation is long overdue.

I was pleased to be appointed to this conference committee to find a way to compensate sick workers. The agreement that was worked-out is a reasonable start, but is only that—a start.

The plan that finally emerged is based on legislation written by Senator FRED THOMPSON that passed the Senate. It requires the President to send Congress by March 15, 2001 a specific proposal detailing the level of compensation and benefits that should be paid. If Congress does not act on the proposal by July 31, 2000, a default benefit level of $150,000 plus medical benefits will take effect.

Those who worked for the Department of Energy (DOE) and civilian companies with which it contracted suffering from chronic beryllium disease, chronic silicosis or a radiogenic cancer which could be linked to their service at the DOE site will qualify for compensation.

I believe this solution is a sound first step and probably the best we can get at this time. However, we may be able to do better in the next session of Congress. These workers, heroes of the Cold War, deserve to be compensated. They provided an invaluable service to their country, unaware that their bodies were being exposed to agents that would have a devastating impact on their lives.

With the leadership of Senator FRED THOMPSON, and along with my colleagues in the House like Representatives ZACH WAMP, LINDSEY GRAHAM and ED WHITFIELD, progress is finally being made on the tremendous debt that is owed to people who worked in our nuclear weapons industry.

Further, this bill also moves us forward in keeping our promise to provide permanent lifetime health care to America's military retirees and their eligible family members.

The program will take effect beginning in fiscal year 2002 and is open to military retirees and their eligible family members. Under the plan, beneficiaries could keep their current Medicare provider and use TRICARE as their Medicare supplement paying any costs not covered by Medicare. Beneficiaries would pay no co-pays or deductibles.

The plan also includes no enrollment fees or premiums for all Medicare eligible beneficiaries. The agreement also reduces the maximum out of pocket expenses for all military retirees by sixty percent, from $7,500 to $3,000.

In addition to the permanent TRICARE for Life initiative, the conference committee also approved and strengthened several military health care proposals adopted by the House and Senate earlier this year.

Other benefit improvements include expansion of DOD's mail order and retail pharmacy programs to allow participation by all beneficiaries and one year extension of the demonstration program ''TRICARE Senior Prime,'' which is also known as Medicare subvention.

Mr. Speaker, this conference will protect our national security and take care of those that ensured our protection. I encourage all my colleagues to support this conference report.

Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support H.R. 4205, the Defense Authorization bill for 2001. This bill includes many important provisions that advance this Nation's national security interests. The measure properly addresses our Armed Forces' modernization efforts, safeguards the military's combat readiness and does right by our men and women in uniform and their families.

The measure authorizes $309.9 billion for defense programs, nearly equal to the amount provided in the House and Senate versions of the bill. This is $4.5 billion above the Administration's request and $21.1 billion above the amount appropriated for FY 2000. Specifically, the bill authorizes $63.2 billion for weapons procurement, $38.9 billion for research and development, $111.0 billion for operations and maintenance, $8.8 billion for military construction and family housing, and $13.1 billion for defense-related activities of the Department of Energy.

This bill will also allow us to keep the promise of lifetime health care to America's veterans and their families. As an original cosponsor of the health care provisions of the Defense Authorization Conference Report, and as a member of the Defense Conference Committee, I am particularly pleased with this legislation. Specifically, the bill provides permanent lifetime TRICARE eligibility to Medicare-eligible military retirees and their family members; restores pharmacy access for all Medicare-eligible military retirees; and authorizes the Department of Defense to begin a Thrift Savings Plan. Moreover, the bill provides a 3.7 percent pay increase to continue to close the gap between civilian and military pay. Indeed, this legislation is a victory for the 1.4 million Medicare-eligible military retirees and their families. They will not receive what they earned and deserve: lifetime medical care, as promised to them when they enlisted in the U.S. Armed Services. It has been the intent of many of us to make this year the Year of Military Health Care, and through this legislation, we have done just that.

In addition, the bill establishes a compensation plan for personnel made ill by exposure to toxic or radioactive materials while working on U.S. government nuclear weapons programs, including those who developed chronic silicosis and uranium mine workers who are currently covered under a less generous compensation program. This is a critical effort that I support. The bill also requires the Defense Department to report on the progress being made toward developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy in the Balkans, and to detail the commitments and contributions of European nations and the United Nations to peacekeeping operations in Kosovo. This is a proper approach. Finally, the bill endorses the thrust of the agreement reached between the U.S. Navy and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico earlier this year to address the Navy's live-fire training on Vieques Island. I believe that agreement is the best way of addressing both the Navy's readiness requirements as well as the interests of the Puerto Rican population.

Lastly, I am very pleased that this bill provides fire departments nationwide the resources necessary to hire and train more firefighters, purchase and update equipment, and sponsor fire safety education programs. I am particularly proud of this legislation because it was incorporated from the Firefighter Investment and Response Enhancement (F.I.R.E.) Act, which I sponsored last year. This legislation for which I worked hard to include in the Defense Authorization Conference Report as a House Armed Services Committee conferee strengthens public safety through enhanced emergency services by authorizing $400 million over two years in grants to local fire departments. With one out of every three firefighters and over 24,000 civilians injured each year, and with about 100 firefighters and over 4,000 civilians killed annually in fire related emergencies, this legislation will pay significant public safety dividends for both firefighters and the families they serve.

Under provisions of the legislation to assist firefighters, grant funds will be used to hire and train new recruits and to buy new equipment. The legislation will help career departments hire additional personnel to meet coverage needs, while saving local taxpayers the added financial burden. Both career and volunteer departments will be able to acquire badly needed, but expensive, equipment such as thermal imaging cameras. Such cameras can locate people trapped in a smoke filled building who might otherwise be killed. Many departments and companies have not purchased such equipment because of the unit and training costs.

Firefighter grant funds will pay up to 90% of all project costs for local volunteer fire departments that serve 50,000 people or less and up

to 70% of the costs for local career fire departments as well as volunteer departments that serve more than 50,000. Matching funds can be provided by either state or local governments. At least 5% of the funds will be set aside for grants to local programs dedicated to prevention and public safety education. Fires cost the nation an estimated $100 billion annually. Only $32 million in federal resources are available for fire prevention and training, compared to $11 billion on law enforcement. We have clearly seen the positive benefits of putting more money into law enforcement with the crime rates falling in most every category and in most all communities. We will now do the same for fire prevention and fire safety by providing the necessary resources to help our local fire departments battle their share of the nearly 100,000 fires in the United States annually.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report to the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization. This conference report is important because it focuses on providing our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines the equipment and other resources necessary to accomplish the vital mission of protecting this Nation's vital interests.

There has been considerable debate during this election year about the status of our military's readiness. This discussion often focuses on a range of topics including pay, facilities, new equipment, size of the force and procurement. Well, I'm proud to stand before you and tell you that this report does more than debate, pontificate or raise additional discussion items. This report funds and places resources where the service chiefs feel they are needed. And, in a number of cases, provides additional funding to address the service chief's unfunded requirements for their procurement, readiness and modernization efforts.

It is also important to acknowledge that this conference report also addresses a number of quality of life issues for our military personnel. There are a number of important initiatives included in this report. Some may see these initiatives as an increase in benefits. However, things like increased minimum housing allowances for young families, and a 3.7% pay raise and a comprehensive set of improvements to the military health care system are not perks or increased benefits. They are simply the least we can do for those service members and their families who sacrifice every day.

Beyond all of the campaign rhetoric and posturing, this report demonstrates Congress' commitment, our commitment to our Nation's military and the men and women who serve in that military. I urge all of my colleagues to support this conference report.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make clear my opposition to a provision originally in the Senate's version of the Defense Authorization bill. This provision authorizes a study on a new type of weapon, one that many have started to call ''mini-nukes.''

The purpose of this study is for the government to consider a new weapon capable of destroying underground bunkers. Proponents of the provision say that the bunkers in question are used by States of Concern to protect their leaders in times of crisis, or to store stockpiles of biological or chemical weapons. They also say the weapons are an improvement over prior systems since the release they cause of chemical or biological agents into the environment is negligible. Therefore, proponents argue, we must have these weapons.

The problem is that we don't need new nuclear weapons; the Defense Department has not even identified a requirement for this type of weapon. What is more, I know from top-secret discussions with the Pentagon that we have other, non-nuclear ways of destroying and disabling the underground bunkers.

Studying a new weapon only takes us one step closer to manufacturing it. And this is one weapon we do not need to manufacture. One of the major concerns I have with this study is that it focuses on making a ''usable'' nuclear weapon, or one that does not harm civilians. But that is ridiculous—no nuclear weapon can side-step mass destruction and the harming of civilians. By today's nuclear standards, the bomb we used on Hiroshima was tiny. But look at the destruction those bombs caused—even though the city has been rebuilt, the area still has a disproportionate number of children with mental deficiencies.

Finally, as a supporter of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, I want to point out that provisions like this one only take us closer to the resumption of tests. Those who ''study'' any new weapon not already in our stockpile will naturally want to test that particular weapon.

The fact is, this provision is a bad one. It we are truly interested in nuclear nonproliferation and in downsizing our own nuclear stockpile, the last thing we should be doing is laying the plans for a new weapon.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference report to accompany H.R. 4205, the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001.

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities, I am please to inform the House that this conference report authorizes $8.8 billion for the military construction and military family housing programs of the Department of Defense, an increase to the President's request of $787 million. These funds will be used to meet critical shortfalls affecting the qualify of life of military personnel and their families and to improve facilities supporting the training and readiness of the armed forces. This conference agreement is consistent with the bipartisan agreement reached earlier this year on the military construction appropriations bill.

This conference agreement also provides for an extension of the military housing privatization initiative that is beginning to show some significant successes. Properly implemented, this program will go a long way toward resolving the housing crisis confronting military families.

Beyond military construction, Mr. Speaker, this is landmark, legislation. I have long been concerned about the quality and availability of health care for both retirees and active duty personnel. The health care reforms provided in this bill will meet the promises made to earlier generations of servicemen and women and will guarantee that those promises will be kept to those in uniform now and those volunteers who will come after them.

I urge all members to join me in support of this important bill.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report on H.R. 4205, the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2001.

Several of the provisions included in this agreement are under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Education and the Workforce and I am pleased that we were able to come to an agreement.

First, I am pleased that the Department of Defense authorization bill includes a provision that further amends the Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) program for military personnel stationed overseas. In last year's Department of Defense bill, the conference committee adopted provisions of a bill I introduced, H.R. 1779, requiring the Secretary of Defense to fund and operate a nutritional assistance program for families of military personnel overseas. That law also included a provision that required the housing allowance received by military personnel to be taken into consideration when calculating eligibility for the overseas WIC program.

Consistent with my original bill, H.R. 1779, this year's conference agreement eliminates that requirement and allows more overseas military personnel to benefit from the program.

Second, I would especially like to thank the conferees for agreeing to include the Impact Aid program as a part of the conference agreement. Impact Aid is one of our Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs. It provides important financial assistance to schools impacted by a federal presence such as military installations and Indian lands. Earlier this year the House passed H.R. 3616, which continued the authorization of the Impact Aid program. However, no further action has taken place and given the lateness of this session it is most important that we get these changes enacted into law this year. We have worked with House and Senate members in coming up with compromise language and I am pleased that the conferees have agreed to include this language in the conference agreement.

Some of the specific provisions included in the Impact Aid part of the conference report would: change the formula for heavily impacted school districts to speed up the distribution of funds; protect against any large decreases in payments for children due to Department of Defense housing and transfer privitization efforts; address the needs of school districts impacted by housing units built under the ''Build to Lease'' program; continue to provide schools with a higher level of payments for children who move off base for a period of time when their homes are being rebuilt; and modify the current construction program in order to provide for a competitive grant program for school districts highly impacted by a military presence.

Mr. Speaker, the Impact Aid program has been a valuable source of assistance to heavily impacted schools and school districts over the years. Without this program, many school districts would be without the full complement of resources they need for providing a high quality education to their students. I greatly appreciate the willingness of House and Senate conferees to include this important legislation in the Department of Defense conference report.

A third issue of interest to the Committee on Education and the Workforce deals with military recruiters on high school campuses. In some parts of our nation, military recruiters are denied access to recruit on secondary school campuses, even though the same schools give access to prospective employers

and colleges and universities. The conferees have included language that will give recruiters the same access that prospective employers and higher education institutions enjoy.

The conferees have also included protections for those that do not wish to allow military recruiters on campus. If a school board, by majority vote, indicates that it does not want military recruiters on campus, then that decision would be respected under the legislation. In addition, the conferees have included a provision that makes clear that private secondary schools with religious objections to military service do not have to provide access to recruiters. Finally, I wish to thank the conferees for making several technical changes in this section and for adding the Education and Workforce Committee as one of the committees to which reports on recruiting access will be provided.

The legislation also contains a provision establishing a pilot program to reengineer the equal employment opportunity complaint process for Department of Defense civilian employees. This will allow the continuation of a successful alternative dispute resolution (ADR) program already begun by the Navy—which has reduced the average wait for a determination on the merits from 781 to just 111 days. The bill permits the expansion of this model to other defense agencies. This complements our committee's successful efforts to have the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission expand use of ADR to expedite the processing of charges of discrimination in the private sector.

Finally, this legislation establishes the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program. This provision will establish a compensation program for those workers who helped build the nation's nuclear program and who have suffered illness and disease because of their work. I worked to ensure that this provision will require some further assessment and enacting legislation before full implementation. As a cautionary note, I point out that as we have certainly learned from our committee's experience with other similar programs, it is especially important that Congress keep a watchful eye on what happens down the road. Congress should work to ensure that the program remains targeted to help only Department of Energy employees with specific occupational illnesses, rather than evolving into a bloated, over-broad and open-ended entitlement program. I recognize this has been a difficult provision to work through, but I commend the conferees on giving this provision the Congressional review necessary.

Mr. Speaker, on balance, I believe the conferees have done an excellent job of reaching agreement on some very difficult issues. I once again want to thank them for working with the Committee on Education and the Workforce to resolve issues under our jurisdiction. I would urge my colleagues to support the conference agreement.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I support and urge my colleagues to support the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002 (H.R. 4205) which contains an important provision to the friends, relatives, and military colleagues of William H. Pitsenbarger. The provision permits the Medal of Honor to be awarded posthumously to Airman First Class William H. Pitsenbarger, a pararescue crew member from Piqua, a town in my district. He was killed in a military operation assisting in the rescue of Army personnel who were severely out numbered and surrounded by Vietcong troops near Cam My, Republic of Vietnam on April 11, 1966.

I have included a short article describing his heroic action from the Air Force Association magazine, Valor, published in October 1983.

'THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE'

(By John L. Frisbee)

A1C Bill Pitsenbarger knew the risks involved when he volunteered to drop into the midst of a jungle firefight.

By April 1966, 21-year-old A1C William H. Pitsenbarger, then in the final months of his enlistment, had seen more action than many a 30-year veteran. Young Pitsenbarger had gone through long and arduous training for duty as a pararescue medic with the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service and had completed more than 300 rescue missions in Vietnam, many of them under heavy enemy fire. He wore the Air Medal with five oak leaf clusters; recommendations for four more were pending. A few days earlier, he had ridden a chopper winch line into a minefield to save a wounded ARVN soldier.

His service with ARRS convinced Pitsenbarger that he wanted a career as a medical technician. He had applied to Arizona State University for admission in the fall. But that was months away. He had a job to do in Vietnam and, as rescue pilot Capt. Dale Potter said, Pitsenbarger ''was always willing to get into the thick of the action where he could be the most help.''

On April 11 at 3 p.m., while Pitsenbarger was off duty, a call for help came into his unit, Detachment 6, 38th ARR Squadron at Bien Hoa. elements of the Army's 1st Infantry Division were surrounded by enemy of forces near Cam My, a few miles east of Saigon, in thick jungle with the tree canopies reaching up to 150 feet. The only way to get the wounded out was with hoist-quipped helicopters. Pitsenbarger asked to go with one of the two HH–43 Huskies scrambled on this hazardous mission.

Half an hour later, both choppers found an area where they could hover and lower a winch line to the surrounded troops. Pitsenbarger volunteered to go down the line, administer emergency treatment to the most seriously wounded, and explain how to use the Stokes litter that would hoist casualties up to the chopper.

It was standard procedure for a pararescue medic to stay down only long enough to organize the rescue effort Pitsenbarger decided, on his own, to remain with the wounded. In the next hour and a half, the HH–43s came in five times, evacuating nine wounded soldiers. On the sixth attempt, Pitsenbarger's Huskie was hit hard, forced to cut the hoist line, and pull out for an emergency landing at the nearest strip. Intense enemy fire and friendly artillery called in by the Army made it impossible for the second chopper to return.

Heavy automatic weapons and mortar fire was coming in one the Army defenders from all sides while Pitsenbarger continued to care for the wounded. In case one of the Huskies made it in again, he climbed a tree to recover the Stokes litter that his pilot had jettisoned. When the C Company commander, the unit Pitsenbarger was with, decided to move to another area, Pitsenbarger cut saplings to make stretchers for the wounded. As they started to move out, the company was attacked and overrun by a large enemy formation.

By this time, the few Army troops able to return fire were running out of ammunition. Pitsenbarger gave his pistol to a soldier who was unable to hold a rifle. With complete disregard for his own safety, he scrambled around the defended area, collecting rifles and ammunition from the dead and distributing them to the men still able to fight.

It had been about two hours since the HH–43s were driven off. Pitsenbarger had done all he could to treat the wounded, prepare for a retreat to safer ground, and rearm his Army comrades. He then gathered several magazines of ammunition, lay down beside wounded Army Sgt. Fred Navarro, one of the C Company survivors who later described Pitsenbarger's heroic actions, and begin firing at the enemy. Fifteen minutes later, as an eerie darkness fell beneath the triple-canopy jungle, Pitsenbarger was hit and mortally wounded. The next morning, when Army reinforcements reached the C Company survivors, a helicopter crew brought Pitsenbarger's body out of the jungle. Of the 180 men with whom he fought his last battle, only 14 were uninjured.

William H. Pitsenbarger was the first airman to be awarded the Air Force Cross posthumously. The Air Force Sergeants Association presents an annual award for valor in his honor.

The Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service is legendary for heroism in peace and war. No one better exemplifies its motto. ''That Others May Live.'' tan Bill Pitsenbarger. He descended voluntarily into the hell of a jungle firefight with valor as his only shield—and valor was his epitaph.

Bill Pitsenbarger showed honor in a time of tremendous pressure. He put other lives before his own. He put his country before his self-interest and he proved that America would remain the land of the free and fight for the freedom of others by showing it was still the land of the brave.

The town of Piqua still holds enormous pride for Bill Pitsenbarger and the community as well as Pitsenbarger's colleagues and friends wholeheartedly join me in supporting the award of the Medical of Honor. Pitsenbarger's heroism is well known in the Air Force. In fact, the Air Force Sergeants Association has named its award for heroism after him. More than a dozen other military and civilian buildings, organizations and monuments around the world that have been named in his honor.

I have worked with numerous organizations and individuals in researching and investigating the Pitsenbarger record. On behalf of these supporters, I submitted to Air Force Secretary Whitten Peters in March 1999 a package of materials to upgrade Pitsenbarger's award to the Medal of Honor. In the past 18 months. Pitsenbarger's file has been reviewed by Pentagon officials including the Secretary of the Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Defense. They have recommended posthumously awarding him the Medal of Honor.

I believe this Medal of Honor is long overdue. My fellow Ohioans, Pitsenbarger's colleagues and Air Force enlisted personnel join me in the belief that this finally corrects the injustice and gives Mr. Pitsenbarger the recognition that he so deeply deserves.

Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from California, Mrs. TAUSCHER, and I are proud to support H.R. 4205, the Defense Authorization bill for 2001. Among its many important provisions with regard to both people and equipment, the bill addresses several especially notable policy issues: the bill provides permanent lifetime TRICARE eligibility to Medicare-eligible military retirees and

their family members; restores pharmacy access for all Medicare-eligible military retirees; and authorizes the Department of Defense to begin a Thrift Savings Plan. Moreover, the bill provides a 3.7 percent pay increase to continue to close the gap between civilian and military pay.

However, as members of the Conference Committee that negotiated the final details for this bill, we cannot overlook the fact that one important provision has been left out. Recent acts of hate violence have opened many people's eyes to the brutal reality of bias motivated violence and the urgent need to do something to prevent it.

Because hate violence affects where people live and travel and terrorizes entire communities, the federal government has a unique obligation to prevent hate violence against any group. Current federal law only covers race, religion, national origin and color. The Hate Crimes Prevention Act would give federal agencies the authority to investigate and prosecute hate crimes based on a victim's real or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

Mr. Speaker, the Senate and the House each voted separately to include language in the bill addressing hate crimes. We are disappointed that the leadership in Congress has seen fit to ignore the will of both bodies by removing this provision from the Fiscal Year 2001 Defense Authorization bill. For the will of the powerful leadership in Congress to prevail over the will of the majority in both Houses is not only an affront to us, but also to the democratic principles that govern us.

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my dismay this afternoon that the Conference Report for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, H.R. 4205, does not contain language which would have expanded federal hate crimes laws. Despite this disappointment, as a member of the House Committee on Armed Services, I have no choice but to support the Conference Report and will vote for it.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, a majority of members in both the House and the Senate voted to include the hate crimes provisions in this bill. The Senate voted in favor of an amendment adding the hate crimes provisions to the Senate version of the bill on June 20th by a vote of 57 to 42. On September 13th, I was eager to join the majority of my colleagues in the House in voting in favor of the Conyers motion to instruct conferees to include these provisions in the final version of this bill. It is truly shameful, however, that the Republican Leadership in Congress was able to prevent the inclusion of these provisions in the conference report despite the fact that majorities in both Chambers voted in favor of them.

The Hate Crimes Prevention Act, H.R. 1082, was one of the first bills I co-sponsored upon becoming a Member of Congress. I believe that this legislation is a common sense effort to combat the heinous crimes that are being committed against members of our society simply because they are a member of a specific group. Some have argued that hate crimes laws are not needed because all crimes are hate crimes. Of course all crimes are wrong and should be punished. What makes this legislation so important, however, is that hate crimes are intended to intimidate and punish a whole class of people. Whether it is a lynching in Texas, a crucifixion in Wyoming, or spraying bullets in a bar in Virginia, these horrific acts are intended to terrorize entire groups of people and should be punished accordingly. It is a centuries old part of our common law system to weigh the element of intent in evaluating the severity of a crime and the hate crime law do just that.

It is tragic that the Republic Leadership in Congress has been able to disregard the clear majority of both Chambers and prevent the hate crimes provisions from being included in this bill. I will join the President in his fight to include them in another piece of "must pass" legislation so that we can do our part before adjournment to combat these horrific crimes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

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

Mr. SPENCE. 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 382, nays 31, not voting 19, as follows:

[Roll No. 522]

YEAS—382

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Allen
Andrews
Archer
Armey
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldacci
Ballenger
Barcia
Barr
Barrett (NE)
Barrett (WI)
Bartlett
Barton
Bass
Becerra
Bentsen
Bereuter
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop
Blagojevich
Bliley
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonior
Bono
Borski
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Bryant
Burr
Burton
Buyer
Callahan
Calvert
Camp
Canady
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Carson
Castle
Chabot
Chambliss
Chenoweth-Hage
Clay
Clayton
Clement
Clyburn
Coble
Coburn
Collins
Combest
Condit
Cook
Cooksey
Costello
Cox
Cramer
Crane
Crowley
Cubin
Cummings
Cunningham
Davis (FL)
Davis (VA)
Deal
Delahunt
DeLauro
DeLay
DeMint
Deutsch
Diaz-Balart
Dickey
Dicks
Dingell
Dixon
Doggett
Dooley
Doolittle
Doyle
Dreier
Duncan
Dunn
Edwards
Ehrlich
Emerson
Engel
English
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Ewing
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fletcher
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fossella
Fowler
Frelinghuysen
Frost
Gallegly
Ganske
Gejdenson
Gekas
Gephardt
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gilman
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Goodling
Gordon
Goss
Graham
Granger
Green (TX)
Green (WI)
Greenwood
Gutknecht
Hall (OH)
Hall (TX)
Hansen
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Herger
Hill (IN)
Hill (MT)
Hilleary
Hilliard
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoeffel
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Hooley
Horn
Hostettler
Houghton
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hyde
Inslee
Isakson
Istook
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
John
Johnson (CT)
Johnson, E.B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kasich
Kelly
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind (WI)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kleczka
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kuykendall
LaFalce
LaHood
Lampson
Lantos
Larson
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lowey
Lucas (KY)
Lucas (OK)
Luther
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Martinez
Mascara
Matsui
McCarthy (MO)
McCarthy (NY)
McCrery
McGovern
McHugh
McInnis
McIntyre
McKeon
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Menendez
Metcalf
Mica
Millender-McDonald
Miller, Gary
Minge
Mink
Moakley
Mollohan
Moore
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Morella
Murtha
Myrick
Napolitano
Nethercutt
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Ose
Oxley
Packard
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Pease
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Phelps
Pickering
Pickett
Pitts
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Portman
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Quinn
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Reyes
Reynolds
Riley
Rivers
Rodriguez
Roemer
Rogan
Rogers
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Rothman
Roukema
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Rush
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Sabo
Salmon
Sanchez
Sandlin
Sanford
Sawyer
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaffer
Scott
Serrano
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Sherman
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shows
Simpson
Sisisky
Skeen
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Souder
Spence
Spratt
Stabenow
Stearns
Stenholm
Strickland
Stump
Stupak
Sununu
Sweeney
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Thune
Thurman
Tiahrt
Tierney
Toomey
Towns
Traficant
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Visclosky
Vitter
Walden
Walsh
Wamp
Watkins
Watt (NC)
Watts (OK)
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson
Wolf
Wu
Wynn
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NAYS—31

Baldwin
Blumenauer
Conyers
Coyne
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Ehlers
Frank (MA)
Gutierrez
Jackson (IL)
Kucinich
Lee
Lewis (GA)
Lofgren
Markey
McDermott
McKinney
Miller, George
Nadler
Owens
Paul
Payne
Sanders
Schakowsky
Sensenbrenner
Shays
Stark
Velazquez
Waters
Woolsey

NOT VOTING—19

Campbell
Cannon
Danner
Eshoo
Franks (NJ)
Hutchinson

Klink	Meehan	Waxman
Largent	Miller (FL)	Weygand
Lazio	Neal	Wise
McCollum	Shuster	
McIntosh	Talent	

1252

Mr. MARKEY changed his vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Messrs. BARRETT of Wisconsin, DELAHUNT and TIERNEY changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, I was unfortunately delayed away from the Capitol during the vote on the Defense Authorization legislation, H.R. 4205. However, had I been here, I would have voted ''yea.''

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4265.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Carolina?

There was no objection.

ENERGY AND WATER REDEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001—VETO MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the further consideration of the veto message of the President of the United States on the bill (H.R. 4733) making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.

The question is, Will the House, on reconsideration, pass the bill, the objections of the President to the contrary notwithstanding?

(For veto message, see proceedings of the House of October 10, 2000, at page H9575).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. PACKARD) is recognized for 1 hour.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and that I may include tabular and extraneous material on the veto message of the President of the United States to the bill, H.R. 4733.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. VISCLOSKY) for purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge my colleagues in the strongest possible terms to override the President's unfortunate veto of the Fiscal Year 2001 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act.

Of all the appropriations bills, this is one of the most bipartisan. The conference agreement that we presented to the House 2 weeks ago is fair and balanced.

Through the programs of the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, we have provided funds to maintain and rebuild our critical water resources infrastructure and protect millions of citizens who are currently vulnerable to the devastating effects of floods.

Funds that we have provided through this bill for the Department of Energy will help to strengthen our national defense, increase our scientific knowledge, and help us to become more energy independent.

In spite of all the good things in this bill, the President has legislated to veto it over a single provision included by the Senate. The administration asserts that this provision would undermine implementation of the Endangered Species Act. That is simply incorrect.

Under the provisions of section 103, all alternatives for protecting endangered species on the Missouri River, including a spring rise in river levels, can continue to be studied and only a revision in the Master Water Control Manual that results from spring rise is prevented from being implemented in fiscal year 2001.

I wish to significantly note that the Corps of Engineers has confirmed that it will not be prepared to implement a revised Water Control Manual for the Missouri River until the spring of 2003 due to the time it will take to comply with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy. Therefore, this issue really is not an issue. It cannot be implemented before the bill would address in terms of the time limits.

On October 2, the President issued a statement in which he said that this provision would ''establish a dangerous precedent aimed at barring a Federal agency from obeying one of our Nation's landmark environmental statutes.''

If the President truly believes that today, then why did he not believe it four other times when he signed this very provision into law?

We have done our very best on this bill to accommodate the priorities of all Members of Congress, including the Democrats and Republicans equally and the administration, as well.

Almost 2 weeks ago, we approved a conference agreement by a vote of 301–118. I was disappointed at that time that a number of Members who had come to us for assistance and whose wishes we did accommodate in the bill voted against passage of the conference report. Some who voted against the conference report may have had their concerns addressed in other bills.

Specifically, the Interior Appropriations Conference Report, which now sits on the President's desk and he will likely sign it I am told, included $8 million for the Northeast Home Heating Reserve Issue.

1300

I am sure that that was part of the reason that some voted against the conference report on this bill. I expect that all the Members who voted in favor of the bill two weeks ago will do so again today and encourage all those Members who voted no last week to reconsider that decision. I sincerely hope that we do not have to reopen this bill at this point and possibly reconsider items that have already been agreed to.

I truly believe that a wise use of the taxpayers money is rebuilding America's infrastructure. It is spending their tax dollars to improve their quality of life. It is a very good expenditure of funds. And so our conservative Members who feel that we have spent too much in this bill I hope will recognize that this is spending money in their districts, improving the quality of life of their citizens. It is not in the best interest of our Nation to hold up this important piece of legislation over a single provision. Therefore, I ask all Members to vote to override the President's unfortunate veto of this bill.

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

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I join my colleague, the gentleman from California, in asking all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote to override the President's veto of H.R. 4733, the Energy and Water Appropriation Act for the year 2001. The chairman eloquently addressed the primary controversy that is engaged in this legislation and that is the Army Corps manual and regulations dealing with water flow on the Missouri River. I would join in his observations.

First of all, that the President in 4 previous years has signed legislation with similar language. Secondly, as far as the issue that is of complaint to the President, it will not come to fruition for another 2 fiscal years, so I do not think it would be appropriate to veto this legislation based on that one provision, given the good work the chairman and the committee has done on the bill.

The President also mentioned, however, three other items in his veto message, and I would like for a moment to address each of his concerns. The President indicated he is upset that we had not set aside enough funds for renewable and solar energy. I would point out to the Members that for the current fiscal year 2000, we appropriated and the administration will spend $362 million for these programs. The conference report that was approved by