

Fitzgerald, George Allen, Don Nickles, John Ensign, James Inhofe.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on Executive Calendar No. 238, the nomination of Thomas C. Dorr, of Iowa, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, shall be brought a close?

The yeas and nays are required under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. EDWARDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY), and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) would vote "nay."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 57, nays 39, as follows:

The result was announced—yeas 57, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 455 Ex.]

YEAS—57

Akaka	Dole	McConnell
Alexander	Domenici	Miller
Allard	Ensign	Murkowski
Allen	Enzi	Nelson (NE)
Bennett	Fitzgerald	Nickles
Bond	Frist	Pryor
Brownback	Graham (SC)	Roberts
Bunning	Grassley	Santorum
Burns	Gregg	Sessions
Campbell	Hagel	Shelby
Chafee	Hatch	Smith
Chambliss	Hutchison	Snowe
Cochran	Inhofe	Specter
Coleman	Jeffords	Stevens
Collins	Kyl	Sununu
Cornyn	Lincoln	Talent
Craig	Lott	Thomas
Crapo	Lugar	Voinovich
DeWine	McCain	Warner

NAYS—39

Baucus	Dayton	Lautenberg
Bayh	Dodd	Leahy
Biden	Dorgan	Levin
Bingaman	Durbin	Mikulski
Boxer	Feingold	Murray
Breaux	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Byrd	Harkin	Reed
Cantwell	Hollings	Reid
Carper	Inouye	Rockefeller
Clinton	Johnson	Sarbanes
Conrad	Kennedy	Schumer
Corzine	Kohl	Stabenow
Daschle	Landrieu	Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Edwards	Kerry
Graham (FL)	Lieberman

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 57, the nays are 39. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on this vote and the previous vote.

Mr. REID. I move to lay both motions on the table.

The motions to lay on the table were agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now return to legislative session.

The Senator from Washington.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1853

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I know we are going to move on to other legislation and I am sure we are going to hear from our leaders today about what the rest of the week's schedule looks like and possible strategy for adjournment, but I think it is critically important before we adjourn we address the unemployment needs of Americans. While we in this body last year adjourned without fully taking care of the unemployed and the unemployment benefit extension program, I think it is unconscionable we would do that this year.

While the economy may have slightly improved, we still have huge unemployment across the country. For us in the State of Washington, with nearly 7½ percent unemployment, this problem continues.

Unemployment benefit insurance is a stimulus. For every dollar paid in unemployment benefits, it generates \$2.15 into the economy. This is what we need to be doing to take care of Americans. We cannot continue to give tax breaks to the wealthiest of Americans and tax incentives in the Energy bill and tax breaks in a lot of other programs and not take care of basic Americans who would rather have a job but do not have that opportunity and are depending on those unemployment benefits to make mortgage and health care payments.

Last year we really did leave Americans with a lump of coal in their stocking. Instead of saying to them we are going to make sure that as the economy starts to recover we are taking care of you to give you that security, we said we are going to terminate this program. Even though the Senate did its homework and the House failed to pass this, we left many Americans without that security.

Constituents of mine basically took money out of their long-term pension savings at huge penalties just to make up for the unemployment benefit program that would not continue. It is imperative before we adjourn we pass the Unemployment Benefit Program extension.

I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1853, a bill to extend unemployment insurance benefits for displaced workers; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. ENSIGN. Reserving the right to object, and I will object, very simply

put, when the Democrats were in control of the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Presidency back in 1993, the unemployment rate, when they terminated the program, was 6.4 percent nationally. It is now 6.0 percent, lower than it was in 1993 when every Democrat voted to terminate the program. So with that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2861, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2861) to make appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Bond/Mikulski amendment No. 2150, in the nature of a substitute.

Dayton amendment No. 2193 (to amendment No. 2150), to fully fund the Paul and Sheila Wellstone Center for Community Building.

AMENDMENT NO. 2199 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2150

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I have some amendments that have been cleared on both sides. First, I send an amendment to the desk for Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. BINGAMAN, and Mr. EDWARDS, dealing with a study on Prevention of Significant Deterioration and Nonattainment New Source Review.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND], for Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. BINGAMAN, and Mr. EDWARDS, proposes an amendment numbered 2199.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To include an evaluation of the impact of a final rule promulgated by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency in a study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences)

At the appropriate place, add the following:

SEC. \_\_. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES STUDY.

The matter under the heading "ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS" under the heading "ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY" in title III of division K of section 2 of the Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, 2003 (117 Stat. 513), is amended—

(1) in the first sentence of the fifth undesignated paragraph (beginning "As soon as"), by inserting before the period at the end the

following: “, and the impact of the final rule entitled ‘Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) and Nonattainment New Source Review (NSR): Equipment Replacement Provision of the Routine Maintenance, Repair and Replacement Exclusion’, amending parts 51 and 52 of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, and published in electronic docket OAR-2002-0068 on August 27, 2003”; and

(2) in the sixth undesignated paragraph (beginning “The National Academy of Sciences”), by striking “March 3, 2004” and inserting “January 1, 2005.”

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, in January 2003, the Senate approved a very similar amendment by Senator INHOFE to the Fiscal Year 2003 consolidated appropriations bill. That amendment initiated a study at the National Academy of Sciences to look at the effects of the EPA’s first set of New Source Review rules, published on December 31, 2002, on emissions, human health, pollution control technology, and energy efficiency.

That amendment provided that the National Academy will submit an interim report to Congress no later than March 3, 2004, approximately 1 year after passage.

In September 2003, the EPA provided an oral authorization to the academy to begin work. Unfortunately, the agency has still not provided the contract papers necessary for the project to start. I do not know what the holdup might be.

However, that study, if it ever gets funded by EPA, would not review the effects of the second set of NSR rules on routine equipment replacement which were published on October 27, 2003. It should and, since EPA has not yet funded the study and it has not started, there is still plenty of time to revise the mission statement and do the work. I am advised by academy staff that this expansion would entail minimal additional cost to EPA.

As I have noted, my amendment simply extends the NAS study to cover the effects of the second set of rules looking at the same criteria and extends the interim report deadline by 10 months to January 1, 2005.

I am pleased the managers have agreed to accept this amendment.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, we are ready to accept the amendment by voice vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate? If not, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2199.

The amendment (No. 2199) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2200 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2150

Mr. BOND. I send an amendment to the desk on behalf of Senator INHOFE, providing for implementation plans and no preclusion of other provisions relating to the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND], for Mr. INHOFE, proposes an amendment numbered 2200.

Mr. BOND. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To include provisions relating to designations of areas for PM<sub>2.5</sub> national ambient air quality standards)

On page 106, between lines 20 and 21, insert the following:

**SEC. —. DESIGNATIONS OF AREAS FOR PM<sub>2.5</sub> AND SUBMISSION OF IMPLEMENTATION PLANS FOR REGIONAL HAZE.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 107(d) of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7407(d)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(6) DESIGNATIONS.—

“(A) SUBMISSION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, not later than February 15, 2004, the Governor of each State shall submit designations referred to in paragraph (1) for the July 1997 PM<sub>2.5</sub> national ambient air quality standards for each area within the State, based on air quality monitoring data collected in accordance with any applicable Federal reference methods for the relevant areas.

“(B) PROMULGATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, not later than December 31, 2004, the Administrator shall, consistent with paragraph (1), promulgate the designations referred to in subparagraph (A) for each area of each State for the July 1997 PM<sub>2.5</sub> national ambient air quality standards.

“(7) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR REGIONAL HAZE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, not later than 3 years after the date on which the Administrator promulgates the designations referred to in paragraph (6)(B) for a State, the State shall submit, for the entire State, the State implementation plan revisions to meet the requirements promulgated by the Administrator under section 169B(e)(1) (referred to in this paragraph as ‘regional haze requirements’).

“(B) NO PRECLUSION OF OTHER PROVISIONS.—Nothing in this paragraph precludes the implementation of the agreements and recommendations stemming from the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission Report dated June 1996, including the submission of State implementation plan revisions by the States of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, or Wyoming by December 31, 2003, for implementation of regional haze requirements applicable to those States.”

(b) RELATIONSHIP TO TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.—Except as provided in paragraphs (6) and (7) of section 107(d) of the Clean Air Act (as added by subsection (a)), section 6101, subsections (a) and (b) of section 6102, and section 6103 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (42 U.S.C. 7407 note; 112 Stat. 463), as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, shall remain in effect.

Mr. BOND. We have no further statements on this side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2200) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2193

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 2193 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Amendment No. 2193 is pending.

Mr. DAYTON. I defer to the ranking member.

Ms. MIKULSKI. First, we acknowledge the very able Senator from Minnesota has offered an amendment for the full funding of the Wellstone Memorial in this year’s appropriation.

We acknowledge the vigorous advocacy of Senator DAYTON for not only Minnesota but for his dear and beloved colleague, Senator Wellstone, of happy memory. We all remember with great melancholy that terrible day when Senator Wellstone lost his life. We promised we wanted to have a permanent memorial to the legacy of truly an extraordinary American. I assure the Senator from Minnesota and all the people of Minnesota, we have the will to help complete this memorial. We are a little tight on the wallet.

I wonder if the Senator would accept essentially a 2-year funding promise, that we fund this this year at \$500,000 and that next year we complete it with \$700,000. This way it keeps the money in the pipeline so the memorial can be sure it can meet its bottom line, and that we can continue to stay the course on creating this most appropriate memorial to our beloved colleague.

Would the Senator accept that as a way of keeping the process moving forward but understanding that we are a bit tight this year? I know, because the Wellstone legacy was in championing veterans, I say to my colleague from Minnesota, we have been able to add \$1.3 billion, and if I know our colleague, that is what he would be happy about.

But we are not going to abandon the memorial, either. Does this sound like a reasonable, rational, and acceptable approach?

Mr. DAYTON. I thank the Senator and the chairman of the subcommittee. I know these two leaders have been under the greatest of pressures and financial strictures. They both have performed heroically in getting the money for veterans.

My colleague is right. My former colleague, Senator Wellstone, would be happy beyond belief for the veterans of Minnesota and of America. I thank you for your extraordinary efforts. I salute the efforts of both distinguished colleagues and I thank them for this matter.

I certainly meant no disrespect to anyone yesterday in my remarks. My distress was primarily because I felt that again my friend Paul’s memory would not be well served by having the folks in Minnesota or anywhere else losing out. So his memory would be served, I wanted this memorial, this

tribute from the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the President of the United States, and they have been very supportive and gracious throughout all this. We finally fulfill that.

I thank the chairman and ranking member for making this possible, and I yield the floor.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I further say to my unflagging colleague from Minnesota, this \$500,000 will not come out of other Minnesota projects. OK? The memorial to Senator Wellstone is a national project of national impact and, therefore, will not impact upon the Minnesota projects which are also so important and needed.

Mr. DAYTON. I thank my colleague.

AMENDMENT NO. 2193, AS MODIFIED

MS. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I send to the desk a modification of the Dayton amendment and ask such modification reflect the agreement we had here and I urge its adoption.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to modifying the Dayton amendment? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2193), as modified, is as follows:

On page 58, line 21, strike "\$1,112,130,000" and insert "\$1,111,530,000".

On page 125, between lines 7 and 8, insert the following:

SEC. 418. There shall be made available \$1,500,000 to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for the purposes of making the grant authorized under section 3 of the Paul and Sheila Wellstone Center for Community Building Act.

Mr. BOND. We are happy to accept it. We appreciate working with the Senator from Minnesota, in fact both Senators from Minnesota. Senator DAYTON and Senator COLEMAN have both been very strong, vocal supporters. We know how important it is to Minnesota. We are sorry we are in such tight fiscal constraints, but we want to put the money in this year with the sure knowledge that we will be able to come back and finish it next year, which I trust will not delay the construction of the memorial.

Furthermore, since Senator COLEMAN has been active on this, on his behalf, I ask that he be listed as a cosponsor of the amendment. I know the people of Minnesota want to know both of their Senators are very vigorous champions of this great memorial to a man we will always miss.

I didn't always agree with him but it was always interesting, and I had many, many good and pleasant exchanges with him. We worked together on many issues. The Government Printing Office now uses soy ink because of our amendment. We used to tease each other, that in Minnesota he would claim it as the Wellstone amendment; I would claim it as the Bond amendment in Missouri. But neither one of us would mention the cosponsor in our States.

But we worked closely together. His is a wonderful spirit that is still with us.

I believe there are no further comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senator will be added as a cosponsor.

Mr. BOND. I ask we adopt it on a voice vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment as modified.

The amendment (No. 2193), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, may I have 1 minute?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I thank, again, the chairman for his wonderful remarks. I know my departed colleague enjoyed his camaraderie with his colleagues here as much as he enjoyed the debates and disagreements. He respected all of them as individuals and the process as we are all engaged in as the essence of our democracy.

I thank the distinguished Senator from Missouri for those gracious comments. Again, I thank the ranking member, the great Senator from Maryland, for her help in this matter and our successful resolution.

I wish to give credit to my colleague, Senator COLEMAN, who is chairing a hearing of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. He has been very supportive of this throughout and was instrumental earlier this year in getting the funding raised to its current level. I cannot speak for him, but I am sure he is grateful, as I am, that this has been resolved.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the VA-HUD NASA flat-line budget. The bill has NASA funded at \$15.3 billion. This is the same as the amount enacted in fiscal year 2003. As many of you may recall, I have fought to plus up the shuttle upgrades program for years. I still firmly believe that adequate supportability and safety upgrades budgets, coupled with supporting infrastructure, are needed to keep the shuttle operating safely.

The Columbia Accident Investigation Board chaired by Admiral Gehman concluded that throughout the decade, the Shuttle Program has had to function within an increasingly constrained budget. Both the shuttle budget and workforce have been reduced by over 40 percent during the past decade. The White House, Congress, and NASA leadership exerted constant pressure to reduce or at least freeze operating costs. As a result, there was little margin in the budget to deal with unexpected technical problems or make shuttle improvements.

Most people believe we will continue to fly the shuttle for the life of the station, but we continue to base our budgetary decisions on the long-lost premise that the shuttle will be replaced in the near term.

The fact of the matter is that the shuttle must return to flight to complete the assembly of the International Space Station. Return to flight will take funds, and we don't know if NASA has enough funds to fully cover the cost of return to flight since the fiscal year 2004 supplemental was never sent to Congress and the fiscal year 2005 budget remains embargoed. We do know that NASA plans to reprogram \$200 million out of station reserves and \$107 million out of the Service Life Extension Program, SLEP, to cover some of the fiscal year 2004 costs. The requisite funds should not be robbed from other NASA accounts as has been practiced in the past. Perhaps it would be better to provide NASA enough money to adequately fund all the NASA initiatives without resorting to starving one account to feed another.

The shuttle needs to be able to fly safely as long as this country needs it. To even consider using upgrade and infrastructure funds for return to flight is unconscionable and certainly not in the long-term best interest of our Nation's space program.

It is important that we build, maintain and fly the safest vehicle possible. We cannot afford to have accountants making technical decisions instead of engineers and program managers if we want to maintain our technology edge.

Reducing the NASA budget for the International Space Station program in fiscal year 2004 could force NASA to transfer skilled, knowledgeable personnel—civil service and contractor—to other programs. A lesson learned from the *Columbia* accident was that we must retain the technical knowledge within human space flight programs so that potential life-threatening problems can reliably be identified and correctly addressed.

The science and technology payback from the ISS is proportional to the size of the crew working there. There are now two crew members onboard but the program plan calls for an increase up to seven when the shuttle is returned to flight and emergency crew return capability is onboard. That increase also requires that the ISS's life support systems be beefed up to provide greater oxygen generation and carbon dioxide removal among other capabilities. The fiscal year 2004 ISS budget request includes capability upgrades that are the upfront systems that will allow that increase in crew size. This development is programmed to be continued in fiscal year 2005 from program budget reserves. If the ISS budget is reduced in fiscal year 2004 that reduction will come from existing reserves that would have been carried forward to fiscal year 2005 and paid for the continuation of these necessary developments. A cut this year will most

likely force NASA to cut back on this development and further delay crew size increase and consequently the scientific return from the ISS.

Because a reduction in the ISS budget for fiscal year 2004 will likely be taken from program reserves that is like tying one arm behind the program's management. ISS is a developing human space flight vehicle, with inherent schedule and technical risks. Managing the unknowns that will occur requires appropriate flexibility in the management's budget, budget reserves. Reducing the program budget and as a consequence reducing those reserves is simply dangerous.

We cannot allow this budget to be flat lined from fiscal year 2003. NASA cannot do everything it hopes to do on the cheap. The fiscal year 2004 Presidential request should be approved and in addition \$300 million added to ensure human space flight achieves its objectives without jeopardizing safety and delays to completing the ISS. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting an increase to the NASA top line.

(At the request of Mr. DASCHLE, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Chairman BOND and Senator MIKULSKI for their hard work in developing the Senate fiscal year 2004 VA-HUD and Independent Agencies appropriations bill. Considering the low authorization level for this important bill, they have done an excellent job maintaining priorities in Veterans health care, the environment and housing. It is vital that the full Senate-passed amount for Veterans healthcare be maintained in conference so that we don't lose more ground in caring for those who have borne the battle. However, it is obvious that additional resources are critically needed for many programs in these areas if they are to work as intended.

Understanding the difficult authorization level facing this committee, I would still like to express my strong support for additional funding for YouthBuild in the fiscal year 2004 VA-HUD and Independent Agencies conference report. Despite the repeated support of over 57 of our Senate colleagues for a funding level of \$90 million, and despite the President's Budget request and House-passed level of \$65 million, the Senate bill could only provide \$60 million for a program that has proven its value and that is crucial to the lives of many young people. At the same time, 1,400 YouthBuild participants who are building housing for homeless and low-income people have lost access to AmeriCorps education awards due to the cutbacks in AmeriCorps.

Each year, YouthBuild receives strong bipartisan support because the program works. Eighty-five percent of students who complete the YouthBuild program either secure a job—at an av-

erage wage of more than \$7.60 per hour—or go on to postsecondary education. The program's success rate is especially notable since YouthBuild serves an at-risk population, 80 percent of whom have previously dropped out of high school.

YouthBuild is a uniquely comprehensive program that offers at-risk youth an immediately productive role rebuilding their communities. Along with attending basic education classes for 50 percent of the program time, students receive job skills training in the well-paid construction field, personal counseling from respected mentors, a supportive peer group with positive values, and experience in community leadership and civic engagement. To date, 25,000 YouthBuild students have built over 10,000 units of affordable housing.

Despite its obvious success, YouthBuild is losing ground with more than 30 sites that have closed due to lack of funds since 1996. Most of the remaining programs enroll 25 percent fewer students than they did in 1997. In 2001, 56 experienced YouthBuild sites that qualified for funding from HUD did not receive it solely due to a lack of funding. Only two local programs have been funded continuously since 1994.

During the House-Senate conference, I hope that the Senate will yield to the House and provide \$65 million for YouthBuild as the President has requested and the House of Representatives has provided. This is the least we can do. We must continue to fight to open the doors of opportunity and service to America's youth by supporting YouthBuild.●

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I want to thank both Senator BOND and Senator MIKULSKI for their hard work on this important legislation which provides federal funding for the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies. Unfortunately, I must again speak about the unacceptably high funding levels of parochial projects in this appropriations bill. Overall, this legislation contains approximately \$1.2 billion in unrequested spending and locality-specific earmarks.

The Committee provides \$29.3 billion in discretionary funding for the VA. That amount is \$1.3 billion more than the President's budget request and \$2.8 billion above the amount in fiscal year 2003. Some progress has been made to reduce the overall amount of earmarks for the VA in this spending bill.

Among other Senators who have stood on the Senate floor to fight for additional funding for veterans' healthcare, I am concerned that the Committee has directed critical dollars from veterans' healthcare to fund spending projects that have not been properly reviewed. Certain provisions funded under the VA in this legislation illustrate that Congress still does not have its priorities in order.

One especially troubling expense, neither budgeted for nor requested by the Administration over the past twelve years, is a provision that directs the VA to continue the twelve year old demonstration project involving the Clarksburg, WV, Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) and the Ruby Memorial Hospital at West Virginia University. Several years ago, the VA-HUD appropriations bill contained a plus-up of \$2 million for the Clarksburg VAMC that ended up on the Administration's line-item veto list and since then the millions keep flowing.

Three years ago, the Committee 'recommended' \$1 million for the design of a nursing home care unit at the Beckley, WV, VAMC. Two years ago they strengthened their report language urging 'the VA to accelerate the design of the nursing home care unit at the Beckley, WV VAMC.' Last year, they have urged the VA "to include sufficient funding" for a new nursing home care unit at the Beckley, WV VAMC. This year, they urge the VA to include sufficient funding in the 2005 budget request.

For St. Louis, MO, the Committee 'encouraged' the VA to pursue an innovative approach at a cost of \$7 million for leasing parking spaces at the John Cochran Division of the VA Medical Center in St. Louis as a means to address a parking shortfall at the VA hospital.

Additionally, the Committee "supports continuation" at the current spending level of the Rural Veterans Health Care Initiative at the White River Junction, VT VAMC. The current level is an astounding \$7 million.

While I am encouraged by the increase specifically in veterans health care funding over last year's enacted levels, we must do much more. We made a promise to our veterans that we would take care of their mental and physical health needs incurred for their many sacrifices for our nation. The VA currently has an incredible backlog of claims. Currently, four out of every ten claims for veterans' disability benefits are decided incorrectly further contributing to the backlog. The millions in dollars wasted in pork barrel spending would go a long way to decreasing the backlog in veterans claims by funding additional claims adjudicators and training.

I would be remiss if I did not point out the provisions in this legislation related to AmeriCorps. Whether it is tutoring inner-city youth or fighting forest fires in the West, the lives of countless people are touched by AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps' efforts to reach out to those affected by natural disasters are paying serious dividends. Over 246,000 victims of fires, floods and hurricanes have been aided by AmeriCorps volunteers working in conjunction with groups such as the American Red Cross.

Despite AmeriCorps' countless success stories, the appropriators have funded AmeriCorps \$93.2 million below