



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

DAVID R. OBEY, CHAIRMAN

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OBEY PREPARED STATEMENT ON THE FY2010 CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS BILL

This Bill "provides the resources that are needed to help restore and rebuild our economy"

WASHINGTON – The House passed the FY2010 Consolidated Appropriations bill today by a vote of 221 to 202. Below is the prepared statement by Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, on the bill:

The country is struggling to overcome the longest and deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Main Street has been hit especially hard. Many families cannot pay their bills or mortgage payments, and trillions of dollars of wealth has been stripped from retirement accounts. And the recession has caused an economic crisis for the States too, with many facing severe budget shortfalls, leading to job cuts and reductions in vital services, including those that help some of the most vulnerable among us.

The bill before us today is one of the key measures Congress will pass this year to help address those problems and provide relief for millions of hard-working Americans caught in a struggle for economic survival. It combines the Transportation; Commerce, Justice, Science; Financial Services; Labor-Health-Education; Military Construction, Veterans Affairs; and State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bills.

- So this is the bill that will help provide the care we owe our veterans and military families;
- It's the bill that will help train Americans for jobs in health care and other growing industries;
- It will encourage economic development and help small businesses grow;
- It'll help to shore up our social safety nets for people who've fallen on hard times and provide educational opportunities for our children;
- It will help keep our transportation systems safe and strong and enable new discoveries in science;
- It'll allow our law enforcement agencies to combat crime, terrorism, and illegal drugs and our foreign service to continue rebuilding our diplomatic capacity; and
- It will help protect consumers and restore the public confidence in our financial institutions.

Program Integrity Provisions

With this bill we have an obligation to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable children, families, and seniors in our society. However, we also have an obligation to ensure that taxpayer funds are used as effectively as possible – avoiding waste, fraud and abuse.

Accordingly, we made it a priority to provide the resources that agencies need to conduct proper oversight. For example the Labor-Health-Education portion of this package provides over \$1 billion for activities to reduce improper payments, fraud, and abuse in the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, and in the Social Security Administration – a 50 percent increase over 2009. OMB tells us that could result in over \$48 billion in savings and increased revenues over the next ten years.

We also fully fund the Inspectors General to enable them to effectively carry out their audit and oversight responsibilities for the agencies included in the bill.

Key Investments

There are a good many things to point out in this bill, but in the interest of time, I will highlight just a few:

Jobs

This economy is shedding skilled jobs, and most aren't coming back because they are being exported to places like China. So we have to provide opportunities for workers to upgrade their skills. Workers have their backs against the wall – for six straight years under the last Administration the top 10% in our economy took home over 90% of the income growth; while the other 90% of us got table scraps. Workers simply haven't been able to catch a break! They've been faced with unfair tax policies and haven't had a fair shot at the bargaining table or in the workplace because the government hasn't been there to protect them from abuse by the big boys or from slave labor in the third world.

This bill works to address that.

It expands job retraining programs, so that workers like those I recently visited with at a retraining program in Antigo, Wisconsin can develop new skills to get a better break in this job market.

It provides \$121 million more than last year to worker protection agencies in the Labor Department so they can rebuild their capacity to enforce the nation's laws providing for safe workplaces, it provides over \$20 million more than last year for the National Labor Relations Board, which helps give workers a fair shot at the bargaining table, and it includes \$93 million to protect worker rights around the world.

It fully funds the request for the Dislocated Worker Employment and Training program at \$1.4 billion, providing over \$70 million (or 5.3 percent) more than last year for training and support services for workers affected by mass layoffs and plant closures.

It provides \$125 million for competitive grants to community colleges and local adult education providers to prepare workers for careers in high-demand and emerging industries; \$40 million to prepare workers for careers in energy efficiency and renewable energy; and \$45 million for a new initiative to help workers who face substantial barriers to entering the workforce.

Recognizing that unemployment for seniors is at its highest point since BLS began collecting data, we provide over \$250 million more than last year to place an additional 30,000 low-income seniors into jobs with community service organizations.

To help address youth unemployment, the bill includes \$103 million for YouthBuild – 50 percent more than last year – and \$1.7 billion for Job Corps, to provide job training, counseling and educational opportunities to low-income kids.

And it provides over \$420 million to help States process over \$140 billion in Federal and State unemployment benefits for over 15 million people because unemployment levels have doubled since the recession set in two years ago.

We also make a special effort to help our veterans transition to the civilian workforce, with a total of \$268 million, including \$256 million within the Labor Department for veterans' employment and skills training, and

\$6 million for a new college-based Centers of Excellence for Veterans Success initiative by the Education Department to provide academic, counseling and support services for veterans seeking to use their new GI Bill education benefits.

Veterans and Military Families

While we might be divided on the war, we should all be able to agree that we owe a debt of gratitude to our veterans and military families. They're the only ones who've been asked to sacrifice for this war – and they've had to go to the well again, and again, and again.

This bill builds on the achievements we made last year, with the expansion of the GI Bill education benefits and increased funding for veterans healthcare, with nearly \$110 billion to meet our veterans needs, including over \$45 billion so the VA can provide healthcare to over six million veterans – including nearly 420,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

We provide nearly \$2 billion to help the VA hire about 1,200 new claims processors so they can better address the VA's claims backlog; and, for the first time ever, we provide over \$48 billion in advanced appropriations for veterans medical care programs for 2011, so that the VA can better plan for the future.

We also provide over \$23 billion for military family housing, barracks and new military facilities, to make life a little better for our troops and their families.

Health and Human Services

On the healthcare front, we put a particular emphasis on expanding health care coverage and services, with investments of more than \$3 billion in the bill.

As we're working to pass a health reform bill that will expand the reach of the health care safety net to millions of more Americans, it would be irresponsible not to build the capacity of our health care system to deal with the additional demand that will be created. And of course, one of the bright spots on the jobs front right now is the health care sector, which continues to add new jobs every month. It simply makes good sense to help train people for those positions.

To accomplish those goals, we've got a number of initiatives in the bill:

- We provide \$2.2 billion for Community Health Centers so they can provide primary health care to 17 million patients, of whom 40 percent are uninsured, in 7,500 centers around the country;
- To expand training programs so that we can get more doctors and nurses to work, we provide the Health Resources and Services Administration \$498 million - \$105 million (or 26.8 percent) more than last year;
- To help the more than 100 million Americans who don't have dental insurance, the bill includes \$66 million, (\$15 million more than 2009) to provide critical dental care and to train dental workers;
- to help States expand healthcare coverage and test innovative new ideas, we provide \$75 million in second year funding for State Health Access Grants; and
- To help subsidize health insurance coverage for almost 200,000 people who can't get private health insurance, we provide \$55 million for State High Risk Insurance Pools.

We also included \$190 million to allow HHS to continue an aggressive campaign to dramatically reduce life-threatening hospital infections, which cause over 100,000 deaths and contribute to about \$30 billion in excess health care costs every year.

To improve the state of the art in health care and reduce health care expenditures, the bill provides \$31 billion (\$692 million or 2.2 percent more than last year) to allow the National Institutes of Health to continue to invest in biomedical research, with over 38,000 research grants, including over 10,000 new ones, funded this year.

And our nation's most vulnerable people – the old and the young, the poor and the disabled – are also taken care of in this measure. The bill sustains last year's historic \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP, and includes a \$22 million increase for nutrition and other services for seniors, so that almost 3 million more meals can be provided this year.

Education

On the education front, the funding in this bill will help make educational opportunity a reality. Unlike the budget request, the bill does not finance education reforms by cuts to Title I. The bill maintains \$14.5 billion for Title I grants to provide educational services to 20 million low-income children. It supports working families by investing \$35 million more than last year to expand after school tutoring and academic enrichment for nearly 50,000 more students. And, it includes funding for several of Secretary Duncan's key education reform priorities, including:

- 1) \$400 million for the Teacher Incentive Fund, which supports school districts and States that want to reward effective teachers and schools through compensation systems tied to student achievement results;
- 2) \$250 million for a new comprehensive literacy initiative, under the Striving Readers program, to help struggling students from pre-K through grade 12 build their reading and writing skills; and
- 3) \$50 million for a new high school dropout prevention initiative that will target assistance to high schools that disproportionately contribute to the nation's dropout crisis.

And to help nearly 8 million low- and middle-income students pay their college tuition, we maintained funding for Pell Grants, which when combined with a mandatory supplement of \$690, will support maximum award of \$5,550 per student – \$200 more than last year.

Protecting our Communities

The bill provides over \$3.7 billion (\$480 million more than last year) for grants to aid state and local law enforcement and crime victims, including nearly \$520 million for Byrne Grants and almost \$800 million for the COPS program. Under President Bush, those grants were cut by nearly \$2 billion.

And to combat illegal drugs and address other national security needs, the bill provides \$11 billion to the DEA, FBI, ATF and other federal law enforcement agencies.

Transportation and Infrastructure

To improve and repair our nation's aging highway infrastructure, the bill provides nearly \$42 billion, including \$41 billion for the Federal-aid highway program and an additional \$650 million for highway investments.

To help states create a 21st Century passenger rail system that reduces congestion and helps the environment, we included \$2.5 billion (\$2.4 billion more than last year) for High Speed/Intercity Passenger Rail Grants

And to modernize the nation's air traffic control systems and provide Airport Modernization, Safety and Efficiency Grants to ease congestion and prepare our nation's airports for growing use, the bill includes \$6.4 billion.

Protecting Consumers and our Financial Systems

To continue implementing the bi-partisan consumer protection law that we enacted in response to massive product recalls, including children's toys from China a couple of years ago, the bill includes \$118 million (\$13 million more than last year) for the Consumer Product Safety Commission. That will allow CPSC to expand the Import Safety Initiative, which puts inspectors at key U.S. ports, and to further investigate suspected problems with imported drywall from China.

And to allow the SEC, the FTC and other government oversight bodies to strengthen and enforce the rules that govern Wall Street, protect consumers and combat anti-competitive behavior, we provided \$1.5 billion.

Scientific Research and Development

To support the President's commitment to double funding for basic scientific research in key agencies over the next decade, the bill provides nearly \$7 billion (\$436 million more than last year) to allow the National Science Foundation to support the most promising scientific research at America's colleges and universities.

And to help address one of the greatest challenges facing our country, we included about \$2 billion (\$75 million more than last year) to allow NASA, NOAA, NSF and other agencies to study and respond to global climate change.

Miscellaneous

And there are a bunch of other issues covered in the bill.

It maintains the restrictions on Guantanamo Detainees that was included in the Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

It provides \$7.3 billion (\$4.2 billion more than last year) to ramp up efforts for the 2010 census. The Census Bureau plans to hire about a million workers around the country help collect census data.

And it provides a \$993 million (or 9.5 percent) increase for the Social Security Administration, to help the agency process a rising number of retirement and disability claims, and work down its backlog of disability hearings.

Conclusion

To summarize, we have carefully scrutinized this bill with an eye toward making the best possible use of our limited resources. Developing this has been a challenging task and it will not make everyone happy. However, we have tried to bring forward a measure that serves the country well.

There are those that argue that we're providing too much for these critical investments. The reality is that we followed the budget passed by Congress and we're below the President's request by more than a billion dollars.

Total funding for these six bills is \$446.8 billion. That compares to \$397.1 billion provided in 2009 for these bills, not including emergency funding. Increased funding is provided for our Veterans (\$3.2 billion), the Census (\$4.2 billion), infrastructure investments (\$10.8 billion), health (\$6.3 billion), education (\$5.6 billion) and for foreign operations and military construction to cover war costs funded in previous years by supplementals (\$14.8 billion). The remainder of the bill provides only a 1% increase.

This is a good bill. It provides the resources that are needed to help restore and rebuild our economy and I ask my colleagues to support it.

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