

order to strike them out, to at least eliminate them. We can't do that here because this is not a conference report. This is an amendment between the Houses.

We have had that before. Rules are only as good as your willingness to enforce them, and we have seen a pattern of unwillingness to enforce the rules or to seek ways around them. Now, some will stand up and brag and say, Hey, we have 40 percent fewer earmarks here than we had 2 years ago. They will say we have 40 percent fewer, the dollar value is down. Well, if you look at last year, we have, I think the figure is, about 400 percent more earmarks than last year. It is hardly, hardly a mark of fiscal discipline to have 9,200 earmarks in this bill when you have already had 2,000 pass in the defense bill. For one, that is not a 40 percent reduction, and two, it is about a 400 percent addition to last year.

Let's reject this rule and reject this bill.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York, the chairwoman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, Mrs. LOWEY.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the rule and of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, specifically division J on State and Foreign Operations. Division J reflects a bipartisan, bicameral effort by Ranking Member WOLF, myself, Senator LEAHY and Senator GREGG to address our strategic priorities, national security interests and invest in development, poverty reduction and global health. I also wanted to thank Speaker PELOSI and Chairman OBEY for their knowledge and their commitment to the priorities in this bill.

Just a few highlights. For those of us who did read the bill, what do we have, 20 hours, 3,500 pages. I am sure if you all divided it up, you would have a good understanding of what is in that bill.

Some highlights: \$6.5 billion, \$796 million above the President's request, for HIV/AIDS and other global health programs; \$1.5 billion to address humanitarian emergencies, including Iraqi refugees; \$550 million for the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Darfur, funding for Liberian security sector assistance and increased assistance for Africa; an expansion of basic education, safe water, environmental programs; \$1.544 billion, 344 million above the Senate-passed level, for the Millennium Challenge Account. This funding will allow them to undertake all planned compacts and threshold programs this year. It maintains Israel's qualitative military edge. It maintains our development and security assistance to the people of Pakistan, assistance central to helping them fight al Qaeda, the Taliban and associated terrorist groups.

And I want to especially thank our staff for their tireless work in crafting the bipartisan bill, the division J of

this Consolidated Appropriations Act. This bill will help make America be more secure and improve the lives of millions around the world, and I encourage my colleagues to vote for this bill.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. I would ask my friend how many speakers she has remaining.

Ms. SUTTON. We have two speakers remaining.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. I would reserve at this time.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Texas, the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee of Military Construction, Veterans Administration and Related Agencies, Mr. EDWARDS.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, this bill sends a clear message to America's service men and women, their families and their veterans that a grateful Nation deeply respects their service and sacrifice, provides the largest increase in VA health care funding in the 77-year history of the VA. The bill also provides funds to hire 1,800 new VA claims processors to reduce the serious backlog of benefits claims and reduce the time to process them.

On the military construction side, we increased \$4.37 billion for BRAC, military construction and family housing, a 29 percent increase over last year.

I want to salute Speaker PELOSI and Chairman OBEY for making veterans and support of our military families the highest of priorities in the new Congress. Millions of America's veterans and military families will receive better health care and have a better quality of life because of their dedication to them.

I want to thank the majority subcommittee staff, an outstanding staff, the best anybody would have a right to work with, Carol Murphy, Tim Peterson, Walter Hearne, Donna Shahbaz and Mary Arnold, the outstanding minority subcommittee staff, Liz Dawson, Dena Baron, and my staffer, John Conger. I hope to offer a special note to the son of a distinguished Army soldier, Rob Nabors, Chief Clerk of the Appropriations Committee. Because of Mr. Nabors' good judgment, professionalism, calm demeanor and dedication, America's veterans and our military will benefit not just this year but for decades to come. Tonight, Mr. Nabors' father has a right to be especially proud of his son. And let me, along with that, thank Mr. WICKER for his partnership from day one in this effort.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida continues to withhold his time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

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

Mr. ANDREWS. I thank my friend for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, with governing comes responsibility. The responsible vote on this rule and this bill is "yes." The minority has talked about responsibility for the military. They are right. That is why this body and the other body passed a Defense Appropriations bill, \$459 billion to support the military. The other side talks about responsibility for reducing the deficit. They didn't reduce the deficit when they were in the majority. We are reducing it by passing a budget that puts us back on the path to a balanced budget.

We also have a responsibility to listen to the concerns that are being raised by the men and women that we represent. They are worried about gangs and drugs. So this bill puts 34 percent more money into drug courts, nearly doubles the amount of money being spent on police support programs around the country. They are worried about porous borders and people coming into the country illegally. So this bill puts 15 percent more into customs and border enforcement. They are worried about high heating costs, being unable to pay their utility bills. So this bill puts 21 percent more into the program that helps people pay their utility bills.

Finally, there is all this talk about supporting and saluting our veterans. This bill stops talking and starts acting with a request that matches that which the veterans service organizations of this country asked us for, the largest increase in veterans health care in the history of the country. The responsible vote is "yes." The irresponsible political course is to complain. Let's do the country's business, pass this rule, and pass this bill.

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Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I will be asking for a "no" vote on the previous question so that we can amend this rule and allow the House to consider a change to the rules of the House to restore accountability and enforceability to the earmark rule while closing the loopholes we have found over the last few months.

Under the current rule, so long as the chairman of a committee of jurisdiction includes either a list of earmarks contained in the bill or report, or a statement that there are no earmarks, no point of order lies against the bill. This is the same as the rule in the last Congress. However, under the rule as it functioned under the Republican majority in the 109th Congress, even if the point of order was not available on the bill, it was always available on the rule as a "question of consideration." But because the Democratic Rules Committee specifically exempts earmarks from the waiver of all points of order, they deprive Members of the ability to raise the question of earmarks on the rule or on the bill.

The earmark rule is also not applicable when the majority uses a procedure to accept "amendments between the