

and colleagues join me in praising his accomplishments and extending thanks for his service over the years on behalf of the state of Alabama and the United States of America.

TERRY will surely enjoy the well-deserved time he now has to spend with Barbara and his beloved constituents. I wish him the best of luck in all his future endeavors.

CONSOLIDATED SECURITY, DIS-
ASTER ASSISTANCE, AND CON-
TINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT,
2009

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, it is with no small amount of misgiving that I will cast my vote in favor of this Continuing Resolution today. While I know that my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee worked diligently and in good faith to fashion a responsible and responsive bill for this Congress to consider, I regret that the White House did not do the same.

First and foremost, I do not believe this document should be repealing the twenty-seven year old congressional moratoria on offshore drilling. While I—like many of my colleagues—am willing to consider new ideas for responsible development in the context of broader, forward-looking legislation like The Comprehensive American Energy Security and Consumer Protection Act this House passed last week, I do not support unrestricted drilling three miles off our coastline, and I don't believe the American people do, either. Restoring common-sense environmental safeguards and developing a genuine vision for this Nation's energy future needs to be an early action item for an OBAMA Administration and the 111th Congress.

Second, while I am gratified that this CR includes important assistance for our struggling families in the form of additional funds for Pell Grants, the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, and low income home energy assistance, I am disappointed that it does not include the kind of robust stimulus our economy clearly needs right now. It is simply astonishing that the President would threaten to veto \$50 billion for job-creating infrastructure improvements, unemployment insurance, food stamps and health care support for our states and citizens at the same time he is asking for \$700 billion to bailout Wall Street. This, too, must and will change under an OBAMA Administration and a strengthened Democratic Congress in 2009.

In spite of these and other shortcomings, we clearly must fund the federal government through the beginning of next year—and the Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bills included in this package, while not perfect, all, on balance, have my support.

Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this temporary spending measure today—mindful that Congress will be back to address its deficiencies in a few short months.

CONSOLIDATED SECURITY, DIS-
ASTER ASSISTANCE, AND CON-
TINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT,
2009

SPEECH OF

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, this is a bad week for those of us concerned over Congress' refusal to reign in federal spending. Not only are we preparing to deal with at least a multi-billion dollar bailout of the financial services sector, Congress today stands ready to add billions to the national debt by passing H.R. 2638.

I would not object to many of the items in this bill if they were offset by reductions on other, lower priority, programs. For example, I would support the disaster relief package if the package were offset by reductions in other spending, particularly reductions in our overseas commitments. Unfortunately, H.R. 2638 not only fails to reduce spending to finance disaster aid; it attaches money for the country of Georgia onto the disaster aid package. Georgia is not receiving this money because it was affected by a natural disaster but because it was involved in a military conflict with Russia—which was started by Georgia! It is an insult to the American people to divert money that could have gone to help the victims of Hurricane Ike to promote interference in a conflict that in no way threatens the security of the American people.

Another particularly objectionable part of H.R. 2638 is the section providing \$7.5 billion in loan guarantees for the auto industry. In exchange for the loans, the industry must agree to produce the type of automobiles favored by federal bureaucrats. Thus, this bill not only increases corporate welfare, it empowers federal bureaucrats to displace the judgment of consumers as to where the auto industry should concentrate its resources. As the failure of every centrally planned economy throughout history shows, when government officials usurp the decisions of consumers, workers, and entrepreneurs the result is economic stagnation.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2638 represents another missed opportunity for Congress to exercise fiscal discipline by funding the American people's priorities, such as disaster relief, by reducing spending on non-priority items, such as overseas spending. Therefore, I must oppose this bill. I hope that in the future Congress will fund items such as disaster relief by reducing spending in other areas instead of burdening future generations with more debt.

CONSOLIDATED SECURITY, DIS-
ASTER ASSISTANCE, AND CON-
TINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT,
2009

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for H.R. 2638, the Con-

tinuing Resolution, or CR, and to thank Chairman OBEY and the Democratic leadership for putting together a continuing resolution that includes a full year of funding for our troops, veterans, and first responders, while also guaranteeing continued funding for other essential Government programs.

I am especially pleased that the CR includes a \$7.5 billion appropriation to support \$25 billion in direct loans to automakers to re-tool their manufacturing facilities to produce the next generation of advanced technology vehicles. The loans will help keep jobs in Michigan and other States, and create new green jobs building new, more fuel efficient vehicles. This package will help us move quickly towards vehicles that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and I have every confidence that just like the loan guarantees to Chrysler in the 1980s these loans will be repaid to taxpayers at a profit. These loans would not be in the CR were it not for the tireless work of the entire Michigan delegation, or the strong leadership of Speaker PELOSI, Majority Leader HOYER, Senate Leader REID, Michigan Senators LEVIN and STABENOW and all the Democratic and Republican Leadership in the House and the Senate.

I am pleased that we have also provided a full year of funding for the Department of Defense. This package includes important increases for training, addresses National Guard and Reserve equipment shortfalls, so that our troops are sent into battle well prepared and well equipped. It also contains increases for military health care, and for programs that support military families.

In addition to providing for our troops overseas, this bill provides for our veterans once they have returned home by continuing to strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs. The funding provided for the VA in this bill builds upon prior efforts of the 110th Congress to provide our veterans with the health care and other benefits they deserve. In the last 3 years, Congress has increased funding for veterans' health care by \$11.8 billion. This year, Congress has provided \$47.6 billion for the VA, which is \$4.5 billion above the 2008 funding level and \$2.8 billion over the President's request. These increases will be used for improvements in veterans' medical care, including mental health treatment for veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. The increases will also be used to hire more claims processors, provide state-of-the-art prosthetics, and make important facility improvements.

This bill also provides critical homeland security funding to protect our country from terrorist attacks and to help respond to devastating natural disasters. The CR contains \$4.2 billion in grant funding for port security and first responders, increases in funding to hire 2,200 new border patrol agents, and important new oversight provisions to ensure Department of Homeland Security is spending its money wisely and implementing the findings of the 9/11 Commission. The bill also provides \$22.9 billion in emergency disaster response assistance to help the gulf coast rebuild from Hurricane Ike, help communities in the Midwest that suffered from floods, and assist those in the West that were ravaged by wildfires.

Like many of my colleagues, I had hoped that this administration would be willing to

work with Congress as we began our work on the appropriations process. Unfortunately, most other government programs are going to be temporarily funded at last year's levels until March 6, 2009, because we did not receive the kind of bipartisan cooperation required to complete work on all 13 appropriations bills. As the unemployment rate continues to rise and American families are struggling, this administration refuses to recognize that increased funding for programs such as the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, unemployment insurance and employment service operations, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, among others, is desperately needed.

Next year, Congress will have the opportunity to work with a new administration that I imagine will be more favorable to these programs, but until then I am pleased to see that some of these important programs will receive a much-needed increase. For example, this continuing resolution increases funding for student financial assistance programs by \$2.5 billion, with \$16.8 billion devoted exclusively to Pell grants. With the troubles in the financial markets, this funding is critical for students who rely on aid to finance their education. I strongly believe that higher education is the key to turning our economy around, especially in Michigan, and the fear of student aid being cut is a distraction our students and their families do not need. The increase in the Pell Grant Program will help those that need it the most, at a time when they need the help the most.

I am particularly pleased that this legislation will set an annual funding level of \$110 million for State unemployment insurance and employment service operations at the Department of Labor. As the State with the highest unemployment rate of 8.9 percent, families in Michigan know all too well the difficulty unemployed workers are having not only in finding a new job, but also receiving the critical training or assistance they need. Since this President took office Michigan has lost over 400,000 jobs. In the last 6 months alone, Michigan has lost an average of 3,820 jobs per month. Without further funding for unemployment insurance we cannot turn this trend around. We all can agree that finding a job during an economic downturn is extremely difficult. Therefore it is critical that families have the help they need to buy their groceries, pay their mortgages, and fill their gas tank until that next employer is found. I hope that as Congress turns to the economic stimulus package we can go a step further and extend unemployment benefits for States that need it the most.

This legislation also included a critical increase for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, CSFP, and the Nutrition for Women, Infants and Children, or the WIC program. Without the increase of \$23.5 million for this program, 70,000 low-income women, infants, children, and elderly citizens, would risk losing access to food. With over 70,000 citizens relying on CSFP in Michigan, this increase is critical. This is also true of the WIC program which assists over 200,000 families in Michigan each year. This legislation would increase funding for this program by \$1 billion, which will greatly help mothers and their children buy the groceries they need at a time when food prices continue to sky rocket. When the price of a gallon of milk is the same price as a gal-

lon of gas, we need to ensure that our families are not forced to choose between the two.

While Michigan families are being forced to pay more for many goods and services, one of the most painful increases has come from rising energy costs. Fortunately, this legislation includes \$5.1 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which is \$2.5 billion more than 2008 levels and will assist 2 million additional households. LIHEAP, a critical but thinly stretched program, serves nearly 560,000 homes in Michigan. This funding will help the State of Michigan in its efforts to provide as many homes as possible with home energy assistance. The need for this funding is clear. The winter months bring with them rising utility costs, and the State of Michigan has seen an additional 30,000 LIHEAP applicants between June 2007 and June 2008. In addition, this bill provides \$250 million for weatherization assistance. Around 3,000 homes in Michigan are served by projects that increase their home energy efficiency. The increased funding will allow for weatherization of approximately 100,000 homes, saving low-income families \$400 in energy costs.

One thing that is not included in this bill is an extension of the decades-old moratorium on offshore drilling. This means for the next 5 months drilling is allowed up to 3 miles off the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts and parts of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico. The citizens of Michigan's 15th Congressional District are no strangers to high gas prices; in fact, average gas prices in Michigan are among the highest in the Nation. Despite the claims of the Bush administration and its Republican Congressional allies that drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf is some sort of panacea, allowing the moratorium to expire will have little effect on rising prices at the pump. I would remind my colleagues across the aisle that the Energy Information Administration reported in 2007 that, "access to the Pacific, Atlantic, and eastern Gulf regions would not have a significant impact on domestic crude oil and natural gas production or prices before 2030." Earlier this year, Republicans obstructed legislation that would require oil companies to start drilling on the 68 million acres of Federal oil reserves which they are warehousing or lose the ability to obtain new leases. If the Republicans were really concerned with bringing down gas prices, they would have voted for a bill that would have taken action now to increase oil production.

Fortunately, under the current plan, leasing in these off-shore areas will not begin until 2012. This most certainly means that the next President and the next Congress will steer the course of our national drilling policy. If I have anything to do with it, this policy will include a framework for leasing and development that complies with environmental laws and insists on proper direction and use of revenues gained from drilling.

This legislation provides funding for critical programs and ensures our government will continue to operate until March 6, 2009. While it is disappointing that partisanship and election year politics stopped us from completing our work on all 13 regular appropriations bills this year, I am hopeful that we will quickly finish our work next March when we have better leadership from the White House and a larger majority to work with. I once again thank Speaker PELOSI, Majority Leader HOYER, and Chairman OBEY for their hard work on this im-

portant bill, and urge my colleagues to support it.

ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Madam Speaker, I regret that due to unforeseen circumstances I was unable to participate in one vote on the floor of the House of Representatives on September 24, 2008.

The vote was on H.R. 7005, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide alternative minimum tax, AMT, relief for individuals for 2008. Had I been present, I would have voted "no" on that question. AMT relief is certainly necessary, and providing it for more than 25 million families in 2008 is projected to cost more than \$60 billion over 10 years. In addition, because the AMT fix in this bill is not paid for under pay-as-you-go rules, the fix can be expected to add tens of billions more in interest costs. In contrast, the fiscally responsible version of AMT relief that the House passed earlier this year with my support would have been revenue neutral, including through the elimination of a tax subsidy that continues to be provided to major oil companies during this time of record profits for the industry. I cannot support H.R. 7005, which would add many tens of billions more to the out-of-control national debt that is approaching \$10 trillion, when a fiscally responsible and fair alternative is available.

DUNCAN HUNTER NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT-

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill.

We've all read the stories about wounded troops being forced to repay enlistment or reenlistment bonuses. Chairman SKELTON is to be commended for including a provision that ensures that any servicemember who is retired or separated for a combat-related disability will not be required to repay any portion of a bonus or other benefit. The same provision ensures that the survivor of a member who dies on active duty will likewise not have to repay any bonus or benefit their deceased loved one was entitled to. I am also pleased this bill authorizes a much needed and well deserved 3.9 percent pay raise for our troops.

Today we are also ensuring that active duty families, military retirees, and their dependents are not socked with higher TRICARE fees or co-pays by extending the prohibition on such increase. The bill also encourages beneficiaries to use preventive health services by waiving copayments for preventive services.

We've all been troubled and saddened by the increased rates of suicide among