

DISSENTING VIEWS

We take no pleasure in opposing the FY 2012 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, but the deep cuts in important environmental and natural resource programs and the breathtaking array of special interest legislative riders and funding limitations leave us no choice.

To begin with, this bill was saddled with an exceedingly low 302(b) allocation. The bill is \$2.086 billion, or 7 percent, below the FY 2011 appropriations level and \$3.818 billion, or 12.7 percent, below the President's request. While some in the majority may wear these cuts as a badge of honor, the harm to the environment and our efforts to preserve America's natural heritage are too great to ignore.

We do note and commend the work Chairman Simpson did in chairing 22 hearings and receiving testimony from numerous agency and public witnesses. We appreciate the inclusive stance taken in developing this bill and recognize the difficulties in crafting a bill within the Subcommittee's allocation. We acknowledge Chairman Simpson's efforts to protect funding for programs serving American Indians. We only wish that this protection could have been extended to other important portions of this bill.

There is perhaps no greater example of the majority's misplaced funding decisions than the cuts that would be imposed on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). After the EPA budget was cut by 16 percent in the current fiscal year, the majority is now proposing a further reduction of 18 percent in the agency's budget for next year. These cuts are meant to diminish clean air and water programs at both the Federal and State level.

The Washington Post reported on June 20, 2011 that "because the EPA passes the vast majority of its money through to the states, it has meant that these governments—not Washington—are taking the biggest hits." The cuts proposed in this bill would substantially diminish the ability of the states to carry out their responsibilities under the law.

The air we breathe and the water we drink are endangered by the funding and policy decisions made in this bill. The consequences of these decisions will be felt in communities across the nation, especially with the ever-growing backlog of clean water and safe drinking water infrastructure projects. Cuts of nearly 40 percent to the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water grant programs will only increase the backlog and leave many local communities at risk from aging or underdeveloped water and sewer systems.

We are extremely disappointed at the majority's decision to prohibit funds for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings and critical habitat designations. These are the vital first steps needed to begin the recovery process for species at risk of extinction. Under the guise of sending a signal to the authorizing committee, this bill at-

tacks the very heart of the Endangered Species Act. In fact, the bill includes funding for a multitude of expired authorizations and in addition it contains numerous legislative authorizations. But when it comes to endangered species, the ESA's expired authorization is singled out as an excuse to do nothing.

During full committee consideration, we offered an amendment to restore the language and funding for ESA listings and critical habitat designations that have been included in the bill for many years. Unfortunately, this amendment was defeated by a vote of 23–26. Ironically, the bill does allow funds to be used to downgrade species protection through de-listing or reclassification from endangered to threatened species.

Wildlife programs in general are underfunded by the bill; there are deep cuts in programs that assist in the recovery of endangered species or help prevent their listing in the first place. This short-sighted approach undercuts the protection of species that not only have significant environmental value but also great economic value. In reality, the protection of species boosts tourism in many areas; spending by hunters and fishermen brings millions of dollars to local economies.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been one of the great conservation success stories of the past 50 years, but funding in this bill for LWCF activities would be the lowest since the program was created in 1965 and it would represent a 78 percent cut from the current fiscal year. Many park and recreation areas exist today because of the funds provided by the LWCF. We owe it to present and future generations to keep faith with the original promise of the LWCF—as we deplete the oil and gas resources of the Outer Continental Shelf, we committed to use a portion of the proceeds to invest in the future of America's natural, scenic, and recreational resources.

We are blessed in this country with great natural beauty and a wealth of natural resources; we have established a conservation system for some of the best of these resources that are the envy of the world. Our national parks and forests, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas, and other conservation units deserve better than what this bill provides.

Funding for the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) exemplifies the majority's lack of appreciation for our natural heritage. The conservation system on our public lands includes national monuments, wild and scenic rivers, and national trails. Under the bill, the NLCS would be cut by one-third below the current year appropriation and 50 percent below the Obama Administration's request.

Cultural activities and institutions, while a small portion of the bill, are a vital part of our communities and they enhance our quality of life. The disproportionate size of the cuts to these programs in relation to the overall funding in the bill is deeply disconcerting. For example, in the span of three years, appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities would be reduced from \$167 million in each account in FY 2010, to \$155 million in FY 2011 and, under the majority's proposal for FY 2012, to \$135 million. This level is significantly below the amounts these agencies received 20 years ago.

Also during full committee consideration, we attempted to restore funding to three of the many programs cut by the bill. The amendment would have provided needed funding for the Superfund, Brownfields, and Indian Sanitary Facilities programs. To pay for these increases the amendment would have required highly profitable oil and gas companies to pay a greater share of the Federal Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

If our national budget is truly about shared sacrifice, we can start by asking the oil and gas companies to pay their fair share; they have profited so handsomely from the resources owned by the American public. Unfortunately, the Moran amendment failed. We regret that there are Members who would rather side with the oil and gas companies than provide potable water for Native American homes or clean up polluted sites.

The only thing more disappointing than the funding cuts is the scope and extent to which the majority has filled this bill with legislative riders and funding limitations. This is not so much a spending bill as it is a wish list for special interests. A large portion of this bill has nothing to do with deficit reduction and everything to do with carrying out an ideological agenda.

The list of special interest provisions is long: NEPA waivers, limitations on judicial review, the blocking of pollution controls, even the exposure of the Grand Canyon to the well-known hazards of uranium mining. The bill even has funding limitations on actions not being proposed by the Administration. It seems to us that special interest riders have become the new earmarks. Whole texts of legislative proposals have been included in the bill. We are struck by the sheer volume of these proposals as well as the majority's inconsistency on this matter. On one hand, they reject certain funding and authorizations for programs such as endangered species, saying the authorizing committees need to do this work; yet they turn around and add substantial legislative text claiming the Appropriations Committee needed to do this work for the authorizers. The Appropriations Committee has now become the "go-to place" for special interest provisions.

The numerous attacks on the environment in this bill are misplaced. There are those who want to make these controversies into a made-up struggle between humans and the environment. But it is a false dichotomy because we are all part of the environment and attacks on the environment are attacks on us all.

Clean air and clean water, as well as thriving plant and animal populations, are vital components of the infrastructure of our communities. Just as we need to invest in the physical infrastructure of our communities, so must we invest in our natural infrastructure.

We protect nature, not for nature's sake, but for our own sake. As the late distinguished Member of the House, Morris K. Udall, once noted: *"The more we exploit nature, the more our options are reduced, until we have only one: to fight for survival."*

Our constituents and, more importantly, our environment deserve better than what this bill is offering. We oppose the FY 2012 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill and recommend our colleagues do likewise.

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JIM MORAN.

