

Full Committee Ranking Member Rep. Norm Dicks

June 19, 2012

As Prepared For Delivery

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

"I want to begin by congratulating the Chairman and Ranking Member for putting together a decent bill even when the allocation was well below where it should be given the vast transportation and housing needs in our country. I do appreciate that our Majority has made an effort to protect several important transportation and low-income housing programs.

"I strongly approve of the Majority's decision to fully fund the President's request for the vitally important Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program which provides much needed long-term housing to homeless veterans. With nearly 70,000 of our veterans homeless on any given night, this next round of 10,000 vouchers will move us forward in our goal of ending veterans' homelessness.

"The bill also provides a welcome increase to Amtrak which will help intercity passenger rail investments. It continues important investments in the FAA's NextGen air traffic control modernization effort. I also strongly support the Majority's decision to fully fund Community Development Block Grants at the President's request and sustain funding at current levels for Housing Counseling Assistance.

"However, not all programs have been spared. Capital Investment Grants, which fund subway, light rail and commuter rail systems, are \$139 million below last year's level and \$418 million below the budget request. No funds are provided for Choice Neighborhoods, which represents another lost opportunity to rebuild blighted public housing while putting construction workers back to work in struggling communities.

"And due to House Republican infighting over the surface transportation bill and their unwillingness to compromise in conference negotiations, our Republican Majority has had to resort to place-holder language in this bill for several important transportation provisions, not least of which, the funding level for the federal highway program. The reckless partisan brinkmanship of House Republicans on this traditionally bipartisan infrastructure bill is appalling.

"Unemployment in the construction sector is at 14.2% at a time when our nation's roads and bridges are in desperate need of repairs. As we are witnessing in Europe, austerity is not working and shouldn't be replicated here. Unfortunately, House Republicans still haven't retracted from their contradictory 'cut and grow' economic agenda.

"I'd encourage my Republican colleagues to take a lesson from the Appropriations Committee where we can still get our work done and where willingness to reach bipartisan compromise is still considered a virtue, not a flaw.

"In closing, I remain dedicated to working with my good friend, Chairman Rogers, to advance this year's appropriations bills and get our Committee back to regular order. We have already made significant progress on this year's appropriations bills and I hope we can continue this momentum.

"With that I yield back."