

**House Report 107-103 - DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND
RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL, 2002**

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

In submitting these views, the Minority at the outset wishes to express its appreciation for the cooperative and bi-partisan manner in which the Interior Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2002 has been handled by the Chairman and the Majority. The Minority has been consulted throughout the process and believes that its views are reflected in many aspects of the bill. While we do not agree with every recommendation and continue to work for improvements in several areas, in its entirety we believe this Interior bill is one which Members from both parties can support.

The Minority is particularly pleased to join with the Majority in support of the sections of this bill which fully fund the new Conservation Trust Fund created last year by the Congress (title VIII of the Fiscal Year 2001 Interior Appropriations Act). This new funding structure was created as our commitment to significant increases for preservation of this country's natural and cultural resources. It expands programs which support critical land acquisition where lands are threatened by development, accelerates efforts to deal with maintenance needs of our parks, refuges and forests, enhances efforts to protect wildlife, and expands federal support for other conservation and preservation needs. By providing the full \$1,320 million authorized this year for conservation programs in the Interior bill, the Congress maintains its commitment to the \$12 billion in funding anticipated over the first six years of this initiative. This is roughly twice the amount which would likely have been provided under previous financing structures. We support the Committee's decision to maintain funding for the original programs under the conservation program while at the same time providing increases for Administration initiatives including an increase of \$60 million for Land and Water Conservation State Grants and \$60 million for two new private landowner incentive programs.

The Minority is also very supportive of the levels in the bill for the weatherization and State energy assistance grants programs. The \$311 million recommended, a \$120 million increase over 2001, will lead to significant savings in energy as additional homes, schools and hospitals are insulated. This program is critical to lower income families who often live in poorly insulated houses and who have seen the cost of heating double in the last year.

The bill wisely restores many of the cuts proposed by the Bush Administration in a number of critical areas. This includes the decision to restore approximately \$300 million to the Energy Conservation and Fossil Energy research accounts at the Department of Energy. These programs

support research which can significantly ameliorate the energy crisis identified in President Bush's National Energy Policy. In his recent report to Congress on energy, Vice President Cheney has identified America's 'unrivaled technology' and its 'human creativity' as critical tools to deal with a long term energy crisis which has already affected every American and which seems almost certain to get worse. But, unfortunately, the Vice President's rhetoric on energy does not seem matched by the President's budget, a fiscal proposal which significantly reduces our commitment to energy research. While the Minority supports the efforts of the Majority to at least restore energy programs to last year's level, we do not believe that getting back to last year's funding levels is satisfactory. During Committee consideration of the bill we unsuccessfully offered an amendment to add an additional \$200 million for research in four critical areas. These included more efficient vehicles and buildings, plentiful and affordable electricity, less reliance on foreign oil, and technology to ameliorate the effects of global warming. As the bill proceeds through the legislative process, the Minority will continue to look for opportunities to expand energy research.

While we have in these views attempted to indicate the many areas in which we are supportive of the bill, we must, however, express our consternation regarding the continuing efforts of the Majority to hold down funding for America's cultural agencies--the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Office of Museum Services. These agencies, which finance the country's small but critical efforts in support of cultural education and preservation, were cut by more than 40 percent in 1995 and for the most part have yet to recover. The NEA is funded in this bill at a level of \$105 million, \$65 million below the 1995 level and in real dollars a reduction of almost half. The appropriations for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Office of Museum Services are similarly inadequate in this bill. The continuing policy of punishing these agencies because of historical management and policy disputes ignores the successful efforts of both the NEA and the NEH to address concerns raised six years ago by the Majority. Reforms include a significant broadening of grant support to more States and communities, an expanded and more publicly responsive advisory council, and controls to limit funding for controversial programs. We in the Minority believe it is time to recognize the success of these reform efforts and the quality of the programs being supported by providing increased funding. Unfortunately our efforts to add \$25 million in Committee to the budgets for these agencies was not successful. The Minority will continue to look for sources of funding for our cultural agencies as the bill moves to the House floor.

There are other areas beyond energy research and the cultural agencies where the Minority would support additional funds. In particular Indian health and education are high priority areas which need increased resources. But, as stated at the beginning of these views, we believe this legislation in balance is a good bill produced through an open and bi-partisan process. We

believe it deserves an `aye' vote at final passage.

David Obey.
Norman Dicks.

