

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Fiscal Year 2012 Conference report for the Agriculture, Commerce-Justice-Science, and Transportation-HUD appropriations bill.

However, I regret the process that brought this bill to the floor. A full one third of this bill, the Transportation-HUD appropriations, has never been considered by the House before. This bill was not written in an open process and members were not allowed to offer amendments to improve the bill.

I am pleased that this bill included the funding I fought for to help our local residents recover and rebuild from the flooding which caused so much destruction in New Jersey. This bill provides \$2.3 billion in needed disaster assistance to ensure Central New Jersey's businesses and home owners have the resources they need to mitigate the damage and put in place preventive measures in advance of future disasters.

Further, this bill rejects the dangerous attempt by House Republicans to end the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and provides the program with almost \$200 million to help local police departments keep our communities safe despite the local budget constraints. While this represents a steep cut in funding from last year, these funds will help some local departments who are having to make tough decisions about firing police officers for a lack of resources. Going forward, we must do far more to get more cops back on the beat.

In these difficult times, this bill also denies an attempt to reduce funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC). SNAP and WIC help our fellow Americans during their most difficult times with some food assistance to help make ends meet. As millions of our fellow Americans are struggling in this difficult economy, this bill provides \$105 billion for domestic food assistance programs, an 18 percent increase from last year, to make sure they are at least able to keep some food on the table.

As a research scientist, I have long supported the important role of federal investment in basic research. I am glad this bill increases funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) to \$7 billion, an increase of \$173 million. It also provides the necessary funding to continue the development of the James Webb Space Telescope that will allow researchers to find the first galaxies and help create jobs now. Further, this bill provides the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office a 29 percent increase in funding to ensure that our Nation's inventors are able to get their

ideas to market and help grow our economy.

I am also pleased that this bill makes needed changes to ensure that the maximum loan limits for the Federal Housing Administration are maintained at a level necessary for areas with high cost housing like we have in New Jersey. With the housing market still weak, this will help provide some necessary stability and support for prospective home owners.

It is unfortunate that this bill freezes funding for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission which is tasked with implementing many of the commonsense Wall Street reforms we approved last year. Without additional funding the CFTC will struggle to prevent future financial crises, and not have the resources needed to fight oil speculation which is increasing the cost of gas at the pump.

Finally, I regret that this bill contains a number of funding restrictions that will limit our Nation's law enforcement officers from combating gun trafficking and prevent sensible regulations from being established to prevent guns from falling into the hands of criminals. Yet again the NRA has been given an early Christmas present with the inclusion of these special giveaways tucked into this bill without a vote or any debate on them.

This is not a perfect bill but it prevents a looming government shutdown. Further, it provides funding increases for a number of critical programs and rejects many of the dangerous cuts contained in the funding bills that the House previously approved. I support passage of this bill despite its pessimistic view of what America can achieve through ambitious funding of the programs covered under the bill.