



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

June 25, 2009
(House)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 2996 – Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Appropriations Act, 2010

(Rep. Obey, D-Wisconsin)

The Administration strongly supports passage of H.R. 2996, making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010.

The bill makes efficient and effective investments that protect and enhance America's natural and historical jewels, from our forests to our lakes to our monuments. It also funds critical activities to ensure the health of the American people, the environment in which we live, and the modernized 21st Century infrastructure that is vital to our economy.

The Administration would like to take this opportunity to share additional views regarding specific provisions in the Committee's version of the bill.

Administration Priorities

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Administration commends the Committee for including the full request of \$475 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to restore the ecology and environment of the Great Lakes. The Administration also appreciates the Committee's increased support for the Water Security Initiative, but urges the Congress to fully fund the remaining two pilot projects. The President's request would finish funding the cooperative agreements with the cities and allow EPA to transition to data analysis, dissemination of best practices, and close out of the program. The lessons learned from these pilot projects would provide all water systems nationwide with tools to effectively protect their critical water infrastructure.

Wildland Fires. The Administration appreciates the strong support of the Committee in providing requested funding amounts for wildfire suppression operations and the new Wildland Fire Suppression Contingency Reserve of the Forest Service and Department of the Interior. The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress on safe, cost-effective, and accountable results in managing wildfire.

Indian Health Service. The Administration appreciates the Committee's support for the President's initiative to expand health care services through the Indian Health Service.

Department of the Interior

The Administration appreciates the Committee's support for nearly all of the priorities identified

in the President's Budget. However, the Administration urges the Congress to provide the \$30 million increase requested for programs to help teach youth about conservation through outdoor activities, such as hunting and fishing. The Administration is also concerned about efforts to shift forward coal bonus bid payments that would otherwise be received in future years.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The Administration appreciates that the Committee supports the proposed termination of diesel grants, termination of a homeland security grant program for local water infrastructure that has achieved its purpose, and other proposed reductions. However, the Committee cancels \$142 million in unobligated balances from the State and Tribal Assistance Grants account, which is \$132 million more than the request. The Congress is urged not to exceed the proposed cancellation level. Some unobligated balances are required to address active lawsuits or appeals; a cut of this magnitude could create liabilities for EPA. Furthermore, it would harm State environmental programs during a time of fiscal constraint because it would reduce funding that States use to operate their delegated implementation of the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and other environmental programs. In addition, the Administration is concerned about the level of reductions to administrative functions and information technology which provide the backbone for all of EPA's work to safeguard public health and the environment.

Department of Agriculture (USDA)

The Administration is pleased that the Committee funds the President's Protecting National Forests Initiative. However, the Administration does not believe that funds for this initiative should be merged with the existing Legacy Road and Trail Remediation program, for which separate funding was requested. The Administration urges the Congress to remove the merger of funds in order to permit greater flexibility in protecting natural resources and maintaining facilities.

The Administration appreciates the Committee's support of funding for the USDA Forest Service portion of the President's Conserving New Lands Initiative but urges the Congress to fully fund the Forest Legacy program component.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

The Administration appreciates the Committee's support for this national performing arts center and memorial to President John F. Kennedy. However, the Committee's version of the bill adds \$2.5 million above the requested amount for a program to train arts managers throughout the United States. This program, like all other educational and performance programs at the Center, is currently funded through private donations. The Federal role in the Center has for many years been restricted to operation, maintenance, and capital repair of the presidential monument, and appropriating funds for this program would enlarge the Federal role, disrupting what is currently an effective public-private partnership.

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