

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on the rule, and I appreciate her leadership dealing with the critical issues of arts funding and for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

I look forward later today to being part of debate, and I hope amendment approval that will move us back in the direction that we need to go. But I too am a little frustrated in the context of billions of dollars that we are hemorrhaging with red ink where we seem to be able to find all sorts of resources for things that are suboptimal in some cases, to say the least, but certainly not the highest of priorities, that we are scrambling here for less than \$14 million that has such a vital connection to our communities.

I would hope that as our Members come to the floor to deal with the debate on this amendment and the final vote that they have a chance to look back at the records in their own offices of the dedicated men and women who are part of the arts councils, who are part of the local councils for the humanities. To consider the incredible mileage that is extracted from a few small dollars that benefit primarily the rural and outlying areas of our State, not necessarily the large cities like Seattle, New York City or even Portland, Oregon. Larger cities have a higher level of programming. It is the smaller communities that benefit. It is a tragedy that we are not meeting even what the President had requested.

I also am pleased to follow my good friend from Washington who has worked so hard for so many years to keep our eye on the ball on the investment we need for critical parks infrastructure. Our national parks are part of the infrastructure every bit as much as our highways and our airports. I appreciated what he did with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Regula) fighting in tough difficult budget times. I am hopeful that we will be able to honor the hard work here to see if there is something in the course of the amendment process and as the budget is working its way through the process here this year that we not turn our back on America's treasures.

Last, but by no means least, I must acknowledge the hard work that the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Dicks) did with the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. Obey), the gentleman from California (Mr. George Miller), the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. Young), to deal with the land and water conservation fund. This has been an area that had been ignored for decades. It had been, frankly, a bipartisan shame that we did not fully fund the land and water conservation fund. These were resources that have such an important impact on States and localities. We reached a deal, as the "little CARA" was set aside. We have an opportunity to keep faith with the spirit of that agreement, and I am hopeful in the course of the budget process that we are able to do so.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's comments on the conservation amendment, but I also want to underline one other thing he said that I forgot to say, and that is that the President's budget requested an \$18 million increase for the National Endowment for the Arts and for the National Endowment for the Humanities, and neither one of those has been accomplished. I think we have increased Humanities by \$3 million, but this is below the President's budget request; and Mrs. Bush, who I think is a very thoughtful first lady, has been a proponent of these two increases. So I was somewhat surprised that it was decided to take out the money for these important programs, especially since they were requested by the first lady.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's underlining that.

And I would just conclude by saying that I hope in the spirit of bipartisan accommodation that has accompanied much of the work with the arts, with the parks infrastructure, and with CARA that we are able to give our affirmative vote to preserving the integrity of them in the course of this budget process.