

Mr. Chairman, it is very hard for me to disagree with the gentlewoman from Jacksonville, Florida (Mrs. Fowler), my good friend. I had the opportunity to work with her constituents for years and admire their concern and their interest. But with all due respect, I have a little difficulty with some of the characterization.

I think it was clear when President Clinton signed the legislation in effect in the last session that he was not agreeing to it. In fact, my reading of that indicated that there were grave reservations on the part of the administration.

I am here, I guess, because of my grave concerns about the process that have been raised by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Gilchrest). The way that we handle water resources and development in disaster-prone areas in this country is itself a disaster.

Despite spending over \$40 billion, for instance, to prevent flooding since 1960, flood-related costs adjusted for inflation are about triple what they were in the early 1950s, before we started the program. Total Federal disaster payments between 1977 and 1993 topped \$100 billion. Disaster costs have increased 550 percent in the last 10 years.

Recently, this last week, we were here debating remedy to the Salton Sea, which was itself part of an engineering failure on the part of efforts to try and impact the environment. I appreciate that disasters are not always predictable, but too much development occurs directly in harm's way with the taxpayer footing the bill.

In 1982, as the gentleman from Maryland outlined, the Reagan administration and a Democratic Congress passed the Coastal Barrier Resources Act. I am not going to go through the details that the gentleman from Maryland pointed out, but it has saved the taxpayers an estimated \$11 billion, keeping Federal investment out of millions of acres of barrier islands and coastline.

Mr. Chairman, if people want to build where God does not want them, then they ought to step up and pay the price, not the American taxpayer. The bill before us invites Federal investments back into the path of disaster.

I personally have reservations in terms of dealing with this as a technical amendment in

terms of a rider. There is substantive legislation that has been considered in the past in the Committee on Resources. I would like that dealt with in that fashion. I too have reviewed the various parcels. It seems to me that there was, in fact, an argument made that they were in fact properly categorized.

But it seems to me that what we need to do on this floor is to be more aggressive in the protection of these issues that protect the taxpayer. And, in fact, we should be pushing back, whether it is water reclamation projects in the West, mining costs, beach nourishment, disaster relief, flooding, levees. Time and time again the taxpayer has been stuck with the bill. We have been very, very slow to adjust our policies over time. And I am reluctant to see us this evening, through the process of the rider process, expand that. I would rather this go back to substantive committees.