

Statement
by
Chairwoman Marge Roukema
Markup of
HR 2941, The Brownfields Redevelopment Enhancement Act of 2001
March 14, 2002

Today we are here to markup the Brownfields Redevelopment Enhancement Act of 2001, (HR 2941) which is legislation that will give communities across the country the tools they need to redevelop brownfields sites and return them to productive use. By approving this bill, we will greatly improve the program that HUD uses to award brownfields grants.

Congressman Gary G. Miller, the Vice Chairman of this Subcommittee, has worked hard to draft this bill. He and his staff spent many hours consulting with HUD and with outside organizations in order to find ways for HUD to improve its brownfields program. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney was an original co-sponsor of the bill and likewise deserves our thanks for her leadership role on this issue.

A great deal of the work they have done is reflected in the amendment in the nature of a substitute that Congressman Miller will be offering this morning. This amendment reflects the best efforts of the majority, minority and HUD – all of whom worked together to make improvements to the bill that was introduced last September.

My colleagues should note, as background, that an estimated 500,000 brownfields exist across the country. Of these, over 12,600 are in my home state of New Jersey. These are sites where redevelopment is complicated by potential environmental contamination, but that are less seriously contaminated than those covered under Superfund. No matter how they are classified, these are eyesores that should be cleaned up on land that should be put to better use.

As you all know, the Bush Administration has already made brownfields a priority and worked with this Congress to pass the “Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act” late in the last session. That bill addressed the liability issue and the role of the EPA. This bill addresses the redevelopment issue and the role of HUD, which will serve to make brownfields a great deal more attractive to potential developers. In the process, our green spaces are much more likely to be spared.

The changes that are included in this amendment are changes that have been worked out and agreed to by both the majority and the minority.

First, this amendment includes a findings and purposes section.

Second, we have added language to ensure that redevelopment projects are not over-leveraged, and to ensure that BEDI grant money is not used to fund the pilot program.

We have also added language guaranteeing that the objectives of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 apply to grants administered under this bill and to ensure that grants are used for CDBG eligible activities.

This amendment also:

- Extends appropriations for brownfields through fiscal year 2007, rather than through fiscal year 2004.
- Modifies the pilot program to allow cities greater flexibility to use HUD grants as leverage for redevelopment loans.
- Renames the pilot program to the “Pilot Program for National Redevelopment of Brownfields.”
- Removes a provision stipulating that brownfields redevelopment activities would not count against a community’s CDBG caps.
- Removes a brownfields study requirement.

Finally, this amendment makes several minor technical changes requested by HUD. None of these changes will affect the primary purpose of the bill: the de-linking of brownfields grants from Section 108 loan guarantees. The current requirement that cities must leverage their CDBG funds in order to receive brownfields grants has discouraged many of our smaller communities from applying for these grants. As we heard at last Wednesday’s hearing from numerous witnesses, this de-linking will be a valuable contribution to the goal of redeveloping brownfields sites across the country.

This bill represents a positive step forward in providing communities across the country with the tools they need to cleanup and redevelop brownfields sites.

I think that it bears mentioning that this bill is supported by:

National Association of Realtors
National Association of Homebuilders
Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition
National Community Development Association
U.S. Conference of Mayors
National Association of Counties
National Association for County Community and Economic
Development
Mortgage Bankers Association

Again, I want to commend Mr. Miller and Mrs. Maloney for their leadership on this important legislation and now I yield 5 minutes to the Ranking Minority Member, Congressman Frank.