

Mr. Speaker, I came to Congress committed to having the Federal Government be a better partner in helping our communities be more livable, our families safe, healthy, and economically secure. Among the most important areas for the new Administration to reexamine is the quality of life, the livability of our enlisted people, and the relationship that the military plays in making all our communities more livable.

There are tremendous opportunities to continue some good things that started in the last Administration, and for the President and Secretary Rumsfeld to move even further. The bottom line is that the United States Department of Defense should be a leader at home and abroad, improving the quality of life for the men and women in uniform and their families.

The Department of Defense should be a world leader in building livable communities, whether it is improving environmental protection, sustainable development or partnerships with citizens at all levels.

There are some outstanding examples taking place within a stone's throw of our Nation's capitol.

The Navy Yard renovation is leading the revitalization of the District of Columbia's Southeast waterfront. It is recycling materials and land, developing green buildings, and proving that you can improve the quality of military life while making a difference for the community.

The Department of Defense is managing a massive problem dealing with the same Endangered Species Act that confronts American communities all across the country. To cite just one example, there are 17 endangered species that have been identified at Camp Pendleton, the only large green space remaining between Los Angeles and San Diego.

The Department of Defense is managing 12,000 properties that are listed on or are eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is the largest inventory in the United States and slated to grow even larger because over the next 30 years another 70,000 buildings will reach 50 years of age and require evaluation.

In fact, our military is the largest manager of infrastructure in the world with over \$500 billion in bridges, hospitals, roads and docks. One of the most challenging examples is to be found in the area of housing. There are over 300,000 units of military housing; and sadly, as President Bush is discovering today, two-thirds of them are substandard. There is an opportunity to harness new techniques in partnership with the private sector to make sure that we retain valued personnel by treating their families right with homes we can all be proud of.

I hope this Congress will step forward to help the military in other ways to promote livable communities. One of the most important ways would be to increase the necessary funding in order to accelerate the timetable for cleaning up unexploded ordnance, the bombs and shells that did not go off as intended and litter the landscape in over a thousand locations across the United States. There is a legacy of bases, bombing sites, and storage depots from Martha's Vineyard to Camp Bonneville in metropolitan Oregon.

Even around the American University campus right here in Washington, DC there is unexploded ordnance and nerve gas and that has been here since World War I. We cannot wait 500 years to clean these sites up, which is the time that will be required if we follow the current pattern.

The President should include a separate line item in the budget he submits to us, and Congress should focus on it and provide adequate funding. Another simple but powerful step would be for the Department of Defense and, say, the Post Office to obey the same rules as the rest of America. The presumption should be that absent a specific finding of urgent military necessity, our Department of Defense meets the same building codes, environmental standards, and transportation requirements.

Last, but by no means least is the opportunity to keep the mission if not the team intact at the Department of Defense for the military to provide true environmental leadership. There was an outstanding team that was assembled in the last administration: Sherri Wasserman Goodman, Randall Yim, Sandy Apgar, to name just a few. These people have doubtless moved on, but there is a lot to be learned from them, and we need to make sure that the mission and the techniques are retained and enhanced.

Getting and retaining the highest quality fighting force in the world requires that we treat them

and their families right. It is important to make the military a full partner in livable communities using the ingenuity, the brain power, and the sense of mission and devotion to duty that are the hallmark of our armed forces.