The clock is ticking for unhoused people staying in San Francisco’s shelter-in-place (SIP) hotels.

The 25 SIP hotels that have sheltered over 2,000 homeless people during the COVID-19 pandemic are scheduled to close operations, a few at a time, according to a plan published in June by the City’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH).

Hotel Diva on Post Street, which the City bought and will convert into permanent supportive housing as part of the state’s Project Homekey program, already closed down on August 1. Forty people who had been staying there moved to other SIPs, while five were pushed back onto the streets, and two were sent to medical facilities. One other tenant, who refused to leave, was arrested for an outstanding warrant.

Scheduled for September closures are the Chancellor, Epik, Tilden and Union Square hotels.

Under the HSH plan, the hotels and nonprofit organizations contracted by the city to run them will be given 90 days’ notice before closure.

SIP residents will receive notice one week after the providers, according to the communications plan that HSH shared with the Local Homeless Coordinating Board (LHCB). The remaining hotels will receive closure timelines later in the year.

Meanwhile, reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for non-congregate pandemic housing are scheduled to end on September 30, the final day of the federal fiscal year.

While the City and the federal government have a definite timeline, the future of people staying at SIPs is hazy. The SIP hotels have been operating since April 2020. Last December, amid intense public outcry the City had to scrap a plan to phase out the SIPs despite surging COVID-19 cases only after getting state funding to keep the program afloat and.

Now, as the City faces a surge of the more transmissible coronavirus delta variant, it’s considering demobilizing the SIP program once more. But one critical question still lingers: Where do the residents go?

At a June meeting of the LHCB, then-interim HSH director Abigail Stewart-Kahn told the board that hotel staff were assessing residents for possible housing exits under the City’s coordinated entry system. She said that many residents weren’t yet “document ready”—that is, having ID, birth certificates and other paperwork that would expedite their re-housing process.

That’s not what SIP residents have been telling RK Johnson, a shelter client advocate for the Erection Defense Collaborative. Based on their accounts, Johnson disputes the City’s assertion that residents weren’t document ready. Many tenants have papers, she said, but the City has been slow to place them in housing, so it has been shuffling them around.

“Alot of people are being told that they haven’t been placed into housing, so they’re being taken into another SIP hotel and also being relocated in congregate shelters,” she said.

Tenants have also been receiving between two days’ and two weeks’ notice—far short of the 90 days HSH is giving SIP providers and more importantly far short of the notice tenants are supposed to receive. They are also given the boot with inadequate referrals to services.

“When they let them know [about closings], they give a dinky little paper with a list of resources, but the resources don’t exist because of COVID,” she said. “If it’s not operating at full...
WHEN TENTS ARE REMOVED, THERE’S NO WAY HOME

Jennifer Friedenbach

The Healthy Streets Operations Center (HSOC) grew out of the Mission Police Station in January 2018, with the goal of clearing all the tents from the Mission District. It almost succeeded in that endeavor. But rather than reducing homelessness, the number of tents on the streets actually increased in the district, as did the misery of those who had their flimsy shelter and the bit of dignity that tents provided ripped away.

This August, Department of Emergency Management (DEM) director Mary Ellen Carroll gave the quarterly HSOC presentation to the Local Homeless Coordinating Board. Carroll painted a picture of a team whose primary goal is to help unhoused people, using a service-led model driven by public health. She described a process of removing tents that involves gathering data on unhoused people, offering shelter alternatives and identifying those unhoused community members in need of more serious medical attention.

The Coalition on Homelessness has been present at many, if not most, of these operations since the inception of HSOC, acting as legal observers and peer support for those being displaced. What we have seen time and again is that HSOC’s operating procedures are not being followed. But even if they were, HSOC’s approach is highly problematic, trauma-inducing and likely to exacerbate homelessness. Because we have seen the impact of these operations on our most vulnerable community members, the Coalition on Homelessness is calling for the immediate dismantling of HSOC.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

For decades, homelessness has been used as a political wedge in San Francisco elections, with politicians using enforcement to draw more conservatives and business interests with politicians using enforcement to draw the ire of elite San Franciscans, rather than being allowed the freedom to connect those most in need with the shelter options they want.

HSOC started as a police-led, complaint-driven coordination of city departments and resources designed to lower tent counts and break up large encampments. Later, in early 2019, the operations moved out of the police department and into the Department of Emergency Management, which oversees 911 response and leads the City’s COVID-19 response.

While HSOC’s leadership changed departments, its core purpose of moving people along hasn’t changed. For unhoused community members, the cycle of being shuffled around by the City and having belongings trashed continues uninterrupted. These operations make it harder for people to find places that are well lit, or near people with whom they feel safe. For people with no other options, tents offer a modicum of shelter and privacy, and take the edge off the indignity of living in public spaces. While HSOC sometimes offers services before clearing encampments, it often has very little to offer, and relies on police or Public Works to simply clear an area. After an area is cleared, HSOC often removes bathrooms and constructs barriers to prevent people from returning, further limiting safe sleeping areas for individuals who have no alternative.

This is an inherently flawed approach. While HSOC frequently boasts its success in reducing the number of tents in San Francisco, this success is not reflected in exits from homelessness. Tents are not people, and removing tents does nothing to change the housing status of the individual who slept in it, and it leaves people on the street with even less protection from the harsh conditions under which they live.

Beyond this, HSOC has also significantly changed how the City allocates resources. In order to justify its operations, HSOC reserves shelter beds and housing resources for people whose encampments are swept. This means that the thousands of unsheltered San Franciscans who are not targeted by a sweep, but are in a better position to accept available services, are shut out of those beds. These resources are often directed to the most politically important areas, rather than those most in need.

continues on page 6...
Susan Griffin was spammed the physical hazards of homelessness, thanks in part to her seven-month stay at the Chancellor Hotel.

Displaced from her housing after an illness, Griffin spent a couple of months couch surfing and occasionally staying at hotels. Through connections at her church and the SF Homeless Outreach Team, she secured a room at the Chancellor.

"If I hadn't gotten into the SIP, I would have been outside," she said.

While at the hotel, Griffin worked as a receptionist at H&R Block during tax season. Between her earnings from the tax preparation firm and her Social Security payments, Griffin was able to save enough money to move into an apartment on Van Ness Avenue.

Griffin learned in November of the City’s initial closure plan that was eventually shelved, but there was also scuttlebutt among hotel residents of possible housing available.

"The rumor was that we were getting housing no matter what," but there was no guarantee of a private bathroom like she had at the hotel — a step down from the SIP, she said.

"You’re getting housing of some sort, but it was a homelessness shelter type of situation. That was something I was not interested in doing," she said.

The offer would’ve been to move to a single-residency occupancy hotel, she recalled. Like shelters, SROs fit the City and state’s definition for congregate sites, which are considered high-risk environments. COVID outbreaks in SROs occurred in the spring of 2020.

It certainly would be a far cry from Chancellor, a historic boutique hotel built for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, located along a cable car line and around the corner from Union Square. On its website, Chancellor touts a menu of 12 different types of pillows for guests’ comfort.

Griffin might have dodged a bullet by moving into an apartment on her own. Compared with others experiencing chronic homelessness, Griffin had a relatively smooth entry into housing, but still her homeless episode was marked with uncertainty.

"It was frightening," she said. "I was afraid of not having any sort of roof over my head. It was scary, frightening to be vulnerable."

Mr. Gutierrez told Street Sheet that he arrived in San Francisco with a small boy’s dreams of moving to the big city. He doesn’t want his real name or his birthplace to be published, because would be employers have passed him over when they learned of his unhoused status.

Mr. Gutierrez, 30, moved from the East Coast in 2019. He had several jobs doing kitchen work, construction and window washing. Last spring, the Homeless Outreach Team found him living in a tent on Turk and Jones streets and referred him to the Tilden Hotel.

Since living at Tilden, Mr. Gutierrez has enrolled in job-readiness programs at Code Tenderloin and Downtown Streets Team. He is also focusing on earning his GED certificate and eventually becoming a caseworker or social worker.

"Since I’ve been at the hotel, I’ve been trying to find myself and how to better myself," he said.

Less than one-half mile from his former encampment, Tilden seems a world away. It’s near Union Square, and offers amenities found in most tourist hotels, such as concierge service and a gym.

News of the hotel’s impending August 15 closure came to Mr. Gutierrez in a note last month. Still, he’s optimistic about a housing opportunity where he could get a subsidy covering half of his rent. As of press time, he didn’t know yet where the housing would be or his move-in date, but he said he hopes to remain in the City.

"I’m trying not to leave San Francisco, because I got a lot of opportunities. I’m still going to chase my goals because I’ll be rewarded for my patience," he said. "There’s always a solution to everything if you want to find it."
Emily's wide range of image making skills and fashion sensitivity adds to our photos a subtle touch of glamour. She keeps fashion and product images true to life yet with a high-end commercial look. Emily's work has been featured in Vogue Business, The San Francisco Chronicle/SFGate, The Guardsman, Etc Magazine, The Green Queen Magazine, amongst others.

Austen Zombres, 33, originally from Sonoma, ca. After exploring many mediums, settled on hand cut recycled collage about 10 years ago. Not only for the clean lines and bright colors, but for its sustainability and challenge. “Recycled collage, no paint or pen used. All lines and colors hand cut from paper and cardboard found in San Francisco.” Working with these self-imposed guidelines: 1) Cardboard and paper must have no other practical use. 2) Must be discarded or will be discarded. 3) No paint, pen, or pencil in the final piece of art. With few necessities, glue, and razor blades, the low cost of production is a key factor allowing me to afford the city I love. Bay Area culture and 90s nostalgia fill my arts, as well as local flora and fauna.

We have over 200 pieces from local artists who have generously donated purchasing art. Moreover, we will have over half a dozen raffle prizes in Botanical Gardens, as well as a COH Swag bag which includes all of our newest merchandise (also available for individual sale) including COH branded hoodies, STREET SHEET face masks, and new COH iron on patches and enamel pins!

Show your support for the Coalition on Homelessness and enjoy this wonderful event as we reconnect in resilience. Registration is free and you can start viewing art today!

For registration for ArtAuction21 please scan the QR code OR visit this site: https://one.bidpal.net/cohartauction21/
will be hosting our 21st Annual Art Auction! To keep each other safe the to bid on the hundreds of beautiful art pieces on display. ArtAuction21 has which accommodate a variety of budgets.

ion dedicated to the elimination of homelessness and its social, political, ices of some of the most disenfranchised San Franciscans lead the fight influx of over a billion dollars to San Francisco’s homeless response system pite a very difficult year, we have accomplished so much together. This year $1.1 billion in funding for homeless services including hundreds of housing emeranent affordable housing for our most vulnerable residents.

ed their talent and art to our cause and ask you to match their generosity in cluding a 20 person wine tasting at Total Wine & More, tickets to the SF

Title: Petro Park (2015) Artist: Lauren Jade Szabo
Lauren Jade Szabo is a Los Angeles born artist who lives and works in Oakland, CA. She graduated with a BFA in Illustration from California College of the Arts with distinction, and received an MFA Fellowship from San Francisco Art Institute for graduate study in Painting, completed in 2018. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is in private collections in Europe and the United States. Szabo currently exhibits with SFMOMA Artist’s Gallery and teaches Painting in the public education department at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Title: Street Beat 1 (2019) Artist: Hunter Ridenour
Hunter Ridenour is a San Francisco based visual artist working in photography and collage exploring themes of the challenges being faced by many residents such as housing insecurity, the inequality of power in city government and human connection. Most recently his work focuses on the challenge of confronting toxic masculinity, misogyny and how to connect with men emotionally. He is currently pursuing his M.F.A. in photography at San José State University graduating May 2022.

Title: In Bar (2021) Artist: Doug Rhodes
I believe art changes our perceptions of the people and world around us, broadening our perspectives in ways that cultivate greater respect for humanity and nature. I work mostly with acrylics, but lately I have been mixing photography and other media into my paintings, using real world subjects to create images of worlds I imagine. Currently, I find myself depicting humanity coming to terms with the immutability of Mother Nature: jungles overtake urban settings and cityscapes grow out of trees. My studio is in the Mission District on Clarion Alley, a location covered with murals and frequented by art-loving tourists from around the world.

Title: El Beso (2021) Artist: Patrich Pinzza

Title: Rene Yanez
Submitted by SF Poster Syndicate

Title: Art Auction 21: Transforming Art into Action & Reconnecting Through Resilience
It's finally here! Starting September 9th the Coalition on Homelessness will be hosting our 21st Annual Art Auction! To keep each other safe the event will be held entirely online, which means you will have two weeks to bid on the hundreds of beautiful art pieces on display. ArtAuction21 has which accommodate a variety of budgets.

The Coalition on Homelessness is a grassroots social justice organization dedicated to the elimination of homelessness and its social, political, and economic causes. Our bottom-up organizing model ensures the voices of some of the most disenfranchised San Franciscans lead the fight. This year $1.1 billion in funding for homeless services including hundreds of housing permanent affordable housing for our most vulnerable residents.

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HSOC FAILS TO FOLLOW EVEN ITS OWN INADEQUATE PROTOCOLS

continued from page 2...

TRAUMATIZING OPERATIONS

One way the Coalition on Homelessness works to ensure the human rights of those on the streets is through consistent monitoring of City operations that impact unhoused people, by sending staff and volunteers to talk to the people who are targets of sweeps. Our monitoring and outreach has concluded that the reality of ground operations is significantly divorced from what is described in public-facing documents.

Instead of encampment operations being based on the needs of people living on the streets, they are driven by the complaints of housed individuals. Even so, the City doesn’t have enough shelter beds for the people they displace through sweeps. Our monitoring and reviews of internal HSOC emails reveal that shelter beds are only available for a fraction of encampment residents. Folks without viable options find themselves further destablized and with nowhere to go. This contradicts what Director Carroll reported publicly when she said, “if we do not have enough shelter beds, we do not carry out the operation.”

Public Works is supposed to follow its own “bag and tag” protocol, confiscating only unclaimed property and leaving a notice of where to pick it up. But on the ground, we have seen that the protocol is not followed in practice. Property is confiscated even as homeless people rush to gather their belongings, and we regularly field reports of stolen survival gear, medications and cherished personal items. Once property is confiscated, it is impossible to retrieve it, as much of it is trash instead of stored. We also see a clear connection between overlays and the confiscation of Nascar during sweeps. When the City illegally confiscates property, it is not only inhumane—it is often fatal.

WHERE DO PEOPLE GO?

In her August report to the Local Homeless Coordinating Board, Director Carroll shared cumulative numbers of placements for folks displaced by sweeps. These numbers have been removed from public documents, but we were able to screen shot them during the live streamed presentation. The numbers focused almost entirely on success in removing tents. In total, HSOC stated that it encountered 4,648 “clients” between June 10, 2020 and June 30, 2021, and only 2,077, or 44%, were “placed.” These numbers reveal a glaring and systemic failure: More than half of encampment residents were displaced to another street corner. Of those who were “placed,” 53% were sent into congregate shelters or sanctioned encampments. About 40% were put in SIP hotels, which were made available for a very limited time.

As we move through encampment sites, our outreach team asks residents whether they were offered any services, and if so, which. The majority report that they had not been offered services, while some folks said they were offered congregate shelter. HSOC claims that currently, the “acceptance rate” of services is only 30%. This number is highly suspicious, but it’s also important to understand that the prevailing wisdom among service providers is that “service resistance” is a myth. When individuals do not “accept” services, it is a system failure—the offer itself is not meeting the need. Even outside a pandemic, placing individuals in congregate shelter is often inappropriate for a variety of reasons, including because they often lack disability accommodations. But as the delta variant ravages our communities, it is not difficult to grasp why someone might turn down an offer to stay in a large facility full of strangers.

“*They offer shelter, *” a former HST staff person told us. “But everyone at HSOC knew that staying at MSC South would be more harmful physically and mentally than staying in the tent and they did it anyway. There are no ethical guidelines there.”

Conversely, during the window when hotel rooms were made available, the acceptance rates of SIP hotels was about 95%. Hotels offered bathrooms, privacy and dignity. This acceptance rate further demonstrates that when the system responds to the needs of unhoused people, it can easily move people off the streets.

Unfortunately, SIP hotels were made available primarily to individuals who were being swept out of encampments, leaving in the dust those whom public health employees and other front-line service providers identified as most in need. In other words, if you were lucky enough to live in a tent surrounded by others in tents, you got a hotel room. If you were so destitute that you didn’t even own a tent you were mostly screwed.

We know from experience that encampments can be cleared with dignity and fairness. In 2021, San Francisco successfully carried out an “encampment resolution” at the King Street encampment in accordance with federal guidelines. After months of the City’s failed attempts to criminalize and displace the camp residents, Brennan Duffy, who was then the Mayor’s homeless director, got involved. He reached out to community advocates and camp residents for counsel, took their input to heart, and secured a church where the residents could relocate together, allowing them to stay with friends, partners and pets. He designated a storage container where belongings could be stored intact, and most importantly, created an exit plan for the church. After a stay in the church, residents were relocated to housing, with careful considerations for maintaining the relationships residents had developed through their experiences together.

This became especially important when Ian Smith, one of those residents and a contributing writer to Street Sheet, developed cancer. Thanks to the thoughtful relocation effort, Smith was able to spend the rest of his young life surrounded by friends who took care to preserve his writing and show him with love in his last days. Throughout this process, there were no protests, and no roadblocks from the Coalition on Homelessness, because it was done right.

Going forward, any clearing of encampments should follow the precedent set in 2021. The property of encampment residents should be respected. The community should be brought in, not deliberately excluded. The City can begin by identifying a variety of new resources for individuals in an encampment, and then send HOT workers in to spend at least two weeks with encampment residents to deeply assess their needs. This should start by addressing garbage, water and medical needs so that assessment can occur without undue hardship. Police should not be involved. Paramedics should be called only if there is a medical emergency. Public Works should wait to clean until everyone is gone. And critically, given the history and trauma those in encampments have survived, there should be a system of accountability. All operations should be publicly posted and an independent human rights monitor assigned to witness every operation.

San Francisco can do this right. There is no excuse for forced relocation. At UCSF’s Dr. Margot Kushel has written in response on how to combat homelessness, “There is no medicine as powerful as housing.”

THE SHIFTING GROUND OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

In 2111, communities and governments nationwide are re-examining a police response to homelessness. The federal government now penalizes municipalities in McKinney Act funding applications for failing to abate criminalization, and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness has created guidelines for cities to move away from sweeps and instead to collaborate with communities in relocating individuals to permanent housing. If permanent housing is not available, the guidelines suggest moving folks into temporary settings. The Obama administration’s Department of Justice statement of interest in Martin v. Boise spelled out that it is a form of cruel and unusual punishment to enforce laws against camping, sitting and lying in the dust those whom public health employees and other front-line service providers identified as most in need. Unfortunately, SIP hotels were made available primarily to individuals who were being swept out of encampments, leaving in the dust those whom public health employees and other front-line service providers identified as most in need. In other words, if you were lucky enough to live in a tent surrounded by others in tents, you got a hotel room. If you were so destitute that you didn’t even own a tent you were mostly screwed.

THE SHIFTING GROUND OF NATIONAL STANDARDS
In Memoriam: Janice Mirikitani

February 4, 1941 – July 29, 2021

Janice Mirikitani, the beloved GLIDE Co-Founder and Japanese American Sansei poet, whose activism helped define the social justice culture of San Francisco, and whose verse illuminated her struggles with ethnic identity and personal adversity, died on Thursday, July 29, 2021. She was 80.

Mirikitani was a teacher, artist, and activist whose work and commitment to empower and give voice to the most marginalized has transformed tens of thousands of lives in San Francisco and beyond. As co-founder of the Glide Foundation, she played a seminal role in creating what many consider the nation’s boldest and most unique fusion of social justice activism, social services and the arts, in San Francisco.”

Mirikitani spent her entire adult life in a relentless pursuit of the kind of justice that brings the extreme and sometimes hidden needs in our society to the forefront of our attention. She did this on three fronts: as a poet who rendered the rage of the oppressed, the incognito survivor, and the invisible onto the page, as a teacher-coordinator who guided thousands of children, women, and men in the exploration of their own histories, and as Founding President of the Glide Foundation by ensuring those struggling the most in San Francisco had access to food, housing, recovery, medical care, and a place to grow.

Born February 5, 1941, in Stockton, California, Janice Mirikitani was incarcerated as an infant with her family in an Arkansas concentration camp during the mass internment of Japanese Americans during WWII. Following her family’s release from the camp in 1945, the five-year-old Mirikitani moved to Chicago with her family and then to Petaluma with her mother. She has spoken publicly and through her poetry of these years where she endured emotional isolation, poverty, and the trauma of sexual abuse by her stepfather. Mirikitani is known as a woman who can illuminate the horrors of war, lead a group of homeless women in writing their own histories, and confront institutional racism in public life — all while exposing the raw vitality, joy, and rage of speaking truth.

Mirikitani earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from UCLA in 1960 and her teaching credential from UC Berkeley. She also taught in the Contra Costa School District for a year before pursuing a graduate degree in creative writing at San Francisco State University. In 1966, Mirikitani came to work at Glide Memorial Church as an administrative assistant. There she met Reverend Cecil Williams and quickly became active in political movements for human rights and the 1960s anti-war and peace movements. Her exposure to the injustices of structural racism and sexism, particularly against poor people, propelled her activism.

Calling herself a “warrior of peace,” as director of a GLIDE program beginning in 1969, Mirikitani shaped GLIDE’s outreach and support for women and families facing challenges of substance abuse, domestic violence, single parenting, childcare, health and wellness, education, and access to employment. Under her leadership, GLIDE programs increased in size and scope. In 1982, GLIDE named Mirikitani Executive Director and President.

On January 1, 1980, Mirikitani married Williams. Working closely together, they built GLIDE into a visionary, internationally known social justice leader, advocate, social service provider, and inclusive spiritual community.


Mirikitani and Williams collaborated on the book “Beyond the Possible: 50 Years of Creating Radical Change in a Community Called GLIDE” (2009). It describes GLIDE’s explosive growth, from a struggling local church within the GLIDE Foundation to a nationally recognized social justice institution.

In “Beyond the Possible,” Mirikitani writes, “Our ministry at Glide started by listening to people tell us about their needs, and by engaging those people in creating programs… True leadership, we learned through the years, was about providing opportunities for those who might not consider themselves capable or educated but nevertheless had the passion, street smarts, and commitment to change — to emerge and develop as leaders.”

“Beyond the Possible,” Janice Mirikitani

“Our ministry at Glide started by listening to people tell us about their needs, and by engaging those people in creating programs — True leadership, we learned through the years, was about providing opportunities for those who might not consider themselves capable or educated but nevertheless had the passion, street smarts, and commitment to change — to emerge and develop as leaders.”

"Beyond the Possible," Janice Mirikitani

Donations can be made in Mirikitani’s memory at glide.org/honorjanice or by email to development@glide.org.

In lieu of flowers, a GLIDE Memorial Fund for Janice Mirikitani has been established to support programs benefitting Women and Children.

GLIDE is limiting at the memorial due to COVID safety protocols and guidance. Those who wish to attend are encouraged to join the livestream at 12:30 p.m. on GLIDE’s Facebook page, facebook.com/glide.sf.
We know you have a story to tell. The best journalism comes from those on the frontlines of stories, and no one is better equipped to tell the story of homelessness than those living it every day. This 12-week journalism course is designed to share introductory journalistic writing skills with those who are too often left out of the newsroom. Learn alongside a CalMatters inequality journalist and your fellow street-based journalists how to craft stories, conduct strong interviews and hook your readers.

INFORMATION SESSION
AUGUST 25 @3PM
All sessions will be held on Zoom. To participate please email us at streetsheetsf@cohsf.org. Spaces are limited and spots will be prioritized for those who have experienced homelessness and poverty.

12 WEEKLY SESSIONS
AUGUST-SEPTEMBER
$ Applicants who are accepted will receive a stipend upon completing the course.
We may also be able to provide chargers and/or tablets for those without access, so please contact us!

400 STORIES FOR $400 BILLION

The Long Term Supports and Services (LTSS) for All Grassroots Coalition will be meeting with Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office to urge her to SUPPORT and LEAD the efforts to win $400 billion in funding for Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). Over the last months, members of the LTSS for All Coalition have collected personal stories sharing why CARE IS ESSENTIAL to them. These stories will be presented to Speaker Pelosi in person and on ZOOM. Help us urge the Speaker to LEAD on this funding and help us pass the $400 billion in Congress.