THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
By Congressman Everett M. Dirksen
16th District

THE SPENDING PROGRAM. State, County and City officials, School Directors, Park Boards, taxpayers, the unemployed and all others will be interested in the spending program and just what it provides. Believing that an analysis of the Bill as it was approved by the Congress will be of interest, we submit herein a digest of the measure.

TITLE I. WORK RELIEF AND RELIEF. There is made available directly to the WPA, the sum of $1,250,000,000 of which, not to exceed (1) $425,000,000 may be expended on highways, roads and streets, (2) not to exceed $575,000,000 on public buildings, parks, public utilities, rural electrification, sewer and water systems, airports, flood control, eradication of insect pests, projects for the production of fertilizer materials for distribution to needy farmers, etc., and (3) not to exceed $250,000,000 for educational, professional, clerical, cultural, recreational and other non-construction projects. For the National Youth Administration (NYA) the sum of $75,000,000. To the Secretary of Agriculture the sum of $175,000,000 for loans, relief, rural rehabilitation and for carrying out the provisions of the Farm Security program. For Puerto Rico for rural rehabilitation the sum of $6,000,000. For various agencies of government such as the General Accounting Office, the Treasury Department and others whose administrative work will be increased as a result of the administration of this program, the sum of $25,425,000.

a. Funds herein provided are to be used (except the administrative funds) only for work relief or relief of persons in need.

b. The WPA funds are to be apportioned over a period ending January 31, 1939. (This makes it a 7-month program.)

c. Administrative costs are limited to 5%.

d. No State, County, City or other non-Federal project shall be undertaken until the sponsor of such a project has first made an agreement in writing to finance its entire share of the cost of a project.

e. Rates of pay shall be not less than the prevailing rates of pay for work of a similar nature in the same locality.

f. Needy persons whose names have not heretofore been placed on relief rolls will be eligible for work the same as those whose names as heretofore have been on the rolls.

g. No relief worker shall be eligible for a WPA job if he has refused to take work on some other Federal or non-Federal project where the wage rate was comparable or higher than that paid on WPA.

h. Any relief worker whose work on some other Federal or non-Federal project has been ended thru no fault of his own shall continue to be eligible for restoration to the relief rolls or for employment on any other Federal or non-Federal project.

i. The fact that a person has received or is eligible for the so-called Soldier's bonus shall not be considered in determining actual need.

j. Aliens who are illegally in this country or who have failed before the enactment of this Bill to file a declaration of their intention to become citizens, shall not knowingly be given employment.

k. Preferences in employment shall be in the following order: (1) Veterans who are citizens and in need (2) Other citizens, and Indians who are in need (3) Aliens in need who have filed their "first" papers.

l. Persons employed on work projects who refuse to take private employment which pays as much and lasts as long and which they are capable of doing shall not be retained on the rolls so long as such private employment is available.

m. Insofar as efficiency permits, administrative and advisory positions shall be filled by persons from the Status in which such projects are located.

n. No salaries or expenses from these appropriations shall be paid to any person in a supervisory or administrative
position who is a candidate for any Federal, State, District, County or Municipal office which requires full time and for which a salary or per diem is paid.

o. Damage claims not in excess of $500 arising out of the operations of the WPA or NYA can be adjusted and settled by the Administrator.

p. No new applications for funds for projects to rebuild or repair penal institutions or reformatories shall be considered unless the President finds that such funds will not promote the competition of convict-made goods with the products of free labor.

q. Farmers in actual need of work but who are not on relief rolls shall be eligible for work on projects in rural areas the same as persons who are on relief rolls.

TITLE II. PUBLIC WORKS. The sum of $965,000,000 is made available for the Public Works Administration, not to exceed $750,000,000 of which may be used for grants. These funds are made available until June 30, 1940. No funds shall be allotted to any project which in the judgment of the Administrator cannot be started before January 1, 1939, or substantially finished before June 30, 1940. Not to exceed $100,000,000 of this fund may be used for Federal construction projects such as Federal prisons, veterans' hospitals, etc. Grants for non-Federal projects shall not exceed 45% of the cost of the project. Up to $500,000,000 of the money that might be realized from the sale of bonds and securities taken by the PWA in its operations of this Act can be used as a revolving fund from which to make further loans.

TIME LIMIT UNDER THIS TITLE. As reported to Congress, the bill contains the following time limit for WPA applications: "No new applications for loans or grants for non-Federal projects shall be received or considered by the Administration after August 31st, 1938." If the Act should go into effect on June 1st, it would mean that there would be just three months for a State, County, City, School District, or other eligible agency to file its application for a new project. Where an application had been filed before August 31st, it would be permissible to file an amended application after that date however.

TITLE III. FEDERAL PUBLIC BUILDINGS. The $70,000,000 which was made available in the fiscal year 1937 for a three-year program for the construction of Federal public buildings is increased to $130,000,000 so that two Federal projects can be constructed under that program in each Congressional District in the United States. This bill, however, adds only $25,000,000 to the program for the next fiscal year.

TOTAL COST OF THE PROGRAM. The outlay for relief work and administrative expenses, none of which will be recovered by repayment, will be $1,529,425,000. The Public Works program totals $965,000,000, of which the amount that is expended in the form of loans will be recovered to the Treasury. The Public Buildings program will cost $25,000,000. Total outlay, a small portion of which may be paid back to the Treasury, is $2,519,425,000.

TITLE IV. RURAL ELECTRIFICATION. Under the regular appropriation acts of the Congress, there has been available for rural electrification loans for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1938, the sum of $50,000,000. A hearing was held on that item and it was increased to $60,000,000 in the hope that it might provide extra employment in the rural areas. On the floor of the House, this amount was finally increased to $100,000,000.