

HOW GOVERNMENT WORKS FOR YOU: AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

Mr. REID. Madam President, I rise today to speak about an issue that has been bothering me for some time. As this Congress begins to wind down, I have reflected on the achievements and the failures during the past 2 years of this Congress. As I look back on the 104th Congress, I am struck by the public's negative perception, not only of this Congress, but our Government, our Federal Government. In my 10 years here in the Senate, I cannot recall a time when the American public had such a low regard for our Federal Government. It seems like our perception of Government in this country has gone from a view where all things are possible to a view by many where all things are suspect.

There has always been in this country a healthy tradition of political dissent, but what I am hearing today is something deeper and more negative than that. This troubles me because I hear it being echoed in the State of Nevada even by young people, the very generation who will lead us into the next century. I am not willing to stand by and watch an entire generation of Nevadans grow up distrusting our Government. The future, I believe, of Nevada, and our Nation, depends on this next generation's youthful energy and natural optimism to carry us forward.

So I would like to spend a little time today—and I will in the future—talking about how Government works for each of us. I think it is important to take a few minutes to remember how Government has changed our lives for the better. There are many areas about which we could speak, but today I am going to talk about our National Park System, which I personally am very proud of. I think all of us in America should be rightfully proud.

In the late 1700's and the early part of the 1800's, hunters and trappers would come back from passing through Yellowstone with incredible tales of soaring mountains, steaming lakes, of spouts of water going into the air hundreds of feet, stories that many people believed were untrue. But, of course, they were true.

In PBS's recent production on the West, "The Making of the West," there is a great story in the first couple of series about a mountain man by the name of Joe Mink, who came through Yellowstone, and some of the stories that he told.

Many stories were told about this great area in our country. These stories were passed on, some not believing them, as I mentioned, some thinking that they were nothing more than tall tales started by native Americans and then passed on by hunters and trappers.

But the stories persisted. Finally, expedition parties were sent out to check the stories about Yellowstone. One such expedition journeyed there to report back what they felt should be

done with Yellowstone. What these men found there awed and really humbled them. At their campsite near the Madison River, members of the expedition party talked about what they had seen. Maybe the land, they said, could be mined, and surely a few fortunes could be made harvesting timber. The possibilities of development really seemed endless.

But a member of that expedition by the name of Cornelius Hedges, who was a Montana judge, had a different idea. There are a lot of fathers of our National Park System. Cornelius Hedges is one of those fathers. He thought that the land should be preserved as a national park, a word that was unheard of at the time.

The expedition returned and began to promote the idea that Hedges had. In 1872 this dream came to fruition when Congress established Yellowstone National Park. In 1916 the National Park Service was established by Congress. Today, 80 years after the birth of the National Park Service, there are more than 270 million visitors to our national parks. Of course, some people visit parks more than once.

Madam President, I read in this morning's paper about President Clinton yesterday being at the Grand Canyon. During his presentation yesterday at the Grand Canyon, he talked about an event that really changed his life. That was a time when as a young man he went to the Grand Canyon and spent 2 hours sitting in solitude, looking at this piece of nature. He said even today in his hustle and bustle world he is able to reflect back on the solitude that he experienced at Grand Canyon National Park.

I, too, a little over a year ago had the good fortune of traveling down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. It was a life-changing experience for me, also, as it has been for thousands and thousands and thousands of people over the years who have gone through this, one of our national parks, the Grand Canyon.

This year Nevada is celebrating the 10th anniversary of our only national park, the Great Basin National Park. This incredible wonder in Nevada is home to the southernmost glacier in all of America. Yes, a glacier in Nevada—incredible, but true. The oldest living thing in the world is in this national park, the bristlecone pine, a tree that is gnarled, and some say not statuesque like a lot of big green trees that we see. It is over 5,000 years old. Madam President, 2,500 years before the birth of Christ these trees were growing in the Great Basin National Park.

We have many other things that will cause one to wonder other than these twisted limbs of the bristlecone pine in Great Basin National Park, but it is something that we in Nevada are proud of and the entire Nation is proud of. This 77,000-acre park was visited last year by about 100,000 people. You do not have to be rich to take in the won-

ders of the Grand Canyon. You do not have to be rich to take in the wonders of Yellowstone or Great Basin.

Our National Park System is designed for everyone. It is something that we as a country should be very proud of and we are. You can travel the depths of the Earth to see the incredible wonders of Lehman Cave, also part of our great national park. This jewel, the Great Basin National Park, will be there for centuries to come, as will Grand Canyon, as will Yellowstone.

I have talked today, Madam President, about one example of about where I think Government has worked well for the people of this country in establishing our National Park System. Now, this is something, our National Park System, that we should all speak proudly of, positively of, and it is a function where Government has worked well. Instead of denigrating Government, we should work to improve our system of Government that is the envy of the world. Our National Park System is the envy of the world.

Unquestionably, the Federal Government needs to streamline, reform, and change. Burdens of regulations of unfunded mandates must be eliminated, and ridiculous paperwork requirements must be eliminated, also. However, Government oversight is not innately evil and can be designed not as an intrusive control mechanism over the States but as an insurance policy to guard against Americans falling through the cracks. Our goal should be for a more effective Federal Government, not one that is useless or so reduced that our citizens are the ones to suffer. As a nation, we cannot afford to have a Federal Government that is unable to provide for Americans to defend our interests in the world.

Madam President, I ask that we all reflect on a success that we have had as a Federal Government. That is, in establishing and maintaining our National Park System. Of course, we need to do more. We have a tremendous backlog of renovations and repairs that need to be made in our National Park System, but visiting a national park is an experience of a lifetime. It was for me as it has been for millions of other Americans.

Mr. FAIRCLOTH. Madam President, I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. FAIRCLOTH pertaining to the introduction of S. 2093 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRIST). Morning business is closed.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 11 a.m. having arrived, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 39, which the clerk will report.