

had an understanding that I would explain the motion, that the gentleman would make her comments, and then the gentleman would close and we could yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, I apologize to the gentleman. I guess I did not understand exactly. But that is fine with me. No problem whatsoever.

Mr. OBEY. Fine. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI).

Ms. PELOSI. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) for yielding me this time, and if that is not pleasing to the distinguished chairman of the committee, I am pleased to yield to him first. If it is okay, then I will proceed.

Madam Speaker, once again I wish to thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) for his leadership on this important issue, important to America's workers. Today, we have an opportunity to do the right thing for America's aviation workers.

Both the House and Senate versions of the supplemental appropriations bill include financial assistance for the airlines, as they should. Aviation is an essential cornerstone of the U.S. economy. Both the House and Senate bills focus primarily on mitigating for the cost of security provisions required by the Federal Government, as those bills should have that funding. But we cannot ignore the workers who form the backbone of the aviation industry.

Madam Speaker, at least 150,000 workers in the aviation industry have lost their jobs since 9/11, including those who work for the airlines and related industries. Many of these workers have exhausted their unemployment benefits, and that was months ago. But with the industry still contracting, new jobs are impossible to find. Thousands more airline workers have lost their jobs since the Iraq war began and layoffs in the industry could reach 70,000 more. Concern about the exposure to the deadly SARS disease in Asia is now reducing air travel from the U.S. to Asia even further.

The Senate has included \$225 million for extended unemployment compensation for aviation workers. The House should recede to the Senate position.

□ 1230

Madam Speaker, it is the least that we can do. I urge Members to vote for relief for aviation workers. To support the Obey motion to instruct conferees, vote for the motion to instruct.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am not really opposed to what the gentleman is suggesting here. The Committee on Appropriations did add \$3.2 billion to the wartime supplemental to deal with airline issues and to be helpful to the air-

line industry. So there is plenty of money to handle this issue, but I am going to vote against it because of the problems it could cause as we go to conference.

We have a tight schedule. The committees on both sides of the aisle have worked extremely well. Just a few days after receiving the President's request, the Committee on Appropriations reported the bill to the House. As Members know, last Thursday we passed this bill with an overwhelming vote in the House.

However, there are some significant differences between our bill and the bill presented by the other body. I just have the feeling this is going to be a fairly difficult conference because, while the House kept the bill very clean and close to what the President requested, to fight the war and provide for homeland security and to support those of our coalition who are helping us in this war effort, the other body, frankly, added quite a few things that were extraneous to the wartime issue; and that is going to make the conference a little difficult.

I want to get this conference completed. Leadership has advised me, as well as most of the Members, that we are not going to take our Easter district work period recess until this bill has left the Congress and has gone to the President since it is important to what the President is doing in Iraq. I will vote against this motion. I want to again emphasize we need to move this bill quickly. If the conference gets tied up for more than 2 days, we will not get this bill to the floor in time for the House to take its usual Easter recess. In addition, I am opposed to motions to instruct in general. I have no objection to what the gentleman wants to do, but it is just procedural for me. I think it could complicate the conference on this very important wartime supplemental.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Without objection, the previous question is ordered.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair

announces that she will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

NUTRIA ERADICATION AND CONTROL ACT OF 2003

Mr. GILCHREST. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 273) to provide for the eradication and control of nutria in Maryland and Louisiana.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 273

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

(1) Wetlands and tidal marshes of the Chesapeake Bay and in Louisiana provide significant cultural, economic, and ecological benefits to the Nation.

(2) The South American nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) is directly contributing to substantial marsh loss in Maryland and Louisiana on Federal, State, and private land.

(3) Traditional harvest methods to control or eradicate nutria have failed in Maryland and have had limited success in the eradication of nutria in Louisiana. Consequently, marsh loss is accelerating.

(4) The nutria eradication and control pilot program authorized by Public Law 105-322 is to develop new and effective methods for eradication of nutria.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide financial assistance to the State of Maryland and the State of Louisiana for a program to implement measures to eradicate or control nutria and restore marshland damaged by nutria.

SEC. 3. NUTRIA ERADICATION PROGRAM.

(a) GRANT AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of the Interior (in this Act referred to as the "Secretary"), subject to the availability of appropriations, may provide financial assistance to the State of Maryland and the State of Louisiana for a program to implement measures to eradicate or control nutria and restore marshland damaged by nutria.

(b) GOALS.—The goals of the program shall be to—

(1) eradicate nutria in Maryland;

(2) eradicate or control nutria in Louisiana and other States; and

(3) restore marshland damaged by nutria.

(c) ACTIVITIES.—In the State of Maryland, the Secretary shall require that the program consist of management, research, and public education activities carried out in accordance with the document published by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service entitled "Eradication Strategies for Nutria in the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay Watersheds", dated March 2002.

(d) COST SHARING.—

(1) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the costs of the program may not exceed 75 percent of the total costs of the program.

(2) IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.—The non-Federal share of the costs of the program may be provided in the form of in-kind contributions of materials or services.

(e) LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Not more than 5 percent of financial assistance provided by the Secretary under this section may be used for administrative expenses.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—For financial assistance under this section, there is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary \$4,000,000 for the State of Maryland program and \$2,000,000 for the State of Louisiana program for each of fiscal years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008.

SEC. 4. REPORT.

No later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary and the National Invasive Species Council shall—

(1) give consideration to the 2002 report for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries titled "Nutria in Louisiana", and the 2002 document entitled "Eradication Strategies for Nutria in the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay Watersheds"; and

(2) develop, in cooperation with the State of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources, a long-term nutria control or eradication program, as appropriate, with the objective to significantly reduce and restore the damage nutria cause to coastal wetlands in the States of Louisiana and Maryland.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST).

Mr. GILCHREST. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to offer this measure along with the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. TAUZIN). The fundamental goal of this legislation is to effectively address the growing problem of nutria that are destroying thousands of acres of essential wetland habitat. It also reauthorizes a 1998 law that created a pilot nutria program in Maryland at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, Fishing Bay Wildlife Management Area, and Tudor farms.

Since that time, Federal, State and local partners have worked together in Maryland to develop a nutria eradication strategy and to test restoration methods on the damaged marsh. Louisiana is working on a nutria control strategy and monitoring marsh recovery. These are both carefully crafted proposals which will systematically address nutria population control and marsh damage. They represent the culmination of scientific understanding about nutria population, dynamics and marsh impacts.

Because of the nutria's incredible ability to proliferate, partnerships in both States must act aggressively to avoid population increases that could nullify previous effort and investment of public and private resources. Both Maryland and Louisiana are serious about nutria control and have contributed several million in non-Federal funds, and both are committed to providing models for the control of nutria in the 14 other States in which they are found. Full commitment from both

Federal and State partners is needed to complete these models over the next 5 years.

This semi-aquatic, nonnative rodent has no natural predators in Maryland, and they have consumed nearly half of the marsh lands on Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. These marshes are vital to the survival of millions of migratory waterfowl, bold and golden eagles, and neotropical songbirds. The remaining acreage of Blackwater is in serious peril. Unless nutria are stopped, they will continue to destroy wetlands in Blackwater and other refuges on the Delmarva peninsula, and marshlands along the Atlantic coast and the Gulf of Mexico.

H.R. 273 will authorize Public Law 105-322, and it will implement the next step in the process, which is the eradication of nutria in Maryland as well as the restoration of damaged wetlands. In their testimony, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stated: "We recognize the need to continue cooperative efforts to eradicate nutria in the Chesapeake Bay region and will continue as a key Federal member of the nutria eradication partnership."

In addition, H.R. 273 authorizes money to alleviate the tremendous problems that nutria have caused in Louisiana. According to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, these pesky rodents have damaged or destroyed over 100,000 acres of wetlands in their State.

Under the terms of the bill, the Secretary of the Interior will undertake steps to control or eradicate nutria in the two states and together with the National Invasive Species Council develop a long-term nutria control and eradication program.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 273 will help to solve serious problems facing Maryland's Eastern Shore and Louisiana's marshlands. It will serve as a model for other States that may face the prospect of fighting against an invading population of nutria. I urge Members to vote for H.R. 273.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, as stated by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST), the overall purpose of this legislation is to better coordinate and provide financial assistance to the States of Maryland and Louisiana in their efforts to eradicate and/or control nutria, a large member of the rodent family that has decimated wetland areas in both States.

Madam Speaker, no one denies the fact that nutria have become far too abundant in some regions of both States. In addition, it is the consensus of wildlife biologists that greater effort should be undertaken now to control this invasive pest before it ruins more

valuable fish and wildlife habitat. This legislation is noncontroversial and should also help conserve coastal wetlands, something which is very important to my district. I support H.R. 273 and urge Members to do likewise.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GILCHREST. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Madam Speaker, I thank the leadership on the other side of the aisle for moving this legislation. We appreciate the cooperation we have had from the Democrats, as well as staff on both sides. I urge Members to vote for this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. TAUZIN. Madam Speaker, Nutria is a rodent native to South America. They weigh approximately 18 pounds and resemble a beaver. In the 1930's, they were introduced into Louisiana. Studies indicate that female nutria are capable of producing up to 15 young per year. By 1943, they were well established in our state. The population of nutria in Louisiana reached levels of 20 million—many times higher than any other state in the country.

The preferred habitat of this rodent is wetland areas. They often dig intricate tunnel and burrow systems in their home range. Nutria have been known to eat rice, sugarcane, fruit and nut trees and seedlings of bald cypress, but prefer wetlands plants. Studies suggest that they waste 90 percent of plant material while feeding on the base and root system. This root system "holds" our fragile wetlands areas together. When the root systems are destroyed, so are the wetlands.

Researchers in Louisiana have fenced off areas of wetland plants in known nutria breeding areas. The protected area have had wetlands plants exceed six feet in height, while the unprotected areas have literally turned into mud, and eventually, open water. Between 2000 and 2001, the area of marsh converted to open water increased by over 4500 acres as a results of nutria damage. These rodents have damaged or destroyed over 100,000 acres in Louisiana.

The State of Louisiana has spent millions of dollars responding to this crisis. Nutria have been used as a source of fur, their meat has been placed on numerous restaurant menus and marketed by Louisiana's top chefs, they have been used as a food source for alligators in farming operations and the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans used them in their animal feed. In 2001 dollars, pelts sold at levels as high as \$31 each in 1931, \$23 each in 1977, and today, \$2.18 per pelt. In the late 1970's, trappers removed up to 1.9 million nutria per year. More recently, despite the best efforts of the state, only 987 trapping licenses were sold and less than 30,000 nutria were taken.

The American alligator is the most significant natural predator of nutria. In Louisiana, where alligator are most abundant, nutria comprise up to 60 percent of alligator diet. However, efforts to control the growing nutria population with alligator have proven insufficient. In fact, efforts to increase the alligator population to control nutria only resulted in a decrease of nutria in the alligator's diet and an increase in nutria trappers in alligator's diets.

I am happy to join my friend from Maryland, Congressman GILCHREST, in this effort to protect our fragile wetland areas from future destruction by passage of H.R. 273. As you

know, more endangered species depend upon the habitat provided by wetlands than any other environment for survival. In coastal areas, each mile of vegetated wetland also reduces storm surge by one foot—protecting these areas will save FEMA money in future natural disasters.

This bill recognizes the wetland destruction caused by nutria in Louisiana and authorizes the Department of Interior to become a partner in our state's ongoing efforts to prevent further damage to inland and coastal wetland areas as a result of nutria.

Mr. GILCHREST. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1245

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 273.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. GILCHREST. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

REQUIRING SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE TO PAY COSTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS WITH RESPECT TO CONVEYANCES UNDER EDUCATION LAND GRANT ACT

Mr. HAYWORTH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 108) to amend the Education Land Grant Act to require the Secretary of Agriculture to pay the costs of environmental reviews with respect to conveyances under that Act.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 108

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. COSTS OF REVIEWS FOR CONVEYANCES UNDER EDUCATION LAND GRANT ACT.

Section 202 of the Education Land Grant Act (16 U.S.C. 479a) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(f) COSTS OF REVIEW.—The Secretary shall pay the costs of all action required under section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)) with respect to any conveyance under this section.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH).

Mr. HAYWORTH. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 108, which amends the Education Land Grant Act to require the Secretary of Agriculture to pay the costs of environmental reviews, is an important piece of legislation for many schools, many school districts, but most of all for many students across the United States of America.

Currently the new Education Land Grant Act enacted in the 106th Congress allows the Forest Service to convey up to 80 acres of its land to school districts to renovate, expand, or construct school facilities. The act requires that land conveyed is identified for disposal in the particular forest's plan and that the conveyance cost of the survey is borne by the applicant. The Forest Service has determined this cost to be \$10 per acre.

However, both conveyance of land under this act and the forest plan amendment require an environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act known as NEPA. Presently the Education Land Grant Act and the interim Forest Service manual fail to indicate who bears the cost of the environmental analysis.

Madam Speaker, this is the crucial point today. In implementing this law, the Forest Service staff has administratively determined that schools that apply for a conveyance under this act would need to pay for various administrative costs, analyses, and environmental compliance assessment. In fact, Madam Speaker, the interim directive that has now finally been distributed states various costs to be borne by school districts, and, I quote now, “Nominal costs includes the nominal fee of \$10 per acre conveyed, plus all costs directly associated with the project that the Forest Service may incur to evaluate and process a school district's request to acquire National Forest Service lands under ELGA, such as, costs associated with National Environmental Policy Act compliance, document preparation, surveys, posting of property monuments, markers, or posts, and recordation.”

In fact, another memo mentioned that even staff time, that even staff time used to process requests will need to be paid by school districts.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues, what we have here is a disconnection. In the 106th Congress this body passed the new Education Land Grant Act unanimously. The other body did likewise. It was signed into law by President Clinton in his final days of office. Here we have a textbook example of elected officials, constitutional officers, doing their job. As the author of the new Education Land Grant Act, it was never my intent for a governmental bureaucracy to determine administratively that they were going to charge the rural school districts of America for their staff time. Indeed, Madam Speaker, if I am not mistaken, anyone in the employment of the United States Government serves the people, and here we have an administrative di-

rective saying we are going to charge school district X staff time for Federal workers to work on this. This is a disconnection between the intent of Congress, the assent of the executive branch, and the execution by a bureaucracy.

Madam Speaker, the costs associated with the conveyance under ELGA are truly minimal to the Forest Service, a drop in the bucket for that agency. Here is the problem: Those same costs can prove absolutely prohibitive to school districts seeking to expand their facility. Indeed, Madam Speaker, the intent of the legislation was to offer this land at minimal costs to school districts, and our studies have borne out that in 44 of our 50 States this will have a positive impact primarily for rural districts, but the entire intent of the legislation was to allow those rural districts to focus their financial resources where they are best used, helping teachers teach and helping children learn, not to be caught up in a bureaucratic morass that would prove to be prohibitive to those districts.

So this particular piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, H.R. 108, will require the Forest Service to accept the full cost of the environmental analysis required by NEPA for these small land conveyances. This would free local school districts from burdensome administrative costs, allow them to spend funds again on what is most important, what goes on in the classroom for their students.

The Education Land Grant Act was initially passed by this Congress for the purpose of aiding local school districts. This legislation will simply direct the Forest Service to pay for any environmental analysis costs, allowing the Act to achieve its original intent of improving communities and benefiting school children across the United States.

Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to join me in support of this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, H.R. 108 would require the Secretary of Agriculture to pay the costs of environmental reviews conducted pursuant to the Educational Land Grant Act. The majority and my colleague have already clearly and very passionately explained the bill, and we have no objection. So we support H.R. 108.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) for her favorable comments.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.