

But there is no inconsistency on our part. We didn't say that was the wrong thing to do. The inconsistency is the administration that says yes to \$30 billion to Bear Stearns and no to \$15 billion here.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. All time for debate on the amendment has expired.

The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. ALTMIRE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 7 printed in House Report 110-621.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 7 offered by Mr. ALTMIRE:

Page 36, after line 2, insert the following new section:

SEC. 15. INELIGIBILITY OF ILLEGAL ALIENS FOR ASSISTANCE.

Aliens who are not lawfully present in the United States shall be ineligible for financial assistance under this Act, as provided and defined by section 214 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 1436a). Nothing in this Act shall be construed to alter the restrictions or definitions in such section 214.

Page 36, line 3, strike "15" and insert "16".

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 1174, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Chairman, I offer this amendment to the Neighborhood Stabilization Act to ensure that illegal immigrants are not eligible for the financial assistance we're providing today to individuals adversely affected by the housing crisis.

Section 214 of the Housing and Community Development Act governs the participation of noncitizens in certain HUD programs. It requires valid documentation from the beneficiary, verification of that documentation by the appropriate entity, and outlines who may and may not be eligible for financial assistance.

Under section 214, illegal immigrants are not eligible for financial assistance. Let me repeat that: Under section 214, illegal immigrants are not eligible for financial assistance. And my amendment makes certain that section 214 rules apply to the new programs authorized by the Neighborhood Stabilization Act that we are debating tonight.

With the housing crisis and economic downturn impacting the lives of hard-working Americans throughout the country, we need to make sure that targeted, fiscally responsible assistance that we are providing goes only to law-abiding citizens.

As responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, it is our responsibility to en-

sure that every penny is spent wisely and is not used to benefit any illegal immigrants in any way.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Chairman, I seek time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from West Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mrs. CAPITO. I would just like to express my support for his amendment. I think we have had this debate on the floor many times. And I want to say that we want to assure the American public, I think it's always good to reassure the American public that taxpayer funds are not going to help people here who have entered our country illegally and remain here illegally.

I would like to see, as we move forward in this debate on this and other bills, that we tighten down the types of identification that are full proof, that can be used to certify the legality of whoever the resident is residing, whether it's in public housing or in other taxpayer-funded opportunities.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. All time for debate on the amendment has expired.

The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania will be postponed.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ALTMIRE) having assumed the chair, Ms. BALDWIN, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5818) had come to no resolution thereon.

□ 2245

CHARLTON HESTON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 1091, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr.

CLAY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1091, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES ON H.R. 2419, FOOD AND ENERGY SECURITY ACT OF 2007

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to instruct at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Cantor moves that the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the Senate amendment to the bill H.R. 2419 be instructed not to agree to the provisions contained in section 12808 of the Senate amendment (relating to qualified forestry conservation bonds).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR) and the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

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

I rise around this motion to instruct, which is centered on an objection that I have in the Senate-passed farm bill around one particular provision that certainly raises a lot of questions in my mind and should raise a lot of questions in the minds of my colleagues.

In the bill there is, without question, a \$200 million earmark that benefits one wealthy landowner. Section 12808 in H.R. 2419, as passed by the Senate, provides for a tax credit bond program. There is a scheme in this bill that was so narrowly crafted that the bonds authorized thereunder can only be used for the acquisition of one, just one, piece of land in the entire country. This piece of land happens to lie predominantly in the State of Montana and is owned by timber giant Plum Creek. According to press reports, the Nature Conservancy would be allowed to issue \$500 million in bonds under this bill and then use the proceeds to purchase the land from the timber giant. Even more egregious is that the provision does not even appear to require the protection of a single additional tree or a single additional fish. If this isn't a tax earmark, I don't know what is. Mr. Speaker, this is the "bridge to nowhere" of the farm bill.

Now, I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will argue that the Montana bond provision does not fit the definition of an earmark under House rules. Their reasoning will be that many taxpayers will potentially own the Montana bonds and then get tax credits from the Federal Government. But make no mistake. This provision is designed to facilitate one land sale by one landowner.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here's my question: What in the world are we doing here contemplating the expenditure of \$200 million in U.S. taxpayer money to fund the purchase of a tract of land that benefits just one wealthy landowner, all the while American families are struggling with skyrocketing gas prices, food prices through the roof, plummeting home prices, and an economy that is barrel, barely growing?

It is time for us, Mr. Speaker, to say "no" to these types of backroom deals that have been struck in the middle of the night that benefit a wealthy few. It is time for us, Mr. Speaker, to say "no" to business as usual in Washington. And it's time, Mr. Speaker, for us to put the people first.

Think about it. Imagine what we could do with \$200 million. It would go a long way to help solving the problems that so many people are facing across this country. This \$200 million earmark is exactly what is wrong with Washington and why the American people are demanding change. It's time for all of us to insist that the Federal Government start working for the people again.

Mr. Speaker, my motion is a very simple one. It asks that the House instruct its conferees on the farm bill to reject section 12808 of the Senate-passed bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, the point of the farm bill at issue with this motion deals with a concept of public interest. Will private land adjacent to forest land be protected or will it be sold off and developed into very nice, very expensive private lots, taking land out of general public access and enjoyment? That's really the issue.

I believe it's an extremely serious issue, and I'm going to introduce into the RECORD coverage of this that appeared in the New York Times October 13, 2007, under the title "As Logging Fades, Rich Carve Out Open Land in West." This article cites the prospect of vast timber sales by a company named Plum Creek Timber. And I would quote from the article:

"Some old-line logging companies, including Plum Creek Timber, the country's largest private landowner, are cashing in, putting tens of thousands of wooded acres on the market from Montana to Oregon. Plum Creek, which owns about 1.2 million acres in Montana alone, is getting up to \$29,000 an acre for land that was worth perhaps \$500 an acre for timber cutting.

"Everybody wants to buy a 640-acre section of forest that's next to the U.S. Forest Service or one of the wilderness areas," said Plum Creek's president and chief executive, Rick Holley.

"As a result, population is surging in areas surrounding national forests and national parks, with open spaces being carved up into sprawling wooded plots, enough for a house and no noisy neighbors."

And the article goes on to talk about the extraordinary pressure, development pressure, for the wealthy few that can spend recreation dollars buying up and carving up land adjacent to the Forest Service.

AS LOGGING FADES, RICH CARVE UP OPEN LAND IN WEST

(By Kirk Johnson)

WHITEFISH, MT.—William P. Foley II pointed to the mountain. Owns it, mostly. A timber company began logging in view of his front yard a few years back. He thought they were cutting too much, so he bought the land.

Mr. Foley belongs to a new wave of investors and landowners across the West who are snapping up open spaces as private playgrounds on the borders of national parks and national forests.

In style and temperament, this new money differs greatly from the Western land barons of old—the timber magnates, copper kings and cattlemen who created the extraction-based economy that dominated the region for a century.

Mr. Foley, 62, standing by his private pond, his horses grazing in the distance, proudly calls himself a conservationist who wants Montana to stay as wild as possible. That does not mean no development and no profit. Mr. Foley, the chairman of a major title insurance company, Fidelity National Financial, based in Florida, also owns a chain of Montana restaurants, a ski resort and a huge cattle ranch on which he is building homes.

But arriving here already rich and in love with the landscape, he said, also means his profit motive is different.

"A lot of it is more for fun than for making money," said Mr. Foley, who estimates he has invested about \$125 million in Montana in the past few years, mostly in real estate.

The rise of a new landed gentry in the West is partly another expression of gilded age economics in America; the super-wealthy elite wades ashore where it will.

With the timber industry in steep decline, recreation is pushing aside logging as the biggest undertaking in the national forests and grasslands, making nearby private tracts more desirable—and valuable, in a sort of ratchet effect—to people who enjoy outdoor activities and ample elbow room and who have the means to take title to what they want.

Some old-line logging companies, including Plum Creek Timber, the country's largest private landowner, are cashing in, putting tens of thousands of wooded acres on the market from Montana to Oregon. Plum Creek, which owns about 1.2 million acres here in Montana alone, is getting up to \$29,000 an acre for land that was worth perhaps \$500 an acre for timber cutting.

"Everybody wants to buy a 640-acre section of forest that's next to the U.S. Forest Service or one of the wilderness areas," said Plum Creek's president and chief executive, Rick Holley.

As a result, population is surging in areas surrounding national forests and national parks, with open spaces being carved up into sprawling wooded plots, enough for a house and no nosy neighbors.

Here in Flathead County, on the western edge of Glacier National Park, the number of real estate transactions, mostly for open land, rose by 30 percent from 2003 to 2006, according to state figures. The county's population is up 44 percent since 1990.

The United States Forest Service projects that over the next 25 years, an area the size of Maine—all of it bordering the national forests and grasslands—will face development pressure and increased housing density.

But the equally important force is the change in ownership. According to a Forest Service study, not yet published, more than 1.1 million new families became owners of an acre or more of private forest from 1993 to 2006 in the lower 48 states, a 12 percent increase. And almost all the net growth, about seven million acres, was in the Rocky Mountain region.

Institutions, pension funds and real estate investment trusts have been particularly aggressive buyers. Over the last 10 years, at least 40 million acres of private forest land have changed hands nationwide, said Bob Izlar, the director of the Center for Forest Business at the University of Georgia. It is a turnover that Mr. Izlar said was unmatched at least since the Great Depression.

Here in the West, questions of clout and class have been raised by the new arrivals.

This year, the conservation group Trout Unlimited, which had been considering ending its involvement in disputes between private landowners and fishermen over public access to fishing streams, backtracked after its members rose up in protest. Some members accused the group of siding with the landowners by not fighting for fishermen's access rights.

In parts of Colorado where communities have committed tax money to preserve open space, conflicts have erupted on the borders of the public lands over whether the programs—which in many cases buy out an owner's right to develop property, but not the property itself—are simply enriching landowners who keep the land and the public off, too.

"When you're there, you're on four million acres," said Michael Carricarte, who bought an 800-acre property in Glenwood Springs, Colo., in 2005, and now has the place, bordered on three sides by federal land, up for sale, asking \$23.5 million.

"To get to where our property touched public land would take three hours by public road, but from our house it was 10 minutes by four-wheeler or Jeep," he said.

Mr. Carricarte, 39, said he was now in the process of selling a conservation easement to the Aspen Valley Land Trust that would lock 600 acres, all bordering public land, into permanent preservation.

Longtime residents tied to the old timber economy are finding it difficult to keep up. In parts of New Mexico and Colorado, the timber industry has all but collapsed; log harvests in the national forests have fallen to about one-fourth of what they were 20 years ago in the Rocky Mountain region, and less than a tenth what they were in the Pacific Northwest.

Some privately owned timberlands have increased production, but in the West, where more than two-thirds of all forest land is publicly owned (compared with about one-sixth in the eastern United States) private owners, even if they want to allow logging, cannot make up the difference.

Ronald H. Buentemeier, a second-generation forester, said he struggled every day to get enough wood to stoke the family-owned mill he runs in Montana, the F. H. Stoltz Land and Lumber Company.

"There's not enough private land out there," said Mr. Buentemeier, a blunt-talking 66-year-old with a flat-top crew cut. "We've been pulling rabbits out of the hat to keep going."

In ways that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago, environmentalists and representatives of the timber industry are reaching across the table, drafting plans that would get loggers back into the national forests in exchange for agreements that would set aside certain areas for protection.

Both groups are feeling under siege: timber executives because of the decline in logging,

and environmentalists because of the explosion of growth on the margins of the public lands.

One of the most ambitious proposals is here in Montana. It would allow some logging in the Beaverhead and Deerlodge National Forests in the state's southwest corner in exchange for the designation of new areas within the forests as permanent wilderness.

Some timber companies say that gaining conservationists as allies may be the only way to get back into the national forests, and so stay in business. But both sides say that success will require a turn of the historical momentum against logging in the West that began in the early '90s.

A court decision in 1991 involving the northern spotted owl required the Forest Service to manage for more than just timber production. The national forests in the northern Rockies constricted logging, fostering expansion in other forest areas like the South.

"If there's anything the industry should have learned over the years, it's that we can't do this by ourselves," said Gordy Sanders, the resource manager at Pyramid Mountain Lumber, one of the mill operators involved in the Beaverhead and Deerlodge negotiations.

Many environmentalists say they have come to realize that cutting down trees, if done responsibly, is not the worst thing that can happen to a forest, when the alternative is selling the land to people who want to build houses.

Stoltze Land and Lumber, for example, which owns about 36,000 acres near the border of Glacier National Park, has said that the failure of the logging industry would leave the company no option but to sell land into the booming development market.

That prospect chills the blood of people like Anne Dahl, the director of the Swan Valley Ecosystem Center, a conservation and education group.

"I'm a former tree hugger who was opposed to everything, every timber sale," Ms. Dahl said, "but now I see that the worst thing you can do is lose it all to development."

Other new partnerships are emerging. Last year, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Indian tribes, which have a reservation south of Whitefish, joined with conservationists to buy a square mile of land from Plum Creek that was deemed crucial to the endangered bull trout.

The tribes chipped in \$4.8 million, half the purchase price, and the Trust for Public Lands put together the other half. The two parties recently completed a plan to manage the property jointly, said the Salish and Kootenai tribal chairman, James Steele Jr.

Plum Creek, based in Seattle, changed its corporate structure in 1999 to become a real estate investment trust. Some Plum Creek property has been bought by conservation groups, including about 68,000 acres in the Blackfoot Valley northwest of Helena. Negotiations continue for more conservation sales, with money surging into funds organized by groups like the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Lands.

Mr. Holley, the Plum Creek executive, said that his company was committed to both the timber and real estate businesses, but that only a small percentage of its land, perhaps 30,000 acres or so, had the combination of attractions—proximity to public lands but also to other amenities, like shopping and restaurants—to make sale for development feasible.

The Forest Service, meanwhile, is struggling to find its own balance. A spokesman for the agency said that the national forests across the West were increasingly tilting toward recreation and away from logging. But,

the growth in population on the forests' edge also means more need than ever to thin the trees, through some logging, if only for wild-fire protection.

Tom Tidwell, the regional forester for 25 million acres of national forest that includes Montana, northern Idaho, North Dakota and part of South Dakota, said the Forest Service was eager to keep timber companies in business to help with the thinning.

"We're more in the need of the industry," Mr. Tidwell said. "It's essential that we have someone to do that work so that taxpayers don't have to pay for it."

One broiling and unresolved issue is who gets to use the land as it changes hands.

Most private timber tracts in the West, including those owned by Plum Creek, have traditionally been open to recreational use, treated as public entry ways into the vast national forests, grasslands and wilderness. Areas that in Montana alone add up to nearly 46,000 square miles, about the size of New York State. But in many places, the new owners are throwing up no trespassing signs and fences, blocking what generations of residents across the West have taken for granted—open and beckoning access into the woods to fish, hunt and camp.

"Part of our character is that we have so much big sky and open country," said Gov. Brian Schweitzer of Montana, a Democrat who has publicly sparred with Plum Creek about its land sales. "We're going to have to be creative. There's no textbook written on how to do this."

So the proposal at issue here is something different. It would provide a new category of tax credit bonds and establish a national program allowing the issuance of \$500 million in tax-exempt timber conservation bonds. The way it's structured, the bonds will be issued by a nonprofit organization whose holdings consist primarily of forest lands. Their board of directors would include specified representation of public officials as well as conservation organizations. The funds from the bonds will be used to purchase sizable tracts of forest lands, a minimum of 40,000 acres protected from the kind of development I was referencing earlier. And this acreage would have to be adjacent to U.S. Forest Service lands, basically leveraging the critical area already protected in Forest Service holdings. At least half of the land acquired would be transferred to the Forest Service. The development in previously forest lands not only diminishes substantially the public use and enjoyment potential of this property; it increases significantly the public cost.

We've all seen these forest fires across the West and the lavish homes they have taken out. We've also witnessed the extraordinary taxpayer dollars spent fighting to the very best effort of our talented firefighters, trying to protect these beautiful, extraordinary properties carved into areas that were previously pristine forest.

Now, an issue was raised in terms of whether this was simply too narrow a tax benefit. The bonds sold under this provision would go to numerous holders of qualified forestry conservation bonds; so there's no special earmark-type interest there. And when you consider the fact that half of the holdings have to be transferred to the United

States Forest Service, we think everyone in the country is a beneficiary of this provision in that area.

We voted on this once before in the House, debated it as part of the energy bill. It passed 235-181. And at that time a discussion was held. The minority leader raised an issue in terms of whether we ought to be talking about preserving trees and fish or something like that, his argument went, in the context of an energy bill. Well, we decided to at that time—the bill did not ultimately become law; so it's back before us again. But, clearly, there can be no issue raised about its appropriateness for consideration as part of a farm bill. A farm bill is where we address forest issues. General forestry legislation is within the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committees. We have passed farm bills that have included provisions addressing forestry, especially on private lands. In addition, the U.S. Forest Service is within the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture. So we think attaching it to the farm bill certainly makes sense in many respects.

But to be candid, this wasn't a provision that originated in the House. It originated in the Senate. I have been party to discussions now going over the last couple of weeks that have involved many, many issues in difference between the House and the Senate. That's what happens when you reach the final stages of bringing a bill out of conference committee. There are back-and-forth negotiations. And this ended up in the bill, a bill that, in my opinion, was improved in very substantial ways by priorities that we also have in the House. Certainly, the \$10.3 billion commitment into nutrition, helping people afford food at a time when the cost of groceries has risen so dramatically, this is going to be a feature directly responsive to priorities we've had in the House. It's all part of the negotiation process. There will be stuff in this bill that I think anyone will like. There will be stuff in this bill that people will be less enthusiastic about. It's a great big bill. But in balance I believe this reasonably is in the package. I like the fact that it addresses this subdividing of this forest land adjacent to the U.S. Forest Service. I like keeping the big tracts and expanding U.S. Forest Service holdings at a time when they're under such extraordinary development pressure, which would take it out of, basically, public access and enjoyment.

So I think that this proposal is fine in the bill, and I would therefore urge a "no" vote on the motion to instruct.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 2300

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the ranking member on the Ways and Means Committee, the gentleman from Louisiana, as much time as he may consume.

Mr. MCCRERY. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I reluctantly rise to educate the House on a provision that was in the Senate version of the farm bill, and according to reports as being considered for inclusion in the conference report. I say "reluctantly," Mr. Speaker, because my good friend, Mr. BAUCUS, is the sponsor of this provision in the Senate bill, and I certainly respect the right of any Member to try to bring Federal dollars to his district. But that is exactly what this is. And it ought to be exposed for that. It is not a tax provision really. It is a really more like an appropriation.

And my good friend on the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. POMEROY, said that, well, this is not really just for one entity, there will be lots of bondholders, so this money will be spread out among numerous bondholders. That's true. It will be. But that evades the point. The point is that the way the provision is written in the Senate bill would limit the application of these bonds to one specific piece of property in the United States.

Now I will read to you the criteria that lead us to that conclusion. First, "some portion of the land must be adjacent to United States Forest Service land." Well there's lots of parcels of land like that around the United States.

But second, "at least half of the land acquired must be transferred to the United States Forest Service at no net cost to the United States and not more than half of the land acquired may either remain with or be donated to a State." Again that's fine. Nothing wrong with that.

Third, and this is where it begins to tighten, "the amount of acreage acquired must be at least 40,000 acres," a fairly large parcel. And then fourth, "all of the land must be subject to a native fish habitat conservation plan approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service."

So upon examination of all the parcels of land in the United States, only one meets this criteria. And it happens to be a large piece of land of which about 90 percent of it is in the State of Montana. And it is owned by one landowner in the State of Montana.

So, Mr. Speaker, even though, yes, there will be scores, hundreds, thousands maybe of bondholders, they're not going to be the ones getting \$500 million for a piece of property. It is one landowner. And the taxpayers will be footing about \$200 million of the bill.

Now that is like an appropriation. That is a \$200 million appropriation basically to the Nature Conservancy which will buy the land and give the money to the current landowner. So let's call it what it is. It's an earmark. It's an appropriation disguised very cleverly as a forest tax credit bond.

Now, this provision could have been written to apply to any property in the United States so that anybody who wanted to set aside land could utilize these bonds. But it wasn't. It was restricted to this one piece of property. It's a rifle shot. It's an earmark.

And Mr. CANTOR's intention, I believe, is to educate the House of this and to say, and I agree with him, that this has no place in the farm bill. It ought to be in an appropriations bill. It ought to be clearly defined as an earmark for the purchase of this piece of property.

Now I don't know if \$500 million is an appropriate amount of money for this piece of property. I don't know what Nature Conservancy might have offered for this piece of property. But my guess is that when you have a \$200 million subsidy from the taxpayers, it just might distort the market. It just might raise the value of land in that particular parcel and all around that parcel.

So I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman's motion to instruct conferees is well placed. This ought not be in the farm bill. And frankly this farm tax credit idea ought not be used to distort the market for real estate anywhere in the country, and certainly not on a piece of property this big in one location.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I would just say that the Plum Creek Forest tax credit scheme is plumb wrong. This is the "bridge to nowhere" of the farm bill. This has no business being in the farm bill. This is clearly, as the gentleman from Louisiana said, an earmark directed at one wealthy landowner. And this is why the American people are sick and tired of the way this town does business.

We owe it to the public. They deserve better. Let's call this what it is. The Plum Creek Forest is plumb wrong. This is a "bridge to nowhere" in the farm bill. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this motion to instruct the House conferees.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POMEROY. I have enormous respect for each of the speakers, my friends, on the other side. I think they have made their points well. But I would like us to come back to really what's at stake with the issue in front of us. Essentially, we want to avoid a bridge to wealthy development communities placed into pristine forest lands adjacent to U.S. forests. I earlier referenced a New York Times article covering this extraordinary development pressure that's on these lands.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman yield?

Mr. POMEROY. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. CANTOR. I would ask my good friend from North Dakota, what is the date on that article in the New York Times?

Mr. POMEROY. October 17, 2007.

Mr. CANTOR. So clearly, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the gentleman, I would imagine that the economic times surrounding that article 6, 8 months ago certainly may have been different than they are today. We have been on the floor all day, and will continue to be on the floor tomorrow, talking about the housing crisis and the plummeting real estate values.

Let's face it. If you have got 40,000 acres of land today, and that land was scheduled for development and sale of parcels, that land is not worth what it was in the fall of 2007.

Mr. POMEROY. Reclaiming my time.

Well, my friend, I think we are talking about a different section of the economy. In fact, economic analysis of the functioning economy shows that there has been extraordinary wage growth of the wealthiest 1 percent, top 10 percent, consumptive patterns have continued unabated at the peak earning levels in our economy. And it is those people that are the customers for this land. This isn't your average Joe deciding, hey, Ma, let's move to Montana and buy a little forest land. No. There's no jobs there other than former timber industry jobs. The economy is in transition there. These are wealthy people that want to have essentially recreational property in areas we can't imagine.

One of the individuals referenced in that article has invested about \$125 million in Montana. It talks about his not liking what a logging company was doing. They began logging too much of the view in front of his yard. So he bought the land. He bought all the mountain that they were mining on. That's the kind of guy that we are talking about.

They talk about another guy here. They quoted a man named Michael Carricarte who bought an 800-acre property in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, in 2005. He has got the place bordered on three sides by Federal land. And he is now asking \$23.5 million for it.

This isn't the kind of property that is involved with our earlier discussion about the housing crisis. This is quite a different deal entirely. And it is for those reasons that I think it is important that we act to preserve the public interest.

We are in a recession. But it is not a recession that is diminishing the development pressure on forest lands. And we are not going to be in a recession forever. And that pressure, especially as baby boomers age and have this disposable income, is only going to continue. In fact, they talk about the pressure being extraordinary. And again, in Montana, more than 1 million acres are under threat alone.

So basically this provision has been fashioned, and if you think about it, a 40,000-acre minimum, it is entirely protected by Fish and Wildlife plans. Now my friend, Mr. MCCRERY, cites that as a negative thing. I think essentially if the goal of this is to try and preserve property, it might be a good thing. And of course there is a provision for a perpetual conservation easement. So really the aim of this, and I think it will achieve it, is to make certain we don't have private development, little lots with great big houses chunked into the pristine forest. We would like to preserve this. We would like to actually expand the holdings of the U.S. Forest

Service and have the land adjacent to it protected under perpetual conservation easement.

So all in all, there certainly is a sound rationale behind this proposal. It was included in the negotiations back and forth between the House and the Senate. And again it certainly invites the kind of questions and scrutiny that this provision has been put under tonight. But I think when you think about the importance in this country of preserving for general public use and enjoyment, we certainly come down on the right side as compared to dividing this into little lots and having that kind of development in this area.

So I think that we have covered the area. Is the gentleman ready to close? If so, I will wrap up now or I will reserve the time.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I just have one additional comment to make.

Mr. POMEROY. I think that we have discussed this at the end of a long day. I will reserve the balance of my time, but if the gentleman's comments are in the nature of a close, then I'll yield back without saying anything further.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman. And I admire him for his valiant effort to defend this provision in the Senate-passed farm bill. He did a great job.

Mr. Speaker, I just still believe that if we were serious in wanting to preserve land adjacent to Federal forest and parkland, we would have a provision here, maybe not in the farm bill, but a provision in a program authorizing some legitimate awarding of bonds, wherever the program deemed appropriate, not so narrowly drawn that the \$500 million could only be used to purchase one particular parcel.

I think anyone looking at this would have to conclude that the aim was to afford the current landowner the ability to sell the land in this difficult climate.

So Mr. Speaker, the Plum Creek Forest and the bond programs associated therewith is plumb wrong. This is a "bridge to nowhere." This is where America, once again, will be let down by the actions of this House if this provision is allowed to stay in.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

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

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

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. 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, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

□ 2315

CONTINUATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 110-109)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice, stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, and expanded in scope in Executive Order 13399 of April 25, 2006, and Executive Order 13460 of February 13, 2008, authorizing the blocking of property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation and re-exportation of certain goods to Syria, is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2008.

The actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism, interfering in Lebanon, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs including the recent revelation of illicit nuclear cooperation with North Korea, and undermining U.S. and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency declared with respect to this threat and to maintain in force the sanctions I have ordered to address this national emergency.

GEORGE W. BUSH.
THE WHITE HOUSE, May 7, 2008.

AGREEMENT WITH CZECH REPUBLIC ON SOCIAL SECURITY—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 110-110)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on Ways and Means and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Social Security Amendments of 1977

(Public Law 95-216, 42 U.S.C. 433(e)(1)), I transmit herewith the Agreement Between the United States of America and the Czech Republic on Social Security, which consists of two separate instruments: a principal agreement and an administrative arrangement. The Agreement was signed in Prague on September 7, 2007.

The United States-Czech Republic Agreement is similar in objective to the social security agreements already in force with Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Such bilateral agreements provide for limited coordination between the United States and foreign social security systems to eliminate dual social security coverage and taxation, and to help prevent the lost benefit protection that can occur when workers divide their careers between two countries. The United States-Czech Republic Agreement contains all provisions mandated by section 233 and other provisions that I deem appropriate to carry out the purposes of section 233, pursuant to section 233(c)(4).

I also transmit for the information of the Congress a report prepared by the Social Security Administration explaining the key points of the Agreement, along with a paragraph-by-paragraph explanation of the provisions of the principal agreement and the related administrative arrangement. Annexed to this report is the report required by section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, which describes the effect of the Agreement on income and expenditures of the U.S. Social Security program and the number of individuals affected by the Agreement. The Department of State and the Social Security Administration have recommended the Agreement and related documents to me.

I commend to the Congress the United States-Czech Republic Social Security Agreement and related documents.

GEORGE W. BUSH.
THE WHITE HOUSE, May 7, 2008.

FORECLOSURES AND CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, we were discussing very important legislative initiatives dealing with the Neighborhood Stabilization Act that would give \$15 billion to reclaim foreclosed homes, and an important legislative initiative, the American Housing Rescue and Foreclosure Prevention Act that would revise a number of the GSEs like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, all to help the American people.

In my discussion on the floor of the House, I indicated that we are moving