

American Samoa law requiring uniformed service voters to register to vote in person is contrary to the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act. The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act recognizes that there is a considerable cost involved for a service member, and often a spouse, to travel to his/her home of residence to register to vote. Federal law also recognizes that active duty service members have little to say about where they are stationed. Yet, wherever they are sent, and whatever dangers they may encounter, Federal law recognizes that our service members are fundamentally entitled to the right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, the discrepancy that exists between Federal and territorial law must be addressed. Soldiers from American Samoa serving in the active-duty military should be afforded a fair opportunity to vote in American Samoa as required by federal law.

The fact of the matter is our military men and women place their lives on the line to protect our freedoms. The least we can do is ensure that their fundamental right to vote is also protected. Now more than ever, when our country is at war, and our nation is in crisis, we should make every effort to afford our service members and their dependents the right to vote.

To ensure that American Samoa's election laws comply with Federal law, I have suggested that a division should be created within our local election office to deal specifically with absentee ballot and registration procedures. I also believe that the territory needs to reconsider matters pertaining to run-off elections.

Under territorial law, it is nearly impossible for absentee voters to cast votes in a run-off election because local law mandates the run-off election to be held two weeks after the general election. This local mandate discriminates against active service members and other absentee voters. To address this problem in terms of Federal elections, I believe the best solution is to establish non-partisan primary elections during an election year in the event that there are three or more candidates running for Congress.

Primary elections in the summer followed by general elections in the fall will afford all of our qualified voters an equal opportunity to cast their ballots. This will also ensure that our active duty service members are afforded the same rights and privileges as every other American serving in the U.S. Armed Services.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and I look forward to its timely passage.

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#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2001

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, because I had to return to my district to handle very urgent business, I missed a number of rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted 'yea' on rollcall votes 505 and 508. On rollcall votes 506, 507 and 509, I would have voted "nay".

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT (SPACE) ACT

### HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2001

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, the United States is an economic powerhouse. We work to keep the economy strong and to maintain a high standard of living for the people who reside here. Yet we have a drain on the economy estimated to be \$137 billion annually, a drain that goes unchecked and relatively unpublicized because it is not a "glamorous topic." This drain is spreading, continually invading our natural spaces and crowding out our native flora and fauna.

In this regard, I am referring to harmful non-native species, invasive species; an issue which is not yet fully in the public's eye. Even if a person has little concern with native fish and wildlife and the habitats they live in, even if that person resides in a city where the major wildlife is found only in alleys, the fact remains that invasive species are a drain on our economy. Included in the \$137 billion figure I referred to earlier are the negative impacts on agricultural production, control costs, and costs in lost land and water resources and uses. This number is too large to ignore, particularly when trends suggest that the number will only go up over time.

For example, my home State of West Virginia is a relatively small in terms of land mass, but here are only a few of the impacts felt from harmful nonnative species:

The balsam fir tree, on the state list of rare plants, is being infected by a small insect, the balsam wooly adelgid, which sucks the sap, killing the tree. This tree is a unique species for the State, and unless drastic measures are taken, it will be completely wiped out by this insect.

Shale barrens, one of the most unique natural plant habitats in West Virginia, have been invaded by many non-native species over the years, but two of the most problematic are spotted knapweed and barren brome grass. These plants out-compete native species and slowly eradicate them from these unique ecosystems.

In a continuation of the plight of the Great Lakes, the zebra mussel has found its way to West Virginia. So far, the zebra mussel is responsible for the federal listing of five species of mussel in the Ohio River, not to mention economic damage from its clogging of water pipes.

These are only three of the over 150 harmful non-natives that currently affect West Virginia. In my view, we have an obligation to our native species to protect, conserve and restore them from the introduction of harmful invasive species.

For these reasons, today I along with the gentleman from Maryland, WAYNE GILCHREST, and the gentleman from Guam, ROBERT UNDERWOOD, are introducing a bill to protect, conserve and restore our native fish, wildlife and their habitats by addressing the threat of these space invaders, harmful invasive species. Maryland, for example, has a nutria problem, too many nutria, and the veined rapa whelk, both of which I know Mr. GILCHREST

has great concern with. Mr. UNDERWOOD has chosen to be an original cosponsor because of the enormous impacts the brown tree snake has on Guam, its power lines and native bird species.

The Species Protection and Conservation of the Environment Act, or SPACE Act, would provide the missing link in existing efforts to combat the pernicious and destructive space invasion of some of our most valuable natural areas by:

1. Providing incentive money to States to write State-wide assessments to study exactly where their native species are being threatened by harmful nonnative species;
2. Providing incentives for projects to implement the State assessments;
3. Encouraging the formation of partnerships among the Federal government and non-Federal land and water owners and managers;
4. Addressing harmful nonnative species' migratory pathways;
5. Implementing specific recommendations of the National Strategy written by the National Invasive Species Council;
6. Creating a Federal-level rapid response capability; and
7. Tasking the National Invasive Species Council to develop standard monitoring requirements for projects combating harmful nonnative species.

Using a two-pronged approach, the SPACE Act would provide resources to States and U.S. territories, including Indian Tribes, to address real problems and real solutions. The first prong is a grant program to provide resources to States, territories and tribes to develop assessments to control their harmful nonnative species. Participation in the program would be voluntary, but once this bill becomes law we believe that all States, territories and tribes will want to take advantage of this opportunity and the benefits it can bring to them, aiding them in the organization, prioritizing and specific actions with regards to their harmful non-native species problems and allowing them to apply for what the bill refers to as Aldo Leopold Grants. Technical assistance would also be available to the States, territories and tribes through the National Invasive Species Council to ensure that all assessments would be effective and include the recommendations of the Council's overarching Management Plan.

The second prong is implementing the assessments through what would be known as Aldo Leopold Native Heritage Grant Program, which would be available on a 75% federal, 25% non-federal cost sharing basis. Through a variety of partnerships land and water owners and managers would be eligible to receive grants administered by the Secretary of the Interior. The approved assessment would serve as a guide for developing projects with partners, including Department of Interior and Forest Service lands, working together to control or eradicate harmful nonnative species on the lands and waters under their governance. With the assessment as the foundation for all projects, this legislation would encourage addressing all problems at the ecosystem level and including all land and water owners. To support the use of innovative methods and technologies, grants would be available on an 85% federal, 15% non-federal basis if new techniques are used. Reporting and monitoring requirements are mandated by the grant, allowing for the creation of a database which would track the methods and results of