

this one, where the American people are behind bipartisan efforts of our side and moderate Republicans to reach agreement, let us proceed with this bill at least as a start. The American people want to protect the environment.

**PERMISSION FOR SUNDRY COMMITTEES AND THEIR SUBCOMMITTEES TO SIT TODAY DURING 5-MINUTE RULE**

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the following committees and their subcommittees be permitted to sit today while the House is meeting in the Committee of the Whole House under the 5-minute rule.

Committee on Banking and Financial Services, Committee on Commerce, Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

It is my understanding that the minority has been consulted and that there is no objection to these requests.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EVERETT). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule I, the Chair announces that he 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 4 of rule XV.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken after the debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules.

**BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE LAND EXCHANGE**

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 826) to extend the deadline for the completion of certain land exchanges involving the Big Thicket National Preserve in Texas, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 826

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

**SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

The Congress finds that—

(1) under the Big Thicket National Preserve Addition Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-46), Congress increased the size of the Big Thicket National Preserve through authorized land exchanges;

(2) such land exchanges were not consummated by July 1, 1995, as required by Public Law 103-46; and

(3) failure to consummate such land exchanges by the end of the three-year extension provided by this Act will necessitate further intervention and direction from Congress concerning such land exchanges.

**SEC. 2. TIME PERIOD FOR LAND EXCHANGE.**

(a) EXTENSION.—The last sentence of subsection (d) of the first section of the Act entitled "An Act to authorize the establishment of the Big Thicket National Preserve in the State of Texas, and for other purposes", approved October 11, 1974 (16 U.S.C. 698(d)), is amended by striking out "two years after date of enactment" and inserting "five years after the date of enactment".

(b) INDEPENDENT APPRAISAL.—Subsection (d) of the first section of such Act (16 U.S.C. 698(d)) is further amended by adding at the end the following: "The Secretary, in considering the values of the private lands to be exchanged under this subsection, shall consider independent appraisals submitted by the owners of the private lands."

(c) LIMITATION.—Subsection (d) of the first section of such Act (16 U.S.C. 698(d)), as amended by subsection (b), is further amended by adding at the end the following: "The authority to exchange lands under this subsection shall expire on July 1, 1998."

**SEC. 3. REPORTING REQUIREMENT.**

Not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this Act and every six months thereafter until the earlier of the consummation of the exchange or July 1, 1998, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall each submit a report to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate concerning the progress in consummating the land exchange authorized by the amendments made by Big Thicket National Preserve Addition Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-46).

**SEC. 4. LAND EXCHANGE IN LIBERTY COUNTY, TEXAS.**

If, within one year after the date of the enactment of this Act—

(1) the owners of the private lands described in subsection (b)(1) offer to transfer all their right, title, and interest in and to such lands to the Secretary of the Interior, and

(2) Liberty County, Texas, agrees to accept the transfer of the Federal lands described in subsection (b)(2),

the Secretary shall accept such offer of private lands and, in exchange and without additional consideration, transfer to Liberty County, Texas, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the Federal lands described in subsection (b)(2).

(b) LANDS DESCRIBED.—

(1) PRIVATE LANDS.—The private lands described in this paragraph are approximately 3.76 acres of lands located in Liberty County, Texas, as generally depicted on the map entitled "Big Thicket Lake Estates Access—Proposed".

(2) FEDERAL LANDS.—The Federal lands described in this paragraph are approximately 2.38 acres of lands located in Menard Creek Corridor Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve, as generally depicted on the map referred to in paragraph (1).

(c) ADMINISTRATION OF LANDS ACQUIRED BY THE UNITED STATES.—The lands acquired by the Secretary under this section shall be added to and administered as part of the Menard Creek Corridor Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] and the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN].

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 826, sponsored by Mr. WILSON of Texas, would extend the

authority previously granted to the Park Service to conduct land exchanges with private owners and the Forest Service at the Big Thicket National Preserve. These exchanges will add critical acreage to the park unit. Because of the lack of progress by the respective agencies, this legislation is necessary to facilitate expansion of the Big Thicket National Preserve as mandated by the 103d Congress.

Mr. WILSON has worked cooperatively with the committee and the agencies to find a way to promptly facilitate this noncontroversial land exchange. This legislation will extend the deadline for completion of these exchanges by 3 years or until July 1, 1998. Because we are interested in these exchanges occurring in a prompt manner, this bill will also terminate the authority of the Park Service to conduct this exchange if the new deadline is not met. Moreover, there is a requirement that the agencies report back to the committee every 6 months on the progress of the exchange. Last, included in the text is the authorization to complete a very minor exchange necessary to provide emergency access to an inholder in times of flooding. This will exchange 3.76 acres of private lands for 2.38 acres of park lands. This is a noncontroversial exchange supported by both the landowner and the Park Service.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 826 for the betterment of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

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

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

(Mr. RICHARDSON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 826, introduced by my good friend and colleague, Representative CHARLIE WILSON. It is a disappointment that the Big Thicket National Preserve land exchanges that were previously authorized have not been completed. Representative WILSON introduced H.R. 826 to extend the deadline for completion of these exchanges. I am glad to see that the bill extends the time period. However, it appears that the gun is being put to the head of the National Park Service to get the land exchanges completed, when it does not appear that the National Park Service is the problem in getting the exchanges done. I hope that the committee amendment's triggering mechanism will not be necessary and that these exchanges can be completed quickly.

I would also note, Mr. Speaker, that the committee amendment includes an additional land exchange that had not been previously discussed. I understand that this small exchange is one the National Park Service supports and that