Many of our colleagues think we ought to continue to ''borrow'' from the highway trust fund to make the budget look better than it really is. We have a chance to say no to that kind of ''sleight of hand'' next week. Spending money for the purpose we tell taxpayers we're collecting it for is one of the kinds of tax relief that taxpayers will appreciate. One of our priorities should be ''truth in taxing.''

IN RECOGNITION OF STUDENT MEMBERS OF THE ''KICK BUTTS CONNECTICUT'' CAMPAIGN TO END YOUTH SMOKING

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great bunch of kids who are sitting in the gallery this morning with their parents and their advisers. These students are all members of the ''Kick Butts Connecticut'' campaign, which I started 2 years ago to help combat smoking in my home State. They are true heroes, acting as antismoking peer counselors for school children.

Madam Speaker, I do not have time in 1 minute to talk about all their many accomplishments, but I would like to acknowledge them each by name: Rhiann Hinckley from Memorial Middle School in Middlefield; Emily Parmenter also from Memorial Middle School in Middlefield; Josh Zelem from Amity Junior High School in Bethany; Lindsey Norman from Amity Junior High School in Orange; and Chika Anekwe from Wooster Middle School in Stratford. Two additional students who made the trip down to Washington but have already returned to Connecticut: Dan Lerman from Amity Junior High in Bethany and Shannon Mason from Hamden Country Day School in Hamden, Connecticut.

Madam Speaker, I salute these young people for their creative efforts, for their hard work, and for their dedication in the fight to reduce youth smoking. Every single day they are saving children's lives and we are all very grateful and we are all very proud.

FOREST RECOVERY AND PROTECTION ACT OF 1998

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House resolution 394 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2515.

□ 1015

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2515) to address declining health of forests on Federal lands in the United States through a program of recovery and protection consistent with the requirements of existing public land management and environmental laws, to establish a program to inventory, monitor, and analyze public and private forests and their resources, and for other purposes, with Mr. COLLINS in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, the Forest Recovery and Protection Act of 1998 is the result of some 14 months of listening and learning and fact-gathering. It is the result of seven hearings in which we heard from a broad array of people across this Nation, including scientists, academics, State foresters, professional associates, environmental groups, wildlife organizations, citizens, community leaders, elected officials, organized labor, the forest products industry and the administration.

Beyond the hearing process, the committee has worked exhaustively with minority Members, northeastern Republicans, hopefully all Members of this body to refine the bill to broaden support for what we believe is a very necessary and a very reasonable initiative. We extended a hand and we worked with those who have expressed concerns with the bill and we were willing to work in good faith to find solutions.

I am delighted to stand here today and to tell my colleagues that because we have collaborated with these concerned parties we have a stronger bill and one that truly represents, we believe, diverse interests. Here are just a few of the groups, by the way, that support this bill: the AFL-CIO, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, the National Association of Counties, the Society of American Foresters, the National Association of State Foresters, the National Association of Professional Forestry Schools.

But despite our best efforts to include all interests in crafting this legislation, there are those of course who have elected to remain outside the process rather than coming to the table to seek solutions. Unfortunately, because they have not been engaged, there are some misunderstandings about this bill, which I would like to clear up.

There are a number of people who are talking about this bill, about what it is not. I would like to explain to them about what the bill does. It is a five-year pilot project providing a timely and organized and scientific strategy to address the chronic conditions of our national forests. The bill establishes an independent scientific panel through the National Academy of Sciences to recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture the standards and criteria that should be used to identify which national forests are in the worst shape and where restoration efforts are needed most.

The public then provides input on the standards and criteria which the Secretary publishes. Based upon the standards and criteria, the Secretary then determines which forests have the greatest restoration needs and allocates amounts to those forests. On-the-ground forest managers then begin planning projects to restore degraded and deteriorating forest resources.

I have been hearing information to the contrary, so I want to make this clear to everyone in this assembly. These projects must comply with all applicable environmental laws. This legislation does not in any way limit public participation under existing laws and regulations. More than that, a full, open, public process must be conducted by all recovery projects. All project planning, including analysis of environmental impacts, must comply with NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act. Recovery projects must be consistent with land and resource management plans, plans that have been analyzed by NEPA and have been deemed consistent with environmental laws and regulations. There is no short-circuiting, circumventing or limiting of laws. Public process or judicial review anywhere in this bill are always protected.

So those who oppose 2515, the original bill, must oppose current environmental laws and regulations. Those who oppose this bill must oppose restoring fish habitat. They must oppose reducing the threat of epidemic levels of insects and disease. They must oppose replanting trees and stabilizing slopes after catastrophic events, and they must oppose reducing the risk of wildfire.

Those who oppose this bill say the forest health crisis is a myth, that forest health is an excuse to log our national forests. Of course, not every acre in the National Forest is degraded or deteriorating, but over the last decade an enormous body of scientific literature has been generated about our degraded, deteriorating forest resources. Scientists agree that our forests are ''outside the historic range of variability,'' and that active management is necessary in some areas to begin to return forests to their historic conditions.

The Chief of the Forest Service has said that there are some 40 million acres of National Forest at unacceptable risk of destruction by catastrophic fire, and listed these sources: the Integrated Scientific Assessment for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia Basin says, ''We found that forests and ecosystems have become more susceptible to severe fire and outbreaks of insects and disease''; the Southern