

NOTICE OF HEARING

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RECREATION

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Historic Preservation and Recreation of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will take place on Thursday, July 23, 1998, at 2 p.m., in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on S. 2109, a bill to provide for an exchange of lands located near Gustavus, Alaska, and for other purposes; S. 2257, a bill to reauthorize the National Historic Preservation Act; S. 2276, a bill to amend the National Trails System Act to designate El Camino Real de los Tejas as a National Historic Trail; S. 2272, a bill to amend the boundaries of Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site in the State of Montana; S. 2284, a bill to establish the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site in the State of South Dakota, and for other purposes; and, H.R. 1522, a bill to extend the authorization for the National Historic Preservation Fund, and for other purposes.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send two copies of their testimony to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Historic Preservation and Recreation, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, 364 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510-6150.

For further information, please contact Jim O'Toole of the Subcommittee staff at (202) 224-5161.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FLORIDA'S WILDFIRE ASSISTANCE

• Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I rise today to make a few remarks on the extraordinary efforts which are currently taking place in my home state of Florida. For over a month now, as I am sure we are all well aware, devastating wildfires have ravaged Florida, impacting all of our 67 counties. Since this crisis began, more than 2,000 separate fires to date have been identified and more than 500,000 acres of state and federal land have been burned.

While these facts are certainly overwhelming, I think it is important that we take a moment to recognize the heroic campaign which has been undertaken to contain these fires. Last week I had the opportunity to tour the fire ravaged area of Volusia County, and I met with firefighters and emergency officials on the front line of what has

been a constant battle. I was simply overwhelmed by the determination of these men and women who have undertaken the challenge of extinguishing these fires. These brave individuals are working 16 to 18 hours a day in extreme temperatures and the harshest of conditions. Tragically, these fires have consumed over 367 homes and 33 businesses. It is, however, thanks to the efforts of these individuals that losses have remained at this level.

These dedicated professionals, who have put their lives on the line fighting the wildfires, represent the tremendous support which Florida has received by our fellow Americans. Not since Hurricane Andrew in 1992 have we seen an outpouring of human kindness and supplies from around the country to help Florida fight a natural disaster of this magnitude. It is disasters like this which bring the American people together and makes our country one giant community. To date, 44 states, from as far away as California and Alaska, are involved in this effort. Through an outstanding coordinated effort on the part of local, state and federal agencies, countless numbers of people are working behind the scenes, including the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and private citizens.

I have remained in close contact with state and federal emergency officials, and I am confident all that can be done is being done. What Florida really needs is rain. While the situation still remains quite volatile, the weather patterns do offer some hope and relief to the devastated areas. Over the past few days several rainstorms have offered some relief, however much more is still needed to completely extinguish the fires. I know all of my colleagues join me in letting the firefighters, emergency officials and residents battling these fires know they are in our thoughts and prayers as they continue the fight to extinguish these fires.●

HIGHER EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1998

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support of legislation passed by the Senate last evening, the Higher Education Amendments of 1998.

The Higher Education Act has been of enormous benefit to millions of students over the past three decades in providing more affordable access to institutions of post-secondary education. Many of these students simply would not have gone to college or vocational school without the assistance provided through such programs as Pell Grants, student loans, and work study.

With the increased competition faced by workers in the global economy, the importance of these programs is even greater today, not only for students but also for our nation's economy. The Higher Education Act programs account for 68 percent of all financial aid available to students.

The cost of a college education continues to grow far faster than inflation,

leaving more and more students with a large debt once they finish. Last fall, the College Board released a nationwide survey of tuition costs, finding that tuition and fees would rise about 5 percent for the fifth year in a row.

In contrast, inflation in the overall economy has been held under control during these years, hovering at an average of just over 2 percent.

As costs have increased, student borrowing has expanded to make up the difference. Student loans now comprise about 60 percent of all financial aid, whereas in the 1980-81 school year, loans were just over 40 percent of the total. The average graduate of a four-year college today will have \$14,500 in debt upon entering the working world.

Given the increased reliance on borrowing, it is notable that this reauthorization legislation will provide for a reduction in interest rates on new student loans by approximately 1 percent from current rates. This provision will save students hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars.

Nearly 84 percent of South Dakota students receive financial aid in some form, with an average annual award of \$5,400 to students who receive aid at the six public universities. Approximately 16,000 students in South Dakota receive Pell Grants, accounting for \$28 million in federal assistance.

I am pleased that this bill will provide legislative authority to increase the size of the maximum Pell Grant to \$5,000. In the 1970s, Pell Grants covered three-quarters of the costs of attending a four-year public school. Today, these grants cover only one-third of the cost. I realize that finding the budget resources to fund this maximum grant fully will be difficult, but Pell Grants are the most effective program we have for helping low-income students afford post-secondary education.

This legislation also continues the essential Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program. Although direct lending by the federal government has consumed a portion of the overall student loan volume, all of the colleges and universities in my state of South Dakota continue to use the FFEL program and remain satisfied with the services they receive. Accordingly, I have been skeptical of efforts that might destroy the balance that has existed between direct lending and the FFEL program. Federal policy should not be changed in ways to either favor direct lending or undermine the financial viability of lending by the private sector.

There are some lesser-noticed provisions of this bill of which I am particularly proud. Promoting the availability and affordability of child care has been one of my highest priorities in the Senate. That's why I am so pleased that legislation I cosponsored earlier this year, the CAMPUS Act, has been incorporated into this bill. CAMPUS stands for Child Care Access Means Parents in School. This provision will establish a grant program to assist colleges with