

Democrats out of the legislative process and provided neither an opportunity to debate the amendment, nor the chance to show this amendment for what it really is: an unacceptable invasion of our Nation's public lands and an assault on our public process. I oppose this clandestine.

The King Cove Access Project rider is an affront to our nation's environmental laws. Section 115 of the Energy & Water Appropriations Bill directs the construction of a road from the village of King Cove, Alaska through the sensitive Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and right to the boundary of the fragile and internationally significant Izembek Wilderness Area. The provision waives all environmental laws governing construction of such a road in the process. The amendment was not included in either the House or Senate bills.

Other government agencies have raised concerns about this project as part of the mandated inter-governmental coordinate. Congress dealt with this issue five years ago when I was the ranking member of the Resources Committee in the 105th Congress. The King Cove Access Project was defeated then and should have been defeated now.

In 1998, proponents attempted to add the provision to an appropriations bill but were not successful. A compromise was later reached with the King Cove Health and Safety Act which was included as Section 353 of Public Law 105-277, the Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The measure appropriated \$40 million to address the access needs of the communities of King Cove and Cold Bay; however, the Act did not approve a road through the Izembek refuge or the Izembek Wilderness. In fact, the legislation specifically required that expenditure of the funds allocated in the bill "must be in accordance with all other applicable laws."

It is outrageous that five years after a satisfactory compromise was agreed upon, we must return to this issue.

The Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, on the Alaska Peninsula, is internationally recognized as one of the most important wetland reserves in the Northern Hemisphere. Home to threatened and endangered species, as well as millions of migratory birds, the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and Izembek Wilderness are keys in the fight to conserve the natural diversity of wildlife populations and habitats.

The King Cove Access Project rider inappropriately short-circuits the public process. An administrative decision on a project to enhance marine-road access for the community of King Cove is proceeding in a timely manner and does not require intervention by Congress. However, the King Cove Access Project mandates one alternative in the EIS, thereby effectively ignoring the advice of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, other federal agencies and the American public.

The King Cove Access Project ignores environmental laws, threatens important wildlife habitat and sets a dangerous anti-wilderness precedent. It is shameful that it was part of this legislation.

RECOGNIZING ST. HYACINTH
BASILICA

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 8, 2003

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of more than 111,000 of my constituents who are of Polish descent, I proudly rise to recognize the official designation of St. Hyacinth's Church on 3636 West Wolfram as a basilica for the Chicago Archdiocese.

My hometown of Chicago was once said to contain more Poles than any city outside Warsaw. Still today, in St. Hyacinth's parish, the area's largest and most prominent Polish Catholic parish, residents are just as likely to speak Polish as English.

St. Hyacinth's was founded in 1894 with less than 50 members and has grown tremendously over the years. Today, St. Hyacinth's serves over 8,000 worshippers each week under the guidance of the Resurrectionist Fathers, who have served the congregation since its founding.

Under the leadership of its rector since 1995, Rev. Michal Osuch, St. Hyacinth's has actively engaged in the sacramental life of the church by developing programs of evangelization that emphasize connecting adults, particularly with the sacraments of confirmation and marriage. The church also provides a welcoming home for new immigrants every month by hosting free English-as-a-Second Language classes, a Polish language school for children and many other community activities for adults, youth and children.

In becoming a basilica, St. Hyacinth's was recognized for its prestige, its beauty, and its ability to accommodate large numbers of parishioners since a basilica is a community's focal point for worship and evangelization. Cardinal Francis George validated these features last Sunday by formally proclaiming it as "a place of frequent and exemplary liturgical celebration."

The petition for basilica status was reviewed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and approved by the Congregation of Divine Worship in Rome. As a basilica, it maintains an obligation to uphold a high level of both worship and religious instruction, particularly through conferences and speakers.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate St. Hyacinth's on this high honor and its upcoming 110th anniversary next year. In earning the distinction of becoming a basilica, it has again proven its importance as a pillar of Chicago's Polish American community. On this day, I am proud to join the people of my district, as well as those of Polish descent around the City, in celebrating this historic achievement.

THE VOTER CONFIDENCE AND INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY ACT OF 2003

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 8, 2003

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to reiterate the importance of my "Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2003" to the

integrity of democracy in the United States. Although I am deeply gratified by the substantial groundswell of support among my colleagues and cosponsors, I regret that this session draws to a close for the year without this critical piece of legislation having been meaningfully addressed by this Chamber.

When I introduced the Voter Confidence Act in May of this year, I did so without cosponsors. I had been told that no one wanted to reopen HAVA. I had been told that adding paper records back into the electoral process would generate fraud. I had been told that access for the disabled and voter verified paper trails were mutually exclusive—you can have one or the other, but you can't have both. I had been told that there is no complaint that existing electronic voting machines are not functioning properly. But it seemed obvious to me, given that all computers are subject to error, failure and tampering, that computers upon which elections are conducted would be as well. I also believed that voter verification mechanisms, just like voting machines themselves, could readily be made accessible to disabled voters. Although I supported HAVA, and continue to support the many groundbreaking improvements it ushered forth, I was troubled to see that HAVA funding fueled an unintended consequence—the wide-scale purchase of unauditible electronic voting machines—and threatened the very integrity of the electoral system in the United States. Earlier this session, I introduced the Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act to enhance HAVA's accessibility requirements, to increase participation among all voters, and to restore faith in the electoral system and in the government itself by giving voters a means by which they themselves could be certain that their votes are being counted.

From the moment my press release announcing the bill was released, my telephone began to ring with calls from voters around the country expressing their profuse thanks. Within a week, one of my local metropolitan papers ran an editorial saying that the bill "proposes urgent and sensible measures to preserve the sanctity of the ballot" and suggested that Congress "shift into high gear and enact this legislation without delay." Within two or three weeks, I was joined on the bill by eight of my Colleagues. In another week or two, I was joined by eight more. More editorials ran—New York Newsday said that although "many election officials . . . resist the paper trail idea . . . the purpose of voting reform isn't to make life easier for election clerks. It is to make elections fairer and restore the frayed confidence of voters—the people who are supposed to count most of all." The Bismark Tribune asserted: "One thing the committee should insist on is a paper 'receipt' that lets the voter check his work and is available for a re-count, if necessary." The Star News of North Carolina opined: "By the time this is over, we might be nostalgic for hanging chads. At least they were cheap. It turns out those expensive high-tech voting systems based on computers can be stuffed like ballot boxes in Chicago. My, what a surprise. . . ." Most recently, the New York Times said, "[T]he public must feel secure that each vote is counted. At this stage, a voter-verified paper trail offers the public that necessary security."

And as we all know, this is not just a matter of opinion. A team of computer scientists from Johns Hopkins and Rice Universities released

a report in July disclosing “stunning, stunning flaws” in the security of certain electronic voting machines widely in use, precipitating an avalanche of further studies and reviews, raising further red flags among jurisdictions considering new equipment purchases, and generating further uncertainty and concern about the use of privately owned and controlled voting equipment that produces results that cannot be meaningfully audited in any way. Reports of irregularities on voting machines abound, but I will mention just one. In a recent election conducted in Boone County, Indiana, a “computer glitch” reportedly “spewed out impossible numbers.” In a jurisdiction that had fewer than 19,000 registered voters, 144,000 votes were reported. The County Clerk said she “just about had a heart attack.” Although a “corrected” count of about 5,300 votes was eventually produced, how can we know it was in—fact correct? The fact is, without an independent voter verified paper trail, we can never know.

The New York Assembly passed a law in June mandating voter verified paper trails. The State of Illinois passed a similar law in August. In November, the Secretary of State of California mandated voter verified paper trails. Legislation requiring voter verified paper trails is also pending in Maine, and I have been told that similar bills are imminently to be introduced in Maryland and Virginia. Broad coalitions of public interest groups are now taking definitive action to lobby in favor of voter verified paper trails. The Communications Workers of America passed a resolution in August stating that the CWA “endorse and support the use of only DRE and ‘touch screen’ machines with the ability to provide the voter with a view of a paper ballot that is stored and available for audits.” A large New York-based coalition including at least five disability advocacy groups issued a statement in the fall urging that “New voting machines should provide a ‘voter-verifiable paper audit trail’ and incorporate ‘data-to-voice’ technology to ensure full access by all.” Grass roots organizations lobbying for my bill and for voter verified paper trails are forming all over the country. The resolution in favor of voter verifiable audit trails posted by Verifiedvoting.org has more than 1,000 endorsers. An online petition in favor of my Voter Confidence Act which had 50 signatures in July has more than 4,000 signatures now. An online petition in favor of voter verified paper trails sponsored by Martin Luther King III, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Investigative Journalist Greg Palast has more than 60,000 signatures.

I introduced this legislation because I think that if we don’t have an election system that voters can trust, voter participation will decline and our democracy will deteriorate. Citizens from all over the country, sharing this concern, have spoken out, indeed shouted out, that we should act. The extent and depth of discussion on the Internet and in town meetings is striking.

This is not a partisan issue. I stand today with 90 Members from both sides of the aisle, who are just as deeply concerned about the integrity of our electoral system as I am. They are just as deeply troubled by the prospect of private ownership and control of the vote count as I am. They have heard from and responded to the concerns of their constituents about insecure, un-auditable voting equipment just as I have. Some of them have even told

me that—second only to the Iraq conflict—the issue of the verifiability of election results is the one most frequently raised in public forums. And one thing that has been reiterated to me time and again—even by people who have not made their minds up on the issue—is that the issue is not going to go away.

We have a responsibility to demonstrate that our democracy stands above all others in its unimpeachability. New York Times columnist Paul Krugman concluded his recent column, entitled “Hack the Vote,” by saying, “Let’s be clear: the credibility of U.S. democracy may be at stake.” When the results are in after the next election, there must be no question. There must be no doubt. We must all feel certain that the voice of the people, as expressed in the voting booth, was heard. November 2004 is just around the corner. When this body reconvenes in January, I urge it to consider this legislation a top priority.

AUGUST 14TH BLACKOUT

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 8, 2003

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to comment on the Bush Administration’s report on the August 14 blackout that left millions of people in New York without power, some for days.

The U.S.-Canadian outage task force on November 19 issued a report titled “Causes of the August 14th Blackout in the United States and Canada,” saying 50 million people from Indiana to Massachusetts and Canada went without electricity because of untrimmed trees and a computer glitch. But the New York Times reported on November 25 that “a variety of experts now say the [report’s] findings were too narrow, ignoring the federal government’s role in the recent reshaping of the power industry.”

We need to know what the truth is. The Times has reported on the blackout as thoroughly as anyone, so this report is very important. Maybe we need an impartial investigator to follow up on what they are reporting.

In the November 25 article, Alan Richardson of the American Public Power Association says that maybe the federal government didn’t address what mistakes the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) made in breaking up the utility industry “because the answer is not one that’s comfortable politically.”

Commenting on the organization the FERC approved to run the transmission wires in the Midwest, transmission expert Robert Blohm is quoted in the article as saying “How come nobody has examined this horror story, of how they set up an entity 10 times more complex than any known one, in such a short period of time?”

John Casazza, a retired executive from a New Jersey utility, says in the article that “There are a lot of aspects in this blackout that have not been touched by [the Administration’s] report. . . . The root causes are what has happened as a result of our government policy.”

If the experts think policy set by the government is the cause of the blackout, why are the government officials who made these bad pol-

icy decisions the ones that are writing the report on what caused the blackout?

Back on September 23, the Times reported that “Experts now think that on Aug. 14, northern Ohio had a severe shortage of reactive power, which ultimately caused the power plant and transmission line failures that set the blackout in motion. Demand for reactive power was unusually high because of a large volume of long-distance transmissions streaming through Ohio to areas, including Canada, that needed to import power to meet local demand.” These long-distance transmissions were mainly by “independent power producers,” or IPPs, who often do not produce any reactive power. The article quoted Raymond Palmieri, who is responsible for transmission reliability in the Midwest, as saying reactive power “is definitely a contributor” to the blackout.

Who has been pushing for these long-distance transmissions by IPPs? The FERC. They had experts saying for at least two months before the official blackout report came out that it was a problem. But what did that official blackout report, which FERC and the DOE directed and wrote, say about the role of reactive power and IPPs? “[T]he suggestion that IPPs may have contributed to the difficulties of reliability management on August 14 because they don’t provide reactive power is misplaced.”

There is nothing wrong with independent power producers. They perform a valuable role in meeting the nation’s electricity needs. But if the government’s blackout report barely even mentions the role of reactive power, and doesn’t mention at all whether, in light of more long distance transmissions, someone should have changed the rules to make sure there was enough of it, when experts say it was “definitely a contributor,” something isn’t right.

While the FERC has been pushing for more long-distance transmission, Congress has been hearing from experts that the transmission system wasn’t designed to operate that way, and that using it for long-distance transmission reduces reliability. At the House Energy and Commerce Committee’s blackout hearing on September 4, Gene McGrath, the CEO of Consolidated Edison, said “I think as an engineer and as an operator having the generation as close to the load center as it can be done is the best interest of everybody. . . . [A]s you separate generation from load you introduce another component. As you introduce other components you can introduce costs and you can introduce reliability problems.” That is, generating the power two or three States away causes problems. We need to have the power generated close to where it is used.

Is that issue even discussed in the Administration’s blackout report? No—not even a little bit.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents went without power on August 14. It’s not just an inconvenience, it’s a danger in many cases to be left without electricity. Life-support equipment, traffic signals, elevators, and so many other important devices all depend on electricity. But we seem to have a situation where our own government’s review of the blackout steers away from even looking into what seem to be very important contributing factors.

FERC Chairman Pat Wood testified before the House Energy and Commerce Committee many times in the past couple of years, telling