

year, \$20 million study and proposing "Plan 2007", the IJC is proposing to maintain the status quo and change little from the current management plan. "Plan 2007" will not restore the natural cyclical rhythms of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River as was proposed in "Plan B+", the widely supported management proposal developed in the IJC Study that would provide significant environmental improvements to the region.

Audubon New York and the National Audubon Society applauds your attention to the need to restore the coastal ecosystems of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, and strongly supports your resolution calling for the adoption of a regulation that provides ecosystem benefits, and addresses the concerns of the public and the State of New York. We thank you for your strong efforts on this critical issue, and look forward to working with you and our partners throughout the region to ensure a sound environmental plan is implemented.

Sincerely,

ALBERT E. CACCесе,
Executive Director.
JOHN FLICKER,
President.

DUCKS UNLIMITED,
Ann Arbor, MI, April 17, 2008.

Congressman JOHN MCHUGH,
*House of Representatives, Rayburn HOB, Wash-
ington, DC.*

Congresswoman LOUISE SLAUGHTER,
*House of Representatives, Rayburn HOB, Wash-
ington, DC.*

DEAR CONGRESSMAN MCHUGH AND CONGRESSWOMAN SLAUGHTER: On behalf of the 16,000 Ducks Unlimited members in New York, I would like to thank you for your initiative on developing the resolution regarding the water level management plan for Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. As you know, DU has been engaged in this issue for many years, and strongly encouraged the International Joint Commission to adopt Plan B+ for future water level management of the Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence system. In our scientific opinion, Plan B+ delivered the best overall environmental, economic and social benefits to all affected interests.

In our opinion, Plan 2007 as presented by the IJC does not go far enough to remedy the past management regime, nor look forward enough to ensure multiple future benefits for the majority of affected people and resources. DU is mobilizing our membership to be present at the public information sessions and public hearings scheduled by the IJC so that our voice will be heard.

Therefore, Ducks Unlimited supports your bi-partisan House Resolution calling for the IJC to increase the level of environmental protections and benefits, fully consider the views of the public and State of New York when selecting the new plan, and maximize hydropower production (in line with Plan B+). Again, thank you for your leadership on this issue, and rest assured that Ducks Unlimited will be following this important environmental issue very closely.

Sincerely,

RAY WHITTEMORE,
Director of Conservation Programs.

APRIL 22, 2008.

Hon. JOHN MCHUGH,
*House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.*

Hon. LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER,
*House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR CONGRESSMAN MCHUGH AND CONGRESSWOMAN SLAUGHTER, We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our support for the house resolution you've developed that urges the International Joint

Commission to adopt a water management plan for the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario that takes into consideration environmental needs and the concerns of the public and affected States and urges the Secretary of State to reject any plan that does not do so.

Since the completion of the Moses-Saunders hydropower dam 50 years ago, the Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River ecosystems have suffered consistent losses to their globally significant biodiversity due to unnatural and damaging water levels regulation. The current, 50 year-old regulation scheme has artificially constrained water levels, resulting in considerable damage to more than 50% of the region's coastal wetlands and significant impacts to many fish species and nesting water birds.

After more than five years of study funded by \$20-million taxpayer dollars, the IJC has the information necessary to select a scientifically-based and publicly supported management plan that would deliver significant environmental improvements to the region. Instead, the IJC has turned its back on the Lake and River environment by proposing a plan—Plan 2007—that continues, and perhaps even worsens, the environmental destruction of the Lake and River.

In a time of unprecedented momentum towards restoring the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system, the actions by the IJC that would reverse restoration programs are unacceptable.

We applaud your efforts to ensure that the environment of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario are protected from further damage. By introducing and supporting this resolution, you are sending a strong signal to the International Joint Commission that the status quo, which has resulted in the significant losses of wetlands throughout the River and Lake ecosystem, is not acceptable.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Caddick, Executive Director, Save The River/Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper; Joel Brammeier, Vice President for Policy, Alliance for the Great Lakes; April H. Gromnicki, Esq., Director, Ecosystem Restoration, Audubon; Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director, Audubon New York; Julie M. Barrett O'Neill, Esq., Riverkeeper and Executive Director, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper; Dereth Glance, Executive Program Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment; Gildo M. Tori, Director of Public Policy, Ducks Unlimited; Katherine Nadeau, Water & Natural Resources Program Associate, Environmental Advocates of New York; Jill Ryan, Executive Director, Freshwater Future; Mary Muter, Vice President, Environment, Georgian Baykeeper for Georgian Bay Association and Foundation; Thomas Marks, NY Director, Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council.

John Jackson, Director, Clean Production, Great Lakes United; Robert A. Sweeney, PhD, Executive Director, International Association for Great Lakes Research; Nancy Foster, Secretary, International Water Levels Coalition; Les Monostory, President, New York Division, Izaak Walton League; Robert M. Borchak, Director at Large, Michigan United Conservation Clubs; Karen M. Schapiro, Executive Director, Midwest Environmental Advocates; Andy Buchsbaum, Regional Executive Director, National Wildlife Federation; Harold L. Palmer, President, New York State Conservation Council; Aaron R. Vogel, Executive Director, Thousand Islands Land Trust; Bill Pielsticker, Legislative Chair, Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited.

TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE AND SIMPLIFICATION ACT (H.R. 5719)

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act (H.R. 5719). I want to thank Chairman RANGEL and Subcommittee Chairman LEWIS for bringing this legislation to the floor which modernizes IRS functions by responding to recommendations by the Taxpayer Advocate.

The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act helps to simplify the tax process and protect taxpayers from abuses. It strengthens protection from identity theft and tax fraud by requiring the IRS to notify taxpayers if it suspects identity theft. H.R. 5719 also makes the tax process simpler by eliminating an outdated requirement for detailed records of calls made on employer-provided cell phones. It strengthens outreach to ensure that working families entitled to the Earned Income Tax Credit receive the refund they have earned and provides protections from predators.

H.R. 5719 helps to ensure tax fairness by closing an offshore loophole that allows government contractors, who receive millions or billions in taxpayers' dollars, to set up companies in foreign countries to avoid paying Social Security and Medicare taxes. For example, defense contractor KBR, has reportedly avoided paying over \$100 million in Social Security and Medicare taxes by creating shell companies in the Cayman Islands.

This important bill also puts an end to the use of private debt collection agencies to collect Federal income taxes and ensure that this critical government function is performed by public servants on behalf of American taxpayers. Despite aggressive tactics, contractors only brought in a little more than half of what it cost the IRS to implement the program. IRS agents can do this more efficiently and ending this program prevents the possible misuse of confidential taxpayer information. Our constituents deserve to know that the person contacting them on behalf of the Federal Government is a public-servant, who is held to the highest standards of accountability and confidentiality, not a person whose paycheck depends solely on the number of collections they make.

I urge my colleagues to support the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE GRAND OPENING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC IN OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, it is a great honor for me to rise today to recognize the grand opening on April 25, 2008, of the Department of Veterans Affairs Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Okaloosa County, located in the First Congressional District in Northwest Florida.

This momentous occasion has been a long time coming for the ever-growing veterans' population along Florida's Emerald Coast. With the highest veterans' population of any congressional district in the Nation, many of the residents of Okaloosa County and the immediate areas have had to drive significant distances for some of the most basic outpatient care from the VA. This area was identified years ago as an underserved area for VA healthcare, and was marked as a priority location for future VA construction. Now completed and ready to receive patients, this CBOC will alleviate travel time and provide efficient access to VA healthcare for those veterans.

Beautiful beaches, warm weather, and friendly neighbors encourage many to call the Florida panhandle "home." With five military installations in my district alone it is little wonder that active and retired military and nearly 110,000 veterans make up a tremendous portion of my constituency. While many already saw the need for improved access to VA care, it took a coordinated effort from many interested parties to make this event a reality. There was no doubt that this facility is what our area's veterans needed and deserved.

A co-sharing agreement between VA and the Department of Defense has been a huge factor in bringing about this moment. By using land on Eglin Air Force base, in close proximity to the base hospital, veterans using the VA clinic have access to various DoD resources and active servicemembers stationed there have access to part of the clinic's specialty care. In addition, the use of DoD land ensures that VA does not have to deal with finding and acquiring land, resulting in the best deal for taxpayers and veterans alike.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I would like to recognize the efforts of all who worked toward bringing this important facility to Okaloosa County, Florida. We have an eternal debt of gratitude to our servicemen and women, and this much-needed VA clinic is one way that we can begin to say thank you for ensuring that the liberty continues to shine a bright light over our country.

COMMEMORATING THE ARMENIAN
GENOCIDE

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Mr. CAPUANO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 93rd anniversary of the Armenian genocide and to celebrate a people who despite murder, hardship, and betrayal have persevered.

Throughout three decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, millions of Armenians were systematically uprooted from their homeland of three thousand years and deported or massacred. From 1894 through 1896, three hundred thousand Armenians were ruthlessly murdered. Again in 1909, thirty thousand Armenians were massacred in Cilicia, and their villages were destroyed.

On April 24, 1915, two hundred Armenian religious, political, and intellectual leaders were arbitrarily arrested, taken to Turkey and murdered. This incident marks a dark and solemn period in the history the Armenian peo-

ple. From 1915 to 1923, the Ottoman Empire launched a systematic campaign to exterminate Armenians. In eight short years, more than 1.5 million Armenians suffered through atrocities such as deportation, forced slavery and torture. Most were ultimately murdered.

Many of our companions in the international community have already taken a final step towards healing and reconciliation. The European Parliament and the United Nations have recognized and reaffirmed the Armenian Genocide as historical fact, as have the Russian and Greek parliaments, the Canadian House of Commons, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies and the French National Assembly. It is time for America to join the chorus and acknowledge the Armenians who suffered at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. And let me stress that I am not speaking of the government of modern day Turkey, but rather its predecessor, which many of Turkey's present day leaders helped to remove from power.

As I have in the past, as a member of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, I will continue to work with my colleagues and with the Armenian-Americans in my district to promote investment and prosperity in Armenia. And, I sincerely hope that this year, the U.S. will have the opportunity and courage to speak in support of the millions of Armenians who suffered because of their heritage.

COMMEMORATING THE 93RD ANNI-
VERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN
GENOCIDE

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of the 1.5 million men, women and children who were killed and the 500,000 survivors who were expelled from their homes during the Armenian Genocide. Today marks the 93rd anniversary of the beginning of a systematic effort carried out by the Ottoman Empire, which ultimately resulted in the elimination of ethnic Armenians from their historic homeland.

On April 24, 1915, the Ottoman authorities arrested approximately 250 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Istanbul. Following this episode, the military proceeded to round up hundreds of thousands of Armenians and force them to march hundreds of miles into present day Syria, denying them food and water along the way. Those that were not slaughtered and survived the treacherous journey were brutally raped and beaten along the way.

The root of this occurrence can be attributed to an official policy of discrimination, which culminated in genocide. I urge my colleagues to read Samantha Powers widely acclaimed book, *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, which clearly describes this as genocide.

May we all take a moment to remember the victims of the Armenian Genocide, one of the most horrible tragedies of the 20th century. We remember, not so that we may dwell on the events of the past, but so that we may renew our personal commitments to never stand idly by and let such a tragedy happen again.

COMMEMORATING THE 93RD ANNI-
VERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN
GENOCIDE

HON. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker. I wish to commemorate the 93rd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. On April 23, 1915, the world suffered its first deliberate act of systematic mass murder of people of one culture by another—and the unspeakable crime of genocide was born. The massacre and mistreatment of approximately 1.5 million Armenians in the waning years of the Ottoman Empire epitomizes the depths of inhumanity that the human race is capable of.

Out of this wretched episode of history, we have made a determined effort to move beyond hatred, to recognize mistakes, and to prevent similar events from occurring in the future. It is our obligation to learn from lapses in moral judgment and forge safeguards for all oppressed, vulnerable, and subjugated peoples.

I would like to express my sympathy to the survivors and descendants of the Armenian Genocide. I hope we can all take time to reflect on this solemn day of remembrance.

HONORING TURKEY'S SHARED
COMMITMENT TO SPREADING
DEMOCRACY AND DEFEATING
EXTREMISM

HON. ED WHITFIELD

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Mr. WHITFIELD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a strong friendship that has proven enormously important since the beginning of the Cold War. Time and time again, the Republic of Turkey has stood firmly with the United States as we have pursued our shared goals in a region where we have few steady allies. Turkey, a fellow NATO country, is a vital partner in our fight against extremism and an example of a vibrant democracy in a region burdened with inequality.

Turkey's assistance in supporting combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan has been instrumental in our efforts to bring opportunity and prosperity to millions of people. Its proximity to both countries has made it an ideal place to coordinate logistics and center supply routes. Over 74 percent of the air cargo that reaches American forces in Iraq passes through Incirlik Air Base in Southern Turkey, and around 4,000 trucks carrying fuel, food, and water cross into Iraq from Turkey every day.

The Turkish government also has provided over \$50 million for reconstruction efforts in Iraq, and another \$100 million for Afghanistan. Turkey has committed over 800 troops and assumed command of the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) Regional Reconstruction Center in Kabul. Their Provincial Reconstruction Team has trained over 1,900 members of the Afghan army, treated 650,000 patients at two fully equipped hospitals and four clinics, and educated 37,000 young minds at