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#### KEEP AMERICA'S REFUGES OPERATIONAL ACT

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, in celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week, Senator BARRASSO and I introduced legislation just prior to the recent recess to reauthorize the National Wildlife Refuge System's volunteer and partnerships program. I want to share with our colleagues some information about S. 1940, the Keep America's Refuges Operational Act, and ask for their support.

The Keep America's Refuges Operational Act reauthorizes the volunteer and partnerships program, with no increase, at \$2 million per year. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use this authorization of Federal funding to provide volunteer uniforms, training, equipment, and necessary travel. The bill also allows volunteer groups to use this modest funding for administrative expenses directly related to the program.

For example, these groups will now be able to use funding to complete administrative requirements of cooperative agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Cooperative agreements enable volunteers to assist the agency in technical activities, such as bird banding, other wildlife tagging, and research.

Our National Wildlife Refuge System is an exceptional network of public lands and waters dedicated to fish and wildlife conservation. More than 40 million people visit our refuges each year to explore, fish, hunt, and view and study wildlife. This ecotourism industry strongly supports local economies.

Volunteers are critical to refuge operations, making up 20 percent of the refuge system's workforce. Volunteers assist with fish and wildlife surveys, restoring habitat, and supporting refuge office functions. Without volunteers and partner groups, refuges may have to cut back on public programs and reduce hours of operation.

In my home State of Delaware, we have two beautiful refuges: the Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge and the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. The two refuges employ only 10 full time staff, and both refuges are highly dependent upon volunteers.

Each year, people come to our refuges to observe the federally threatened Red Knot shorebird, which stops along the Delaware Bay to refuel on horseshoe crab eggs along its migration journey. Volunteers make sure these visitors have memorable experiences.

When people can see these pristine habitats and the many species that call them home, they are inspired to be good stewards of our planet for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

I want to ensure that these opportunities abound, in Delaware and around the country. A small annual investment in the refuge system volunteer and partnerships program goes a long way. Every \$1 appropriated to coordinate these volunteers translates to \$10 worth of volunteer services.

These appropriations also help cut government costs. In fiscal year 2016, 40,000 volunteers donated 1.4 million hours, with donated time equaling that of 649 full-time employees.

I want to thank Senator BARRASSO for cosponsoring this commonsense legislation. I look forward to working with him and our colleagues in the House to pass the Keep America's Refuges Operational Act and enact it into law.

Thank you.

#### CONFIRMATION OF AJIT PAI

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I do not believe Chairman Pai should have been confirmed to serve a full 5-year term as Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, FCC. Since assuming the leadership role at the Commission, Chairman Pai has systematically advanced policies that advance corporate interests at the expense of American consumers.

Chairman Pai's decision to open an NPRM that will eventually reverse the 2015 open internet order is an egregious example of his misplaced priorities. In 2016, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit confirmed that the open internet order was a lawful exercise of the Commission's regulatory authority. Broadband service providers must provide fair and equal access to all users, regardless of socioeconomic status. Over 18 million Americans submitted comments urging the Commission to maintain regulations that impose transparency and prevent ISPs from throttling or discriminating against certain data. Numerous polls have shown that Americans, across the political spectrum, overwhelmingly support regulations that would prevent broadband companies from discriminating against certain data.

Chairman Pai claims that the 2015 order caused a decrease in broadband investment, but the evidence suggests otherwise. I wrote to Chairman Pai about the evidence that he frequently cites to support his allegations of depressed investment—evidence, which I believe, is incomplete and inconclusive. As technology develops and consumers become even more dependent upon internet access, it is imperative that the FCC ensures that the internet is not divided between the have and the have-nots.

I was also disappointed by Chairman Pai's support for Congress's actions to repeal the Federal Communications Commission's broadband privacy rules. These rules are especially important in light of recent data breaches. Every website we visit and every link we click leaves an unintended trail that

tells a story about our lives. ISPs can collect information about our location, children, sensitive information, family status, financial information, Social Security Numbers, web browsing history, and even the content of communications. ISPs sell this highly sensitive and highly personal data to the highest bidder without consumer's consent or knowledge. The Commission's rules empowered consumers and gave them tools to protect their privacy through transparency, choice, and data security. In supporting the rule's repeal, Chairman Pai demonstrated that he does not believe that Americans should have control over their data.

The rise of the internet of things, telehealth, and smart agriculture means that American consumers need an FCC that is on watch and committed to protecting their interests. I hope that Chairman Pai will reverse course and will stop putting the interests of big corporations ahead of the interests of American consumers.

#### REMEMBERING LIEUTENANT THOMAS F. BURKHART AND VET- ERANS OF THE WAR IN THE PA- CIFIC

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, this week my constituent Caroline Burkhardt of Baltimore, MD, is on a historic trip to Japan of remembrance and reconciliation. A guest of the Japanese Government, she will follow the journey of her father, Thomas F. Burkhardt, who was a prisoner of war of imperial Japan 75 years ago. Her trip will include a visit to the site of the camp in which her father was held as a POW.

At the start of WWII, Lieutenant Burkhardt served in the Philippines with the Headquarters Company of the 45th Infantry, Philippine Scouts, an elite U.S. Army unit composed of American officers and Filipino enlisted men. After Japan's December 8, 1941, invasion of the Philippines, his battalion helped defend the withdrawal of American forces on Luzon to the Bataan Peninsula. Barely a month after being promoted to first lieutenant, on January 24, 1942, Lieutenant Burkhardt earned a Silver Star for "Gallantry in Action" at the Battle of Abucay Hacienda, January 15 to 25, 1942, which maintained the first battle position on Bataan.

Sick with malaria, Lieutenant Burkhardt was in the open-air general hospital No. 1 near the tip of Bataan when Major General Edward King surrendered the peninsula to Japanese forces on April 9, 1942. Soon thereafter, the patients were taken by truck, boxcar, and foot up to Camp O'Donnell, an overcrowded, makeshift POW camp. In early June, the Japanese, fearing the deaths of the prisoners from the horrific conditions in the camp, began to release their Filipino POWs and transfer the others to a new facility at Cabanatuan. It is estimated that 1,550 Americans and 22,000 Filipinos died at Camp O'Donnell, the overwhelming majority within the first 8 weeks.