

INTRODUCTION OF STEWARDSHIP,  
EDUCATION, RECREATION AND  
VOLUNTEERS FOR THE ENVIRON-  
MENT (SERVE) ACT OF 1999

**HON. TOM UDALL**

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 18, 1999*

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of the Stewardship, Education, Recreation and Volunteer (SERVE) Act of 1999. This legislation, introduced by my colleague and cousin, Mr. UDALL of Colorado and which I am proud to be a co-sponsor of, will energize and expand existing efforts to enhance the outdoor, education and recreation experiences of the great outdoors for many Americans.

Our Nation's national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas and public lands are enjoyed by nearly two billion visits each year. These wonderful areas provide Americans with sightseeing, wildlife watching, hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping opportunities, just to name a few. In my District alone, visitors can experience a wide range of education and outdoor recreation opportunities. From the Chaco Culture National Historical Park, which provides Americans a brief glimpse into the daily life of the region's first inhabitants, to the Bureau of Land Management's Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness with its dramatic moon like landscape, to the high country mountains and streams of the Santa Fe National Forest that provide excellent hunting, fishing and camping opportunities.

Visitors to our Nation's public lands often don't realize that behind the scenes of these magnificent natural and historical areas that visitors have come to see and learn about, are a cadre of volunteers who have selflessly given their time and expertise to the American people to make their experiences memorable. For without the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of the volunteers, Federal land management agencies would not be able to stay ahead of the maintenance and enhancements our national treasures require.

In the 1980's, a program was established to encourage Americans to become more involved in the management and protection of their lands for current and future generations. By all accounts, this program showed promise. Federal land management agencies such as the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were given a long needed tool to recruit and recognize individuals who donated their energy, time and expertise to enhance our federal and public lands for all Americans to enjoy.

Unfortunately, other priorities and funding issues have placed this program on the back burner. It is now time to revitalize, re-energize and expand our Nation's volunteer and educational outreach program.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation would not only restore a past volunteer program, but expand and strengthen it by providing more powerful tools to Federal land managing agencies. This legislation would direct the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to establish a national stewardship award program

to recognize individuals, organizations and communities who have distinguished themselves by volunteering their time, energy and commitment to enhancing the priceless legacy of our Nation's public lands. As a minimum under this legislation, the Secretaries would establish a special pass to all our national parks, forests, refuges and other public lands to recognize volunteers for their exemplary efforts.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation would also encourage an attitude of land and resource stewardship, and responsibility towards public lands by promoting the participation of individuals, organizations and communities in developing and fostering a conservation ethic towards the lands, facilities and our natural and cultural resources. Specifically, this legislation would encourage Federal land management agencies to enter into cooperative agreements with academic institutions, State or local government agencies or any partnership organization. In addition, the Secretaries would be enabled to provide matching funds to match non-Federal funds, services or materials donated under these cooperative agreements.

Providing educational opportunities has been one of America's greatest achievements and is one of the greatest gifts one generation can give to the next generation. This legislation encourages each Federal land management agency to play a role in education by cooperating with States, local school districts and other education oriented entities to (1) promote participation by students and others in volunteer programs of the Federal land management agencies, (2) promote a greater understanding of our Nation's natural and cultural resources, and (3) to provide information and assistance to other agencies and organizations concerned with the wise use and management of our Nation's Great Outdoors and its natural and cultural resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that this chamber realizes the importance of this bill in recognizing the invaluable role volunteers play in the stewardship of our Nation's cultural and natural resources. Therefore, I ask immediate consideration and passage of this bill.

EAST GRAND RAPIDS HIGH  
SCHOOL NAMED NEW AMERICAN  
HIGH SCHOOL

**HON. VERNON J. EHLERS**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 18, 1999*

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the students, staff and community that represent East Grand Rapids High School in my congressional district. It is my pleasure to honor all of those in the East Grand Rapids family for their commitment and dedication which resulted in being named a 1999 New American High School by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The award recognizes schools where all students are expected to meet challenging academic standards and acquire the communication, problem solving, computer and technical skills necessary to pursue careers and higher education.

To even be considered as a New American High School there are many hurdles that a school must successfully pass. Applicants must supply members of a steering committee with documentation that they have undertaken standards-based, locally driven reform efforts that positively affect key indicators of school improvement and student success. Among the documentation items they must present are proof of increases in student achievement, increases in student enrollment at postsecondary institutions, increases in student attendance, and reductions in student dropout rates.

East Grand Rapids is a model school when it comes to challenges and performance High expectations are set for all students because of the high motivation level of the student body. The numbers speak for themselves. Based on statistics from the 1998 school year, approximately 94% of East Grand Rapids students enrolled in colleges or universities. The school registered a dropout rate of less than 1% and an attendance rate of 97%. Academic test scores are also the highest in the state of Michigan in mathematics, reading, and writing.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to take this opportunity to highlight the positive happenings at East Grand Rapids High School under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. James Morse and Principal Patrick Cwayna. It takes a lot of pride, sacrifice, and teamwork to qualify for this prestigious award. I ask all of my colleagues to join me in saluting everyone involved in helping East Grand Rapids achieve this remarkable honor. I also wish continued academic and overall success for everyone associated with this school.

REGARDING THE TRAGEDY AT  
THE TEXAS AGGIE BONFIRE OF  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

**HON. JOE BARTON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 18, 1999*

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I speak today with great sadness about a tragedy which happened early this morning at Texas A&M University. A great tradition that all Aggies hold very dear—Texas Aggie Bonfire—collapsed, killing at least six people and injuring as many as 25. My thoughts and prayers are with the parents who lost children, and the students who lost friends. Texas A&M is a family, and today the Aggie Family is in shock, grieving for our dead and injured students.

For those of you who have not ever heard of Texas A&M Bonfire, it is one of the most cherished Aggie traditions. Traditions are very important at Texas A&M. The bonfire tradition revolves around building and burning the world's largest bonfire. In past years, it has soared over 100 feet high and burned all night. This year's bonfire was scheduled to be over 60 feet high and burn until after midnight.

Aggie Bonfire has been a tradition at Texas A&M since 1909 when they used it to stay warm during the "Yell Practice" on the night before the annual A&M-Texas football game. The bonfire represents everything Aggies are about: hard work, unity, dedication, and loyalty. It also represents a burning desire for A&M to defeat the Longhorn football team.