

Next year, the Smart Growth Commission will consider making other recommendations, including financial incentives, to encourage regionalism. The Triangle's leadership should help shape and push for this legislation.

Ultimately, the Triangle cannot fulfill its promise as a "world class region" without regionalism. We will remain a collection of dissonant localities simply exploiting the economic principle that specialized industries tend to cluster together. Once our quality of life wanes, those industries will cluster elsewhere.

Regionalism can ensure that does not happen by showing us where self-interest is self-defeating and by offering a forum for mutual cooperation. It offers the best hope for seeing that our herd continues to prosper.

A BILL TO ENSURE THAT INCOME
AVERAGING FOR FARMERS NOT
INCREASE A FARMER'S LIABILITY
FOR THE ALTERNATIVE
MINIMUM TAX

HON. WALLY HERGER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Farmer Tax Fairness Act, along with my Ways and Means Committee colleagues, Representatives THURMAN, HAYWORTH, DUNN, TANNER, CAMP, MCCRERY, ENGLISH, and FOLEY. This legislation will help ensure that farmers have access to tax benefits rightfully owed them.

As those of us from agricultural areas understand, farmers' income often fluctuates from year to year based on unforeseen weather or market conditions. Income averaging allows farmers to ride out these unpredictable circumstances by spreading out their income over a period of years. Last year, we acted in a bipartisan manner to make income averaging a permanent provision of the tax code. Unfortunately, since that time, we have learned that, due to interaction with another tax code provision, the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT), many of our nation's farmers have been unfairly denied the benefits of this important accounting tool.

Our legislation directly addresses the concerns being raised by farmers using income averaging. Under the Farmer Tax Fairness Act, if a farmer's AMT liability is greater than taxes due under the income averaging calculation, that farmer would disregard the AMT and pay taxes according to the averaging calculation. As such, farmers will be able to take full advantage of income averaging as intended by Congress.

This provision is a reasonable measure designed to ensure farmers are treated fairly when it comes time to file their taxes. I urge my colleague to join me in promoting greater tax fairness for our nation's farmers.

HONORING JOEL PETT FOR HIS
2000 PULITZER PRIZE IN EDITORIAL
CARTOONING

HON. ERNIE FLETCHER

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, It is my honor to recognize today the outstanding achievement of Joel Pett for being awarded the 2000 Pulitzer Prize in Editorial Cartooning.

Since 1984, Joel has served in the capacity of Editorial Cartoonist with the Lexington Herald Leader and has produced cartoons on local and national government. Since that day in 1984—Pett's outstanding and talented work has appeared in many newspapers and magazines around America. This is why it is not surprising that he was recognized with such a prestigious national award.

With keen wit and acute perception, he has been able to highlight subtle perspectives that demand a more careful examination by the public. By presenting difficult topics in a comical way, Joel Pett is able to touch upon the core issues within the daily life of politics and government.

His distinction as the recipient of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning is one that highlights his creativity, inventiveness and intellect. Joel is a talented professional journalist who is dedicated to his work that he presents to readers throughout the year. I know that the Lexington Herald Leader, Lexington community and Commonwealth, of Kentucky are all proud of his outstanding achievement.

It is a pleasure to recognize Joel Pett, on the House floor today, for his superior work in political cartoons that has earned him the 2000 Pulitzer Prize in Editorial Cartooning.

MORATORIUM NEEDED ON FEDERAL
LAND EXCHANGES UNTIL
SYSTEM IS FIXED

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, land exchanges between private parties and the federal government have long been a source of contention in Congress and in local communities. Exchanges are supposed to provide the federal government a valuable tool to acquire lands with high public interest values, such as enhanced recreational opportunities or wildlife habitat, and to dispose of lands with less or limited public value.

According to a new General Accounting Office study that I commissioned, however, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service have wasted hundreds of millions of dollars swapping valuable public land for private land of questionable value, and the Bureau may even be breaking the law. In response to this report, I have called on Interior Secretary Babbitt and Agriculture Secretary Glickman to immediately suspend all land exchanges until the exchange programs can be fixed.

The GAO report was prominently covered earlier this month by NBC Nightly News, CBS Radio, the Washington Post, and other media outlets across country. Subsequently, my call for a moratorium on exchanges has received strong support from newspapers, organizations and individuals from across the country as well.

I commend to my colleagues three of the newspaper editorials that have appeared so far endorsing the call for the moratorium. I hope that my colleagues will review the GAO report and the call for a moratorium and will support such a move. The public is being taken advantage in these deals and their wallet and the environment are paying the price. "Let's Make a Land Deal," The Washington Post, July 15, 2000; "Public Land Deals Better Not Cheat The Public," The Bozeman (MT) Chronicle, July 20, 2000; "Land Exchange Programs Troubled, But Well Worth Fixing", Minneapolis (MN) Star Tribune, July 24, 2000.

[From the Washington Post, July 15, 2000]

LET'S MAKE A LAND DEAL

It seems like a simple idea: If the federal government owns some land it doesn't necessarily care to keep, and a private landowner has some land the government wants, and the two are roughly equal in value, then make a trade. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have had the authority to make those kinds of deals for years, with the idea that the exchanges would help the agencies consolidate federal lands and acquire important resources. But the transactions are often far from simple and, according to a General Accounting Office report released this week, the land-exchange program has shortchanged taxpayers by millions of dollars by undervaluing federal land or overvaluing private land in some of its deals.

The GAO said there are so many inherent difficulties in the land-exchange process that Congress should consider giving up the program altogether, opting for more straightforward sales and purchases. The Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management reacted sharply to the report, contending that GAO looked at too few transactions to justify its broad recommendation and that many of the cases it cited are old and have already been addressed. They say significant reforms are already underway.

Properly handled, land exchanges give the two agencies resources (public lands suitable for exchange) that they can use to acquire valuable and useful lands, including habitat for endangered species. If they lose that resource and wind up having to compete for funds for every proposed purchase, the likelihood is that their ability to obtain important land or consolidate holdings will be curtailed.

But it is important to be sure that those purposes are being served by the land swaps and that the public's interest is protected, both in terms of what land is being traded away and what value is being obtained for it. Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), who requested the GAO report, has called for a moratorium on land exchanges until each agency "demonstrates that it can insure all exchanges are in the public interest and of equal value, as required by law." That's a challenge they ought to be able to meet.