

Galveston officials to develop a cruise terminal on Galveston Island and market the city to major cruise lines once again. The *Celebration* will result in 20 ship port-o-calls in 2000 and 79 in 2001. It is estimated that the local economic impact will amount to approximately \$40 million annually from ship and passenger spending.

Mister Speaker, this is an exciting time to be a Galvestonian. I would like to applaud everyone throughout the community who made this dream a reality. When the first ship sets sail on September 30, it will usher in a new era of Gulf Coast cruise operations out of the Port of Galveston.

H.R. 5109, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL ACT OF 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 21, 2000

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to advise that unfortunately because of an important scheduling conflict, I was unable to cast my vote yesterday during consideration of H.R. 5109, The Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Personnel Act of 2000. At the time of the vote, I was presenting a keynote speech in observance of Hispanic Heritage Month, where I highlighted veterans issues as part of a discussion of the important contributions of Hispanics in public service.

Had I been able to be present during consideration of the bill, I would have voted in support of the bill. This is a bill that I co-sponsored, strongly supported and voted in favor of being reported out of the House Veterans Affairs Committee for consideration on the House floor.

This is an important bill that would improve the personnel and administration systems of the Veterans Health Administration, allow for necessary construction, and require reports on the effectiveness of the Veterans health care system along with the various aspects of Post Traumatic Stress syndrome on Veterans.

The bill is important as it provides revised authority for pay adjustments for nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and requires that nurses are consulted in formulating policy relating to the provision of patient care.

Also, as part of the full spectrum of health care for Veterans, I am pleased that the bill provides for special pay for dentists, and raises their salaries depending on their training and length of tenure.

Additionally, the bill provides an exemption for pharmacists from a ceiling on special salary rates, and authorizes the inclusion of a physician assistant to consult on the utilization and employment of physician assistants in VA medical centers.

Moreover, it is critical that our VA medical facility infrastructure is safe and meets the needs of our veterans. Therefore, I welcome the authorization in this bill for the construction of major medical facility projects across the nation.

In order to better serve our veterans, this bill also requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that a protocol is used in any clinical evaluation of a patient to identify pertinent military experiences and exposures that may contribute to the health status of the patient and ensures that information relating to the military history of patients are included in their medical records.

Most importantly, I commend the authors of this bill for developing a pilot program to allow Medicare-eligible veterans to receive care at non-VA facilities if they do not have easy access to VA hospitals. Accessibility of care is essential to truly meet our nation's healthcare commitments to our veterans. This carefully tailored demonstration project ensures that care is made more easily available in remote locations, while recognizing that primary VA health care facilities and services should in no way be comprised.

Overall, this bill should provide added improvement in health care services and benefits to our veterans. With H.R. 5109, we are providing important changes and modifications to the VA health care system, in order to continually maintain and upgrade the provision of services and benefits to our veterans.

Our veterans have always answered the call to duty. Consequently, America must always work to match this dedication by fulfilling our commitments to these men and women who have worn the uniform. I therefore strongly support this legislation, and I am proud that my colleagues joined in unanimously passing this bill.

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES NATIONAL HISTORICALLY BLACK AND UNIVERSITY WEEK LANE COLLEGE

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 22, 2000

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to acknowledge the tremendous contributions and individual success stories that have helped our communities grow out of the presence of Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee, the heart of the Eighth Congressional District.

Lane College is one of six Historically Black Universities and Colleges located in Tennessee that have helped set a standard for academic excellence.

Lane was founded in 1882 as the C.M.E. High School by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of America. But the seeds for this great institution were first planted four years earlier in 1878.

William Miles, the first Bishop of the C.M.E. Church of America presided over the Tennessee Annual Conference in 1878 accepted a resolution by the Rev. J.A. Daniels to establish a school.

Two years later, after the great yellow fever epidemic and the ascension of Bishop Isaac Lane to the head of the Tennessee Annual Conference, four acres of land were purchased for \$240 and in 1882 the school's doors were opened.

Bishop Lane's daughter, Miss Jennie Lane, was its first teacher.

In 1884 its name was changed to Lane Institute. Then, 12 years later a college department was organized and the Board of Trustees changed the school's name to Lane College.

Lane College is a small, private, co-educational, church-related institution with a liberal arts curriculum offering degrees in the Arts and Sciences.

Led by Dr. Wesley McClure, the College's ninth president, the school continues to play a critical role in Jackson and surrounding communities as an institution committed to academic excellence.

Lane College is one of 120 historically black universities and colleges located in 23 states across the nation. Lane is one of six located in Tennessee and the other five are Fisk University, Knoxville College, Meharry Medical College, Lemoyne-Owen College, and Tennessee State University.

In 1997, 28 percent of African Americans who received a bachelors degree earned them from historically black universities and colleges.

Moreover, about 40 percent of African American undergraduates enrolled at historically black universities and colleges in 1996 were first-generation college students.

Over its first 118 years, Lane College has ensured its place in the community of academic institutions devoted to the growth and achievement of our young people.

So Mr. Speaker, we are quite certain it will build on that vision of community leadership and academic excellence well into the 21st Century.

Thank you for setting aside this time tonight so that we may recognize the important role historically black universities and colleges play in our country.

CENTRAL NEW JERSEY CELEBRATES THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY OF FREEHOLD VFW POST #4374

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 22, 2000

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 55th Anniversary of Freehold VFW Post #4374. This organization has made lasting contributions through hard work and dedication to those in need.

The VFW is a patriotic organization devoted to serving the widows and orphans of the Veteran. The VFW promotes the institutions of freedom and democracy, to preserve and defend the constitution of the United States of America. The Veterans of Foreign Wars was formed after World War One and continues to maintain a strong presence today.

Freehold's VFW Post #4374 first opened its doors in 1945 under the watchful eye of its first elected Commander, Francis Vanderveer. Commander Vanderveer lead Post #4374 until 1947.

The VFW Post #4347 first held its gatherings for Freehold area veterans in a meeting hall space borrowed from the Knights of Columbus. Then, in the 1960's, construction began on the present Post Home on Waterworks Road, where they continue to serve the community.

Since its inception, Post #4347 members have canvassed the Freehold area for needy families during the holiday season. Last December, like many before it, they held a Christmas party for nearly 100 needy kids, kids who otherwise would have no holiday celebration.

As extraordinary as this effort was, it was just one of many times that VFW Post #4347 has worked on behalf of those in need. Throughout the years, VFW Post #4347 has gone the extra mile to take care of not only our veterans, but also our community.

Freehold VFW Post #4347 is a great asset to both Central New Jersey and our nation. I urge all my colleagues to join me today in recognizing its dedication to our veterans, community service and Central New Jersey.

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE TO IMPLEMENT A NATIONWIDE COHESIVE FUELS REDUCTION STRATEGY

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 22, 2000

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution. I do it on behalf of all the people who live near our National Forests and want to see a change in the way they are managed.

As of today, over six and half million acres have burned in the West. That's an area larger than the entire state of Maryland.

This is catastrophic fire—not the beneficial natural kind—but the catastrophic. It feeds on brush and trees. It climbs up the ladder of fuels into the crowns of the largest old-growth trees, burning everything. It kills a forest completely and sterilized the ground.

Besides the threat to people, these fires kill animals; destroy habitat; release huge amounts of air pollution; and leave barren dead zones. After the fires are extinguished, the exposed soil and debris washes into streams, polluting water and killing fish.

On Tuesday, a state of emergency was declared in one of the counties I represent. Tulare County, California, is now preparing for the massive erosion and mudslides that will come from the area of the Manter Fire. That fire burned 75,000 acres just east of the new Sequoia National Monument. It killed nearly every tree.

The Administration blames it all on Smokey the Bear. They say the problem is the 100-year-old policy of suppressing forest fires. But that's only half of the problem.

In this weekend's radio address, President Clinton blamed "extreme weather and lightning" that sparked too many fires this summer.

The Assistant Secretary for Land at the Department of Interior, Sylvia Baca, said that, "Nobody could have predicted the deadly combination of drought, wind and lightning in the West this year."

But that kind of backward logic ignores the fact that we did know about the accumulation of fuel. We know about the millions of acres of dying forest.

We knew there would be a dry spell in the West.

We knew that a deadly fire season would occur.

Last April, the General Accounting Office reported to Congress that over 39 million acres of our national forests were at high risk of catastrophic fire. Another 26 million acres were reported at risk due to disease and insect infestation.

Experts have tagged the overaccumulation of brush and trees as the biggest threat facing the western environment.

Let me say that again—The biggest threat to the western environment.

Now that biggest threat has become a tragic reality.

What has the Forest Service done about it? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is not much. The only real, aggressive strategy of this Administration has been one of deliberate neglect.

We have before us a roadless policy that will close fifty million acres of forest lands.

We have a Sierra Nevada Framework that will restrict access to over 11 million acres of California forest.

We have the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Plan (ICBEMP) that would limit the use of 60 million acres in the northwest.

Add to that 2 million acres of new national monuments created just this year.

All of these proposals and changes are policies that conflict with, rather than complement, a cohesive national fire strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this year we will spend close to a billion dollars fighting catastrophic fires in the West. A lot of that will be emergency money tacked on top of the budget. Then next year, we will spend hundreds of millions more restoring some of these areas to avoid mudslides and erosion. It doesn't have to be this way.

The bipartisan resolution I am introducing today, with original cosponsors from the East, the South and the West, calls on the U.S. Forest Service and other land management agencies to create a cohesive fuels strategy.

This resolution is identical to the bill that recently passed the California State Assembly. It has strong bipartisan cosponsorship and passed on a unanimous vote.

Similar legislation has been adopted by the State Legislatures in Colorado, Idaho and Arizona, also with bipartisan support.

Our States are calling out for help. Federal forest lands need better care. Specifically:

1. We need a strategy to reduce accumulated fuels. Dense brush cannot be burned with prescribed fire until the small trees are removed mechanically. A fuels reduction strategy will include both of these important tools.

2. We need a strategy to remove diseased trees. Insects and pathogens infect 26 million acres of federal trees and they threaten state and private forests nearby. These trees can be removed and used in order to improve the overall health of the forest.

3. And we need to include states, locals and private business in the effort. A collaborative

approach will ensure that important local variations are included in the plans.

Mr. Speaker, the Forest Service is being pulled in so many directions that their mission seems unclear. I want this Congress to give them some leadership. The priority should be fuels reduction and forest health. These are the highest priority the U.S. Congress has for forest management.

This resolution says clearly that we want such a strategy incorporated into new regulatory proposals and that we want locals involved.

This summer, we have witnessed a real tragedy as millions of acres burned. But keep in mind that over 57 million acres are still at high risk. Not even ten percent of the total has burned this year.

There is still time to create a strategy and to save what's left. We need to protect the Western environment and to protect the people who live there.

HONORING U.S. ATTORNEYS AND INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM THE 9TH DISTRICT OF TEXAS

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 22, 2000

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to commend a team of law enforcement professionals, U.S. attorneys, and Internet service providers who worked together in recent weeks in federally charging a health teacher and trainer in my district of possessing and receiving child pornography.

An investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation found that he was using his home computer to download child pornography from the Internet. Authorities became aware of this man's activities through Operation Innocent Images, a partnership between U.S. Customs and the FBI that is responsible for tracking pedophiles on the Internet. The FBI has the ability to monitor certain activity over the Internet that they believe deals with child pornography or the sexual exploitation of children. In doing this, they have set up a number of operations around the country to monitor activities in a cooperative effort with local law enforcement agencies and all Internet Service Providers (ISP). ISP's help to monitor Internet activity and furnish investigative leads if they believe that a person is inappropriately using the Internet.

I'd also like to commend U.S. Attorney Mike Bradford, who succinctly stated, "Those offenders who possess and distribute child pornography perpetuate the exploitation of children depicted in the pornographic images. Those who use the Internet to acquire or exchange child pornography commit serious crimes and will be prosecuted when caught. The message we want to convey is an absolute intolerance of child exploitation."