EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCTION OF COLORADO SCHOOL LANDS BILL

HON. DARLENE HOOLEY
OF OREGON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, July 20, 2001

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, America has a long tradition of civic activism. From the anti-slavery movement to women's suffrage to the civil rights era, citizen activists have accomplished many important social reforms by working together through peaceful means to influence their friends and neighbors and building support for change. We Americans fight for change at the ballot box and in the halls of legislatures—not with incendiary devices and pipe bombs.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately violent acts in the name of protecting the environment are growing in alarming numbers throughout the western United States. Earlier this month I visited a timber company facility in Monmouth, Oregon that had been burned down in an arson perpetrated by the Earth Liberation Front.

In the Monmouth attack, which roused firefighters out of bed on Christmas morning, the arson caused the roof to collapse only minutes after those who were fighting the fire pulled out. Paul Evans, the mayor of Monmouth and a volunteer firefighter who fought the blaze that Christmas day, told me he narrowly escaped injury or death in the fire. Ironically, Paul, who is now serving a military tour of duty in the Persian Gulf, was probably in more danger in his own town than he now is in Kuwait.

Mr. Speaker, these are not victimless crimes, and they must be halted. That is why I’m introducing the Environmental Terrorism Reduction Act.

The most challenging aspect of these crimes is that the perpetrators have been difficult to apprehend, leaving most of these crimes unsolved because with limited resources and manpower, local law enforcement officials have little success closing these cases.

The Environmental Terrorism Reduction Act closes this gap by requiring the Attorney General to establish a national clearinghouse for information on incidents of eco-terrorism to help investigators stay ahead of the curve in preventing additional acts of terror.

In addition, this bill establishes the Environmental Terrorism Reduction Program in the Department of Justice. This program would authorize the Attorney General, upon consultation with the heads of Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and the Governor of each applicable State, to designate any area as a high intensity environmental terrorism area. After making such a designation local law enforcement agencies could access funding to assist them in solving and preventing these types of crimes in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the provisions in the Environmental Terrorism Reduction Act would greatly aid our communities and industries that are vulnerable to eco-terrorism. It is high time the federal government addressed this situation, and I urge my colleagues to join me in sponsoring this measure and enacting it into law.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AUTHORIZING CONGRESS TO PROHIBIT PHYSICAL DESECRATION OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

SPRECH OF
HON. SILVESTRE REYES
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, July 17, 2001

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Joint Resolution 36, proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the United States flag. I urge all Members to support this resolution. This is a positive step toward finally taking necessary accountability in protecting may no longer fit Colorado’s needs. But altering the board’s focus literally may take an act of Congress.

As Uncle Sam welcomed new states into the union, the federal government set aside entire sections of land to raise money for public education through grazing leases, mineral rights, etc. The federal law that granted Colorado statehood in 1876, called the Enabling Act, included a similar provision.

But during the past 125 years, Colorado has found other ways to fund public education. Colorado’s school acres now supply less than 2 percent of the state’s annual K-12 budget.

Today, some school sections offer tremendous public value as open space or recreational land. Emerald Mountain forms the scenic backdrop to Steamboat Springs.

In 1996, Colorado voters put Amendment 16 in the state Constitution, aiming to give the State Land Board, which manages the school lands, flexibility to preserve open space and wildlife habitat, as well as support public education. The amendment told the land board to set aside 300,000 acres of the 3 million school acres as a Stewardship Trust. Note that 90 percent of the school acres still raise money for education.

But soon after the amendment’s passage, a federal court firmly said the land board is obligated always to fund schools first, under the federal law that granted Colorado statehood. That means the State Land Board might have to accept profitable offers even on lands now in the Stewardship Trust.

Clearly, public school funding is of utmost importance. But taken together, the court’s decision and statehood act mean the Stewardship Trust that voters thought they were putting in place might prove ephemeral. Instead of preserving the cherished 300,000 acres, Amendment 16 simply may have run up their ultimate real estate development value.

To solve the problem, Colorado must ask Congress to amend our state act. The 10 percent of state lands held in the Stewardship Trust then could be permanently set aside.

However, the state could only ask the federal government to do so if the legislature guaranteed an equally secure funding source for public education.

Moreover, the Stewardship Trust will work in the long run only if the legislature also patches an obvious and troubling gap in Amendment 16, which we’ll discuss tomorrow.