

The Caribbean National Forest, the only tropical rainforest in the U.S. Forest System, is a historic and natural treasure to both Puerto Rico and our Nation. The Spanish Crown proclaimed much of the current CNF as a forest reserve in 1824. Recently the CNF celebrated its 100th anniversary, commemorating the date when President Theodore Roosevelt reasserted the protection of the CNF by designating the area as a forest reserve.

Located 25 miles east of San Juan, the forest is a biologically rich. The CNF ranks number one among all national forests in the number of species of native trees with 240. In addition, the CNF has a wide variety of orchids and over 150 species of ferns. There are over 100 species of vertebrates in the forest. Of particular note is the endangered Puerto Rican parrot. At the time that Columbus set sails for the New World, there were approximately one million of these distinctive parrots, today there are under 100.

The CNF is integral to the lives of hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans. It is a major source of water to the island. The CNF receives over 10 feet of rain each year. As a result, the major watersheds in the CNF are able to provide water to over 800,000 residents. In addition, the CNF provides a variety of recreational opportunities to the nearly 1,000,000 Puerto Ricans and tourists each year. Families, friends and school groups come to the forest to hike, bird watch, picnic, swim and enjoy the scenic vistas.

A resource this special needs to be protected for current and future generations. For this reason, I am introducing today my first legislation as a Member of Congress, "The Caribbean National Forest Act of 2005." My legislation builds upon earlier proposals introduced in the House and the Senate. These proposals, endorsed by the Bush Administration, The Wilderness Society and the National Hispanic Environmental Council, would protect approximately 10,000 acres of the most crucial portions of the CNF as the El Toro Wilderness. My bill would insure that this crucial watershed, this diverse and vibrant ecosystem, and a major recreational destination in Puerto Rico will remain available for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, soon after I was elected to office by the people of Puerto Rico. I visited the CNF and met with Forest Supervisor Pablo Cruz. During my visit, I recalled the many times that I have visited the CNF with my family and friends. I want this special place to be there for our future generations. My legislation, the Caribbean National Forest Act of 2005, will make that goal a reality.

THE EDUCATION, ACHIEVEMENT
AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the 31st Anniversary of National Catholic Schools Week, a week in which Catholics spotlight the important mission of providing quality education and strong char-

acter building of the 7,955 Catholic Schools across the country.

In conjunction with this important recognition as well as National Catholic Schools Appreciation Day, I have introduced legislation designed to ensure that the federal government appropriately assists parents with the financial burdens associated with their children's education at a public or private school. My legislation, the Education, Achievement and Opportunity Act will provide refundable tuition tax credits for the educational expenses incurred by parents of children enrolled in elementary and secondary school. The legislation offers parents of elementary school children up to \$2,500 in tax relief, while parents of a child in high school could claim up to \$3,500 in assistance.

Parents who choose to send their children to a Catholic school, or any private school, already pay twice for their child's education: once through their taxes and a second time for the tuition. These out-of-pocket expenses can certainly add up for some families and may pose an enormous obstacle to others. Sadly, many parents struggle—and some may have to forgo a Catholic School education—or any religious based school education—for financial reasons.

Recognizing the unique and enriching educational value that Catholic schools provide, I feel it is important that every parent have the option to send their children to such a school if they wish. It is important to note that not only parents of children in the Catholic School system will benefit from this legislation. The tax relief contained in my proposal can be utilized by parents of children in private and public schools to pay for a variety of educational expenses. Most significantly, the tax credits are designed to help parents with the cost of tuition. However, the tax credits can be used to help meet the costs of other educational needs: (1) computers, educational software, and books required for course of instruction; (2) academic tutoring; (3) special needs services for qualifying children with disabilities (4) fees for transportation services to and from a private school, if the transportation is provided by the school and the school charges a fee for the transportation; and (5) academic testing services.

The Education, Achievement and Opportunity Act proposes a tax credit, not a voucher, so the total amount of educational resources available for all school age children will increase. Under a voucher system, if a school loses enrolled students to a competing school, that school may lose the funding along with the student. Under my plan, that negative outcome is avoided.

There are over 59 million youngsters in elementary and secondary schools across the U.S. today—about 10 percent of these students are enrolled in private, parochial and rabbinical schools. If the public education system had to suddenly absorb all of these students, they would be financially unable to do so. Therefore, the public schools benefit from the existence of the private schools as well.

As every child is unique, so are their educational needs. It is important to support our nation's public school systems which are critical in providing educational opportunities for all. At the same time, it is important to support

those parents who have a desire to provide a secure academic education for their children but in a faith oriented setting.

It is my belief that the tuition tax credit should be available to all, no matter what their race, color or national origin. And make no mistake: the public school system will and must continue to remain the backbone of our nation's education system. However, we must never forget that the public school system was created to serve students—not the other way around. If a student is performing poorly in a school for one reason or another, parents should have the opportunity to move their child to what may be a better setting. And the federal government should help—not stand in the way.

To truly make good on our promise that "No Child is Left Behind," ensuring that Catholic Schools are included in this national promise brings us closer to achieving this important goal. A child is a child, regardless of which school system they are enrolled. The children enrolled in Catholic, private and rabbinical schools deserve nothing less than our full support.

I urge my colleagues to support the Education, Achievement and Opportunity Act.

TRIBUTE TO MR. EDWARD
MALCOLM CHAPMAN

HON. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to mourn the death and celebrate the life of Mr. Edward Malcolm Chapman.

Edward Malcolm Chapman was born in Greenwich, Connecticut to Malcolm and Jessie Chapman on December 14, 1942.

While growing up in Greenwich, Ed attended the Greenwich school system. He was a member of the high school choir, played in the band where he was the first student to go Allstate in their freshman year. He attended Bethel A.M.E. Church where he sang in the choir. He graduated from Westchester Business School and graduated with a degree in Business and attended music school in Stamford, Connecticut.

Eddie entered the work force at a young age. He held several positions in the work force from the technological end to the consultive; Bunker Ramo; Perkin Elmer; and Digital Equipment Corporation. He spent the last nine years of his career at Drake Beam Morin, "DBM" becoming a very present part of the lives of many displaced individuals, consulting and encouraging them to be ever faithful in their present journey.

In keeping a rhythm with all life's great gifts, Ed was able to hit the golf course before photographing his five grandchildren, in the middle of preparing egg rolls in the wok to the melodious sounds of Stan Getz, all while hearing, listening, and understanding the problems of others.

He openly received the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into his life in 1997 while attending Full Harvest International Church under Bishop Clarence E. McClendon. He was baptized in the summer of 2002, and excitedly