

things with the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. DON YOUNG), we came up with a provision on the Chugach area. The C&O Canal. The list goes on and on of things we have agreed to, to make this an acceptable bill.

□ 1315

I personally would urge the passage of this rule, and I would urge the passage of this bill. This is a good piece of legislation. We have played this game time after time. We will hear the same arguments every time. The fact of the matter is the President signed it the last time, and I would hope he would see the wisdom in signing it this time.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, moments ago, HR 4570 was described as a "delicate balance" not to be disturbed by votes against either the resolution or the rule. In fact, the primary justification presented for passage of the bill was the "brilliance" with which a compromise securing the necessary number of votes was "engineered." Statements such as these are an unfortunate commentary on the state of affairs in the nation's capital insofar as they represent not advancement of sound policy principles but rather a seriously flawed process by which federal government "favors" are distributed in a means which assures everyone gets a little something if they vote to give enough other districts a little something too. This is not the procedure by which Congress should be deciding matters of federal land disposition and acquisition. In fact, there appears to be no Constitutional authority for most of what HR 4570 proposes to do.

Particularly frustrating is that in my attempt to return authority to the State of Texas for a water project located in the 14th District, I introduced HR 2161, The Palmetto Bend Title Transfer Project. Return of such authority comports with my Constitutional notion that local control is preferred to unlimited federal authority to dictate from Washington, the means by which a water project in Edna, Texas will be managed. I understand that certain Members of Congress may disagree with the notion of the proper and limited role of the federal government. The point here, however, is that the "political process" embracing the so-called "high virtue of compromise" means that in order for one to vote for less federal authority one must, at the same time, in this bill, vote for more. Political schizophrenia was never more rampant. One would have to vote to authorize the transfer of 377,000 acres of public land in Utah to the federal government (at taxpayer expense of \$50 million for Utah's public schools) in order to return Lake Texana to the State of Texas. Two unrelated issues; two opposite philosophies as to the proper role of the federal government—a policy at odds with itself (unless, of course, compromise is one's ultimate end).

HR 2161 merely facilitates the early payment of the construction costs (discounted, of course, by the amount of interest no longer due as a consequence of early payment) and transfers title of the Palmetto Bend Project to the Texas state authorities. Both the LNRA and TWDB concur that an early buy-out and title transfer is extremely beneficial to the economical and operational well-being of the project as well as the Lake Texana water users. The Texas Legislature and Governor George W. Bush have both formally supported

the early payment and title transfer. In fact, even the residents of Highland Lakes in Travis County who initially expressed a concern as to the effects of the title transfer on the Colorado River Basin, came to support the legislation. This bill will save Lake Texana water users as much as one million dollars per year as well as providing an immediate infusion of \$43 million dollars to the national treasury. Additionally, all liability associated with this water project are, under my legislation, assumed by the state of Texas thus further relieving the financial burden of the federal government.

Texas has already demonstrated sound management of this resource. Recreational use of the lake has been well-provided under Texas state management to include provision of a marina, pavilion, playground, and boating docks, all funded without federal money. Additionally, a woodland bird sanctuary and wildlife viewing area will also be established upon transfer with the assistance of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and several environmental organizations.

Members of Congress must not be put in the position of having to support a massive federal land grab to secure for the residents of Texas more local control over their water supply. For these reasons, while I remain committed to the return of Lake Texana to Texas State authorities, I must reluctantly and necessarily oppose HR 4570.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to this bill and in particular to Section Nine which seeks to reduce hazardous fuels in our national forests. While I oppose many provisions in this bill, I am particularly concerned with the process by which this legislation has made its way to the floor. Most of the provisions have circumvented Committee consideration and some have never even been considered by the relevant Subcommittee. There is a reason why there is a detailed procedure for the consideration of legislation in the House—a procedure that I strongly support—and I am very dismayed that H.R. 4570 was not developed in this way. As many of my colleagues are aware, I have been very active in reforming management policies in our National Forests. Until his point, the dialogue on this issue between various interested parties within Congress has been very productive. However, the provisions pertaining to hazardous fuels reduction in this bill are a step backwards in improving the management of our National Forests. Section Nine authorizes the Forest Service to combine commercial timber sales with forest stewardship contracting. Further, it establishes an off-budget account that while initially funded by transferring money from the hazardous fuels reduction program, is regenerated through timber receipts from these sales.

As a fiscal conservative, I cannot support the connection of these contracts. Providing offsets for timber purchasers to do stewardship work in connection with a timber sale may have the result of paying timber purchasers to take our natural resources. No Member with any fiscal sense should support such a policy.

While this practice may work in private forestry, it is not something I can support on our federal lands. If private contracting is the most effective and cost-efficient option for performing stewardship contracting, it should be used, but separate to a commercial timber sale. There is no reason that these two services need to be connected in a contract.

In addition, since I already have concerns about existing off-budget accounts maintained by the Forest Service, I cannot support the establishment of another one. Everyone can agree on the fact that the Forest Service has fiscal accountability problems. Allowing them to use more money without Congressional oversight is completely irresponsible.

Since I know that there are many good and important provisions in this bill, I am sorry that I cannot support it. However, my concerns with other provisions are serious enough to warrant my overall opposition. It is my hope that in the future this sort of process for developing legislation will be avoided and real progress can be made.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my opposition to ten percent of the Omnibus National Parks and Public Lands Act of 1998. This massive 481 page document that rolls almost 100 bills into one package is ninety percent perfect. It makes needed technical corrections to the 1996 Omnibus National Parks Act, makes important adjustments to park boundaries, designates desirable land as heritage and historic areas, and reauthorizes the Historic Preservation Fund. The bill even establishes the transcontinental American Discovery Trail which ends in Cape Henlopen State Park in my State of Delaware. However, ten percent of this bill needs to be separated out and addressed on an individual basis.

That ten percent includes some of the following measures:

Opens areas proposed or being managed as wilderness to possible development, including the Everglades National Park which Congress has spent millions of dollars to restore;

Hands over title and operation of some western water projects to private interests without requiring them to pay full value for the project. This year, the House passed the Salton Sea Reclamation Act with a price tax of almost one-third of the Bureau of Reclamation's annual budget. There is a long list of other reclamation projects seeking funding. Why then would we want to sell existing projects at less than their fair market value? it is not fiscally responsible especially in a year where the President wants to spend the Social Security Surplus on "emergency" spending;

Waives environmental review procedures for a proposed road that cuts through one of the richest wetlands on the Pacific Coast of North America, as well as a migratory bird nesting area, and salmon spawning grounds. The value of this road may well outweigh these environmental concerns, but we should not blindly authorize the road easement without stopping to study its full environmental impact and plotting a course that minimizes the environmental harm. That is simply poor management.

Ninety percent of this bill could have been one of the shining stars in the 105th Congress' environmental record. Instead, due to the controversial ten percent it will either die in this chamber, never be considered in the Senate, or be vetoed at the President's desk. We have precious few days left in the legislative session and many of us need to return to our districts and debate serious national issues with political opponents. Let us not be the only institution to pass an unsignable law that has