

Monument—and four new national conservation areas, and establishes the Wyoming Range Withdrawal Area. It establishes a collaborative landscape-scale restoration program with a goal of reducing the risk of wildfire and authorizes programs to study and research the effects of climate change on natural resources and other research-related activities.

Treasured places from coast to coast will benefit from H.R. 146, including Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Michigan; Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia; Oregon's Mount Hood; Idaho's Owyhee Canyons; the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado; Zion National Park in Utah; remarkable landscapes in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California; and wilderness-quality National Forest lands in Virginia and public lands in New Mexico.

This bipartisan bill has been many years in the making, and is one of the most important pieces of natural resource legislation in decades. This legislation also makes progress for which millions of Americans have long waited on another front. The Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act is the first piece of comprehensive legislation aimed at improving the lives of Americans living with paralysis. It creates new coordinated research activities through the National Institutes of Health that will connect the best minds and best practices from the best labs across the country, and focus their efforts through collaborative scientific

research into a cure for paralysis, saving effort, money, and, most importantly, time. It will promote enhanced rehabilitation services for paralyzed Americans, helping develop better equipment and technology that allows them to live full and independent lives free from unnecessary barriers. This legislation will work to improve the quality of life for all those who live with paralysis, no matter the cause.

Section 8203 of the Act provides that the Secretary of the Interior shall appoint certain members of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission "based on recommendations from each member of the House of Representatives, the district of which encompasses the Corridor." Because it would be an impermissible restriction on the appointment power to condition the Secretary's appointments on the recommendations of members of the House, I will construe these provisions to require the Secretary to consider such congressional recommendations, but not to be bound by them in making appointments to the Commission.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 30, 2009.

NOTE: H.R. 146, approved March 30, was assigned Public Law No. 111-11.

Remarks Following a Meeting With United States Special Envoy to Sudan Major General J. Scott Gration

March 30, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Obviously on a busy news day, I wanted us to make sure that we weren't losing sight of something that has been an ongoing international crisis, and that is the situation in Darfur.

As many of you know, there has been a longstanding humanitarian crisis there, prompted by displacement and genocide that has been taking place. There have been a series of negotiations around resolving this crisis

in Sudan. It has not gotten resolved, and it is now worsening.

And so I wanted to publicly affirm the importance of General Scott Gration, who has been appointed as Special Envoy to Sudan, to work on a whole host of issues that I think are of importance to the international community and should touch the conscience of all of us.

General Gration is one of my top national security advisers. He's somebody who I've

known for a long time. We've traveled together in Africa. He was a close associate during the campaign. And so I can't think of somebody who is better equipped to travel to Africa, the continent where he grew up, and communicate to Sudan a couple of important points. Number one, we have an immediate crisis prompted by the Khartoum Government's expulsion of nongovernmental organizations that are providing aid to displaced persons inside of Sudan. And we have to figure out a mechanism to get those NGOs back in place, to reverse that decision, or to find some mechanism whereby we avert an enormous humanitarian crisis.

Even as we're dealing with that immediate issue, we can't take our eyes off the longstanding conflicts in Sudan that have resulted in all these persons being displaced. And that means that General Gration's task is going to be to see if we can reinvigorate the north-south agreement, make sure that it is implemented in an effective way, and that we are also exploring a mechanism whereby we can get talks between rebels and the Khartoum Government that could help, once and for all, resolve the Darfur situation.

This is going to be a very difficult task; it will be a time-consuming task. We don't expect any

solutions overnight to the longstanding problems there. Fortunately, what's happened in Darfur has touched so many people around the world, and we have seen such an extraordinary mobilization of advocates, many of who are sitting at this table—we've got bipartisan interest on the part of Members of Congress around this issue—that I actually think that America can speak effectively with one voice and bring the moral and other elements of our stature to bear in trying to deal with this situation.

And I can't think of a person who's better than Scott Gration to represent us in this critical task, and I am sending him off with my full confidence. He will be speaking for the administration, and he will be coming back to report to me very shortly about what he's found there and additional steps that we can take to deal with this situation.

So, thank you, Scott, for the great work.

Maj. Gen. Gration. Thank you, sir.

The President. Good. All right, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:24 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Representative David R. Obey March 30, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Well, I wanted to come by—and don't worry, I'm not singing. [Laughter] That's a pretty funny one, isn't it? [Laughter]

Audience member. The harmonica!

The President. I'm not playing the harmonica, either. [Laughter]

Audience member. Bowling!

The President. I'm not bowling. [Laughter]

I am here to do one, simple thing, and that is to publicly thank David Obey for his extraordinary service to our country. He has been there through thick and through thin, in the majority and the minority. He has consistently held to his values. He has been a passionate advocate for working men and women and making sure that everybody has got a fair shot in our society.

He has been guided by his conscience. He has been directed by a fierce intelligence and great courage. And so, you know, many of us have him to thank for the path that he has created as we entered into politics. Because of him, this is a better place, this country of ours. And he is continuing to do outstanding work each and every day, including partnering with me to help get a whole bunch of stuff done that needs to get done on behalf of the American people.

So, David, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:43 p.m. at the Washington Court Hotel. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.