

The Thrift Savings Plan is a very successful retirement plan that enables federal employees to save for their retirement. The provisions in this legislation will also provide federal employees the same flexibilities enjoyed by their private sector counterparts who participate in 401(k) plans. This provision also allows federal employees to borrow against their accounts for any reason.

The second provision is the Veterans Employment Opportunities and Improvement Act. This legislation has passed the House by voice vote and makes some positive reforms in the application of our Veterans' preference laws. By attaching this provision to S. 868, the majority expects that we will be able to engage the Senate in a conference on this legislation and break the current deadlock.

Finally, the manager's amendment incorporates a provision that was introduced by Senator SARBANES and passed the Senate by voice vote. This is more a technical provision and will help remedy a situation that affects only a limited number of employees. I support the effort to enact this correction.

Again, I support this legislation and the manager's amendment. I hope it will have my colleagues' support as well.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate and thank Chairman MICA and his subcommittee for their magnificent efforts on this very important piece of legislation and for their dogged determination to shepherd this bill through the legislative process.

I had the honor of testifying before Mr. MICA's subcommittee, and I am doubly pleased that some of the points I brought out during the hearing are in the bill. I wish to stress that the most important provision—that of an administrative and judicial method for veterans to pursue their employment claims—is not an expansion of veterans preference, but a necessary provision to ensure just protection of their rights as veterans.

And to those who feel that veterans don't need the protections being provided to them in this bill, let me just quote an internal memo from Postmaster General Marvin Runyon to his Board of Governors. Mr. Runyon states that veterans preference will, "have a detrimental impact on the Postal Service," it would "tie our hands," and it would, "be costly and make our personnel decisions more difficult and onerous." Finally, recognizing the average American's support for veterans he says, "this is a difficult issue to oppose publicly, especially in an election year."

The Postmaster almost got it right, but I would offer this. I would say that it is an issue that should never be opposed—election year or not—because veterans preference must remain the cornerstone of federal employment, simply because it is the right thing to do.

Veterans preference knows neither color nor gender, nor ethnic origin, whether the veteran is a Christian, Jew, Muslim or atheist. It is based on what is becoming a novel idea in this country—a willingness to sacrifice one's life for the good of the nation. I challenge anyone to point out a more appropriate group of citizens to receive some small advantage in securing and maintaining federal employment.

This bill will do much to reverse what I call a growing anti-veteran culture among bureaucrats. There is no doubt that women and minorities have suffered employment discrimination in both the federal and private sector. But let me stress that our military forces have

been in the forefront of promoting women and minorities among the ranks, and it is time for federal hiring managers to put veterans first.

I am also pleased that S. 868 will apply veterans preference to non-political employees of the Congress, the White House, and the Judiciary Branch. The only thing special here is the nation's commitment to a very special class of person—veterans. The approach taken in the bill to these principles is reasonable and is not unduly restrictive.

Mr. Chairman, let me close by noting that a little over 50 years ago, we were just winding up the bloody Pacific Campaign. A few years later, our forces were fighting and dying to maintain democracy's foothold on the Korean Peninsula. Slightly less than 30 years ago, our forces distinguished themselves in turning back the Tet Offensive. And just five years ago, the men and women of this nation struck like lightning against Saddam Hussein. In less than 60 years those wearing the nation's uniform have earned this small benefit at the cost of nearly 520,000 deaths. This is a benefit that costs the government nothing while honoring what is truly national service.

I strongly urge my colleagues to join all the major veterans service organizations in their support of this bill and to vote in favor of S. 868.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WICKER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida, [Mr. MICA] that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 868, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 868, the Senate bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

CLARION RIVER NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS DESIGNATION

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3568) to designate 51.7 miles of the Clarion River, located in Pennsylvania, as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3568

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"() CLARION RIVER, PENNSYLVANIA.—The 51.7-mile segment of the main stem of the Clarion River from the Allegheny National Forest/State Game Lands Number 44 bound-

ary, located approximately 0.7 miles downstream from the Ridgway Borough limit, to an unnamed tributary in the backwaters of Piney Dam approximately 0.6 miles downstream from Blyson Run, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture in the following classifications:

"(A) The approximately 8.6-mile segment of the main stem from the Allegheny National Forest/State Game Lands Number 44 boundary, located approximately 0.7 miles downstream from the Ridgway Borough limit, to Portland Mills, as a recreational river.

"(B) The approximately 8-mile segment of the main stem from Portland Mills to the Allegheny National Forest boundary, located approximately 0.8 miles downstream from Irwin Run, as a scenic river.

"(C) The approximately 26-mile segment of the main stem from the Allegheny National Forest boundary, located approximately 0.8 miles downstream from Irwin Run, to the State Game Lands 283 boundary, located approximately 0.9 miles downstream from the Cooksburg bridge, as a recreational river.

"(D) The approximately 9.1-mile segment of the main stem from the State Game Lands 283 boundary, located approximately 0.9 miles downstream from the Cooksburg bridge, to an unnamed tributary at the backwaters of Piney Dam, located approximately 0.6 miles downstream from Blyson Run, as a scenic river."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] and the gentleman from American Samoa [Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN].

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. HANSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill, introduced by our colleague Mr. CLINGER, which provides for the designation of 51.7 miles of the Clarion River in Pennsylvania under the Wild and Scenic River Act. About 60 percent of the river courses through Forest Service and State game lands, and the balance is abutted by private property owners. The Forest Service has studied this river pursuant to a directive by Congress several years ago. The Forest Service found strong local support for designation of the river, as attested to by a proclamation issued by Gov. Tom Ridge designating June 1996 as Clarion River Month.

The administration fully supports this legislation and I am aware of no objections to it, therefore, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3568.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3568 would designate 51.7 miles of the Clarion River in Pennsylvania, as a component of the national wild and scenic rivers system. I would note for the RECORD that we are being asked to

proceed to designate the Clarion River despite the fact that the wild and scenic river study that this House authorized in the 102d Congress has not been completed. However, we had favorable testimony on this proposal from the administration, the bill's sponsor, and the local community. That being the case we will not object H.R. 3568, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. CLINGER], the author of the legislation.

Mr. CLINGER. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to stand here today and to rise in support of H.R. 3568—a bill to designate 51.7 miles of the Clarion River—located in Pennsylvania—as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

This effort started 4 years ago when the Clarion River became eligible for study by direction of Public Law 102-271 which conveyed a wild and scenic designation upon the Allegheny River.

In March of this year, the Forest Service determined after lengthy analysis that 51.7 miles of the Clarion River contain outstanding scenic and recreational values of regional significance. Mr. Speaker, while I do not share the professional expertise of those who made this determination, I can attest to the fact that the eligible corridor is indeed a natural and beautiful environmental treasure.

The Clarion River corridor is located in the unglaciated Allegheny plateau, is free flowing and relatively slow moving. For that reason, more than 130,000 people have floated on the Clarion River in 1995. In fact, one of my staff members had the opportunity to float the river this summer during celebration of Pennsylvania Rivers Month during which the Clarion River was recognized.

Apart from the Clarion River's recreational value—which winds its way through the Allegheny National Forest—its hallmark is its beauty and serenity. I strongly believe that such a unique natural resource—especially in the eastern United States—should be preserved and protected for the enjoyment of this and future generations.

And judging from the communication that I have had with the residents of the area over the past 4 years, they overwhelmingly agree. During hearings on H.R. 3568 before Chairman HANSEN's Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Lands, we heard positive testimony from two residents of the Clarion area—one private landowner and one travel and tourism representative.

The testimony of Ms. Kimberly Miller, a landowner herself and a self-described caretaker of the land, was especially important considering her property along the corridor has been in family ownership since 1883.

Another Pennsylvania resident came to the Capitol for the hearing last July

to tell the subcommittee about the economic benefit that will follow designation of the corridor. Mr. David Morris, executive director of a regional visitors bureau, stated that according to the U.S. Travel Data Center, more than \$127 million are spent annually by visitors to the Clarion area. This translates into some 1,700 jobs and over \$3 million in local tax receipts—jobs and revenue that might well be lost in the future if the extraordinary recreational values of the river became degraded.

Despite the many positive comments I received about H.R. 3568, and the outpouring of public support that fueled this effort from the start, that's not to say reservations have not been voiced, but the critics have been few and largely limited to those who oppose any designation under the act on philosophical grounds.

It has been my goal since the inception of this project to maintain an open dialog with any and all interested parties. Pending passage of this measure, drafting of the management plan for the river will be developed with the same goal in mind: to achieve consensus among local, State, and Federal agencies along with the interests of private citizens.

I believe it's important to note that H.R. 3568 does not contain any unfunded mandates; does not permit the Government to acquire land through condemnation since more than 50 percent of the land is publicly owned; and would merely require the continuation of a requirement to submit new permit applications for projects on public lands to be reviewed by the responsible State or Federal agency. This has already been the case since 1992.

Mr. Speaker, I want to very gratefully thank all of my Pennsylvania colleagues—Republican and Democrat—who lent their support to this effort, including 15 Pennsylvania House Members and both of our Members from the other body—who introduced companion legislation in the Senate. Their cosponsorship is testimony to the fact that preservation of our national resources is an issue that knows no boundaries—congressional or otherwise.

I believe the words spoken by one of my constituents best capture the sentiment and commitment by residents to see the successful conclusion of this effort, as part of our national infrastructure, this employer will not relocate for warmer weather or for less expensive labor as some other industries have done. The Clarion is part of us and is here as long as we are.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the waning days of the 104th Congress—which brings to a close my career as a Member of this House—it's a great opportunity to consider and pass this legislation which means so much to the people who have sent me back to Washington for the past 18 years. While I have been fortunate to guide many very important reform measures through the House this year, H.R. 3568 allowed me to work hand in hand with the citizens who are

passionate about preserving our local resources for the benefit of fellow Pennsylvanians and all Americans.

With that, I want to thank Chairman YOUNG and Chairman HANSEN for their support over the past months in bringing this measure to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I also express my appreciation to the gentleman from American Samoa for his willingness to also support the legislation.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I certainly would like to commend the gentleman from Pennsylvania who is the chief sponsor of this legislation and am most appreciative of his comments. We do not have any additional speakers, but I want to say to the gentleman from Pennsylvania that hopefully sometime in the future I look forward to visiting the Clarion Wild River and perhaps even asking other Members.

I can say also to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, we have a very sensitive appreciation of what it means to try to pass legislation for not 1 year, not for 2 years, 3 years, but for 4 years. Sometimes our friends from downtown are not exactly very cooperative of some of the things that we here as Members have tried to do in formulating pieces of legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend again the gentleman from Pennsylvania for bringing this piece of legislation to the floor and having the sense of bipartisanship and support of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3568.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURTON of Indiana). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

WEKIVA RIVER, SEMINOLE CREEK, AND ROCK SPRINGS RUN, FL, NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM STUDY

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill