

Mr. Speaker, I will give you many vivid examples which illustrate why the current situation is not working. The Bureau of Indian Affairs pledged to local irrigators that it would set aside funding in 1994, 1995, and 1996 for repairs of a decaying siphon. This never happened. What was the result? The siphon failed at the end of 1996, halting water deliveries to 1,200 acres of cropland and causing damages in the tens of thousands of dollars in lost grain production. The siphon was then replaced with funds that were supposed to be spent on the Flathead River pumps, other project needs and emergency funds, creating an even greater economic problem. Mr. Speaker, here are other examples:

Examples of Bureau of Indian Affairs mismanagement at the Flathead Irrigation Project included:

First, the Flathead Irrigation Project has regularly overtopped a canal running through a Ronan farm, preventing several acres of potatoes from being harvested. This is a recurring problem that cost the farm \$4,000 to \$5,000 per year. In addition, the canal has washed out twice in the past 5 years, transporting water through the farm to other irrigators.

Second, the Flathead Irrigation Project has regularly flooded several acres of an alfalfa field in Ronan, leading to \$3,000 to \$4,000 of damage per year for the past several years. The landowner has repeatedly asked for corrective action, but to no avail.

Third, a farmer from St. Ignatius has been complaining about water overflows from project ditches for the past 4 years. Poor water management by the irrigation project causes hayfield to be flooded, resulting in \$2,000 to \$3,000 of crop loss each year.

Fourth, another St. Ignatius farmer allows the irrigation project to exercise a right of way to access the headworks of a project canal. The irrigation project has failed to secure the gates through the right of way and the farmer has had trash dumped on his property.

Fifth, a rancher from Arlee pastures registered Charlois cattle throughout the Mission Valley. In the farmer's pasture near Pablo, a BIA irrigation project employee was observed driving out of a gate with six registered herd bulls in the pasture. The gate led to Highway 93, one of the most heavily traveled roads in the State of Montana. Quick action from a passer-by prevented a potential tragedy when the gate was secured by the passerby.

Sixth, a farmer-rancher from Hot Springs notified BIA of a ditch overtopping on his ranch. After being ignored by BIA, the farmer notified an irrigation district commissioner who attempted to intervene on the farmers behalf with BIA. The district commissioner call was also ignored until the ditch failed, damaging the farmer's crops and causing extensive damage to his land.

Seventh, Little Bitterroot Reservoir, May and June 1997. At the peak of the runoff, 4,000 acre-feet of water was dumped into an already flooded swollen river. The stored water was lost to irrigators. Downstream ranchers sustained loss of fields due to floods.

Eighth, a rancher from Ronan filed complaints in June, July, and September 1997 of having land flooded by BIA dumping water onto his land. To date BIA has not responded. The rancher has lost access to his corrals and has had pastures flooded.

Ninth, Pablo Feeder Canal, 1991. A washout of the Pablo Feeder Canal led to breach

nearly 300 feet long, dumping 350 cubic feet per second of water, along with 18 inches of gravel and sand on 20 acres of prime to potato land. No settlement is planned by BIA. No ditch rider had been assigned to patrol this section ditch and surveillance was minimal, despite known geologic problems in the area. A farmer has lost the use of 20 acres of land at a value of \$2 to \$3 thousand per acre.

10. BIA's failure to control weeds on ditchbanks led to a local association of farmers and ranchers to approach BIA with a cooperative weed control plan, allowing individual farmer and ranchers to spray for weeds along the ditch banks of their own property. BIA initially pledged cooperation and then ignored the problem, which was first identified in 1994, for the next 3 years. This has led to an increase in weed infestations in the area and finally forced the local farmers and ranchers to simply address the problems of BIA's ditchbanks unilaterally.

Finally water shutoff. Despite being unable to provide any accounting of money, BIA unilaterally shutoff water deliveries to all non-tribal irrigators on the Flathead Irrigation Project in May 1997. Service was shut off over an alleged nonpayment of a BIA billing and was subsequently restored, with BIA admitting that it has not provide an accurate billing, or an accurate accounting of irrigator funds.

High cost due to mismanagement are also not fair, considering the serious economic pressures Montana's family farmers and ranchers now face. This legislation will help eliminate high and unfair costs that continue to compromise the financial stakes of hard-working farmers and ranchers.

Responsible local management of this irrigation project would provide for lower costs and increased accountability of the money collected by and used in the operation of the Flathead Irrigation Project. At the current time the BIA is unable, or unwilling, to provide basic financial information to the local irrigation district. This despite the fact that the local farmers and ranchers pay 100 percent of the costs to operate and maintain the project. At the same, the current management cannot even deliver a year-end balance of funds paid by the local irrigation users.

Local management will also will generate savings over the current management. These savings could be used to restore the Flathead Irrigation Project to a fully functioning, efficiently operating unit. Without this legislation, residents face an uncertain future. This irrigation project is located in one of the most beautiful valleys in western Montana. Preservation of family farms and ranches in the Mission, Jocko, and Camas, valleys in Montana is dependent upon local management, which will provide an opportunity to control the costs associated with the operation of this vital water source.

This bill gives local citizens the opportunity to control their futures. It also keeps the commitments of the past by continuing to allow for the negotiation of water rights between the Federal Government, the State of Montana, and the affected tribes and does not infringe upon tribal sovereignty.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce this measure today with the support of my colleagues and locally elected officials, and I look forward to moving this bill forward on behalf of those communities which depend on the Flathead Irrigation Project for their way of living.

H.R. 2292, THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE RESTRUCTURING AND REFORM ACT

HON. BILL ARCHER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, as the first session of the 105th Congress draws to a close, I rise to underscore my personal resolve and that of the Ways and Means Committee to complete work on needed reforms to the Internal Revenue Service when Congress reconvenes next year.

Mr. Speaker, I have long advocated fundamental tax reform. Our tax system must be more fair, more simple, and permit the working families of America to keep more of their hard-earned money. Yet the Internal Revenue Code is too complex, too unwieldy, and too great an impediment to savings and investment. In short, the Internal Revenue Code is too broken to be fixed. The current tax system must be torn up by its roots and replaced. I am fully committed to carrying forward the critical work of fundamental tax reform, and hope to continue work towards that goal in the second session of the 105th Congress.

In short, Mr. Speaker, America needs fundamental tax reform. However, I also wish to emphasize that there is much we can do more immediately to remedy some of the problems that now exist in our tax system. Towards that end, I am particularly proud of the work this House and the Ways and Means Committee have done on H.R. 2292, The Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of H.R. 2292 is to implement the recommendations of IRS Restructuring Commission chaired by Representative PORTMAN and Senator KERREY and to make sure that the IRS applies the tax laws of our country in a fair, equitable, and consistent manner.

In fact, current law and sound tax policy require as much: For example, the IRS should not abuse its powers to seize property or its rule making authority; the IRS generally may not impose retroactive regulations; and the IRS should apply the tax laws in a consistent and reasonable manner, both among competitors and with respect to specific taxpayers from one year to the next. However, as was made clear in recent hearings by the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee, the IRS often has failed to honor its duty to serve the taxpayer. H.R. 2292 builds on the procedural and administrative safeguards enacted as part of the taxpayers bill of rights I and the taxpayer bill of rights II to help ensure that the IRS faithfully carries out its duties to American taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, the IRS should act in a fair, equitable, and consistent manner simply because its right. Yet doing so also serves to promote sound tax policy. For example, failure to apply the tax laws consistently, like retroactive changes in the tax laws, undermines public faith in the system. If the IRS applies the laws differently among competitors, or changes the way it applies the law to taxpayers from year to year, those actions violate the duty of consistency the IRS owes to taxpayers and erodes taxpayers' trust in the system. That loss of confidence, in turn, discourages taxpayer compliance and makes administration of the Tax Code more difficult.

The Internal Revenue Service Restricting and Reform Act of 1997 will help ensure that the IRS administers the tax laws as Congress intended. Enactment of the new safeguards included in H.R. 2292 will help the IRS will become the customer-friendly agency it was meant to be, and will help the IRS to apply the tax laws of our country in a just manner.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their exceptional work on H.R. 2292 and look forward to continuing to work with them to enact that legislation into law when Congress reconvenes.

HONORING ESSEX CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 40th anniversary of Essex Catholic High School. In 1957 this school was founded by Archbishop Thomas A. Boland with an enrollment of 225 students and a faculty of 7. The school was the first regional high school in the Archdiocese of Newark and has served the young men of the Newark area since that time.

The ability of Essex Catholic to grow and change with the times is perhaps the most important aspect of this school. They moved from the original location at the former Mutual Benefit Life Building on Broadway in North Newark to a larger campus on Glenwood Avenue in East Orange in 1980. At this new facility, the school continues to meet the challenges of serving an area that is consistently changing and progressing. Their ability to meet these challenges stems from the strong moral and religious foundation the school is built upon. This foundation also consists of teaching students to set high standards and goals for themselves. The school continues to emphasize the spiritual and emotional growth of students that is needed to ensure a well rounded education.

The commitment of the Congregation of Christian Brothers and especially the commitment of the Most Reverend Theodore M. McCarrick to Essex Catholic and to our entire community is also to be commended. Their contributions to the school and our area are positive examples to the young men they teach and the community as a whole. This love and dedication to teaching and Essex Catholic is surely one of the school's most valued assets.

Mr. Speaker, without schools such as Essex Catholic many of our young men would not have important educational opportunities available to them. In this year of their 40th anniversary, I would like to congratulate and praise the long-term devotion the Christian Brothers, religious sisters, priests, lay teachers, students, alumni, and parents have for Essex Catholic and the education of our area's young men.

PROTECTING THE RATEPAYERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the recent efforts by the Congress to address an important matter of equity that will ensure that local communities throughout the nation will be able to protect the environment without jeopardizing limited, local government taxpayer dollars committed to water quality improvements. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. We can see the evidence of the Federal, State and local commitment to improving our Nation's lakes rivers and coastal waters. Public awareness of the importance and benefited of sound environmental stewardship exists today that clearly was not evident 20 years ago. Billions of dollars made available to communities under the Clean Water Act to build clean water facilities using the construction grants program has helped to make our waters healthier.

Over the years, local governments that have received these grants have undergone rigorous audits to ensure that the facilities were constructed as planned and designed, in an effort to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are used as intended. At the same time, we have heard from local officials that these audits have often gone beyond the stated purpose of ensuring that grant funds have been used as intended. Instead, they the focussed on whether the funded project should have been constructed as approved by EPA. These re-evaluations occur even though there is no evidence of fraud or abuse in the project's expenditures and after the project has received both Federal and State approvals to proceed to construction. In my congressional district, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District has been seeking to resolve an adverse audit report dating back to 1977. Despite documentation demonstrating that the facility was planned, designed, and constructed in accordance with Federal and State approvals, EPA auditors have sought the return of \$4 million by the local taxpayers.

Simply stated, after 20 years, the auditors now have decided that my constituent could have constructed the project in a better way. This second-guessing of previously approved, eligible project costs should not be permitted. It penalizes the local community for project approvals it did not make and, more importantly, it diverts resources away from water quality improvement projects that the community wants. Instead, the district's resources would have to be spent to contest audit findings that seek to disallow eligible project costs.

Congress attempted to correct this situation most recently in 1987 when it passed the Water Quality Act of 1987. Because the problem of second-guessing and reevaluation persists, the Committee on Appropriations included language in the Veterans, Housing and Independent Agencies Fiscal Year 1998 Appropriations Bill. It directs the EPA Administrator to uphold local government construction grants project eligibilities where the local government grantee has provided decision documents of the EPA, or the designated State agency, permitting use of the funds. I expect

that with the clarification provided in this year's spending bill, EPA will adhere to Congress' directive and uphold eligible project costs such as those of my constituent, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.

THANKING ACTING VA SECRETARY HERSEL GOBER

HON. RUBÉN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say thank you to Acting VA Secretary Hershel Gober, who has worked closely with me these past 10 months to make the dream of easier access to health care for veterans in south Texas become a reality. When I took office back in January, one anxiety I heard voiced time and time again was that veterans in the south Texas/Rio Grande Valley area felt the services they received were less than adequate, and also the distances they had to travel to receive quality care were far too great. At that time I pledged to ensure that the level of care afforded veterans in our communities is second to none. To see what could be done I met with the Acting Secretary. He heard my concerns. He looked at our needs. He took action.

The result: In 1998 the veterans of the 15th District of Texas can expect to begin receiving significantly improved and expanded health care services. The counties of Bee (Beeville), Jim Wells (Alice), and Kleberg (Kingsville), have all been approved as future sites for primary care community-based outpatient clinics. Equally as important, a plan has also been developed, which will lead to expanded inpatient services. This pilot program will establish a process for the contracting of routine, non-urgent, nonspecialty inpatient care for stays for 3 days or less.

This is, indeed, a satisfying resolution. To say the least, I am elated.

It is because of the assistance and guidance of Secretary Gober that we will be able to implement innovative programs that provide much needed assistance to countless men and women who have protected our freedoms and who have made our Nation the great country it is. What the Secretary's efforts mean is that there will be real, effective changes for the veterans of south Texas. This is an example of what can be accomplished when everyone joins together and channels their energy toward a common goal.

Mr. Secretary, I could certainly never have done this alone. I want to sincerely thank you for sharing my vision.

RECOGNITION OF DR. CHARLES ROARK, NORTHEAST EL PASOAN OF THE YEAR FOR 1997

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Dr. Charles Roark as the Northeast El Pasoan of the Year for 1997. In addition to his outstanding work for Hospice, he also