

West Virginia, and Robert Mauk of Huntington, chairman and founding member of CALA of Southern West Virginia. Many others have given their time and energy to these public watchdog groups as well, persons such as Sid Davis of Charleston who, despite having to take time off recently for health reasons, has returned to his volunteer position as an officer of CALA of Southern West Virginia.

Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse groups have declared September 21 through September 27, 1997, to be Lawsuit Abuse Awareness Week in West Virginia. I commend all of the individuals who are involved in Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse for their involvement in civic affairs and their efforts to promote constructive action in a policy area they care about.

As someone who has been a leader for a balanced, responsible form of product liability reform, I continue to hope for the kind of education, dialogue, and consensus-building clearly needed to address problems in our legal system that hurt consumers, victims, and the private sector. I encourage CALA to continue raising these issues and promoting solutions that ensure justice and improve the legal system. West Virginia and the country as a whole need informed, educated, and dedicated citizens to help elected officials address serious issues and achieve proper reforms when necessary.●

RIGHT TO LIFE OF MICHIGAN

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to honor those of Right to Life of Livingston County, Inc. and Right to Life of Michigan for their enduring commitment and dedication to one of today's most important social issues.

Mr. President, to those of us who are pro-life, being pro-life means protecting our families and respecting the sanctity of life. It also means maintaining the central role of the family in all our lives. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of Right to Life of Michigan for their perseverance in support of those goals. Unfortunately, we still must spend much of our time in the political sphere, arguing against laws that promote the taking of unborn human lives, and I am grateful for all their efforts in that area as well.

Ending the tragedy of abortion will not be easy. But groups like Right to Life of Livingston County, National Right to Life of Michigan, and the National Right to Life Committee, are fighting a winning battle. By their example, as well as their arguments, they are showing the power and the beauty of human life.●

● Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, retinal degenerative diseases affect more than six million Americans. This number is expected to climb beyond 10 million as the baby boomers age. This is a vision timebomb and I have witnessed its devastating impact on many of our senior citizens. September 27, 1997 marks World Retina Day, a day in which organizations around the world dedicated

to finding the cures for retinal degenerative diseases join together to call attention to the collaborative research that is being done internationally.

The most common retinal disease is age-related macular degeneration (AMD) which is the leading cause of vision loss in adults over the age of 60. Individuals with AMD not only lose their central vision, but also their ability to read, drive and in many cases they lose their sense of independence. Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) is a genetic disease that steals the sight of the young, robbing them in the prime of their life, their night vision and then their peripheral vision. RP is a progressive disease, leading in most cases to blindness. There is no treatment to stop the progression of this disease. Usher's Syndrome is also a genetic disease and it is the leading cause of deaf-blindness in the United States. This again shows up in our young, robbing them of vision and hearing. The suffering to the patients and their families is incalculable.

Due to the work funded by the National Eye Institute at the National Institute of Health, and organizations such as the Foundation Fighting Blindness and similar organizations worldwide, significant progress in research has been made. Just this past week a stunning research breakthrough was announced. Scientists have discovered gene mutations that cause AMD. This landmark finding offers the first concrete evidence that AMD is genetically linked. There is now hope that by the time the generation of the baby boomers reaches age 60, in about 10 years, that there will be a genetic treatment for AMD. If a treatment is found, we will see a return on our investments in eye research, and the savings to the budget in terms of health care costs will be significant.

With the international collaboration among researchers who represent a broad spectrum of highly specialized scientific disciplines, great strides have been made in understanding AMD, RP, Usher's syndrome and related retinal degenerative diseases. International breakthroughs and collaboration in research warrant the recognition of World Retina Day. I am hopeful that there is a cure in sight. I believe that as we continue to fund medical research, diseases such as these will become eradicated and remembered only in the archives of medical history.●

TRIBUTE TO SOUTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

● Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I stand before you today to pay tribute to a truly outstanding University in my home State of Missouri, Southwest Missouri State University (SMSU). SMSU was one of 135 schools in 42 states selected to the John Templeton Foundation Honor Roll, "a designation recognizing colleges and universities that emphasize character building as an integral part of the college experience."

Being the only public institution in Missouri to earn the 1997-98 Honor Roll

distinction, SMSU is also one of the eight state-funded schools to receive the award nationwide. Schools competing for the Honor Roll were judged on five criteria and out of 2,208 four-year accredited undergraduate institutions only the top few were chosen. One of the categories where SMSU stood out was in community service. During the 1996-97 school year the SMSU campus, including the faculty and students, volunteered more than 69,500 hours.

It is an honor for the entire State of Missouri to have a University like SMSU, whose service and character-building programs have earned it this distinguished award. I commend SMSU's President, Dr. John Kaiser, for his commitment to excellence and hope for continued success in the future.●

JUDGE ROBERT AND HELENE BRANG GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Judge Robert and Helene Brang on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary. A long and successful marriage is truly a cause for celebration, well worthy of recognition by the United States Senate. Their commitment to each other and their family is commendable and a great contribution to the tradition of strong American families.

Robert Francis Brang and Helene Marie Foley met at the University of Detroit while both were students. Helene was a reporter for the Varsity News and Bob was the President of the Student Union. They met on the steps of the Commerce and Finance Building when Helene approached him for an interview.

They were married at St. Scholastica's Catholic Church in Detroit on October 4, 1947. In 1956, Robert and Helene moved their growing family from their home in Detroit to Redford Township where they reside to this day. Bob practiced law and Helene reared 8 wonderful children. In 1968, Bob was elected a Judge for the 17th District Court and retained that position until his retirement.

Mr. President, on October 4, Robert and Helene will have celebrated fifty years together. Their children—Kathleen, Robert, Mary, William, Barry, Stephen, Daniel, and Patrick—along with their twelve grandchildren—Diana, Laura, Rob, Patrick, Amy, Beth, Adam, Kellie, Sarah, Kaitlyn, Dakota, and Austin—will join with them in celebration.

Martin Luther once wrote: "There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage." Robert and Helene are blessed to enjoy such a strong and enduring bond. On behalf of the United States Senate, I wish them a happy anniversary and many more years of joy.●

ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 1997

• Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced S. 1222. I ask that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The text of the bill follows:

S. 1222

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Estuary Habitat Restoration Partnership Act of 1997".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the estuaries and coastal regions of the United States are home to half the population of the United States;

(2) the traditions, economy, and quality of life of many communities depend on the natural abundance and health of the estuaries;

(3) approximately 75 percent of the commercial fish and shellfish of the United States depend on estuaries at some stage in their life cycle;

(4) the varied habitats of estuaries and other coastal waters provide jobs to 28,000,000 United States citizens in commercial and sport fishing, tourism, recreation, and other industries, with fishing alone contributing \$11,000,000,000 to the United States economy each year;

(5) despite the many values of estuaries, estuaries are gravely threatened by estuary habitat alteration and loss;

(6) the accumulated loss of estuary habitat, reaching over 90 percent in some estuaries, threatens the ecological and economic bounty of regions experiencing the loss, and can be reversed only by action to restore lost and degraded estuary habitat;

(7) the demands on Federal, State, and local funding for estuary habitat restoration activities exceed available resources and prompt serious concerns about the ability of the United States to restore estuary habitat vital to efforts to restore, preserve, and protect the health of estuaries;

(8) successful restoration of estuaries demands the full coordination of Federal and State estuary habitat restoration programs;

(9) to succeed in restoring estuaries, it is important to link estuary habitat restoration projects to broader ecosystem planning in order to establish restoration programs that are effective in the long term;

(10) efficient leveraging of scarce public resources and new and innovative market-based funding for estuary habitat restoration activities would generate real returns on investments for communities through improvement of the vibrancy and health of estuaries;

(11) the Federal, State, and private cooperation in estuary habitat restoration activities in existence on the date of enactment of this Act should be strengthened and new public and public-private estuary habitat restoration partnerships established; and

(12) such new partnerships would help ensure the ecological and economic vibrancy of estuaries for the benefit of future generations.

SEC. 3. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to establish a voluntary, community-driven, incentive-based program that will catalyze the restoration of 1,000,000 acres of estuary habitat by 2010;

(2) to encourage enhanced coordination and leveraging of Federal, State, and community estuary habitat restoration programs, plans, and studies;

(3) to establish effective estuary habitat restoration partnerships among public agencies at all levels of government and between the public and private sectors;

(4) to promote efficient financing of estuary habitat restoration activities to help better leverage limited Federal funding; and

(5) to develop and enhance monitoring and maintenance capabilities designed to ensure that restoration efforts build on the successes of past and current efforts and scientific understanding.

SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL.—The term "Collaborative Council" means the inter-agency council established by section 5.

(2) DEGRADED ESTUARY HABITAT.—The term "degraded estuary habitat" means estuary habitat where natural ecological functions have been impaired and normal beneficial uses have been reduced.

(3) ESTUARY.—The term "estuary" means—
(A) a body of water in which fresh water from a river or stream meets and mixes with salt water from the ocean; and

(B) the physical, biological, and chemical elements associated with such a body of water.

(4) ESTUARY HABITAT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term "estuary habitat" means the complex of physical and hydrologic features and living organisms within estuaries and associated ecosystems.

(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term "estuary habitat" includes salt and fresh water coastal marshes, coastal forested wetlands and other coastal wetlands, tidal flats, natural shoreline areas, shellfish beds, sea grass meadows, kelp beds, river deltas, and river and stream banks under tidal influence.

(5) ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION ACTIVITY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term "estuary habitat restoration activity" means an activity that results in improving degraded estuary habitat (including both physical and functional restoration), with the goal of attaining a self-sustaining, ecologically based system integrated into the surrounding landscape.

(B) INCLUDED ACTIVITIES.—The term "estuary habitat restoration activity" includes—

(i) the reestablishment of physical features and biological and hydrologic functions;

(ii) except as provided in subparagraph (C)(ii), the cleanup of contamination;

(iii) the control of nonnative and invasive species;

(iv) the reintroduction of native or ecologically beneficial species through planting or natural succession; and

(v) other activities that improve estuary habitat.

(C) EXCLUDED ACTIVITIES.—The term "estuary habitat restoration activity" does not include—

(i) an act that constitutes mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by Federal or State law; or

(ii) an act that constitutes satisfaction of liability for natural resource damages under any Federal or State law.

(6) ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT.—The term "estuary habitat restoration project" means an estuary habitat restoration activity under consideration or selected by the Collaborative Council, in accordance with this Act, to receive financial, technical, or another form of assistance.

(7) ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION STRATEGY.—The term "estuary habitat restoration strategy" means the estuary habitat restoration strategy developed under section 6(a).

(8) FEDERAL ESTUARY MANAGEMENT OR HABITAT RESTORATION PLAN.—The term "Federal

estuary management or habitat restoration plan" means any Federal plan for restoration of degraded estuary habitat that—

(A) was developed by a public body with the substantial participation of appropriate public and private stakeholders; and

(B) reflects a community-based planning process.

(9) PERSON.—The term "person" includes an entity of a Federal, State, or local government, an Indian tribe, an entity organized or existing under the law of a State, and a nongovernmental organization.

(10) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Army, or a designee.

(11) UNDER SECRETARY.—The term "Under Secretary" means the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere of the Department of Commerce, or a designee.

SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL.

(a) COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL.—There is established an interagency council to be known as the "Estuary Habitat Restoration Collaborative Council".

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—The Collaborative Council shall be composed of the Secretary, the Under Secretary, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Secretary of the Interior (acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service), the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of Transportation, or their designees.

(c) CONVENING OF COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL.—The Secretary shall—

(1) convene the first meeting of the Collaborative Council not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act; and

(2) convene additional meetings as often as appropriate to ensure that this Act is fully carried out, but not less often than quarterly.

(d) COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL PROCEDURES.—

(1) QUORUM.—Three members of the Collaborative Council shall constitute a quorum.

(2) VOTING AND MEETING PROCEDURES.—The Collaborative Council shall establish procedures for voting and the conduct of meetings by the Council.

SEC. 6. DUTIES OF COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL.

(a) ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION STRATEGY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—

(A) DEVELOPMENT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Collaborative Council, in consultation with representatives from coastal States and non-profit organizations with expertise in estuary habitat restoration, shall develop an estuary habitat restoration strategy designed to ensure a comprehensive approach to the selection and prioritization of estuary habitat restoration projects and the full coordination of Federal and non-Federal activities related to restoration of estuary habitat.

(B) PROVISION OF NATIONAL FRAMEWORK.—The estuary habitat restoration strategy shall provide a national framework for estuary habitat restoration activities by—

(i) identifying existing estuary habitat restoration plans;

(ii) integrating overlapping estuary habitat restoration plans; and

(iii) identifying appropriate processes for the development of estuary habitat restoration plans where needed.

(2) INTEGRATION OF PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION PLANS, PROGRAMS, AND PARTNERSHIPS.—In developing the estuary habitat restoration strategy, the Collaborative Council shall—

(A) conduct a review of—

(i) Federal estuary management or habitat restoration plans; and