

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS
CONSERVATION COUNCIL EXPAN-
SION ACT OF 1999

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2821) to amend the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to provide for appointment of 2 additional members of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2821

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 "North American Wetlands Conservation Council Expansion Act of 1999".

SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL MEMBERS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION COUNCIL.

(a) **ADDITIONAL MEMBERS.**—Section 4(a)(1) of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4403(a)(1)) is amended by striking "nine" and inserting "eleven".

(b) **APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL MEMBERS.**—Section 4(a)(1)(D) of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4403(a)(1)(D)) is amended by striking "three" and inserting "five".

(c) **INITIAL TERMS.**—Of the members of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council first appointed under the amendments made by subsections (a) and (b)—

(1) one shall be appointed to an initial term of 1 year; and

(2) one shall be appointed to an initial term of 2 years,

as specified by the Secretary of the Interior at the time of appointment.

(d) **RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING APPOINTMENT REQUIREMENTS.**—Except as provided in subsection (e), this section shall not affect section 304 of the Wetlands and Wildlife Enhancement Act of 1998 (112 Stat. 2958; 16 U.S.C. 4403 note).

(e) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—Section 304 of the Wetlands and Wildlife Enhancement Act of 1998 (112 Stat. 2958; 16 U.S.C. 4403 note) is amended by striking "shall consist of" and inserting "shall include".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE).

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

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present to the House H.R. 2821, introduced by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON).

The fundamental goal of this legislation is to diversify and expand the effectiveness of the North American Wetlands Council by increasing from three to five the number of nongovernmental

representatives that may serve on that body.

Under current law, there are nine members, including the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who serve on the Wetlands Council. Their job is to review and recommend worthwhile conservation projects to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

To date, the commission has approved 714 projects to protect, restore, and enhance critical wetland habitat in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. This represents a financial commitment of \$310.8 million that has been matched by more than 900 nongovernmental partners, for a total investment of \$798.5 million. These funds have been used to conserve over 33 million acres of wetlands which directly benefit millions of migratory birds.

By expanding the membership of the Wetlands Council, two additional conservation groups would be given a seat at the table, and they would bring with them their commitment to accelerate the growth of this extremely successful program.

H.R. 2821 is a noncontroversial and bipartisan bill that has been authored by the two House Members who serve with distinction on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

I urge an "aye" vote on this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

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

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, the council established under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act has made tremendous positive impact in helping to restore and conserve wetlands across the North American continent. Projects supported by the council help to preserve wetlands and provide crucial forage and resting habitats for migratory birds, not only in our Nation, but also in Canada and Mexico.

H.R. 2821 would simply add two additional nongovernmental seats to the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, thereby increasing the size of the council from 9 to 11 members in total. There would be no increase in the current number of two permanent seats in the council, which are reserved for the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the executive secretary of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

It is my understanding from the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) that this increase in nongovernmental seats is considered an appropriate step in order to provide new opportunities for public participation on the council by a broader number of charitable and nongovernmental organizations. Furthermore, it is my understanding that the administration does not oppose this increase in seats.

As such, the bill appears to be straightforward and noncontroversial.

Since the only intention of this bill is to increase the number of opportunities for nonprofit participation in the council, I strongly support this legislation.

By all measures, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council has proven itself to be a very effective and strong advocate for wetlands conservation and restoration. I believe most, if not all, Members of this House can agree that the modest increase in nonprofit seats proposed by this legislation would be a positive enhancement to this extremely successful council. I urge all members to vote "aye" on this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), one of the principal sponsors of the legislation.

(Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE) for yielding me this time, and let me thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) for his help in getting this bill to the floor today.

I rise to pay a very appropriate thanks to the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), author of this legislation.

I have had the pleasure for the past several sessions of the Congress representing the Republican side of the aisle on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, where the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) has had a tremendous career in providing leadership to this body for preserving fly-away space for the migratory birds in North America.

Madam Speaker, there is no other program that I can think of that enjoys such bipartisan support in voluntarily protecting land for birds and for wildlife and habitat.

We in this body tend to get in disagreements from time to time over the issue of takings and over the issue of forcing property owners to make their land available for the public. Well, this program is the exact opposite.

The father of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), if I am not mistaken, was the initiator of this entire program decades ago. This program, started by the father of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), and supported by the late Silvey Oconte, who were both tireless advocates for conservation issues in America, has provided the ability of our Government to protect over 34 million acres of land, 34 million acres of land, without taking anyone's property without their consent, but by simply entering into agreements where we bring conservation groups together so they can use the leverage to provide other funds, matched in such cases by State and local governments, to protect this land for migratory birds.

We now have a massive network of open space that would not have been protected were it not for this legislation, were it not for this program. What the bill of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) does, which I am very proud to be a cosponsor of, is it allows for the expansion of this council, to make sure that those conservation groups who are most heavily involved maintain their seats on this oversight board that recommends projects to us.

I will be remiss if I did not mention, Madam Speaker, Ducks Unlimited. Ducks Unlimited has put millions of dollars into programs that have allowed us to voluntarily protect land as provided for by the legislation of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and by the role that the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) and I play on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

Groups like Ducks Unlimited need to be a part of this process. This legislation allows for the expansion of the council for two more seats so that Ducks Unlimited, hopefully, will be able to maintain that seat in the future.

Once again, I rise in strong support of this. I urge all my Republican colleagues and, really, all of our colleagues to join in enthusiastically voting for the legislation of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), which is right. It is important for our country. I think it also speaks to his leadership following in his father's footsteps on conservation issues for America.

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), the dean of the U.S. House of Representatives. I might add the youngest dean in this century.

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

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I first thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) for his friendship and for what he has done to move this legislation forward.

I also want to compliment and commend the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG), the chairman of the Committee on Resources; the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), the ranking member; the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA); the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), chairman of the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans; and of course the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE).

I want to say what a pleasure it is for me to work with the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), who serves on the Migratory Bird Commission.

This is a relatively small piece of legislation. Its purpose is very simple, and that is to see to it that we have enough participation by private conservation organizations which work so hard to

see to it that this particular program works.

NAWCA is an extremely valuable program which has set aside, with the full consent of the landowners, millions of acres of land in the United States, in Canada, and in Mexico.

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And it has done so with the good will of all involved; conservationists, government agencies, Federal, State and local, private individuals, and landowners are for what this has done. It has been a tremendous assist to the conservation movement in this country and is saving lands for very important purposes.

I want to say again what a pleasure it has been to work with my good friend the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), who has consistently been a great voice for conservation and who has worked wonderfully well with me and with the other members of the Migratory Bird Commission, which is one of the most successful land procurement agencies in the whole history of American government. The fact that so few know about it tends to prove that we work so well that there is really no cause for complaint in the acquisition of the millions of acres of land.

The function of the legislation before us is not to cost the Federal Government money. It will not. Rather, it will allow the Secretary of the Interior to use two additional slots to appoint organizations that will help make sound wetland conservation decisions and will draw in new organizations and organizational strength and achieve additional commitments towards further cooperative investments in reclaiming wetlands and wildlife habitat. This is, in that very small but very important particular, a very important but valuable piece of legislation, and I would commend the committee for its labors in bringing it forth.

I want to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), who has given me all too much credit in this matter and who is my full partner in the business of the Migratory Bird Commission representing the House and also to observe that the commission is served very well by two of our good friends and colleagues in the Senate who have participated actively in the efforts to achieve this particular end.

So this is a good bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it. I think we will be pleased with what we have done when we look back on the successes that this has brought us.

Madam Speaker, today we have before us a relatively small bill to make a significant conservation program even more successful. H.R. 2821, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council Expansion Act, would make a modest improvement to a conservation law that has successfully saved wetlands throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico during the past decade.

I want to thank Chairman DON YOUNG and Ranking Member GEORGE MILLER of the

House Resources Committee for allowing this legislation to come before the House so swiftly. Together with the assistance of Fisheries Subcommittee Chairman JIM SAXTON and Ranking Member ENI FALEOMAVAEGA, their support for this legislation means a lot, and I hope it sends a strong message to the other body for favorable consideration.

NAWCA [naw-ka] was signed into law in 1989 in response to the finding that more than half of the original wetlands in the United States have been lost during the past two centuries. Congress recognized that protection of migratory birds and their habitats required long-term planning and coordination so that our treaty obligations to conserve these precious species would be met.

The purpose of NAWCA is to encourage partnerships among public and non-public interests to protect, enhance, restore and manage wetlands for migratory birds and other fish and wildlife in North America. NAWCA has been a tremendous success, funding 629 projects between 1991 and 1999, helping to restore, enhance or help approximately 34 million acres across our continent. Most impressive has been the ratio of partner-to-government contributions, which has been about \$2.50 for every public dollar invested.

Madam Speaker, I believe that the most effective means to diversify and expand the effectiveness of the Council is to provide the Secretary with new authority to appoint two additional Council members under Sec. 4(a)(1)(D) of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. These appointments would give the Service the ability to include additional charitable and non-profit organizations from among the many which actively participate in the development of NAWCA projects.

A little more than one year ago I first learned of the Fish and Wildlife Service's desire to promote change in the NAWCA program when the agency announced its intent not to reappoint two non-governmental organizations that played key roles in making NAWCA a cornerstone of American conservation success. I was greatly concerned that any replacement of Council members under NAWCA should not serve as a disincentive to continued active participation in meeting the Act's goals.

CBO has indicated that increasing the size of the NAWCA Council will not cost the federal government any money. Rather, it is my intention to allow the Secretary of Interior to use these two additional slots to appoint organizations that will make sound wetland conservation decisions and promote additional commitments toward cooperative investment in reclaiming these habitats.

I want to conclude by praising the hard work of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, the staffs of its member organizations, and those staff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who have devoted themselves to the fulfillment of NAWCA's goals. Congress reauthorized NAWCA last year because its success during the first decade was clearly evident, and because the need for wetlands conservation is even clearer today than it was a decade ago. I hope that H.R. 2821 will provide a non-controversial, easy-to-approve mechanism to accelerate the growth of this magnificent program.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2821, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 659, H.R. 795, H.R. 2140, and H.R. 2821, the four bills just debated.

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

There was no objection.

AMENDING THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT REGARDING ADOPTED ALIENS

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2886) to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide that an adopted alien who is less than 18 years of age may be considered a child under such Act if adopted with or after a sibling who is a child under such Act.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2886

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

SECTION 1. PROVIDING THAT AN ADOPTED ALIEN WHO IS LESS THAN 18 YEARS OF AGE MAY BE CONSIDERED A CHILD UNDER THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT IF ADOPTED WITH OR AFTER A SIBLING WHO IS A CHILD UNDER SUCH ACT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 101(b)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (E)—

(A) by inserting “(i)” after “(E)”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

“(i) subject to the same proviso as in clause (i), a child who (I) is a natural sibling of a child described in clause (i) or subparagraph (F)(i); (II) was adopted by the adoptive parent or parents of the sibling described in such clause or subparagraph; and (III) is otherwise described in clause (i), except that the child was adopted while under the age of eighteen years; or”;

(2) in subparagraph (F)—

(A) by inserting “(i) after “(F)”; and

(B) by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”;

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(i) subject to the same provisos as in clause (i), a child who (I) is a natural sibling of a child described in clause (i) or subparagraph (E)(i); (II) has been adopted abroad, or is coming to the United States for adoption, by the adoptive parent (or prospective adoptive parent) or parents of the sibling de-

scribed in such clause or subparagraph; and (III) is otherwise described in clause (i), except that the child is under the age of eighteen at the time a petition is filed in his or her behalf to accord a classification as an immediate relative under section 201(b).”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS RELATING TO NATURALIZATION.—

(1) DEFINITION OF CHILD.—Section 101(c)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(c)) is amended by striking “sixteen years,” and inserting “sixteen years (except to the extent that the child is described in subparagraph (E)(ii) or (F)(ii) of subsection (b)(1)).”.

(2) CERTIFICATE OF CITIZENSHIP.—Section 322(a)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1433(a)(4)) is amended—

(A) by striking “16 years” and inserting “16 years (except to the extent that the child is described in clause (ii) of subparagraph (E) or (F) of section 101(b)(1))”; and

(B) by striking “subparagraph (E) or (F) of section 101(b)(1).” and inserting “either of such subparagraphs.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 2886, a bill introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN), amends the Immigration and Nationality Act and provides that an older child who is 16 or 17 years old may be adopted with or after the adoption of a younger sibling who is a child under such act.

Currently, the Immigration and Nationality Act permits a foreign-born child who has been adopted by a United States citizen parent to be classified as an immediate relative child for purposes of immigration to the United States. To qualify, the child must be under the age of 16 at the time an immigrant visa petition is filed on the child's behalf.

Since most parents prefer to adopt infants or very young children, older children constitute a relatively small portion of the adoptive children admitted as immigrants. However, in cases involving siblings, adoptive parents often wish to adopt the older child or children in order to keep the family group intact. If the oldest child happens to be 16 or 17, there is no way under current law for that child to immigrate to the United States.

A typical case would likely involve a group of siblings, one 16 or 17 years old who had been orphaned. A United States citizen family is willing to adopt all of the siblings in order to keep them together but, under current law, the oldest child cannot immigrate to the United States. The result would be either separation of the older child from the sibling group or, in cases where foreign adoption authorities will not prevent the separation of siblings, the U.S. citizen loses the opportunity to adopt any of the children.

The bill authored by the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN) would allow

minor orphaned siblings to stay together when being adopted by U.S. citizens. The bill would allow a 16- or 17-year-old child to qualify as an immediate relative child if the U.S. citizen parents have also adopted a sibling of that child who is under the age of 16.

This bill thus would achieve the goal of maintaining family unity in a relatively small number of cases involving the adoption of siblings one of whom is age 16 or 17 at the time the adoptive parents file immigrant visa petitions on the children's behalf, and I urge the House to adopt H.R. 2886.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

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

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, I wish to commend the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN) for his hard work in sponsoring this bill and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) for shepherding this bill through committee and now bringing this to the floor for consideration.

The Immigration and Nationality Act provides immigration and naturalization benefits for the alien children of United States citizens. The word child, however, is a term of art with various definitions. In order to be considered a child in the basis of an adoption, an alien must be an unmarried person under 21 years of age who is adopted while under the age of 16 years. This bill would expand the definition of an adopted child to include an adoptive person between the ages of 16 and 18, provided that the child who is between 16 and 18 is a natural sibling of a child adopted while under the age of 16.

This bill would achieve a worthwhile purpose. If a United States citizen adopts a 15-year-old child, they should also be able to obtain immigration benefits for the child's 17-year-old sibling if they adopt the sibling too. Since most parents prefer to adopt infants, or very young children, older children constitute a relatively small portion of the adopted children admitted as immigrants.

According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, out of a total of 11,316 immigrant orphans admitted in fiscal year 1996, only 351 were age 10 or older. However, in cases involving siblings, adoptive parents frequently wish to adopt the older child or children in order to keep a family group intact. If the oldest sibling happens to be 16 or 17, there is no way under current law that the child can immigrate to the U.S. This bill would change that.

H.R. 2886 will further the goal of maintaining family unity in the relatively small number of cases involving the adoption of siblings, one of whom is 16 or 17 at the time the adoptive parents file visa petitions on the children's behalf.