

down to the well and state that the United States is the only major country which does not charge a Federal royalty for mining on government land. These same anti-mining critics want to add a 5 to 10 percent tax on all U.S. mineral production.

A recent survey was conducted on 17 major mining countries that compete with the United States. These 17 countries account for about 85 percent of all metal and minerals produced by the free world market economy. The average royalty they pay in these 17 countries surveyed was just under 1 percent, that is right, less than 1 percent.

Mr. Speaker, the United States must remain competitive internationally, and these proposed changes to the mining law would not allow us to do so. The United States is already a net importer of most minerals. Why is it that we are so worried about the trade deficit, and here we are talking about potential legislation that would render us completely dependent upon foreign nations for necessary goods and minerals that could be produced right here at home?

Mr. Speaker, Congress would be wise to encourage mineral development to offset the trade deficit and our dependence on foreign countries. In the meantime, this would create jobs, thereby increasing tax revenues and lowering social costs to the government.

SHOULD A GYMNASIUM FOR THE U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT COST \$85 MILLION?

(Mr. COBLE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, the Army has requested an \$85 million construction project for a gymnasium at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Apparently the showers are to be gold-plated, since the average cost for a military physical fitness facility is \$7 million. This request is outrageous.

I am advised that the Army has requested no family housing construction, yet an \$85 million gym enjoys priority status.

Only last week the Republican tax package emphasized the significance of taxpayers retaining more of their hard-earned money. This approach emphasizes compassion and common sense, while the Army struts front and center demanding an \$85 million gymnasium.

The time has come, Mr. Speaker, for all of us to redirect our priorities and practice prudence in lieu of recklessness.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Pursuant to the provisions of clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that it will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to

suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken later today.

LAKE OCONEE LAND EXCHANGE ACT

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 604) to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to complete a land exchange with Georgia Power Company.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 604

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 "Lake Ocone Land Exchange Act".

SEC. 2. LAKE OCONEE LAND EXCHANGE.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARY.—The term "description of the boundary" means the documents entitled "Description of the Boundary" dated September 6, 1996, prepared by the Forest Service and on file with the Secretary.

(2) EXCHANGE AGREEMENT.—The term "exchange agreement" means the agreement between Georgia Power Company and the Forest Service dated December 26, 1996, as amended on August 17, 1998, on file with the Secretary.

(3) GEORGIA POWER COMPANY.—The term "Georgia Power Company" means Georgia Power Company, a division of the Southern Company, a Georgia corporation, or its successors or assigns.

(4) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(b) LAND EXCHANGE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Simultaneously with conveyance by Georgia Power Company to the Secretary of all right, title, and interest in and to the land described in paragraph (2), the Secretary shall—

(A) convey to Georgia Power Company all right, title, and interest in and to the land described in paragraph (3), except as provided in the exchange agreement; and

(B) make a value equalization payment of \$23,250 to Georgia Power Company.

(2) LAND TO BE CONVEYED TO THE SECRETARY.—The land described in this paragraph is the land within or near the Chattahoochee National Forest and Oconee National Forest in the State of Georgia, comprising approximately 1,175.46 acres, described in the exchange agreement and the description of the boundary.

(3) LAND TO BE CONVEYED TO GEORGIA POWER COMPANY.—The land described in this paragraph is the land in the State of Georgia, comprising approximately 1,275.80 acres, described in the exchange agreement and the description of the boundary.

(c) PARTIAL REVOCATION OF WITHDRAWALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The orders issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission under section 24 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 818), authorizing Power Project Numbers 2413 and 2354, issued August 6, 1969, and October 1, 1996, respectively, are revoked insofar as the orders affect the land described in subsection (b)(3).

(2) NO ANNUAL CHARGE.—No interest conveyed to Georgia Power Company or easement right retained by Georgia Power Com-

pany under this section shall be subject to an annual charge for the purpose of compensating the United States for the use of its land for power purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE).

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

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of the Lake Ocone Land Exchange Act, which would enact a mutually beneficial exchange of land between the USDA Forest Service and the Georgia Power Company.

The exchange would result in consolidation and more efficient management of national forests, increased protection of wildlife and habitats, and improved recreational access for citizens.

The Forest Service will exchange Forest Service lands that lie under Lake Ocone behind Georgia Power's Wallace Dam on the Oconee River in northern Georgia, flood rights on contour strips around the lake, and two parcels in neighboring counties, in exchange for lands Georgia Power owns within the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests.

The exchange involves approximately 1,200 acres of Forest Service land for approximately 1,100 acres of Georgia Power land.

The exchange will allow the Forest Service to acquire one of two remaining non-Federal properties within congressionally designated wilderness areas in north Georgia. This tract is in the middle of the Rich Mountain Wilderness, and totally surrounded by other National Forest lands.

The vast majority of lands to be transferred by the Forest Service lie at the bottom of Lake Ocone and are not actively conveying any public benefit. The remainder of the properties being relinquished to Georgia Power is currently occupied by Georgia Power facilities in Rabun County. These properties are of minimal value to the National Forest, and would be more appropriately owned by Georgia Power.

The Forest Service, as detailed by the Forest Supervisor's Decision Memo, has determined that the transfer complies with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and is supportive of the bill.

In addition, 67 percent of the lands of Rabun County are currently part of the Chattahoochee National Forest. This concentrated ownership poses a considerable strain on the ad valorem tax base of Rabun County. Included within the land exchange is the conveyance to Georgia Power Company of over 145 acres of property in Rabun County that currently houses Georgia Power facilities. The divestment of this property will facilitate Rabun County and their problem with their limited tax base.

I urge Members' support of this legislation, with the assurance that this exchange will allow improved management by both parties, resulting in increased environmental protection and enjoyable utilization by all citizens.

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

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 604, the Oconee Land Exchange Act. The companion bill in the House is H.R. 1135.

The Oconee Land Exchange Act would require the Secretary of Agriculture to complete a land exchange with the Georgia Power Company. Provisions of S. 604 allow the National Forest Service to acquire five tracts of land in a single transfer, while conveying four tracts of land of equal value to the Georgia Power Company.

This bill eliminates the need to preserve and maintain over 20 miles of boundary line and seven property corners, saving the National Forest Service \$10,160 over a 10-year period.

This bill requires the Federal Government to pay \$23,250 to the Georgia Power Company, which is the difference between the appraised value of the Forest Service transfer to Georgia Power and the appraised value of the 1,175 acres of land being conveyed by Georgia Power Company to the Forest Service.

S. 604 gives full consideration to the opportunity to achieve better management of National Forest lands and resources by consolidation of split estates. Under this transfer, the Forest Service will be acquiring from Georgia Power Company 50.71 acres of land, less flood rights.

Presently, the Forest Service and Georgia Power manage a meandering boundary that separates the National Forest from the shoreline of the lake owned by Georgia Power Company. The exchange under consideration would eliminate 20.3 miles of boundary lines and seven property corners. By acquiring this specific tract of land, the Nation's forest lands would be extended to the water's edge, instead of following a meandering boundary around the flood pool of the lake.

According to the National Forest Service, this meandering contour area has been a management problem since the lake's inception. Federal acquisition of these 50.7 acres of land less flood rights will allow the Forest Service to manage to the edge of the lake without interfering with the rights of Georgia Power.

Under this exchange, the National Forest Service would acquire a 625 acre tract wedged between the Oconee National Forest and the Piedmont National Wildlife Management Area, and an additional 157-acre property would become part of the Oconee National Forest.

These lands would add approximately 179 acres of wetlands and provide recov-

ery habitat for the red cockaded wood-pecker, an endangered species.

Furthermore, the Forest Service would acquire from Georgia Power a 173.4 acre tract within a congressionally designated wilderness area located in the middle of Rich Mountain Wilderness, and totally surrounded by other National Forest land.

The Georgia Power Company will acquire 1275.8 acres of land owned by the National Forest Service, along with an easement right to flood 240.84 acres of National Forest in the flood pool of Lake Oconee. This conveyance includes a small unmanageable remnant, a 1.6 acre tract, and a second tract that adds land lines and boundary corners while serving only minimal National Forest purposes.

This transfer will permit the public lands to be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resources and archeological values.

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

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), the sponsor of the legislation.

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, as a Georgian I rise today in support of the Lake Oconee Land Exchange Act, which would enact a mutually beneficial exchange of the land between the USDA Forest Service and the Georgia Power Company. The exchange would result in consolidation and more efficient management of National Forests, increased protection of wildlife and habitat, and improved recreational access for all our citizens.

The Forest Service will exchange Forest Service land that lie under Lake Oconee, behind Georgia Power's Wallace Dam on the Oconee River in northern Georgia, flood rights on contour strips around the lakes, and two parcels in neighboring counties, in exchange for lands Georgia Power owns within the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests.

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The exchange involves approximately 1,200 acres of Forest Service land for approximately 1,100 acres of Georgia Power land.

The exchange will allow the Forest Service to acquire one of two remaining non-Federal properties within congressionally designated wilderness areas in north Georgia. This tract is in the middle of the Rich Mountain Wilderness and totally surrounded by other National Forest lands.

The vast majority of lands being given up by the Forest Service lies at the bottom of Lake Oconee and are not actively conveying any public benefit. The remainder of the properties being relinquished to Georgia Power are currently occupied by Georgia Power facilities in Rabun County. These prop-

erties are of minimal value to the National Forest and would be more appropriately owned by Georgia Power.

In addition, 67 percent of the lands of Rabun County are currently part of the Chattahoochee National Forest. This concentrated ownership poses a considerable strain on the ad valorem tax base of Rabun County. Included within the land exchange is the conveyance to Georgia Power Company of over 145 acres of property in Rabun County that currently houses Georgia Power facilities. The divestment of this property will facilitate Rabun County and their properties with their limited tax base.

As the primary sponsor of the House companion bill, H.R. 1135, I urge my colleagues' support for this legislation with the assurance that this exchange will allow improved management by both parties, resulting in increased environmental protection and actually more enjoyable utilizations by the citizens.

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

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER).

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I am an original cosponsor of the House version of this bill, and I rise in support of the Lake Oconee Land Exchange Act to improve the management of the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests.

For some time, there has been an awkward patchwork of land ownership between the USDA Forest Service and the Georgia Power Company. The current land arrangement includes a meandering boundary around the flood pool of Lake Oconee and even a 173.4 acre tract of Georgia Power land in the middle of the Rich Mountain Wilderness. These twisting boundaries and scattered patches of private and public land make it difficult for Forest Service personnel to efficiently carry out their management activities.

This land exchange will allow the Forest Service to consolidate its holdings within the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests, and will simplify the administration of the Forests' borders. This consolidation will be achieved through the Forest Service acquiring one of two remaining non-Federal properties within congressionally designated wilderness areas in North Georgia. Forest boundaries around Lake Oconee will be improved by extending National Forest lands to the water's edge, instead of following the meandering border of the flood pool of the lake.

These changes will allow the Forest Service to better manage prescribed burns in the Oconee National Forest. Presently, the Forest Service has to bulldoze trenches along its meandering border with Georgia Power to ensure the controlled fires do not spread to

private lands. Bulldozing trenches requires a commitment of valuable personnel and heavy equipment and carries a risk of releasing excessive silt into Lake Oconee.

The increased efficiency of management of National Forests allowed by this land exchange will lead to reduced risk to Forest Service personnel and improved preservation of habitat and wildlife.

The Forest Service will gain a habitat for the red-cockaded woodpecker and a quality trout stream, and the Georgia Nature Conservancy and the Georgia Wildlife Federation have informed me of their support for this legislation. I urge my colleagues to join us in passing this legislation.

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

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 604.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 604, the bill just passed.

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

There was no objection.

CLARIFYING EXPORT-IMPORT BANK BOARD REQUIREMENTS

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2565) to clarify the quorum requirement for the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the United States, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2565

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

SECTION 1. CLARIFICATION OF QUORUM REQUIREMENT FOR THE EXPORT-IMPORT BANK OF THE UNITED STATES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3(c)(6) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945 (12 U.S.C. 635a(c)(6)) is amended to read as follows:

“(6) A quorum of the Board of Directors shall consist of at least 3 members.”

(b) EXCEPTION.—Notwithstanding section 3(c)(6) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945, if, during the period that begins on July 21, 1999, and ends on October 1, 1999, there are fewer than 3 persons holding office on the Board of Directors of the Export-Import

Bank of the United States, the entire membership of such Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum until the end of such period.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KANJORSKI) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH).

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2565, a bill to clarify the quorum requirements for the Export-Import Bank of the United States. This bill is designed to remedy a serious problem that has developed with regard to vacancies in Ex-Im's Board of Directors. Without prompt congressional action, this situation could result in the suspension of the Bank's ability to make new financial commitments and jeopardize billions of dollars in pending U.S. export transactions.

The background is as follows: The Bank's charter requires a quorum of its five-member board in order to conduct business. Prior to July 20, two vacancies existed on the board. On July 21, the term of a third board member expired.

Although there is some ambiguity as to whether the quorum requirement refers to a majority of the statutorily prescribed five-person board or, instead, to a majority of board members currently in office, the former interpretation is legally preferable.

As explained in legal analysis provided by the General Accounting Office, the quorum requirement for the five-member board necessarily requires at least three members to be present and transact the board's business. Thus, with only two incumbent members, the board lacks its legally required quorum.

This unfortunate problem is compounded by the fact that no nominations have been made for these vacancies, nor has any intent to nominate been sent to the other body. In this awkward circumstance, Congress has no alternative but to act expeditiously to advance the Nation's interest and remedy this situation. Failure to do so would put America's exports and American jobs at risk.

Therefore, H.R. 2565 clarifies Ex-Im's charter by explicitly providing that a quorum of the board shall consist of three members. At the same time, it provides the Bank with authority to continue operations with only two members of the board until October 1 of this year. This brief window should provide sufficient time for the administration to forward qualified nominees and for their expeditious consideration in the other body.

I would like to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAFALCE) for his leadership and cooperation on this issue. Likewise, I would like to express my appreciation for the leadership of the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. CAL-

LAHAN), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. MANZULLO), and the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, first, may I clarify for the RECORD that, unfortunately, the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAFALCE) wanted to be here today to support this legislation, but his plane has been tied up, and he is unable to make it and asked me to substitute.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2565. This legislation, as amended, permits the Export-Import Bank to operate with only two board members until October 1, 1999. During this interim period, the other body should be in a position to confirm additional board members.

This legislation is necessary to allow the bank to make legally-binding financing commitments on nearly \$7 billion in pending U.S. export transactions. Mr. Speaker, in this era of record trade deficits, we must ensure that significant export transactions continue uninterrupted. Continued operation of the Export-Import Bank will allow U.S. companies to compete on a level playing field with their counterparts in other industrialized nations, who also have access to the important export financing tools, such as loan guarantees, that are offered by the Export-Import Bank.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH), chairman of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, for sponsoring this legislation, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I simply want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KANJORSKI) for his assistance on this issue and for his long-time quality representation on the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services.

This is an issue primarily between the Executive Branch and the other body, but it is something that requires a shift in law, and this body, I think, at this time ought to recognize that particular problem and move as cooperatively as possible with the other body and the Executive Branch in this issue.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2565, as amended.