

With a few improvements to the House-passed or to the Senate-passed bills we can get this job done for rural America.

We need to make sure that the federal guarantee can cover providing high-speed Internet access to rural Americans. As long as we are going to help finance a satellite we should get the biggest benefit out of it by having it also help break down the digital divide.

Also, some of the bill provisions consist of such atypical, and onerous, credit requirement that I do not think that any lenders will want to participate.

I have two basic concerns with the proposed language, and have serious concerns about the extraneous House provisions on cell telephones and the like.

I also understand through lobbyists that efforts are being made to include language that would take away FCC authority to approve the new "Northpoint" technology that could provide local-into-local television in many areas of the country. My understanding is that some of the satellite providers are concerned that Northpoint could compete with them.

In terms of the credit provisions of the bill, I am worried that potential borrowers may have long-term existing contractual obligations or security agreements whose contract terms would be abrogated by this law if they were to participate in this loan guarantee program.

If they received a guaranteed loan under the bill, their lenders could pull back existing credit lines for violating their contracts by complying with the new law.

With respect to the default language, even a minor default could lead to liquidation which would reduce the ability of the United States to protect its own interests and, in addition, could trigger unnecessary defaults on loans or projects which the borrower may have with the United States, or other lenders.

The additional problem with the superpriority bankruptcy language is that it is a backdoor "taking" of property because it would take the property rights of creditors that have other prior perfected security interests in the borrower's property.

These contract property rights—which would be destroyed after the fact—could be very valuable and the bill could take them away.

Mr. President, I have provided language to most interested offices some months ago to resolve these points which may appear at first blush to be technical but, in fact, could make it impossible for this program to work.

I have also proposed language to ensure that rural Americans are able to receive high-speed Internet access under this bill. The section on prerequisites for the loan does not list high-speed Internet access as a purpose for the guarantee.

I recommend adding "high-speed Internet access" to that section so that

the Board could approve a guarantee which would include that purpose, as a secondary consideration.

I have pointed out before on the Senate floor that, "computers are on a development path that improves performance by a factor of 10 every five years," according to Scientific American.

However, without high-speed linkage of these constantly improving computers rural America will be left behind.

In America, there is a growing disparity between the digital "haves" and "have-nots" as portions of our society get left behind at the same lightning pace at which the Internet develops.

I would like the bill changed so that we can close the "digital divide" that keeps rural America from fully participating in America's economic boom under President Clinton.

I know that some are fighting to keep this disparity—but this disparity between rural and urban America is self-defeating as the Internet becomes an increasingly important thread of our business and social fabric.

So I hope all my colleagues will join with me in working together to get this program in operation before Congress goes out of session.

APPROPRIATIONS—INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the Interior Appropriations Bill for fiscal 2001 and our efforts here in the Senate to enact the Conservation and Reinvestment Act to provide permanent funding for land, water, and wildlife conservation programs in this nation.

With the passage of the Interior Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2001, we have taken a step in the right direction toward providing a permanent conservation fund for this nation—but it is only a step.

The Interior Appropriations bill funds many important programs and projects in Arkansas including refurbishing the historic Hot Springs National Park Bathhouses, constructing a visitors center at the White River National Wildlife Refuge, and funding needed construction and maintenance at recreation areas in the Ouachita National Forest.

The bill also increases the funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Payments in Lieu of Taxes, Urban and Historic Preservation programs, State Conservation grants. And needed funding for tackling the maintenance backlog in our nation's park system. But it leaves many of the programs that we have pushed for in the Conservation and Reinvestment Act out completely. Specifically, it leaves out a permanent stream of funding for wildlife conservation and education programs.

By establishing a permanent funding source for state based wildlife programs, we can take steps now to prevent species from becoming endan-

gered. This would enable us not only to conserve the significant cultural heritage of wildlife enjoyment for the people of this country, but also to avoid the substantial costs associated with recovery for endangered species. In fact, all 50 states would benefit as a result of the important link between these wildlife education-based initiatives and the benefits of wildlife-related tourism.

CARA also would have provided a permanent funding source for rural community assistance and development funds, historic preservation, urban parks, conservation easements, and restoration of National Parks. These provisions would annually provide almost \$3 billion nationwide for land, water, and wildlife conservation programs and include over \$25 million in funding for Arkansas.

The 2001 Interior Appropriations bill is an important step toward providing for the conservation of this nation's land, water, and wildlife, but we can do so much more. We must not let this opportunity slip away to enact what may well be the most significant conservation effort of the century. I strongly urge my colleagues to continue to work toward passage of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act.

CONCEALED GUN LICENSES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, in recent years, lobbyists for the National Rifle Association, NRA, have been pressing state legislatures around the country to pass so called "shall issue" laws. "Shall issue" laws require that licensing authorities shall or must issue concealed weapons permits to those who meet standard eligibility requirements. The state laws take discretion away from local law enforcement agencies, who would ordinarily use their own criteria to determine who should carry a concealed weapon.

When such a law was proposed in my home state of Michigan, every major law enforcement organization in the state spoke out against it. Athletes, entertainers, religious leaders and some lawmakers joined them in their public plea to keep concealed firearms off our streets. In the end, although both the State House and Senate passed the "shall issue" legislation, lawmakers yielded to public pressure and refused to proceed to a conference committee, thereby rejecting the law.

While Michigan's citizens acted quickly to ensure that lawmakers rejected the NRA backed proposal, other state legislatures embraced the law as their own. This week the Los Angeles Times published an extensive report on the effects of the relatively new law that gives Texans the right to carry concealed weapons into public places, including churches, hospitals, nursing homes, and amusement parks. The Times story reveals that since the "shall issue" law's inception in 1995,

and its expansion in 1997, Texas has issued concealed weapons permits to more than 400 criminals with prior convictions, and has since arrested more than 3,000 licensees.

Based on the LA Times investigation, it appears that the law billed as part of an “anti-crime” package could really be more accurately described as pro-crime. A recently released study from the Violence Policy Center disclosed that Texans with concealed-carry licenses were 66 percent more likely to be arrested for firearms violations than Texans who did not have such licenses.

The LA Times story explains that part of the problem is that in many cases, concealed permits were given to those whose records should have disqualified them. Perhaps the most disturbing case is that of Terry Gist, also known to his friends as “Holsters” because of his well-known affection for guns. Before he even applied for his permit to carry a concealed weapon in Texas in 1997, Gist had already been to court for trying to choke his wife and threaten her with a gun (she had a restraining order out against him) and arrested while in the army for brandishing his handgun at a local citizen in Haiti. After he passed the state background check and received his concealed weapons permit in the mail, he was known to carry two semiautomatic handguns, sometimes three, with him at all times. Gist bragged that he displayed one of those guns to a driver during a “freeway feud.” In 1998, Gist was arrested and convicted for sexually assaulting an eight-year-old girl who said during the trial that she was afraid he was going to shoot her.

The most common category of problems associated with concealed weapons holders, however, are not those of Terry Gist, but those of people like Paul Leuders. Leuders, a Houston computer analyst, became so upset when he almost missed his bus that the concealed weapons licensee took out his gun and shot the bus driver in the chest.

Law abiding citizens, armed with concealed weapons, are too often turning what would otherwise be unpleasant but not catastrophic events, such as fender-benders and commuting hassles, into tragedies. The “shall issue” laws in Texas and in states around the country don’t make us safer, they make us less secure. In addition, they send the wrong message to our children, that the way to deal with the problems of modern life is with a gun. People around the country reject the NRA logic that they are unsafe in public places if they are not armed. Legislatures should do the same.

America has come a long way since the days of the wild west. Over the last years our law enforcement agencies have developed better ways to reduce violent crime and keep our streets safe. “Shall issue” laws go in the wrong direction by increasing the number of weapons on the streets and the dangers we and our children face.

NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 2000

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am pleased to be a cosponsor of the National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) Act of 2000 introduced yesterday by my friend from Idaho, Senator CRAIG, and 25 of our distinguished colleagues.

The NRDP is a nonpartisan interagency working group whose mission is to “contribute to the vitality of the nation by strengthening the ability of all rural Americans to participate in determining their futures.” Today the NRDP is comprised of nearly 40 State Rural Development Councils [SRDCs]. The NRDP also brings to the task of developing rural America more than 40 agencies, in addition to state, local, tribal, for- and non-profit organizations.

The Partnership has thrived in recent years because of the hard work of thousands of dedicated Americans throughout the country who are committed to reinvigorating rural life through coordination of their efforts and those of the public and private sectors. However, the NRDP has never been formally authorized. The future of this important organization can only be secured if the NRDP, the National Rural Development Council, and the SRDCs are formally recognized by the Congress and authorized to receive appropriations.

Mr. President, that is exactly what this legislation would do. Additionally, the Craig-Conrad bill delineates specific responsibilities for each component of the NRDP while refocusing and reinvigorating many current activities. It does not, however, create any new bureaucracy. This legislation grew out of a hearing of the Agriculture Committee’s Subcommittee on Forestry, Conservation, and Rural Revitalization that Senator CRAIG and I, as chairman and ranking member, held on March 8 of this year. The support expressed at that hearing for the NRDP was broad-based and considerable.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the NRDP’s work. Every region of our nation has benefited. In my part of the country, the NRDP has been particularly valuable in bringing together previously independent rural development efforts, creating a synergistic effect.

As I have discussed on the Senate floor and in committee on numerous occasions, in the Upper Great Plains we are facing a crisis of staggering proportions, placing unprecedented stress on every aspect of economic and community life. This is a very serious matter for the entire country. The farms of the Dakotas and the surrounding states produce wheat, corn, and soybeans in abundance, but something much more important: good families and great kids. The rural way of life helps foster the values of hard work and fortitude that have made America great.

In my view, the ongoing crisis in agriculture represents as great a threat

to our nation’s future as any of the foreign threats we face today. As we work to combat this domestic national security threat and preserve the rural way of life, the NRDP is a truly vital asset. I hope all my colleagues will join the 27 of us on this bill in pressing for its passage and enactment at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FATHER NICHOLAS MAESTRINI AND FATHER JOHN BORACCO CELEBRATE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF PRIESTHOOD TOGETHER

• Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Father Nicholas Maestrini and Father John Boracco, two men who have dedicated their lives in service to the Catholic Church, and who have often found their paths cross along the way. On October 22, 2000, the paths of these old friends will converge once again, as they will be honored together by the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) in Detroit, Michigan, in recognition of their 70th Anniversary of Ordination.

Fr. Maestrini and Fr. Boracco began their long histories of dedicated service to the Catholic Church together as seminary classmates in Monza, Italy. Shortly after becoming ordained priests, both chose to enter into the PIME missionary. PIME is an international community of priests, lay missionaries and lay volunteers who have dedicated their lives to service in foreign lands. Founded in Italy in 1850, it is now a global organization that operates missions throughout the world. Its international headquarters are in Rome, Italy, while PIME U.S. Region is based out of Detroit.

Both Fr. Maestrini and Fr. Boracco joined missions in Asia, and both experienced struggle and hardship there during the chaotic period before, during and after World War II. Fr. Maestrini served as a missionary in Hong Kong from 1931-50. During this time, he suffered through the strife of the Great War and of being interned by the Japanese. Fr. Boracco had it no easier in China, where he was stationed from 1934-54, first in the northern Henan Province and then at Kai Pheng. He was forced to persevere through imprisonment, the Japanese occupation, and the Communist revolution. In 1954, he was condemned to die at the hands of the Communists, but was instead expelled.

In 1951, Fr. Maestrini was named Superior of the PIME U.S. Region. Four years later, he was joined in Detroit by Fr. Boracco, who was assigned to help with the seminary expansion started by his friend. For the next 19 years, the two formed the perfect team. Fr. Maestrini focused his energy on external matters, such as public relations and fundraising, while Fr. Boracco served as rector and spiritual director