

Congressman CHARLIE GONZALEZ, who chairs the Hispanic Caucus' Civil Rights Task Force, for his leadership and assistance on this issue. His dedication to advancing the interests of current and future Latino voters deserves great praise.

Today, I join my colleague in urging this House to vote against the conference report of the Help America Vote Act. Last year, I voted against this bill because despite some of the progress it made, it failed to provide key safeguards that would ensure every voter would be able to cast a ballot and have that ballot counted.

Now, almost one year later, we have a bill that has emerged from conference which includes some major improvements but also unfortunately includes some major new obstacles to Latino voters. Some of these obstacles came from the bill passed by the other body, and others were added in conference for the first time and at the last minute.

Together, these obstacles create a bill that on balance will hurt Latino voters more than it will help. It is a sad irony that this is the end result of a process that began as an effort to address the voting difficulties of the 2000 general elections, where many minority voters were denied their right to vote because of faulty voter lists, intimidation, a lack of voter education, or other obstacles. Rather than take bold, unequivocal strides towards expanding civil rights protections and welcoming our nation's fastest growing bloc of minority voters, this bill is full of half-steps and backward steps that will dampen the voice of the Hispanic American electorate.

The major obstacle to Latino voters in this bill is the inclusion of a new voter identification requirement. This will be the first time in contemporary election law history that an identification requirement is federally mandated. The bill requires a voter to show valid photo identification, a copy of a current utility bill, a bank statement, government check or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter.

While it sounds reasonable to require identification at the polls in order to combat fraud—an effort I certainly support when done with genuine intent to make the voting process fair—the requirements in this conference report would particularly disenfranchise low income people, especially women and the elderly, who, for example, live in multi-person households and are less likely to drive, and therefore do not possess a driver's license, do not receive a utility bill in their name and may not have any of the other forms of identification listed in the bill.

In the past, such provisions have been overturned in federal court for violating the Voting Rights Act. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Justice has prohibited such identification requirements because of the disparate impact they have on minority voters.

In addition to the identification requirement, which was in the other body's bill, new impediments to Latinos were added into the bill at the eleventh hour during conference. The most egregious of which is the creation of the "citizenship check-off box" mandate.

The conference agreement now imposes on states a new mandate that they cannot register voters who inadvertently miss checking off the citizenship box on their voter registration forms. This mandate does not apply to those who fail to mark the age check-off box.

This inconsistency makes no sense, as both citizenship and age are equal requirements to being eligible to vote. There is no acceptable reason why one criteria should be treated differently than the other.

Under this provision, it is entirely plausible that a citizen who is otherwise eligible to vote, who mistakenly misses the check-off box on citizenship, will either not be notified of the error or not be notified with sufficient time to rectify the mistake before the state cut-off date for registration.

Therefore, this change in the law could result in a state or local registrar targeting the voter registration forms of those with surnames that some people consider "foreign," to find any that left the citizenship box blank and then invalidate them, without ever telling the applicant. When the voter shows up to vote, he or she will not be on the voter rolls and then if offered a provisional ballot, that ballot will never be counted, because only the provisional ballots of successfully registered voters are counted.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, this conference report adds barriers to voter registration efforts through adding needless administrative red tape. Under the conference report, someone who registers to vote, who has been issued a current and valid driver's license, must include the license number on the registration form. Therefore, if citizens happen not to have their license with them when they register to vote, their voter registration form will not be processed. This constitutes a weakening of existing voter rights law, and creates barriers to the effectiveness of voter registration drives, as citizens would have to register at a later time if they happen not to have their driver's license with them on their first attempt to register.

For those who have not been issued a driver's license, the bill requires the last four digits of their social security number, which is then cross-checked against the Social Security Administration database—a database riddled with errors, especially in recording the names of Hispanic women.

And for those people with weak memories, who could easily forget their Social Security number, incorrectly record that number, they will have their voter registration form invalidated.

Besides these obstacles, the bill does include some improvements to our election system: more access to provisional ballots; the ability to verify a ballot before casting it; the required posting of voting information; and the creation of statewide voter list databases. However, a great deal of the bill's new benefits will be unavailable to many Latinos and others because of the new barriers the bill erects.

On balance, this bill does not deserve our support. It is not better than no bill at all. I urge all my colleagues to vote against this conference report and revisit election reform in the next Congress, where we can hopefully do the job right.

## CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3295, HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT OF 2002

SPEECH OF

**HON. JAMES A. BARCIA**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 10, 2002*

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3295, the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

Chairman BOEHLERT and Chairman EHLERS of the Science Committee have already spoken about the need for voluntary, technology-neutral standards that address the accuracy, integrity and security of voting products and systems. They have explained and clarified the intent of the standards and research and development provisions in H.R. 3295. I fully agree with and support their statements.

In 1975, long before any other federal agency had looked at our voting equipment, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) reported on the technical deficiencies of voting systems in use. If we had heeded the recommendations of the 1975 report and NIST's subsequent 1988 report, we wouldn't be debating this bill today. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will be an objective and technically qualified voice in the development of performance-based technical standards and guidelines. In addition, NIST will provide needed technical guidance on the research and development projects needed to improve our voting systems.

I would like to thank Chairman BOEHLERT and Chairman EHLERS for working with me in the initial development of the provisions related to technical standards and a research and development program. I especially want to thank my good friend STENY HOYER, the Ranking Member on the House Administration Committee, and Chairman NEY for their strong advocacy in retaining these provision in the final conference report. I also want to congratulate them on successfully concluding a long and difficult conference.

In closing, I would like to remind everyone that the basic cornerstone of trust that Americans place in our government is their belief and faith in the accuracy, integrity, and reliability of our voting systems. H.R. 3295 will strengthen the public's confidence in our voting systems.

I would urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 3295.

SPEECH OF

**HON. PETER HOEKSTRA**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 10, 2002*

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we are here today to consider H.R. 5601, the "Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2002" which reauthorizes and improves the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Adoption Opportunities program, and the Abandoned Infants Act.

While I recognize and am disappointed that we were not able to come to agreement on all issues of the original bill, H.R. 3839, the bill

before us shows our effort and commitment to ensure that programs aimed at the prevention of child abuse and neglect continue. I would like to thank my colleagues on both sides for their hard work and efforts in developing this mutual compromise in the bill before us for consideration today.

I especially want to thank the full committee chairman, Mr. BOEHNER, for his support of this bill, and Mr. GREENWOOD for his diligence in ensuring that infants born addicted to alcohol or drugs receive necessary services.

I want to also thank the ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. ROEMER, and the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. MILLER, for their cooperation in working towards this alternative bill before us today.

This bill provides for the continued provision of important federal resources for identifying and addressing the issues of child abuse and neglect, and for supporting effective methods of prevention and treatment.

It also continues local projects with demonstrated value in eliminating barriers to permanent adoption and addressing the circumstances that often lead to child abandonment.

Mr. Speaker, this bill emphasizes the prevention of child abuse and neglect before it occurs. It promotes partnerships between child protective services and private and community-based organizations, including education, and health systems to ensure that services and linkages are more effectively provided.

The bill retains language that appropriately addresses a growing concern over parents being falsely accused of child abuse and neglect and the aggressiveness of social workers in their child abuse investigations. It retains language to increase public education opportunities to strengthen the public's understanding of the child protection system and appropriate reporting of suspected incidents of child maltreatment.

The agreement continues to foster cooperation between parents and child protective service workers by requiring caseworkers to inform parents of the allegations made against them, and improves the training opportunities and requirements for child protective services personnel regarding the extent and limits of their legal authority and the legal rights of parents and legal guardians.

It also ensures the safety of foster and adoptive children by requiring states to conduct criminal background checks for prospective foster and adoptive parents and other adult relatives and non-relatives residing in the household.

Lastly, this bill expands adoption opportunities to provide for services for infants and young children who are disabled or born with life-threatening conditions, and requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study on the annual number of infants and young children abandoned each year.

I again want to thank my colleagues for their work on this bill and urge them to join me in support of this effort to improve the prevention and treatment of child abuse by supporting H.R. 5601, the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2002.

## KEEPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SAFE ACT OF 2002

SPEECH OF

**HON. JAMES C. GREENWOOD**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 10, 2002

Mr. GREENWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the adoption of H.R. 5601, The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act. I am pleased that after the House passed a similar version of this bill in the Spring with overwhelming support, we have the opportunity to make this critical legislation a reality.

The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act, in combination with other federal child welfare statutes, assists in our national efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect. The Act requires that the Federal-State child welfare system supports and improves the infrastructure of child protective services, develops statewide networks of community-based family support and child abuse prevention programs, and supports demonstration projects to determine how best to improve the well being of abused or neglected children.

The bill continues to provide important Federal resources for identifying child abuse, neglect, and family violence, and for supporting effective methods of prevention and treatment. It also continues local projects with demonstrated value in eliminating barriers to permanent adoption and addressing the circumstances that often lead to child abandonment.

I believe this bill strikes a successful balance between providing appropriate treatment services, such as a plan of safe care for infants affected by illegal substance abuse, and accountability, such as the report that the Secretary of Health and Human Services must submit describing the extent to which States are implementing the policies outlined in the bill.

I want to thank Congressmen PETE HOEKSTRA and TIM ROEMER in this effort, Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Select Education, as well as Chairman BOEHNER and ranking member MILLER of the full Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 5601, and I reserve the balance of my time.

## NATIONAL FOREST ORGANIZATIONAL CAMP FEE IMPROVEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. JIM KOLBE**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 10, 2002

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5316 is the culmination of a year and a half of work by parents and volunteers who wanted to save the camps that serve under-privileged children and disabled adults.

The Forest Service is in the midst of pricing off forest lands, the very camps that serve these children and adults. Government should not be making a profit on disadvantaged children. We should charge these camps a mod-

est fee that pays for the paperwork and maybe a little extra if the camps use a lot of land. But not \$71,000 per year, which could happen in at least one instance if this bill is not enacted.

If we, the Congress, cannot change a law that requires the Forest Service to charge exorbitant use fees on youth camps and camps for disabled adults, fees that almost certainly will lead to the camps closing down their operations, then what laws should we pass?

This bill before us today reforms and improves the fee structure used by the Forest Service for non-profit recreational camps—camps operated by organizations such as the Girl Scouts and church groups. Blame should not be attached to "Scrooge-like" Forest Service officials. Let's face it; the re-calculation of fees is required by a law enacted by Congress. But the result is the same. Fees will dramatically increase for camps across the nation. In one case in Tucson, Arizona, the fee would go from \$4,500 to \$71,000 per year.

The Tucson Citizen put it well in a recent editorial:

With so many arms of government raising fees on just about every service known to taxpayers, one might start to wonder how their general tax dollars are being spent . . .

Ever vigilant for new revenue-raising opportunities, the Forest Service then proposed raising the rents on national forest land that is used by nonprofit organizations for summer camps. Targeted cash cows include the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, religious and men's groups. The Forest Service pulled that one off by borrowing a trick from local governments loathe to commit political suicide by raising tax rates. They accomplish the same thing, however, by reappraising the value of land, making it subject to higher taxes under the old rates once it's deemed more valuable.

We must establish a new, common-sense fee system that is rational and will allow camps to remain on forest lands while providing a fair return to the American taxpayer. Surely, there can be no better use of Federal land than by under-privileged children and disabled adults.

The National Forest Organizational Camp Fee Improvement Act will establish a new fee system based on acreage used by the camps, providing incentives to make the most efficient use of the Federal lands. To prevent large spikes in fees, the camp's fee would be 5%—a reasonable rate of return to the U.S. Government—of the value of the land based on rural land values, not developable land values.

Therein lies the key. We are not going to turn these camp sites inside our beautiful national forests into suburban housing tracts. So, why should the fee be based on a value of the land which will never be realized, rather than the only alternative use to a camp site, which is agricultural uses?

The land value we propose to use is a statistic calculated by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). NASS is not part of the Forest Service, thus ensuring it is independent and appraises the value fairly. The NASS valuation is based on previous sales of farmlands. This is a departure from the current methodology, where valuation is determined by future probable sale prices of land for development. Further, the land value is a 5-year rolling average of agriculture lands by County, thereby taking into account geographical differences and the need to even out large fluctuations in fees over time.