

The exemptions we are debating this week are wrong on so many different levels.

First of all, the legislation is unnecessary. There is already a waiver provision in place in the law for years. There has never been a case where for military necessity a waiver has not been granted. Never, not one. Not one example has been produced before the committees that are examining this.

Additionally, it misses the real threat to military readiness, what is termed encroachment. This is the same sprawl and unplanned growth that threatens our farms and forestlands, pollutes our air and water, and congests our roadways, and this is a real threat to our ability to train and maintain the world's mightiest fighting force.

Across the country, from Ft. Stewart, Georgia, to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, development is threatening the armed forces' ability to fly planes, maneuver and conduct other readiness activities. This has led the State of California to pass their Senate bill 1468 which recognizes the long-term operations of military installations must involve a partnership between the State, local agencies and the Federal Government.

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It provides the military, environmental organizations and local planning agencies the tools to work together to fight common enemies of military readiness like suburban sprawl. But this proposal is completely absent from the legislation coming before us.

The defense authorization bill is also wrong on a very fundamental level. It is missing an opportunity to use the Department of Defense to set the highest standards. Again, given adequate resources and the right orders, our Department of Defense can achieve any mission. We are missing that opportunity.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is a fundamental arrogance and hypocrisy that somehow the Federal Government's rules and regulations are necessary to protect the environment. We will impose them on small business or local government but not on us ourselves. It is the wrong signal and the wrong direction to protect endangered species and the health of our planet.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1904, HEALTHY FORESTS RESTORATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-109) on the resolution (H. Res. 239) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1904) to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to plan and conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and

Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

TRIBUTE TO HONORABLE LARRY COMBEST ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Chairman LARRY COMBEST on a long and successful congressional career. I was privileged to serve on the Committee on Agriculture under LARRY. We were certainly at opposite ends of the spectrum. My first 2 years on the committee were LARRY'S last 2. I was without status. He was the chairman. Regardless of seniority, each person had access to LARRY and his staff on an equal basis. I have always felt that the true measure of a person's character was how he treated those who could do nothing for him. In that respect, I thought that LARRY was really exemplary and I really appreciated the way I was received.

The most significant accomplishment of the Committee on Agriculture the last 2 years was reauthorization of the farm bill. This was a very exhaustive process. It went on over 2 years, involving roughly 50 hearings, 25 of those in various parts of the country and 25 here in Washington. Input was received from such diverse groups as the Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, corn and soybean, rice and cotton, fruits and vegetables, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club. Everybody had a chance.

What the chairman did was ask each group to write the farm bill as they saw it needing to be written and also to score it, to come up with what it was going to cost; and so this was kind of a unique approach because I think everybody that tried began to realize how complex this was.

Again, he took input from every group. The bill was written in full committee, which I appreciated. Everybody had a chance to speak their piece. It was truly bipartisan. We hear the term bipartisan around here all the time, but this was a case where I can really, honestly say that I do not believe either side was given any advantage and that each side felt they had equal ownership, and as a result the farm bill was passed almost unanimously out of the Committee on Agriculture.

LARRY was under a great deal of pressure to delay the writing of the farm bill until 2003. Yet he realized that agriculture was in trouble, that we were surviving each year on roughly a 7, \$7.5

billion emergency payment and this simply could not go on, so he pressed forward and got the bill done in 2002 in the face of a fair amount of criticism. I thought that he showed great tenacity in doing so, and I really appreciated his efforts.

I visited South America with LARRY and other members of the Committee on Agriculture a little bit more than a year ago, and I can recall one meeting in Brazil with their agriculture leadership in which they were very critical of U.S. farm policy. They thought they were poised to take over the soybean market of the world, and I remember LARRY'S response. He said, "My responsibility is to protect the interests of American farmers and ranchers." That is what he did. Our farmers and ranchers really comprise only 1 percent roughly of our population. At one time they were a very significant part of our population. Now they are about 1 percent, and so they certainly need advocates. I really appreciate the fact that Chairman COMBEST truly did all that he could to represent a very important and often unappreciated part of our Nation.

I would like to thank the chairman for his contribution and for his career here and for the way that he worked with other people to bring agriculture to the forefront during the farm bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TEXAS REDISTRICTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, before I discuss some comments I would like to make about the courageous acts of 51 Texas legislators last week, I want to join my Republican colleagues in thanking Congressman LARRY COMBEST for so many years of dedicated public service to the State of Texas and to our country.

Those of us who believe that one of the strengths of our country comes from the values of rural America, one of the strengths of our economy comes from the productivity of our family farmers and ranchers, all of us who believe those things owe a debt of gratitude, an everlasting debt of gratitude to LARRY COMBEST for his bipartisan and strong leadership in our country not only as chairman of the Committee on Agriculture but as chairman of the very important Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence through which he served our Nation's security in so many important ways.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk about the actions of last week where we had

51 Texas legislators who fought to stop U.S. House Majority Leader TOM DELAY from forcing a divisive, partisan and unnecessary congressional redistricting plan through the Texas House of Representatives. Their act of courage was heralded by editorial boards throughout our State of Texas. I salute legislators like Jim Dunnam and John Mabry from my hometown of Waco, Texas.

Without their actions on Monday morning of last week, the Texas House would have passed a plan that would have split my 100-year-old historic rural central Texas district into four different congressional districts stretching from Fort Worth to the suburbs of Houston to San Antonio, literally covering hundreds and hundreds of miles without a single bit of input from one mayor or city council member in our district, one school board member, because that plan was only put together on Mother's Day afternoon last Sunday with the intention of passing it through the Texas House starting at 10 a.m. the next day, on Monday morning. That was wrong for that plan to have been pushed and right for Texas legislators to stand up not for themselves, not for me, but for the right of central Texas citizens in my district and Texans, Republicans and Democrats alike throughout our State, to have a voice in shaping their congressional districts and the future of their communities.

While the Texas legislators are back in Austin working on State priority issues, there are some questions that will not go away and some questions to which the American people deserve an answer.

Outrageously, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the new agency with the responsibility to protect American families from terrorists here and abroad, that agency used Federal antiterrorism resources and personnel to track down Texas Representative Pete Laney of Hale Center, Texas, as he flew his private airplane from his hometown to Ardmore, Oklahoma. To borrow a phrase from former Senator Lloyd Bentsen, "I know Pete Laney, Pete Laney is a friend of mine, and I can assure you Pete Laney is no terrorist." Quite to the contrary, he is the former Speaker of the Texas House, a respected leader in our legislature, respected by members of both sides of the aisle. In fact, Pete Laney was the one individual that President George Bush who then as Governor Bush asked Mr. Laney to introduce for the first time to the public President-elect Bush in his first speech to the Nation and the world once he found out he would be President.

I have some questions for the Department of Homeland Security:

One, and most importantly, why will you not release the tapes of the conversation between the Texas Department of Public Safety and the U.S. homeland security agency, the very conversation that led to the possibly

unlawful and certainly unethical use of Federal resources, antiterrorism resources to track down the law-abiding citizen Pete Laney?

Secondly, do you have something to hide? Why is our U.S. homeland security agency afraid to let the American people and the press know what was in that conversation?

Thirdly, does the public not deserve to hear the conversation that led to what does appear to be a gross abuse of Federal resources?

Fourthly, to the homeland security agency, our U.S. agency again trying to defend us against terrorism, if the tape exonerates you and your actions, what are you afraid of? Why are you not willing to release that tape now, not weeks, not months from now, not years from now? Why are you afraid to release that tape now to Members of Congress and to the public?

Fifth, did Majority Leader TOM DELAY or House Speaker Tom Craddick or any one of their staffs or someone speaking in their behalf ask the Texas Department of Public Safety to make this request to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security?

We will not know the answer to those questions until the tape of our U.S. homeland security agency is made available to the public.

Mr. Speaker, this is no longer just a Texas issue. It is an issue for all Americans who care about defending our families and our neighborhoods and our communities from terrorists. How horrible it is that during the very week that al Qaeda was preparing the final efforts apparently to attack Morocco and American citizens in Saudi Arabia our homeland security agency was tracking down former State Speaker of the House and present State representative Pete Laney in Hale Center, Texas, a community of just over 2,000 people, not known as a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism or radicalism in little old west Texas.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CULBERSON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TEXAS REDISTRICTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, there is disturbing news coming out of Wash-

ington, D.C., and Austin, Texas, today that should be of great and grave concern to all Americans. Because, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Homeland Security, a U.S. government agency, has basically now had to admit that it used a homeland security plane and government resources for political purposes and now they are covering it up. As most of the country now knows, Texas Democrats in the State House recently absented themselves from the floor to break a quorum, a legitimate parliamentary maneuver. This angered the Republican powers that be in Washington, D.C. A homeland security plane was dispatched to try to follow and harass Pete Laney, the former Democratic Speaker of the Texas House, and other members. Upon being caught and not before, the Department of Homeland Security said that they actually were under the impression that the plane was lost or crashed.

Mr. Speaker, that is just not credible. That is just not so. Period.

Now it has been learned that a tape and a transcript of the contact between Homeland Security and law enforcement has been discovered. And what has been the response of homeland security? They refused to turn over the tape. They refused to turn over the transcript.

Mr. Speaker, I have two questions. What did they know and when did they know it? The U.S. Congress calls upon Homeland Security to release the tapes, stop the cover-up, and do it now. Otherwise, they need to get a dictionary and they need to look up the word "subpoena." Otherwise, they need to get the statutes and look up in the statutes the term "freedom of information."

The use of the Federal Government for political purposes should frighten all Americans. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram said this Sunday, "To meet the threat of global terrorism, the United States is assembling enormous Federal resources focusing on activities in American cities, neighborhoods and countrysides that could endanger those citizens. If we are to have this security apparatus, it must be contained to its designated purposes. There must be every safeguard so that it does not cross the thin line between protecting innocent citizens and spying on their private lives. That these security resources were used no matter in what minor way in a Texas political dispute should be alarming to us all."

And, Mr. Speaker, alarmingly there is more. Not only has the Federal Government been spying on citizens for private purposes and then covering it up but also the authority of the state has been used to intimidate and terrorize the families of Texas legislators.

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Here are some examples: Representative Craig Eiland, his wife recently had premature twins, the twins in the neonatal unit of the hospital. Investigators were sent to the neonatal unit to