

it announced it was retaining the roadless rule and then an announcement that it would prohibit logging on 95 percent of Alaska's national forest. Let none be fooled. What the Bush administration did was carve out huge exceptions and loopholes through a thoroughly vetted and well-balanced, popularly-supported plan to protect the ever shrinking swath of untrampled national forests.

In the Boston Globe last week, National forests are called that because they belong to the Nation as a whole, not the governors, and certainly not to the administration in Washington, who has put a former timber lobbyist in charge of them.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune, the administration's version of the roadless rule for the National forests to be published later this month, is portrayed by its authors as a fine tuning of what was arguably the Clinton administration's most important wilderness initiative. Right. It strains credibility for Clinton's successors having relentlessly assailed the rule, to claim that they are now prepared to accept it with minor modifications. Indeed, there is nothing minor about the modifications the Interior Department outlined. Fine tuning with such changes is akin to edging a lawn with a chain saw. Edging a lawn with a chain saw. Not fine tuning.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and their forests deserve better.

REAL RESULTS FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 1 minute.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, the American people are responding to the Republican party's economic agenda and we are responding to their needs. Our majority were elected in part to get the economy moving again, and the early evidence suggests we are delivering results for working families.

On March 11, when the Committee on Ways and Means held its first hearing on the President's Job and Growth Package, the Standard and Poor's 500 Index stood at just above 800. Yesterday it closed above 1,000, a 25 percent increase in the stock market in just 3 months.

The long suffering NASDAQ Composite Index has risen almost 10 percent just since the President signed the Jobs and Growth Package a few weeks ago. All totalled, \$1.9 trillion in equity value has been created by the American people in fewer than 100 days. That is college savings, pension funds and individual retirement accounts. That kind of wealth creation leads to more investment, which leads to job creation and, ultimately, leads to economic growths. It may be too soon to call this a bull market, Mr. Speaker, but it is starting to move.

And in the face of this positive response from the American people, we are going to keep moving our agenda of job creation, growth and economic opportunity to help our citizens fulfill America's promise.

Last week we extended the life of the \$1,000 child tax credit, extending its benefits to millions of working and middle class families. We took millions off the Federal tax rolls all together, and got rid of the child tax credit's marriage penalty.

Our commitment to a family-friendly Tax Code will not stop there, because this week the House will consider legislation to make the 2001 repeal of the death tax permanent. After all, if we have the right to pass on a family business or farm to our spouse and children, why should our children and grandchildren not have that same right? Of course they have should, because economic security does not come with an expiration date.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican agenda for economic growth and opportunity will create new jobs and improve current jobs. That is what the American people expect and it is exactly what we are delivering.

ALASKAN EXEMPTION FROM ROADLESS AREAS CONSERVATION RULE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Bush administration revised the Roadless Area Conservation Rule and exempted millions of acres of forests throughout our country. Included in these revisions are areas I recently had the pleasure of visiting, including the Tongass and the Chugach National Forests in Alaska, which are now set to be turned into the horror of the "10-Year Tongass Timber Project" which I believe is truly a disaster.

As a firsthand witness, I have experienced the beauty and the natural wonders of these two forests in Alaska. The Tongass and Chugach Forests boast the world's most intact rain forests with centuries-old trees providing critical habitat for wolves, grizzly bears, wild salmon, bald eagles, and other wildlife that have disappeared from many other parts of our country.

In 2001, the roadless rule was drafted and implemented to balance the interests of environmental and local labor groups so that a small number of timber projects already in progress at that time could be completed. Furthermore, at the time the maintenance and reconstruction of existing roads was strictly limited to cases of public safety and habitat improvement for wildlife, which meant common sense environmental regulations were put in place to ensure the health and safety of the residences of these areas where

they were tended to as well as the economic well-being of those individuals.

Those common sense regulations did not shut down Alaska. They protected the lands and the people from mining and timber interests that looked to pillage and use the lands for their and not America's own needs. However, until now, large scale timber projects, the cutting sale and removal of timber from the Tongass Forest has been prohibited.

This Roadless Area Conservation Rule was created with the tremendous outpouring of public support, demonstrated in over 600 public hearings that were held around the Nation and with more than 1.6 million comments on this rule alone, more than any other rule in the history of our Nation.

Today, in 2003, without public support or comment, the President has revised the roadless rule with an unbalanced approach that favors the logging and timber interests over America's interests and swings the door wide open for commercial logging, roadbuilding, and development on 58.5 million acres of unroaded national forests nationwide, one quarter of which are located in the Tongass and Chugach National Forests.

This is being done without any public comment, but, again, when has the will of the majority of the American people mattered to this administration?

By lifting the roadless rule in these areas, the Bush administration will destroy the Tongass and Chugach, the Nation's two largest National forests totalling 22 million acres and deprive generations of young Americans from their national inheritance of the world's last remaining old-growth temperate rainforest.

Essentially, these two forests are the Amazon of North America. They are the last vestiges of pristine wildness. They are treasures that require vigilant protection by all Americans. They are the best of what we have in Alaska. And yet, the Forest Service has already scheduled approximately 50 timber projects in the roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest and is set to sell Tongass timber as soon as these revisions are finalized.

To make the situation worse, according to the GAO, these timber sales have been subsidized with hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. I believe that maintaining the roadless rule will protect not only these forests in Alaska, but also Federal lands and forests in every State in our union.

As a New Yorker, I fear that the slippery slope will soon lead to logging and road construction in the forests of New York State, including the wooded areas surrounding the Finger Lakes region.

By opening the road to timber and logging, the President is sending a message that every protected wildness and forest in America is vulnerable to attack by profit-hungry interest groups. From Alaska to New York, this effort must be blocked.

Environmental policy has a lasting effect on succeeding generations. The risk of causing irreparable damage is high. These policies must be developed with the goal of balancing the interests of labor, industry, and the environment, not with the goal of increasing timber sales.

It is amazing that the greatest conservation President in the history of our country was a Republican, President Theodore Roosevelt, while we are now seeing the greatest anti-environmental President in another Republican, George Bush.

Mr. Speaker, the former poet laureate of Colorado and singer/songwriter John Denver said, "To the mountains I confess there; to the rivers I will be strong; to the forests, I find peace there; to the wild country I belong."

NO ACCOUNTING FOR WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE IN GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, as we begin our debate in our committees on reforming Medicare, one of the issues that will be highlighted is the waste, fraud and abuse that has plagued this program for decades. But this Federally-mandated managed program is not the only source of wasteful spending in waste, fraud and abuse. Frankly, the entire government endures this rampant problem also.

In March of this year, GAO submitted its report on the United States government's consolidated financial statement for fiscal year 2001 and 2002. Not surprisingly, GAO could not express its opinion on these statements due to "material weaknesses in internal control and in accounting and reporting."

It is the accounting and reporting that particularly appalls me. In the past 2 years, we have seen what happens with poor accounting and reporting in the corporate world, but it appears that the accounting irregularities continue to run rampant in the Federal Government as well. These irregularities and lack of internal controls result in "hampering the Federal Government's ability to accurately report assets, liabilities and costs."

In addition, such problems prevent accurate reporting of the cost and performance of certain Federal programs. That is, we cannot even determine what our government owns, what it accurately spends each year. GAO goes so far as to state that as a result of these material deficiencies, that the amounts reported in the consolidated financial statements "may not be reliable."

So if a person wanted to see what the consolidated financial statements of a particular agency that reported, they might as well take a scientific wild

guess, because the agency charged with examining the accounting statements of the Federal Government cannot even express an opinion because record-keeping and controls are so shoddy. Yet, we ask the private sector to keep accurate records, and if they do not, they are held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot even accurately state how much waste, fraud and abuse occurs in this Federal Government. Conservative estimates range at 20 billion plus. The government penalizes private companies for poor accounting, but when a Federal agency cannot account for billions that it has spent, what do we do? We give them an increased appropriations for the following year. We should not do this without strict accounting of these Federal agencies.

The President issued his Management Agenda designed to emphasize that clean financial records are key to a "well managed organization." I applaud the President's efforts in this area as it is a daunting task to reform such a bureaucratic beast. The government requires its citizens every year to pay an ever-increasing burden in Federal taxes and users fees for expanding Federal programs. The least we could do is to accurately report how the money is spent.

We must do this in Congress, put in place accounting procedures so we can determine what the government owns, what it spends; and then and only then can we determine where the waste, fraud and abuse is and save, ultimately, the hard-earned money of the taxpayers.

AMERICA IS WAITING FOR AN ANSWER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter by the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) to Condoleezza Rice, the Security Advisor to the President, because it contains some questions I think are important.

The other night I was on Crossfire, and Robert Novak asked me whether I thought it would be a good thing or a bad thing if weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq. The show moved on before I could answer, but it was an interesting question. I think what he was getting at is whether I would feel better if I knew the President were right all along and that there were huge stockpiles of anthrax and nerve gas and missiles armed with bioweapons ready to be launched 45 minutes and a latterday Manhattan Project hidden under a stadium somewhere.

He was really asking if I would feel better knowing that I had not been misled or if I were rather nothing were

found so I could gloat over having been right when I said in September that I thought indeed the President would mislead the American people on the way to Iraq.

Of course, the answer is that I hope that no weapons are there to be found. I hope we are never in danger and that we were not in danger and that our troops were never in danger, and that Saddam Hussein, despite his aspirations, was not on his way of becoming the Saladin of the 21st century. Who would not prefer a world with fewer weapons in the hands of dictators? And if there were weapons, all Americans want them found and destroyed.

The President himself seems to have retreated from the claim that the U.S. was in imminent danger from the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Now he is speaking of existence of a weapons program, not of armed missiles and gallons of nerve gas.

Mr. Speaker, 11 young Americans have died in Iraq in the past 15 days. Fifty have died since the President declared the war over. A total of 180 Americans and 45 coalition troops have died. What does it mean that 180 young Americans have died in Iraq? Did they die to bring democracy to someone else's country or to stop Saddam Hussein's terrible human rights abuses?

Mr. Speaker, I am glad that Hussein is gone, and I believe that nearly all Iraqis are glad that he's gone. But I do not think that the young Americans who died in Iraq signed up to fight against tyranny in general. They signed up to protect this country and our country, their own country.

In light of this where do we go? If this were still the Clinton administration, there would be a highly publicized investigation coming out of every committee in this House, including Small Business and Agriculture. There would be calls for special prosecutors, for resignation, for impeachment.

President Bush puts great store in personal responsibility, and I believe the time is long past for the President to take responsibility and level with the American people. Did the President believe that Iraq was so likely to pose a danger in the future that it was okay to play fast and loose with the Congress, the U.N. and the American people to get approval to go to war?

Was the President misled by bad intelligence? Was he misled by advisors who had prejudged the facts, or was there solid, credible intelligence that just unaccountably turned up to be accurate? We need to know.

If the President's information was bad, we need to know what steps are being taken to dismiss those who provided and vouched for it. If the President decided that future dangers were so great that misleading us about the present danger was warranted, we need him to take responsibility for that decision. We need the President to explain to us and to the world why 180 young Americans are dead and why U.S. credibility is eroding all over the