A BILL

To facilitate a Forest Service land exchange that will eliminate a private in-holding in the Sierra National Forest in the State of California and provide for the permanent enjoyment by the Boy Scouts of America of a parcel of National Forest System land currently used under a special use permit, and for other purposes.

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 'Sierra National Forest Land Exchange Act of 2003'.

SEC. 2. LAND EXCHANGE, SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST, CALIFORNIA.

(a) RECEIPT OF PRIVATE LANDS—In exchange for the land described in subsection (b), the owners of a parcel of private land consisting of the north ½ of the northwest ¼ of section 29, township 8 south, range 26 east, Mount Diablo base and meridian, California, shall convey all of their right, title, and interest in and to the parcel to the Secretary of Agriculture.

(b) CONVEYANCE OF FOREST SERVICE PROPERTY—Upon receipt of the land conveyed under subsection (a), the Secretary of Agriculture shall convey to the persons making such conveyance all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to a parcel of National Forest System land consisting of the east ½ of the southwest ¼ and the west ½ of the southeast ¼ of section 30, township 9 south, range 25 east, Mount Diablo meridian, California.

(c) RECONVEYANCE—The Conveyance under subsection (b) shall be subject to the condition that the recipients of the land agree to convey the land, within a time period agreed to by the Secretary of Agriculture and the recipient, to the Sequoia Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

(d) EQUAL VALUE OF PARCELS—The value of the two parcels of real property to be exchanged under this section are deemed to be equal.

A BILL TO CLARIFY THE TREATMENT OF INCENTIVE STOCK OPTIONS AND EMPLOYEE STOCK PURCHASE PLANS

HON. AMO HOUGHTON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 8, 2003

Mr. HOUGHTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join a number of my colleagues in introducing our bill to solve a problem that has been facing a number of companies during the past few years who grant stock options to their employees. Due to the passage of time, this problem is becoming more urgent for a number of reasons mentioned below. I introduced an identical bill in the 107th Congress.

Many companies use stock options as an incentive to attract and motivate employees. Companies give their workers the right to purchase company stock, at a small discount from the listed price, through Employee Stock Purchase Plans and Incentive Stock Options. Employee stock ownership motivates workers and can create a positive relationship between management and workers, where both reap rewards for successful company performance.

For nearly 30 years the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) took the position that the income from these stock options was not subject to employment taxes when the option is granted or exercised. Instead tax is imposed when the actual stock is sold. However, audits and rulings on specific companies a few years ago raised the troubling prospect that the IRS was changing its position to require that employment taxes should be withheld from the paychecks of individuals who exercised stock options under these plans.

Employee Stock Purchase Plans and Incentive Stock Options were created by Congress to provide tools to build strong companies and encourage greater employee ownership of company stock. It was not the intent of Congress to dilute these incentives by requiring employment tax on withholding when the stock is purchased.

Members of Congress raised concerns about this issue, and in early 2001 the IRS put in place a moratorium so that no employment taxes would be assessed on stock options. The IRS later lifted the moratorium for options exercised this year. In response to further opposition, in 2002 the IRS announced an indefinite moratorium. As a result, the Joint Committee on Taxation determined that there would be no revenue loss it the law were clarified to prevent withholding on ESPPs and ISOs. If the moratorium is lifted by the IRS there will be a substantial revenue cost attached to clarifying the law. In 2002, the House passed the previous legislation I introduced. Although the Senate Finance Committee passed the legislation unanimously, the legislation was not considered by the Senate.

The legislation would clarify that the difference between the exercise price and fair market value of a stock is not subject to employment taxes when an ISO or ESPP is exercised. In addition, wage withholding is not required on disqualifying dispositions of ISO stock or on the fifteen percent discount offered to employees by ESPPs.

I urge my colleagues to support this proposed legislation, so that this issue can be resolved as quickly as possible in this Congress.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT OF H.R. 241, THE VETERANS BENEFICIARY FAIRNESS ACT OF 2003

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 8, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing H.R. 241, the Veterans Beneficiary Fairness Act of 2003. This legislation, which is cosponsored by my friend Lane Evans of Illinois, the Ranking Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, will correct a deficiency in the law that negatively affects some surviving spouses of disabled veterans.

Currently, if a veteran dies while a claim for VA benefits (other than insurance and servicemen's indemnity) is being processed, but before his or her claim becomes final, the surviving spouse is entitled to no more than two years of accrued benefits when the claim is decided in the veteran's favor. H.R. 241 would repeal this two-year limitation so that the veteran's survivor may receive the full amount of the award and not be penalized by VA's failure to resolve a claim in less than two years.

Mr. Speaker, while VA has made great efforts to lower claims processing times, the fact remains that it can sometimes take more than 2 years to correctly determine and adjudicate a claim. When this process takes an inordinate length of time, it is simply not fair to prevent veterans' survivors from receiving disability or pension benefit payments the veteran would have received if VA had been able to process claims in a timely fashion. H.R. 241 would ensure that a veteran's survivor would not suffer because the veteran died while waiting for the claim to be adjudicated.

Mr. Speaker, it is my intention that the Veterans' Affairs Committee consider this bill as soon as possible during the 1st Session of the 108th Congress. It is a matter of fairness and I urge all of my colleagues to join in this effort.

TRIBUTE TO GREG STANFORD

HON. GREG WALDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 8, 2003

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a member of my Washington, DC staff for his tireless efforts on behalf of the good people of Oregon's Second Congressional District. Greg Stanford is leaving my office after three years of dedicated service to pursue other endeavors. Greg has done a great job and will be sorely missed.

Greg was raised near Grass Valley, California, in the community of Chicago Park. Following his graduation from Nevada Union High School, Greg chose to further his education by moving across the California border and attending the University of Nevada at Reno. While pursuing his bachelor's degree in Political Science, he also found the time to participate in Phi Mu Alpha, the international music fraternity and the University Band, honing the impressive drum skills that he was always happy to demonstrate for his coworkers.

After graduating Greg made another move, this time across the country to work in Congressman Jack Metcalf's office as his staff assistant where he wet his political feet while serving the people of Washington's Second District. When Congressman Metcalf decided to retire at the end of the 106th Congress, my office was lucky enough to hire him as our legislative correspondent and deputy systems administrator.

Greg, affectionately known around the office as ''Brady,'' has been an asset to my office during his tenure. He brought a strong interest in politics and a genuine desire to serve the people of Oregon. He hit the ground running, putting in long hours and working hard at any task he was given whether it was drafting constituent letters or following legislation as our ''floor czar'' to rolling up his sleeves and pulling all-nighters printing mass mailings to keep my constituents informed, Greg was a loyal and tireless worker.

Mr. Speaker, Greg has dutifully served the people of Oregon's Second District. His smiling face, his contagious laugh, and good-natured temper will be missed. However, I'm sure he won't miss his days in the cave! I have every confidence that he will do well in whatever vocation he decides to pursue. Good luck, Brady, and good job.