

recreation fee demonstration program permanently. We estimate that direct spending would increase under the bill by \$592 million over the 2006–2014 period because the bill would authorize the spending of fee collections that would not otherwise be available.

This legislation contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: The estimated net budgetary impact of S. 1107 is summarized in the table below. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—											
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
DIRECT SPENDING											
NPS Recreation Fee Program Net Spending Under Current Law:											
Budget Authority ¹	0	0	-63	-79	-81	-82	-84	-86	-88	-89	-91
Estimated Outlays	6	30	76	5	-59	-79	-84	-86	-88	-89	-91
Proposed Changes:											
Authorization Level	0	0	63	79	81	82	84	86	88	89	91
Estimated Outlays	0	0	-4	33	62	77	82	83	85	86	88
NPS Recreation Fee Program Net Spending Under S. 1107:											
Authorization Level	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	6	30	72	38	3	0	-2	-3	-3	-3	-3

¹ The current law amounts represent net direct spending of the NPS under the existing recreation fee demonstration program (which expires on December 31, 2005) and under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA), which will govern the collection and spending of NPS recreation fees after December 31, 2005.

Basis of Estimate: For this estimate, CBO assumes that the NPS would collect and spend recreation fees at all park units under the authority provided by S. 1107, at rates similar to those it now charges under the recreation demonstration program. S. 1107 would provide broad, permanent authority to collect and spend recreation fees at NPS sites similar to that contained in the temporary recreation fee demonstration program. Unlike that program, however, the bill would not specifically repeal or override the fee-related provisions in the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA). The LWCFA will govern the collection and spending of recreation fees after December 31, 2005. Moreover, the bill would not apply to other federal land management agencies that offer similar, often competing, recreation opportunities. This estimate is based on information provided by NPS and assumes that the NPS determines that the fee caps, fee prohibitions, and other fee limitations contained in the LWCFA would not apply to fees that would be established under S. 1107.

CBO estimates that enacting S. 1107 would essentially continue the current recreation demonstration program. The bill—like the demonstration program—would allow the NPS to spend 100 percent of all receipts. Starting in 2006, the LWCFA would otherwise authorize the spending of 15 percent of recreation receipts.

The net effect of these changes would be an increase in direct spending authority of \$63 million for fiscal year 2006, \$79 million in 2007 (the first full year after the new authority would become effective), and \$745 million through fiscal year 2014. CBO estimates that outlays from this new spending authority would total \$592 million over the 2006–2014 period.

Under the bill, recreation fees could also increase by as much as \$32 million in 2006 and between \$41 million and \$47 million a year thereafter, but any new receipts would be offset by an identical increase in new spending. If the NPS were to determine that it must abide by specific restrictions in the LWCFA when establishing fees under S. 1107, the agency would probably not implement any significant increase in offsetting receipts. In the event that no new receipts could be collected under S. 1107, the NPS would be authorized to spend recreation fees under the bill, and the net budget impact would be similar.

In addition, because fees charged by other land-management agencies would not be increased under S. 1107, it is possible that the NPS might not be able to charge higher fees at some parks without putting itself at a competitive disadvantage with other federal recreation providers. In that event, the NPS may not be able to increase rates to the level estimated here; however, the net budget im-

pact would be the same because spending would fall by the same amount.

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: S. 1107 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

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Estimate approved by: Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

STAND-ALONE RELIABILITY

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise today to begin the process of placing directly on the Senate calendar stand-alone electric reliability legislation.

As all my colleagues in this body are well aware, devising a comprehensive policy that will help this nation achieve its energy independence is a task that has divided the Energy and Natural Resources Committee on which I serve, the United States Senate and the Congress as a whole for three years now. Regardless, I believe that there is at least one thing on which every Senator can agree—and that is the need to pass legislation giving the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, working closely with regional entities, the statutory authority to put in place mandatory and enforceable reliability standards.

The call for legislation of the kind we are introducing today dates back to at least 1997, when both a Task Force established by the Clinton Administration's Department of Energy and a North American Electric Reliability Council, or NERC, blue ribbon panel independently determined that reliability rules for our nation's electric system needed to be mandatory and enforceable.

In response, the Senate passed stand-alone legislation on this matter, authored by my predecessor Senator Gorton, in June 2000. Since then, under the leadership of both parties, the Senate has twice passed consensus-based electric reliability provisions—most recently, last July.

There is no doubt that this nation's consumers and businesses cannot af-

ford further delay in improving the reliability of the electricity grid. Last August's Northeast/Midwest blackout, which affected 50 million consumers from New York to Michigan, again sounded the wake up call for federal electric reliability legislation.

I would like to quote from a January 1, 2004 letter published in the New York Times from North American Electric Reliability Council President and CEO Michehl R. Gent. Mr. Gent wrote that interim steps NERC has taken to improve grid reliability since last August's blackout does "not reduce the need for federal legislation that would provide authority to impose and enforce mandatory reliability standards. Whether legislation is adopted on a stand-alone basis or as part of a comprehensive energy bill, passage is essential. If reliability legislation had been enacted when first proposed [in 1999], I believe that the blackout would not have occurred."

Mr. Gent reiterated this position in February 24, 2004 testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I asked Mr. Gent whether in fact it wouldn't be irresponsible of this body not to pass reliability legislation this year, even if we are to pass it on a stand-alone basis. Quite simply, Mr. Gent replied, "I agree."

We are beginning the process of putting this legislation directly on the Senate calendar because we believe American consumers have waited long enough for Congress to take this simple step, putting in place mandatory and enforceable reliability standards to govern operation of the electric transmission grid—the backbone of our nation's economy.

There are those who will argue that we are ill-advised to take this step. They ill argue in favor of taking up and passing last year's failed energy bill conference report (H.R. 6), or S. 2095—the so-called "slimmed down" energy bill introduced this year, which happens to be 100 pages longer than the original. However, I am of the firm belief that we cannot allow these crucial reliability provisions to be held hostage to a flawed comprehensive energy bill.

Now, I know that the distinguished Chairman of the Senate Energy and

Natural Resources Committee has worked to strip one of the most outrageous provisions of the H.R. 6 conference report—the MTBE liability protection, which many Senators simply cannot abide—from the new version of his energy bill. But I am one of the many who believe that the bill that remains requires very, very substantial revision and thorough debate. With its origins in last year's conference report, there are far too many provisions in the new bill that the Senate Energy Committee has simply never considered. Moreover, if one of our primary policy goals is to improve the reliability of our nation's electricity grid, I am hard-pressed to see how many of the provisions in that bill are relevant.

How will weakening the Safe Drinking Water Act help keep the lights on?

Will providing MTBE producers with \$2 billion in taxpayer-funded "transition" assistance in any way reduce the likelihood of outages?

How would delaying Clean Air Act implementation in our nation's most polluted cities ensure reliable operation of our electricity grid?

Can anyone really argue that exempting oil companies from Clean Water Act requirements will make our high-voltage transmission lines more reliable?

S. 2095 might not subsidize Hooters, but there remain plenty of handouts to the polluters and corporate looters—none of which have anything to do with bolstering the reliability of our transmission infrastructure. And that's before a non-existent conference with the House, the Leadership of which has publicly expressed its complete disinterest in revisiting the provisions of H.R. 6 most objectionable to the Senate. In fact, I ask my colleagues to consider the following passage, published in the February 14, 2004 edition of CQ Today.

"You can't start carving out pieces of a deal you already made," said Frank Maisano, a lobbyist who represents several MTBE producers. "What the Senate does at this point is irrelevant. This is just a vehicle to get to conference." MTBE lobbyists—and perhaps our colleagues on the other side of the Capitol—believe that whatever the Senate does within the context of a debate on the new energy bill is "irrelevant." As the saying goes, "fool us once, shame on you. Fool us twice, shame on us."

So Mr. President, in view of the existing gridlock on comprehensive energy legislation, I believe the only responsible course is for this body to bring up and pass stand-alone electric reliability legislation. I reject the notion that passing comprehensive energy legislation—such as it is—is the sole path to improving the reliability of our nation's electricity grid. We can pass stand-alone reliability legislation. We've done it before. We can—and must—do it again. Good energy policy must not be held hostage to the bad, and I am pleased to begin the process

of placing the bill directly on the Senate calendar.

RULING AGAINST MICROSOFT

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today to voice my strong opposition to yesterday's ruling by the European Commission against the Microsoft Corporation.

While Arkansas is not the headquarters of the Microsoft Corp., we are keenly aware of the negative impact that the European Union's protectionist trade actions have on American business and our Nation's economic growth and job creation.

Time and time again, farmers and agribusiness in my state have been denied the opportunity to compete in the European market.

As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, I am dedicated to ensuring a level playing field with our trading partners.

This goal cannot be accomplished alone. It will require a multinational cooperative effort which developed countries like the United States and Europe must lead.

The EU's actions, specifically the one taken yesterday, are a significant step in the wrong direction.

I encourage the administration to continue to engage their European counterparts and demand a more cooperative effort.

I yield the floor.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, March 25 has very special meaning in Greek history. On this date 183 years ago, a small but resolute band of Greek patriots began the struggle to end the foreign domination that for nearly four centuries had oppressed and impoverished Greek lands. For 8 difficult years, resolute and courageous Greek patriots fought against tremendous odds to secure the liberty of their homeland. On this same date 30 years ago the military junta, which had seized power in 1967 and for 7 long years suppressed democratic institutions and civil rights, was brought down, and democracy was restored to the land of its invention. These two events, distant in time and nature as they are from one another, both mark milestones on the road to the vigorous and prosperous democracy that is Greece today.

Nearly 200 years ago, the United States and Greece were two young republics for whom the future was still uncertain. Inspired by democratic ideas in a world that was largely uncomprehending and hostile, both took on the formidable challenge of building viable democratic institutions. That shared commitment has endured. The United States and Greece have stood together in every major struggle for freedom and democracy: through two devastating World Wars, and through the long decades of the Cold War.

The Hellenic Republic was established in 1974. Since that time, Greece has built itself into a strong democracy, a vibrant economy, a regional leader and an ever more solid partner of the United States. Greece has reclaimed its leading role in the region, joining the European Community in 1981. In April 2003, the European Union, under the Greek presidency, signed the Accession Treaty to accept 10 new members in the ancient agora marketplace of Athens, that city serving once again as a cradle for democratic expansion.

Greece's democracy has flourished and prospered over the past 30 years. Recent elections have again demonstrated the stability and openness of the nation's political institutions. With the transfer of power from one party to another, a new generation of Greek leaders is emerging, a generation that promises to build on the strength of the existing relationship with the United States to develop new avenues of cooperation.

Today Greece is preparing for the 2004 Olympics. It is a matter of profound satisfaction for those of us of Greek ancestry that the Games this year are returning to their birthplace, and that Greece will play host to more than two million athletes and visitors from every corner of the world. In connection with the Olympic Games, Greece has undertaken structural improvements that are transforming Athens into a thoroughly cosmopolitan and modern city, and building facilities and infrastructure throughout the country. The investment Greece has made in connection with the Olympics holds out the prospect of a new era, for the people of Greece and visitors to Greece alike. The Games offer a splendid opportunity to present Greek achievements to the international community not only in sports but also in cultural, economic and political terms.

The founders of the American republic were ardent students of the classics, and they looked to the wisdom and experience of ancient Greece as they shaped our nascent political order. In turn, Greek patriots struggling to win independence in 1821 turned to the principles of the new American democracy as they sought to build their own new order. In today's turbulent world, the strong and enduring ties between the two countries are momentous achievements. They give us cause for reflection and celebration on this independence day.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 183rd anniversary of Greek Independence and pay tribute to the contributions of Greece and our Greek-American community. It was on this day in 1821, that Greek patriots rose up against the Ottoman empire and began an 8-year struggle that culminated in a new Greek Republic.

It is fitting that we take this day to reflect on the enormous contributions