

RECOGNIZING STEVE SAULS

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Steve Sauls, an extraordinary advocate for the students and the school of Florida International University in my hometown of Miami.

As an experienced member of the administration and leadership at the university, Steve has worked incredibly hard to promote the needs and the interests necessary to make FIU the fine institution that it is today.

Steve is retiring from his current position as vice president of government affairs for the university after 14 wonderful and productive years and has accepted a job as vice president of corporate relations in a private sector firm. I know that Steve will be immensely missed at the university, my alma mater, and will leave a void that will be difficult to fill. I have no doubt that Steve will continue to lead and excel in his new position, and I wish him all the best and FIU all the best in the years to come.

□ 1015

SOCIAL SECURITY CELEBRATES
ITS 70TH ANNIVERSARY

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on August 14, we will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of Social Security, and that is 70 years of a guaranteed, promised benefit to all Americans of a certain age.

I have to say, I was interested to note that I looked on the Social Security Administration Web site, and I did not see any mention of the 70th anniversary. I think the reason is clear. This President, who basically is trying to dismantle Social Security, does not want the Social Security Administration to celebrate this landmark achievement.

Now, the President and House Republicans want Americans to forget how important Social Security has been for seniors and for the disabled for the last 70 years. It is a guaranteed benefit the Republicans want to turn into a risky privatization plan.

I know that the President continues to be on the road pushing his risky privatization plan. Most recently he was there with his mom, Mrs. Bush. And we are hearing that when we come back after the August break, we are going to see the Republican leadership in the House once again move forward with their privatization plan that is going to only aggravate Social Security's insolvency.

Remember: 70 years of a guaranteed benefit.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER
AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT
ON H.R. 2361, DEPARTMENT OF
THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT,
AND RELATED AGENCIES APPRO-
PRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 392 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 392

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2361) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

This resolution waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration.

Mr. Speaker, we now have before us the first appropriations conference report. The gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman TAYLOR) and those who have been working with him on the House side, as well as on the Senate side, should be applauded for taking this appropriation process and concept of prioritization and presenting the product that we have before us. The Interior conferees have produced a conference report which is fiscally responsible and does live within strict budget discipline. It recommends for the fiscal year 2006 budget \$26.2 billion, which is actually below last year's enacted level of \$27 billion.

Even though the total number is lower, it still takes into account significant and important and high-priority items, such as wildland firefighting, \$2.7 billion; a \$61 million increase for our National Parks; a \$31 million increase in our National Forest System; and \$106 million increase for the Indian Health Service. Indian programs have been represented at a record \$5.6 billion, which means the funding will provide for schools and hospitals, construction, education, human service needs, as well as law enforcement there.

With those increases there, it has to be significant, and there have to be offsetting balances somewhere else, and that is where the process of prioritization takes place. Once again, whether you like the total and the way it has been done, at least this committee has indeed done that process of prioritization.

I commend the Subcommittee chairman (Mr. TAYLOR); the chairman of the full Committee on Appropriations, the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS); the ranking members who were involved in this, as well as all the conferees, for shepherding this measure, this funding measure through the conference process in a timely and orderly fashion in the midst of a very lean budget climate.

Mr. Speaker, the conference report is obviously not perfect; none of these ever are. We are not totally happy with all of the aspects of it. I, for example, still have a concern over our process that we are doing with Payment in Lieu of Taxes, or the PILT program. This House was wise enough to fund that program at \$242 million; the conference funds it at \$6 million less, at \$236 million. That still is \$30 million above what the Senate tried to accomplish. This program, for example, is the basic funding for rural communities; it is rent that is due on the land that is government owned. If the Federal Government is going to own the land, they need to be able to fully support that.

Hope springs eternal, and we in the West will continue to work on this program in the future with the gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman TAYLOR), the gentleman from California (Chairman LEWIS), and others to make sure that these programs are adequately addressed in the future as well.

In closing, and notwithstanding these concerns, Mr. Speaker, the overall conference agreement is a good, bipartisan product. It has been done in a timely manner. It is the first one before us. It deserves our support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) for yielding me this time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As my colleague from the majority mentioned, the rule is typical to that for all conference reports, and I will not oppose it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today not in opposition to the Interior and Environmental Appropriations conference report, but, rather, in disappointment that we have not done enough. Indeed, we live in trying times with enormous fiscal constraints, many of which we have brought upon ourselves. As the chairman and ranking Democrat of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies will probably note today, they did the best that they could with what they were given. Indeed, they did, Mr. Speaker.

I commend the gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman TAYLOR) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS) for their hard and, perhaps most important, their bipartisan work on this legislation. I do believe that they did the best with what the majority gave them.

The Interior conference report includes \$84 million for Everglades restoration in my district and throughout

south Florida. It increases funding for the National Endowment of the Arts and Humanities, as well as operations at our national parks and Indian health care.

The underlying report also includes a provision that I offered during floor consideration prohibiting funds in the bill from being used to work in contravention of a 1994 executive order requiring that Federal agencies take the necessary steps to achieve health and environmental equity across all community lines.

The inclusion of this provision in the conference report sends a clear message to the Environmental Protection Agency that it must change the way it goes about doing business. On behalf of every community in the country which will benefit from this provision, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman TAYLOR) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS) for their commitment to working with me on this issue of critical importance.

The conference report also includes a provision championed by my good friend, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS), that stops EPA from intentionally exposing pregnant women and children to pesticides and requires the agency to establish standards which will come down on the side of public health.

While I am pleased that the aforementioned is included in the conference report, I am greatly concerned about the report's major cuts in clean drinking water and conservation programs. These programs are essential to protecting our environment and the health of our citizens. It is offensive that this Congress has found the money for tax cuts for the best-off of us in our society, but not enough for these critical programs.

Finally, this legislation includes \$1.5 billion in emergency funding for veterans health care. Frankly, this money should have been appropriated before the July 4 recess. Instead, the majority played politics with the Senate, and our veterans were told no.

More than 1 year ago, Democrats came to this floor with the former Republican chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), arguing that the majority was shortchanging veterans health care by more than \$1 billion. What did the majority do about our concerns? Absolutely nothing. Democrats got stonewalled, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) lost his job, and America's veterans got shafted.

This spring, Mr. Speaker, our Democratic prophesy came true. The Bush administration finally admitted that it had pushed a budget which shortchanged veterans health care by some \$1 billion. Democrats countered that \$1 billion still was not enough, and the administration waffled. Eventually and embarrassingly, the Bush administration finally admitted that the actual shortfall was closer to \$1.5 billion, the

amount appropriated in this conference report.

How is it that this body can willingly authorize sending our troops into harm's way, yet refuse to provide them with the health care benefits they were promised? I am pleased that the other body has the backbone to fix what is wrong, but I am not pleased by the efforts of the administration and House Republicans to cover up these shortfalls. Shame on all of us for letting this happen.

Mr. Speaker, individuals on their own are not going to conduct major environmental restoration, force power companies to reduce toxic emissions from their smokestacks, or clean up our Nation's drinking water. But collectively, collectively, we can all make this happen.

Enforcement is not free, and neither is environmental restoration. Is there anybody in this body who is unwilling to pay just a little more to ensure that every American has clean air to breathe and safe drinking water? If given the chance, who would not be willing to pool his or her resources with others in their neighborhood to collectively ensure that everyone has safe drinking water, or that no child would be forced to grow up playing in backyards polluted by dangerous levels of mercury and other toxins?

I will most likely support the underlying conference report, but I say to my colleagues, we had an opportunity to do more in this conference report. Our willingness to do so, however, was the missing ingredient.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN).

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I appreciate all of the hard work in crafting the Interior bill, the conference report; and I very much support it.

I really rise today, though, to talk about something a little bit different. Mr. Speaker, in a few hours, U.S. Army Sergeant Arthur Raymond McGill will be laid to rest. A third district native, Sergeant McGill gave his life serving his country in Iraq when his convoy detonated an improvised device. I rise today to mourn this tragic loss and honor his courageous life.

Sergeant McGill grew up in the northwest Arkansas communities of Gentry, Decatur, and Gravette. At the age of 17, he joined the National Guard and later enlisted in the Army. He was on his second tour of duty in Iraq when he was killed.

Sergeant McGill valued family more than anything else and wanted to set a positive example for his daughter, Kaylee, who his aunt said was the love of his life. Though his life was cut short, Sergeant McGill did set a wonderful example for Kaylee and us all through his selfless and noble service to his country.

Mr. Speaker, at the age of 26, Sergeant Arthur Raymond McGill made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. He is a true American hero, and I certainly ask my colleagues to remember his family, remember his friends in their thoughts and prayers during these very difficult times.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), my good friend that I serve with on the Committee on Rules.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentleman from Florida, for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, when this House first considered the Department of Interior appropriations bill, I came to the floor to express my deep outrage that this legislation nearly eliminated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

I join with my colleagues, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT), in urging that the House and the Senate conferees restore some level of funding for this vital program. I am pleased that 119 Members shared our concerns about this funding cut and signed on to our bipartisan letter. Mr. Speaker, I will insert the letter for the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been an enormous help to our local communities and the families who live in them. The Stateside grant program has helped to preserve open space, slow urban sprawl, and give our children safe places to play.

□ 1030

It is a true partnership with Federal grants requiring a full match from States and local communities. In all, the stateside program has helped communities by funding 40,000 projects nationally. Success stories can be found in every State and in 98 percent of U.S. counties.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is especially near and dear to my heart, having led the fight on the floor of the House back in 1999 to restore \$30 million for the stateside grant program in the fiscal year 2000 Interior appropriations bill after it had been zeroed out in 1995.

In my district, the Land and Water Conservation Fund State assistance grants have provided much-needed funds to restore the historic Worcester Common in Worcester, Massachusetts, and renovate the Briggs Pool in Attleboro, Massachusetts. We have literally preserved dozens of acres of open space that otherwise would have been sold off for development that would not have been conducive to these communities. It has also helped to complete construction this coming fall with the Princeton playing fields in Princeton, Massachusetts.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is based upon a simple concept. It

takes revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling and invests them in our Nation's public land, letting States take the lead. For 40 years this program has a proven track record and benefited from strong bipartisan support.

It was the same bipartisan support that proved successful here today. Clearly the level of funding provided in this bill is far from what is required. In fact, the level of funding is at the same level it was when we resuscitated the program back in 1999. So I am disappointed with that. However, any amount appropriated to this program, no matter how small or large, serves a valuable purpose.

I commend my colleagues for their hard work. I thank those who helped reinsert funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund back into this bill. I hope that we can come to some sort of consensus that next year we will restore funding to a level that is adequate, and to a level that we all promised our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I will insert for the RECORD the letter I referred to earlier.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, July 22, 2005.

DEAR CONFEREE: We are writing to request that, as you move toward conference with the Senate on the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations Bill, you support the funding levels that were included for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in the Senate passed version of the bill.

Since its creation in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been a critical source of funding for the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Forest Service. This funding is used to support the acquisition and maintenance of our national wildlife refuges, parks, forests, and public domain lands.

In addition, the LWCF also funds a matching grant program to assist states and localities in acquiring recreational lands and developing facilities. An integral part of the LWCF, the state-side matching grant program has provided state and local parks and recreation directors with the desperately needed funding to help preserve open space and develop recreational facilities. Over the years, these matching grants have been used successfully to fund more than 37,000 state and local park and recreation projects, enabling millions of Americans to hike through magnificent scenery and view historic sites, bike along seaside and river trails, and picnic and play ball at local parks.

The Senate-passed FY 2006 Interior Appropriations Bill provides \$192 million for LWCF, which includes \$30 million for the state-side grant program and \$162 million for the federal program. This funding is absolutely essential for the proper stewardship of our nation's magnificent natural heritage, and therefore, we strongly urge you to maintain the funding levels for LWCF state-side and federal grant programs provided for in the Senate bill. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Jim McGovern, Rush Holt, Peter T. King, Jim Marshall, Robert E. Andrews, Michael H. Michaud, Michael M. Honda, Howard L. Berman, Rahm Emanuel, Barbara Lee, Donald M. Payne, Dennis J. Kucinich, Joseph Crowley, Richard E. Neal, Henry Cuellar, Rob Simmons, Rosa L. DeLauro, Shelley Berkley,

Allyson Y. Schwartz, Melvin L. Watt, John Spratt, Jim Oberstar, John Lewis, Nick Rahall, Scott Garrett, Dan Lipinski, Mike Doyle, Betty McCollum, Harold Ford, John T. Salazar, Jim Langevin, Leonard L. Boswell, Elijah E. Cummings, Lloyd Doggett, Gene Green, Nancy L. Johnson, John Shimkus, Jo Bonner, Spencer Bachus, Mike McIntyre, Julia Carson, Vito Fossella, Adam Smith, Doris O. Matsui, Solomon P. Ortiz, Brian Higgins, Silvestre Reyes, Tammy Baldwin, Mike Thompson, Charles F. Bass, Tim Holden, Jay Inslee, Frank Pallone, Jr., Martin Meehan, Juanita Millender-McDonald Ike Skelton, Grace F. Napolitano, Sander Levin, Jerrold Nadler, Bernard Sanders, Chris Van Hollen, John B. Larson, George Miller, Tom Lantos, Gary L. Ackerman, Jim Matheson, Sherwood Boehlert, Ed Case, Raúl M. Grijalva, Dale E. Kildee, Jim McDermott, Earl Blumenauer, Jim Saxton, Dennis Cardoza, Carolyn McCarthy, Michael R. McNulty, Ellen O. Tauscher, Timothy H. Bishop, Edolphus Towns, Peter DeFazio, Anthony D. Weiner, John D. Dingell, Sherrod Brown, Wm. Lacy Clay, William Delahunt, Louise Slaughter, Barney Frank, Robert Menendez, Eliot L. Engel, Bobby Scott, Ben Cardin, Tom Udall, Janice Schakowsky, Bart Gordon, Lynn Woolsey, Stephen F. Lynch, Donna M. Christensen, Thomas Allen, Thaddeus G. McCotter, Lois Capps, Emanuel Cleaver, Mike Ferguson, Bart Stupak, David Price, Lane Evans, Carolyn B. Maloney, Jeb Bradley, Steve Israel, Pete Stark, Bob Etheridge, Mark Udall, Sue W. Kelly, Jerry F. Costello, Luis V. Gutierrez, Christopher Shays, Mike Ross, Charles A. Gonzalez, Neil Abercrombie, Anna Eshoo.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate all of the discussion that has gone through on this particular bill. We have had it on several different occasions. There are a lot of good things that are in this particular bill.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) has mentioned the one portion of the \$1.5 billion to solve the hole in the veterans funding area, that once the issue was validated could have been an easy chance for people to grandstand. But I am very proud of this entire Congress in a bipartisan way, who gave instructions in a bipartisanship way, which came as close to a unanimous vote as I have seen here on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, it is an appropriate step to do, to now take this and then review the process so that we can continue to go on. We have much to do in this particular area, but in each year that I have been here in this Congress, I have been very proud that we have tried to move forward in different areas and make progress to fully fund and fully maintain our commitments.

The same thing has gone on with all of the other programs in this particular budget and this particular con-

ference report. This committee has once again done a great job in trying to come up with the principle that all appropriators ought to be doing a prioritizing program. They have prioritized the programs. Mr. Speaker, overall, we can be very positive of that.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule to allow for the consideration of the conference report on the fiscal year 06 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill. And I intend to intend to vote for the conference bill.

Although I am critical of several aspects of this bill—including the low overall spending level—without a doubt this process has been fair and open. Because of the low allocation, there are some problem areas.

But the overall conference report is well worth supporting. With the addition of \$1.5 billion in spending for Veterans health care attached to this bill, I believe that this conference report will get widespread support in both the House and the Senate.

The conference agreement contains another year of healthy increases in National Park Service operations funding. I do wish that the Clean Water Act State Revolving Fund was higher. I also wish that the Conference Report had retained the extra \$10 million in NEA funding that the full House approved in a floor amendment last May. It is important to point out that this agreement contains successful compromises on the issue of pesticide testing on humans and on federal funding for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial to be built on the National Mall.

Again I want to reiterate my strong support for this rule and the conference report on the fiscal year 06 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill. And I want to thank Chairman TAYLOR and his staff for including the minority throughout this process.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I urge the Members to support the rule that provides for consideration of this conference report to the accompanying H.R. 2361, and I move the previous question on the conference report.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 6, ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2005

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 394 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 394

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the