

Although categorical exclusions from NEPA are controversial, I believe they are appropriate for these emergency situations. And because recent lawsuits have led to some confusion about the relationship of Forest Service categorical exclusions and the Appeals Reform Act, the bill would exempt such categorically-excluded projects in insect emergency areas from the Appeals Reform Act. This would make it clear that the projects categorically excluded in an insect emergency situation would not need to go through additional steps in order to enhance the rapid use of such categorically excluded projects.

As the focus of the bill is on the potential fire threats to communities from insect-killed trees and the encouragement of treatment projects in the “community wildfire protection plan” areas, the bill also includes provisions to help communities establish such plans.

Toward that end, the bill includes language to make clear that development of protection plans qualifies for assistance under the Federal Fire Protection and Control Act. And, more importantly, the bill provides that annually for the next five years \$5 million will be diverted from the federal government’s share of royalties for onshore federal oil and gas resources and made available to help Rocky Mountain communities develop their protection plans.

At the meeting in Winter Park last fall, I also heard concerns from private landowners who are doing what they can to reduce fuel loads, cut down insect-killed trees, and otherwise mitigate the fire risks on their lands.

Because some of them would like to be able to do similar work on adjacent National Forest lands, the bill makes clear that the Forest Service can award them stewardship contract or enter into agreements authorizing them to do that carry out fuel-reduction work on those lands, subject to terms and conditions set by the Forest Service. Those arrangements could provide for reimbursement by the government for their work, and the bill specifies that if their work is not reimbursed, it will be treated as a donation to the government for income-tax purposes, meaning it is deductible from income tax by people who itemize their deductions.

The bill would also encourage the Forest Service to establish “central collection points” where trees and other vegetative material could be deposited and made available for further uses as fuel or products.

Also at the Winter Park meeting, I heard that there are some barriers to the private sector in doing the treatment work on Forest Service land. So, the bill would allow the Forest Service to extend the length of time for stewardship contracts for thinning work in insect-emergency areas by as much as an additional 5 years beyond the current 10 year limit.

This could help attract more entities willing to do the needed treatment work in these emergency areas, as could another part of the bill that would allow people carrying out fuel-reduction projects in insect-emergency areas to exclude up to \$10,000 (\$20,000 for joint returns) from the amount of their income subject to federal income tax.

Finally, as trees removed to reduce fuel loads or respond to an insect emergency may have some value as a fuel, the bill would authorize the Forest Service to make grants to owners or operators of facilities that convert the removed trees and other vegetative material into energy.

Although we cannot and should not eradicate insects from our forests, we can and we should strive to help reduce the increased wildfire risks to communities that result from their increased infestations. The purpose of this bill is to provide some additional tools and resources that will enable relevant federal agencies, local communities, and residents of the Rocky Mountain region to better respond to this problem. For the benefit of our colleague, I am attaching a short outline of the bill’s provisions.

The bill has 8 sections, as follows:

Section One—provides a short title and table of contents. The short title is “Rocky Mountain Forest Insects Response Enhancement and Support (or Rocky Mountain FIRES) Act.”

Section Two—sets forth finding regarding the need for the legislation, and states the bill’s purpose, which is to facilitate a swifter response by the Forest Service and Interior Department to reduce the increased risk of severe wildfires to communities in the Rocky Mountain regions caused by the effects of widespread infestations of bark beetles and other insects.

Section Three—amends the Healthy Forests Restoration Act to: Add definitions of terms; Require that in the Rocky Mountain region at least 70% of the funds allocated for hazardous fuel reduction projects be used for projects in the wildland-urban interface and lands near municipal water supplies or their tributaries that have been identified for treatment in a community wildfire protection plan; Provide for designation of insect-emergency areas by the Forest Service; Specify the effect of designation of insect-emergency areas; Specifically authorize the Forest Service to relocate or reassign personnel to respond to an insect emergency; Clarify the relationship of this part of the bill and the Appeals Reform Act; (The bill defines “Rocky Mountain region” as Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.)

Section Four—amends Healthy Forests Restoration Act to authorize help to communities preparing or revising wildfire protection plans, and provides for annual diversion (for five years) of \$5 million from federal share of royalties from onshore federal oil and gas developments to fund this assistance.

Section Five—amends Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 to clarify that development of community wildfire protection plans qualifies for assistance under that Act.

Section Six—amends biomass-grant provision of Healthy Forests Restoration Act to allow grants to facilities using biomass for wood-based products or other commercial purposes (in addition to uses now specified in the Act); to require that priority go to grants to people using biomass removed from insect-emergency areas; to increase authorization to \$10 million annually through 2010 (instead of \$5 million annually through 2008); and to provide for establishment of central collection points for material removed from forest lands as part of hazardous-fuel reduction projects.

Section Seven—amends the Healthy Forests Restoration Act to specifically authorize Forest Service and Interior Department to award stewardship contracts to owners of lands contiguous to Federal lands (or enter into agreements with such landowners) so the

landowners can do fuel-reduction work on the Federal lands and either be reimbursed for such work or authorized to treat value of such work as a donation to the United States for purposes of federal income taxes.

Section Eight—amends Internal Revenue Code to exclude from taxable income up to \$10,000 (\$20,000 for joint return) received from the Federal government as compensation for work done in the Rocky Mountain Region as part of an authorized hazardous-fuel reduction project or a silvicultural assessment done under section 404 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING GENERAL LANCE W. LORD

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to recognize the long and distinguished career of General Lance W. Lord. General Lord is retiring after serving in our nation’s Air Force with distinction for over 37 years.

General Lord received a Bachelor of Science in education from Otterbein College in Ohio, where he entered the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program. He earned a Master’s degree in industrial management from the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. He also attended the Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base.

After entering the Air Force in 1969, General Lord served four years of Minuteman II ICBM alert duty. He was the Director of the Ground-Launched Cruise Missile Program Management Office in West Germany and he was the Commander of two ICBM wings in Wyoming and North Dakota. At Vandenberg Air Force Base in California he commanded a space wing responsible for satellite launch and ballistic missile test launch operations. He led Air Force Education as the Commander of Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base and was the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff for the Headquarters U.S. Air Force. Since 2002, General Lord has been the Commander of the Air Force Space Command at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado, where he has been responsible for the development, acquisition, and operation of the Air Force’s space and missile systems.

General Lord has earned numerous decorations and badges for his outstanding efforts in the military. These decorations and badges include a Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters, a Meritorious Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, an Air Force Commendation Medal, an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with oak leaf cluster, an Air Force Organizational Excellence with two oak leaf clusters, a Combat Readiness Medal, and a National Defense Service Medal with two bronze stars. He also has received many honors, including the Secretary of the Air Force Leadership Award from Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, the General Jimmy Doolittle Fellow Award from the Air Force Association, and the Space Champion Award from the National Defense Industrial Association.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Members of the House will join me in paying tribute to General

Lance W. Lord for his exceptional service to the United States and will wish him and his family all the best in the days ahead.

A BILL TO RATIFY A CONVEYANCE OF THE JICARILLA APACHE RESERVATION TO RIO ARRIBA COUNTY, STATE OF NEW MEXICO

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a bill to ratify a conveyance of a portion of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation to the county of Rio Arriba, New Mexico. This legislation will bring resolution to a long-standing dispute between the Jicarilla Apache Nation and Rio Arriba County.

The dispute, which has been ongoing for nearly two decades, is over the ownership of a road on a parcel of land formerly referred to as Theis Ranch. The Jicarilla Nation purchased Theis Ranch in 1985 and, in March 1988, the Nation subsequently conveyed a trust deed for Theis Ranch to the United States. The Theis Ranch property then, by proclamation of the Secretary of the Interior, became part of the Jicarilla Reservation in September 1988.

A lawsuit was filed in October of 1987 and the District Court was asked to determine the ownership status of the disputed road. In the original lawsuit, Rio Arriba County sought to establish that the county acquired the disputed road by prescription and, therefore, the county was the road's rightful owner. However, the Jicarilla Nation contended that the Nation owned the road because the road was, and continues to be, within the boundaries of the expanded 1988 Jicarilla Reservation. On December 10, 2001, the District Court found in favor of the Jicarilla and determined that the disputed road traversed the Jicarilla Reservation in several locations. Rio Arriba County appealed the December 2001 District Court decision and the appeal is currently pending before the Court of Appeals of the State of New Mexico. In a separate yet relevant matter, Rio Arriba County appealed a February 2003 decision by the Southwest Bureau of the United States Department of the Interior to acquire a tract of land referred to as the Boyd Ranch in trust for the Jicarilla Nation. Rio Arriba's appeal of this determination is currently pending before the Interior Board of Indian Appeals.

In an effort to settle the road dispute, the Jicarilla Nation and Rio Arriba County entered into mediation. The parties successfully reached a settlement that was subsequently executed by both the Jicarilla Nation, on May 3, 2003, and Rio Arriba County, on May 15, 2003. Representatives of the Secretary of the Interior approved the settlement on June 18, 2003. The settlement agreement, which would be implemented by this legislation, provided that the Jicarilla Nation would transfer, more or less, 70.5 acres of land located with the expanded 1988 Jicarilla reservation to Rio Arriba County. In exchange for the Jicarilla Nation's land conveyance, Rio Arriba County agreed to permanently abandon any and all claims to the disputed road. The settlement also provides that the terms of the agreement do not take effect until all parties complete their re-

spective promises in the agreement and the United States, pursuant to federal law, approves of the conveyance of this particular Jicarilla trust land to Rio Arriba County.

Both parties and the Secretary of the Interior have fully performed the terms agreed to within the settlement agreement. All that stands between the parties to this dispute and long overdo resolution is Congressional approval. Consequently, the legislation will adjust the Jicarilla Reservation border in order to account for the transfer. At the same time, this legislation upholds Congress' trust responsibility to the Jicarilla Nation by placing restrictive covenants on the trust land transferred to the County. In other words, this legislation recognizes that the transferred land is immediately adjacent to the remainder of the Jicarilla Nation. As a result of the transferred land's proximity to the reservation, certain uses of the transferred land would have a detrimental effect on the remaining reservation. Therefore, this legislation allows the County to use the land only for "governmental purposes" and specifically prohibits the County from using the land for prisons, jails, or other incarcerated persons, and other purposes.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to expedite passage of this very important legislation. Both the Nation and the County have waited years for this agreement to be implemented. Congress must now do their part to provide long overdo resolution.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO ALDEANE COMITO RIES

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Aldeane Comito Ries, who served as a teacher and principal in the Clark County School District for 38 years. She will be recognized at the formal dedication of Aldeane Comito Ries Elementary School, which was named in her honor.

Raised in Des Moines, Iowa, Aldeane graduated from Roosevelt High School and then attended the University of Iowa. She went on to earn an undergraduate degree in elementary education, with a minor in Italian. She subsequently earned a master's degree in elementary education and is certified in counseling, administration, secondary education and vocational education.

Aldeane began her distinguished teaching career in 1962 at J.E. Manch Elementary School in Las Vegas. After teaching elementary school for 5 years at both Manch and Ruth Fife Elementary Schools, she moved to Farside Middle School where she taught for a year. In 1968, she was appointed as the Dean of Students at Garside and K.O. Knudson Middle Schools. After 2 years as a middle school administrator, she moved to Valley High School where she served as the Dean of Students. Following her time at Valley High School, Aldeane spent 6 years as the Dean at Chaparral High School. In 1981, she was appointed as the Assistant Principal at Chaparral and held that position for 9 years. In 1990, she was appointed to her first principalship at Valley High School. In 1993, she was the first woman to be selected to open a new metro-

politan high school when she was appointed as principal of Silverado. She served there until her retirement. Since retirement, Aldeane has remained active in education by mentoring new principals. Additionally, she touches the lives of the students at Ries Elementary School by volunteering to participate in the Clark County Reads Program.

Throughout her thirty-eight years in the Clark County School District, regardless of her position, Aldeane held fast to the belief that schools should always act in the best interest of their students. Her "students first" philosophy won the hearts of the students and staff with whom she served. Her steadfast commitment to her students and the courage with which she advocated for them serve as an outstanding example for all educators.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Mrs. Aldeane Comito Ries today on the floor of the House.

COLUMN BY THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

HON. MICHAEL G. OXLEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 2, 2006

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House a recent column by Thomas L. Friedman, which offers acute insights into the Dubai Ports World controversy. Mr. Friedman removes politics from the debate and presents a clear and concise evaluation of the issue.

I strongly recommend Mr. Friedman's column to my colleagues.

[From the New York Times, Feb. 24, 2006]

WAR OF THE WORLDS

(By Thomas L. Friedman)

Since 9/11, whenever the Bush team has found itself in political trouble, it has played the national security card against Democrats. It has worked so well that Karl Rove, in a recent speech to the Republican National Committee, made it a campaign theme for 2006.

He said America today faces "a ruthless enemy" and therefore needs "a commander in chief and a Congress who understand the nature of the threat and the gravity of the moment America finds itself in. President Bush and the Republican Party do. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for many Democrats."

Mr. Rove added: "Republicans have a post-9/11 worldview, and many Democrats have a pre-9/11 worldview. That doesn't make them unpatriotic—not at all. But it does make them wrong—deeply and profoundly and consistently wrong."

I particularly like the line "that doesn't make them unpatriotic," when that was exactly the political slur Mr. Rove was trying to implant.

So I understand why Democrats were eager to turn the soft-on-terrorism card back on President Bush when it was revealed that P&O, the navigation company based in London—which has been managing the ports of New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, New Orleans, Miami and Philadelphia—had been bought by Dubai Ports World, a company owned by the Dubai monarchy in the United Arab Emirates, an Arab Gulf state, and that the Bush team had approved the Dubai takeover of the U.S. port operations.

I also understand why many Republicans are now running away from the administration. They know that if they don't distance