

Cherry Valley is a beautiful region, and it provides critical habitat for at least six federally listed species and 80 species of national and regional concern. In addition, it is a prime bird migration corridor for bald and golden eagles and broad-winged hawks. The idea of a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge has been endorsed by a number of locally effective bodies, citizen groups, and conservation organizations.

Under the terms of the bill, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to conduct a 12-month study to evaluate the fish and wildlife habitat and aquatic and terrestrial communities to determine whether their value merits the establishment of a national wildlife refuge. This report will identify priority lands, assess their conservation value, determine the Federal acquisition costs and create a potential acquisition boundary.

I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 5232.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, we support this legislation that would direct the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate lands and waters located in the Cherry Valley Region of Northeastern Pennsylvania for their potential designation as a future National Wildlife Refuge.

Witness testimony received during the May 10, 2006, Fisheries Subcommittee hearing on the bill clearly documented that the Cherry Valley Region contains significant ecological habitat for several species of threatened and endangered wildlife, especially for migratory raptors like hawks and eagles.

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Also, the hearing confirmed that the designation of a new Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a goal strongly supported by local governments and residents. I want to applaud the bill's Democratic sponsor, Congressman PAUL KANJORSKI, for introducing this legislation as a first step towards achieving the ultimate goal of establishing a new Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

I urge Members to support this worthy bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KANJORSKI), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. KANJORSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise in very strong support of the bill I introduced, H.R. 5232, the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act.

Located in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania, Cherry Valley provides habitat to more than 75 species of national or regional concern, including several plants and animals listed as either endangered or threatened. These species include the bog turtle and the bald eagle. Monroe County, however, is also the fastest growing county in Pennsylvania, and this development now threatens and will soon encroach upon the habitat of these rare species.

As a result, grass-roots efforts to protect these sensitive habitats have gained momentum and now have widespread support within the local community. Rarely in my career in Congress have I experienced such overwhelming local support for a legislative endeavor as I have encountered for the designation of a national wildlife refuge in Cherry Valley.

Designation of a national wildlife refuge has bipartisan support from elected officials, including all three county commissioners, two State representatives, and a State senator. It also has the support of supervisors from all of the townships included and located in the Cherry Valley area. Moreover, my colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT) has joined me in sponsoring this legislation because he once represented parts of Cherry Valley when he served as a State senator.

Area business owners have also voiced their support for this effort. For example, the Pocono Builders Association, a building industry trade association in Monroe County, passed a resolution in support of designating Cherry Valley a national wildlife refuge.

Moreover, a number of local landowners have already put their land into easements and other conservation arrangements to facilitate the creation of a national wildlife refuge. Voters have also approved initiatives designed to provide the revenue needed for conservation purposes. Designation of a national wildlife refuge would, therefore, help to coordinate these efforts and provide Federal support for conservation of this important habitat.

In order to determine the appropriate land for inclusion in a potential refuge, I introduced H.R. 5232, the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act, after consulting with my colleagues and determining the best course of action. The bill authorizes a study to be completed by the Fish and Wildlife Service to determine what specific lands are suitable for inclusion in a potential refuge.

The legislation does not authorize the creation of a national wildlife refuge at this time. The bill is intended merely to study areas for their potential for inclusion in a refuge, not to authorize the creation of another refuge. In addition, the study is designed to provide Congress with the information needed to determine if the designation of a wildlife refuge in Cherry Valley is appropriate.

Before closing, I would like to thank my colleague from New Jersey (Mr.

PALLONE) and my colleague from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) for holding a hearing on this legislation. I also would like to thank my colleague from California (Mr. POMBO) and my colleague from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) for moving this legislation through the House Resources Committee. Their work on this bill is much appreciated.

In summation, I urge passage of this legislation.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. RADANOVICH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5232.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERMITTING USE OF CAPITOL ROTUNDA FOR A CEREMONY TO COMMEMORATE THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 427) permitting the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 427

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), that the rotunda of the Capitol is authorized to be used on July 19, 2006, for a ceremony to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Physical preparations for the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as the Architect of the Capitol may prescribe.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

For three-quarters of a century, the Department of Veterans Affairs has supported the distinguished men and women of our Armed Forces through the many services they offer. Since its inception in 1930, the VA has worked tirelessly to enhance patient care and veterans benefits, providing excellence in service to those who serve our Nation proudly.

Of the 25 million veterans currently alive, nearly three of every four served during a war or in an official period of hostility. About a quarter of the Nation's population, approximately 70

million people, are potentially eligible for VA benefits and services because they are veterans, family members or survivors of veterans. But the VA stands for more than the collection of services they offer. They represent the desire of all Americans to ensure that we honor those who selflessly answer the call to defend our great Nation with the great dignity and respect they deserve.

On the occasion of its 75th anniversary year, the Department of Veterans Affairs, with the support of Chairman BUYER of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, has requested use of the Capitol rotunda to commemorate the significant contribution that the VA has made in supporting veterans.

As I have noted in the past, it is important for us to continually identify opportunities to recognize the contribution of our men and women in uniform as a way to give thanks for all that they have given to the American people. As you may know, the Committee on House Administration recently partnered with the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Armed Services Committee to introduce the Wall of the Fallen memorial, a tribute to those men and women who have lost their lives in battle in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I was proud to sponsor the Wall of the Fallen in recognition of these heroes, just as I lend my full support to the request of the Department of Veterans Affairs for use of the Capitol rotunda to celebrate their 75 years of service to our Nation's veterans.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of House Concurrent Resolution 427, authorizing the use of the Capitol rotunda on July 19 of this year for a ceremony to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs. As my colleagues are well aware, Congress must pass a concurrent resolution to use the Capitol rotunda, the respected location of America's historic ceremonies.

I want to thank the gentleman from Indiana for introducing this resolution.

This event will mark the 75th anniversary of the Department of VA in which Congress will use the historic rotunda location to commemorate the service of the VA professionals who provide Federal benefits to veterans and their families.

On July 21, 1930, President Hoover issued an executive order to consolidate various veterans programs to create the Department of Veterans Affairs, which has grown from an organization of 48 hospitals and 30,000 employees into the Nation's second largest Federal agency. Today, the VA em-

ploys over 237,000 professionals, is comprised of 157 hospitals and over 850 community-based clinics, provides pensions and disability compensation to more than 3.4 million veterans, and provides a dignified and permanent resting place at the 120 national cemeteries that honor the men and women who served in our Nation's military.

The responsibility to care for veterans, spouses, survivors and dependents can last a long time. For example, five children of Civil War veterans still draw VA benefits. About 440 children and widows of Spanish-American War veterans still receive VA compensation or pensions. Also currently receiving VA benefits are nearly 160,000 survivors of Vietnam-era veterans and over 256,000 survivors of World War II veterans.

Approximately 63 million people are potentially eligible for VA benefits and services because they are veterans, family members or survivors of veterans. More than half of the citizen soldiers who have ever served in uniform throughout our Nation's history are living today, 25 million of whom are living veterans to whom we owe the greatest debt for our freedom.

Madam Speaker, this celebration honors our veterans' sacrifice and dignifies the cause they served by commemorating the very people who serve them.

I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring the 75 years of dutiful service the Department of Veterans Affairs has provided to our Nation's veterans by supporting passage of this concurrent resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

(Mr. SOUDER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise in support of this resolution so that we can honor the Veterans Administration.

I have had an unusual several years in my congressional district. All of us work a lot with veterans casework; and certainly with the deaths and injuries that come in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have seen the rise in that kind of casework, as well as the aging veterans from World War II, the Korean War and many other people who have so bravely defended our Nation.

But when the CARES Commission suggested closing inpatient services in Fort Wayne, Indiana, we saw an outpouring of veterans in our community who really made clear why they think that the veterans hospitals are so important and so important to their care. They don't want to go to other cities. They don't want to go to other hospitals. They very much appreciate the service they get at the hospitals.

Even though we haven't allocated enough money to meet all the demands, we haven't modernized many of

these hospitals as much as they should be given the service that these dedicated men and women have given in defense of freedom and defense of protecting the rest of us, the fact is they love their hospitals. They love their health care there. They love the fact that they are recognized as veterans when they come in; that they have the camaraderie that they can have with their fellow veterans and the shared experiences; that the people at those hospitals know what kind of sacrifice they have given. They aren't just another cipher as often happens when they go to an emergency room and then they argue about who is going to pay the bill. They know when they go into a veterans hospital and when they come into the Veterans Administration service that they are going to be recognized and treated with the dignity that they deserve.

I want to commend the Veterans Administration. They have a very tough time, with being underfunded, trying to meet the increasing demands, the shifting of where the veterans retire; but we appreciate in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in the CBOCs around the area, the dedicated staff that does the best they can to service the many needy veterans not only in my district but throughout the country.

I enthusiastically support this resolution in favor of using the dome for their 75th anniversary.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I just wanted to mention, yesterday I had the occasion with Senator MENENDEZ to be at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in New Jersey, which is actually in my home county; and it was amazing to me not only was the memorial such a beautiful place to visit. They had an educational center there, and there were so many veterans that just man the place on a voluntary basis just because of their dedication.

It just shows me how so many years after the Vietnam War, many years after other wars, we still have the dedication on the part of our veterans that just volunteer their time and their service just because they believe so strongly in the cause, and in this case, the memorial that represents the sacrifice of Vietnam veterans.

So I just wanted to mention that in conjunction with this service and the resolution that we are about to pass.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous matter on the subject of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 427, which will

provide the use of the Capitol rotunda for the recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It is altogether fitting to use the rotunda, which is reserved for only the most special and solemn occasions, to commemorate the establishment in 1930 of an agency charged "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan." Those words, spoken in 1865 by Abraham Lincoln in his Second Inaugural Address, have been adopted by VA as the department's motto.

When President Herbert Hoover signed the executive order establishing the Veterans Administration, and consolidating and coordinating federal support of veterans, America had 4.7 million living veterans. The new VA administered 54 hospitals with 31,600 employees.

Today, VA cares for our veterans and their families with 235,000 dedicated professionals who operate and manage the largest health care system in the Nation. These public servants, helped by more than 130,000 volunteers, provide high-quality health care to more than 5 million patients in more than 1,300 sites of care, including 154 medical centers.

The VA provides about 3 million veterans with disability compensation and pension payments, and nearly 600,000 spouses, children and parents of deceased veterans receive benefits.

Our revered dead lie in honored repose in 123 national cemeteries administered by VA in 39 States and Puerto Rico. VA also provides grants to States to encourage the development of State cemeteries; funds have been awarded for 63 operating State cemeteries, and 5 more are under construction.

VA research has won the Nobel Prize and it has been instrumental in developing the CT scan, the pacemaker, and improvements in artificial limbs. The Nation's first liver transplant was conducted by a VA surgeon, and VA has pioneered treatments for schizophrenia, high blood pressure, and tuberculosis.

Many veterans know VA best for its able administration of the 1944 GI Bill. Veterans Administration educational benefits have to date sent more than 21 million veterans, service members and family members to college, many of whom have also used VA loans to buy a home. The GI Bill essentially created the modern American middle class that has brought this country unparalleled prosperity and global leadership.

Today our Nation is engaged in a global war on terror. As they have for generations before them, VA's professionals and volunteers are at their stations in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, offices, and clinics ensuring that our newest veterans and their families have the best support possible.

The contribution of VA and the importance of support for America's veterans were officially recognized on March 15, 1989, with VA's establishment as a Cabinet-level department. Hailing the creation of the Nation's 14th cabinet-level position, President George H.W. Bush said, "There is only one place for the veterans of America, in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President of the United States of America."

Madam Speaker, there is only one place to celebrate the 75th anniversary of this remarkable agency. That is in the rotunda of the Capitol of the United States of America, and I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this resolution.

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 427.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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DIRECTING SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY TO TRANSFER FUNCTIONS OF UNIT OPERATING ON THE TOHONO O'DHAM INDIAN RESERVATION

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5589) to direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to transfer to United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement all functions of the Customs Patrol Officers unit operating on the Tohono O'dham Indian reservation.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5589

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHADOW WOLVES TRANSFER.

(a) TRANSFER OF EXISTING UNIT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall transfer to United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement all functions (including the personnel, assets, and liabilities attributable to such functions) of the Customs Patrol Officers unit operating on the Tohono O'dham Indian reservation (commonly known as the "Shadow Wolves" unit).

(b) ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW UNITS.—The Secretary is authorized to establish within United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement additional units of Customs Patrol Officers in accordance with this section, as appropriate.

(c) DUTIES.—The Customs Patrol Officer unit transferred pursuant to subsection (a), and additional units established pursuant to subsection (b), shall operate on Indian lands by preventing the entry of terrorists, other unlawful aliens, instruments of terrorism, narcotics, and other contraband into the United States.

(d) BASIC PAY FOR JOURNEYMAN OFFICERS.—A Customs Patrol Officer in a unit described in this section shall receive equivalent pay as a special agent with similar competencies within United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement pursuant to the Department of Homeland Security's Human Resources Management System established under section 841 of the Homeland Security Act (6 U.S.C. 411).

(e) SUPERVISORS.—Each unit described in this section shall be supervised by a Chief Customs Patrol Officer, who shall have the same rank as a resident agent-in-charge of the Office of Investigations within United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) and the gentleman

from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, let me first explain a little bit about who the Shadow Wolves are.

They are a specialized, all-Native American unit of the legacy U.S. Customs Service that were created by an act of Congress in 1972 to patrol the U.S.-Mexican land border within the Tohono O'dham Indian Nation in southern Arizona.

If you kind of visualize the southwest border, California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, and then think of Phoenix and Tucson coming straight down, Nogales, and then go towards California going west, that area would be the Tohono O'dham Reservation. It is an artificially defined border with Mexico there, because, in fact, the Tohono O'dham are on both sides of that, and Congressman HAYWORTH here in Congress has a bill to try to address how they can move inside their reservation, particularly as we tighten our border.

But it is a different challenge because, quite frankly, they were there before Mexico and the United States were there. So it is a different type of a challenge on the southwest border as to how we are going to provide security from terrorism, security from narcotics, from other types of items moving through, as well as illegal immigration.

Now, many people don't necessarily know Tohono O'dham as a name right off the bat; it is the Papago Indian tribe is what we historically called them, both in the north up more towards Phoenix and down in the southwest. But the Tohono O'dham view themselves as that name, and now the Federal Government has recognized them by that.

It is a relatively recent change, just like on our north border up by where the Mohawk reservation was; now they are called the Akwesasne Indian reservation, but we have a similar challenge on that side of the border.

Now, the reason the Shadow Wolves were created is when you have a separate nation inside your Nation, one of the hardest things for our drug agents, for our historic INS agents and others to penetrate is inside an Indian Nation. They are very closed societies. They know who is going to be where inside that Nation. It is not easy to penetrate.

And here we had one of the most successful tracking organizations, the Shadow Wolves have been featured in People Magazine, on television, all sorts of newspapers around the country for years because they combine modern technology with ancient tracking techniques, combined with being members inside that Nation to provide law and order inside that Nation.

They arrested and pursued and identified narcotics smugglers along their 76 miles of border, and 2.8 million acres, and they would seize roughly