

STEARNS, who joins me as an original cosponsor of this bill.

Currently, burglar and fire alarm signals are transmitted from the home or business to a central monitoring station over the traditional phone line system. In many cases, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone systems will become a substitute for the current land line systems. When a VoIP (broadband) phone system is improperly installed, by either a consumer or a cable provider, there is a significant risk that existing alarm panels will be bypassed, and will no longer be able to send an alert to the alarm monitoring station.

Unless the consumer is notified and the system is properly tested, they will be unaware they no longer have alarm services they are relying on to protect their life, health, safety, and property. Approximately half of the 26 million alarm consumers will learn that their systems are no longer operable when a monthly automatic test is run on their system. However, even those with self-testing systems will be without alarm monitoring services for up to a month. The other half of Americans who have older legacy systems, which cannot be automatically tested by a central monitoring station, will only learn they no longer have alarm services during an emergency. To make matters worse, seniors with home health alert systems, Personal Emergency Response Systems—PERS, will be unaware that they have lost their health lifeline.

Consumers who utilize alarm systems have invested significantly to ensure that they have the security that burglar, health, safety, and fire alarm monitored systems provide. They should be given the information needed to ensure continued alarm monitoring services.

That is why I have introduced the Alarm Customer VoIP Notification Act. This bill requires that before a VoIP system is activated, the customer be notified that their alarm system needs to be tested and that they need to notify the alarm monitoring company. Again, I urge my colleagues' support and cosponsorship of this important consumer protection bill.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM OPERATIONS ENHANCEMENT ACT

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 14, 2007

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Madam Speaker, ten years ago, the Congress enacted a landmark law known as the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. This measure created for the first time an organic statute and a mission for the National Wildlife Refuge System. I was proud to have sponsored that legislation and pleased that President Bill Clinton signed into law October 9, 1997.

National wildlife refuges are undeniably unique. They are the only Federal land system established explicitly to conserve wildlife and their habitat. They also provide protection for 260 endangered and threatened species.

A great deal has happened to the refuge system during the past decade. For instance, the size of this unique system of Federal lands has increased from 93 million to 96 million acres and the number of individual refuge

units has grown from 511 to 547. In fact, there is now a National Wildlife Refuge within all 50 States and the U.S. territories and they are within an hour's drive of most major cities.

Four years ago, the National Wildlife Refuge System celebrated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the first refuge at Pelican Island, FL, by President Theodore R. Roosevelt. The fundamental purpose of that designation was to protect native wildlife and that goal has not changed for the past 104 years. The unambiguous mission of the system: "Is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."

In preparation for the bicentennial, Congress appropriated an historic figure of nearly \$300 million dollars in FY03 and FY04 for refuge operations. This was \$50 million more than had ever been allocated for this essential function.

Sadly, this level was not sustained and refuge operations funding was restored to pre-bicentennial figures soon after the birthday candles were extinguished and the commemorative banners were placed in storage. This appropriation level has remained stagnate for the past 4 years.

While this year's budget contains added revenues for the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's request was grossly inadequate. By way of comparison, my colleagues should know that the National Park Service has 20,000 full-time employees, it manages 390 park units and the system is comprised of 85 million acres of which 52.9 million are located in my State of Alaska. By contrast, the Fish and Wildlife Service has 3,687 full-time refuge employees, it manages 547 refuges and the system is comprised of 96 million acres. In FY08, the Fish and Wildlife Service requested \$394.8 million for the Refuge System, while the Park Service requested nearly five times as much, or \$1.9 billion.

While funding for the National Wildlife Refuge System has remained flat, uncontrollable expenses including employee costs and benefits, GSA-rental office space, fuel and energy continue to rapidly grow. In fact, the Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that these costs are about \$40 million each year. It, therefore, does not take a certified public accountant to understand that no entity can continue to operate year-after-year without at least offsetting cost-of-living expenses.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is no exception to this rule. As a result of these declining resources, the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service instructed each of the service's regional directors to implement cost savings or "workforce plans." These plans have now been prepared, submitted, and approved. The net result is that unless an additional \$15 million in new funding is provided each year, the service will lose 439 full-time refuge positions by September 30, 2008. While these reductions represent 20 percent of their total refuge workforce, these vacancies are not uniform throughout the system. For example, the service will lose 28 percent of its refuge staff in Washington State, 29 percent in Idaho and Kansas, 38 percent in Indiana and a staggering 56 percent in Wyoming.

Without these human resources, the 40 million people who visit at least one refuge each

year will find many refuges overgrown, rapidly spreading invasive species, unstaffed refuge headquarters, an absence of law enforcement personnel, abolished environmental education programs, and significantly less opportunities to enjoy wildlife dependent recreation which includes hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography.

Those who visit a wildlife refuge enjoy the experience because they are a haven from our fast paced lives. These wildlands inspire us and keep us connected to the natural world. The American people deserve the finest refuge system in the world and not one that is being stretched beyond its capacity. In addition to not filling vacancies, the public will find that 88 refuges are closed and an increasing number of 188 refuges throughout the country are unstaffed. In short, visitors will travel hundreds of miles to see a refuge and will find much to their frustration that the front gate is locked and no one is there to describe to them the wonders of each of unique place.

Refuges are also important economic engines. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2004, refuge visitors generated nearly \$1.4 billion for regional economies, they support 24,000 private sector jobs and \$454 million in employment income was generated.

According to the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, CARE, "the National Wildlife Refuge System faces a crippling conservation deficit." The best illustration of this shortfall was described by the northeast regional director who noted that: "In three years, 74 percent of the national wildlife refuges would be operating either 'in the red' or at crisis levels: In five years, 89 percent; and in seven years, 93 percent."

Within that region, you have the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge in northern Virginia. according to a recent article, "A dwindling budget, staff cuts, invasive weeds and crime are bearing down on the refuge, leaving some advocates wondering how visitor services or the health of the land the species depend on will survive". There is no question that the refuge system is in crisis and unless additional revenues are forthcoming this problem will be exacerbated in the near future.

In an effort to provide those additional revenues, I joined with some of my colleagues in urging the House Appropriations Committee to allocate \$451.5 million for refuge operations and maintenance. While this is a step in the right direction, it will not solve the service's long-term funding shortfalls.

We must enact legislation that addressed these funding needs and that is the fundamental goal of the measure I am proposing today. The National Wildlife Refuge System Operations Enhancement Act of 2007 has three major components. The first revenue enhancing measure is to gradually increase the price of a Federal duck stamp from its current rate of \$15 to \$25.

On March 16, 1934, the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act was enacted. Under this law, every hunter over the age of 16 is required to purchase a duck stamp each year if they intend to hunt migratory waterfowl. The price of this stamp has been increased by Congress on seven specific occasions over the past 73 years from an initial cost of \$1 in 1934 to its current level of \$15 in 1991. In fact, this is now the longest period in the history of the program without an increase.

Since the inception of the Duck Stamp Program, the Department of the Interior has collected nearly \$750 million from the sale of duck stamps. These monies are deposited in the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and they have been used to purchase or lease over 5 million acres of land that has been incorporated within the National Wildlife Refuge System. While the number of duck stamp receipts have varied over the years, the actual number sold has declined from 2.5 million in 1971–1972 to 1.6 million in the 2003–2004 hunting season. For the past 3 years, about \$24 million annually has been deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, an increase in the price of a duck stamp from \$15 to \$20 would raise about \$8 million in new revenues each year and up to \$14 million in new receipts with a price tag of \$25. In short, this provision could provide the Fish and Wildlife Service with a long term revenue source. Under my legislation, however, the money obtained from these increases would not be designated for land acquisition but would be specifically targeted toward refuge operations. The ongoing monies raised from the \$15 would continue to be allocated and spent by the Migratory Bird Commission.

It is my firm belief that instead of acquiring millions of additional acres of Federal lands that we don't have the money to maintain, we would be better served by properly managing those we already own. During the previous congress, there was an effort to raise the price of a Federal duck stamp and this increase was overwhelmingly supported by the hunting and conservation community.

The second provision of this bill would direct the U.S. Postal Service to issue a series of first-class postage stamps depicting various units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. These stamps, known as semipostals, would be available to the general public for up to 3 years, the postal service would be permitted to recover any reasonable costs attributable to the printing, sale and distribution of the stamps and there is a sense of Congress that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service not suffer any offsetting reductions in its operations account.

This provision is modeled after Congressional efforts to raise money for extremely worthwhile causes like the Stamp Out Breast Cancer, the Heroes of 2001 and Stop Family Violence. These semipostal stamps have raised in excess of \$65 million. While it is difficult to project what a National Wildlife Refuge System semipostal stamp would generate, I would hope that these stamps would be readily available to all Americans including the 40 million people who visit a refuge.

The final provision would establish a national wildlife refuge system checkoff act. This would allow all Americans to checkoff a box on their Federal tax form indicating their desire to contribute \$1 or more of their refund or \$1 or more in additional payment to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This new checkoff program would not create any new Federal programs and would be implemented without cost to our taxpayers. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would pay all reasonable administrative costs involved in changing the tax form, establishing the trust fund, and transferring the voluntary private contributions to the service.

There are currently 36 States that allow their taxpayers to check off private donations

for various State or local wildlife conservation programs. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a unique network of lands that is the only Federal entity designed specifically for wildlife conservation. It is appropriate that U.S. taxpayers have an opportunity to voluntarily contribute to its effective operation in the future.

I am pleased to introduce this legislation 10 years after the anniversary of the signing of the historic Refuge Organic Act and I want to thank my distinguished colleague MIKE THOMPSON of California for joining with me in this effort. It is my hope that this measure will stimulate debate on the funding crisis facing the refuge system and that members of the 21 national conservation, hunting, and scientific organizations that comprise the Care Group including the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the National Audubon Society, the National Rifle Association, and the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance will endorse this approach.

The options are simple: we can find new long-term funding sources or we can allow the operation of the refuge system to continue to deteriorate to the detriment of both wildlife and the 40 million people who utilize these lands. It is my hope that this Congress will move forward to correct this serious and growing problem.

I urge the adoption of the National Wildlife Refuge System Operations Enhancement Act of 2007.

HONORING OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE OF THE CITIZENS OF ORADELL, NEW JERSEY

HON. SCOTT GARRETT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 14, 2007

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I rise to commend two organizations that contribute so much to make the small community of Oradell, New Jersey, such a fine place to live, work, and raise a family. Through their commitment to their neighbors, the volunteers and staff at both Bergen SWAN and the Oradell Public Library raise the quality of life in Oradell to a level bar none.

Bergen SWAN, led by its Co-Directors Lori Charkey and Mark Becker, were instrumental in preserving open space and beautifying this quiet little suburb on the outskirts of New York City. Working to coordinate grant money from a variety of sources, Bergen SWAN closed a \$1.2 million land transaction preserving Hague Park. Land that likely would have been subdivided and developed is now enjoyed by all as beautiful parkland.

The Oradell Public Library is a centerpiece of community life in Oradell. Working together, a variety of citizen groups and individual residents raised funds and developed plans to renovate the library. The Steering Committee, led by James and Louise Lessersohn, raised \$500,000 in contributions and gifts, mostly in the form of \$100–500 donations. The library is now updated for the 21st century. And, I commend the Lessersohns; Diane DiGiovanni, president of the board of trustees; Kate McGivern, president of the Library Foundation; and Sally Isaacs, president of Friends of the

Library for their commitment to their community.

RECOGNIZING THE LATE CAPTAIN ANN BERNATITUS AS A MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED IN HER HONOR IN EXETER, PENNSYLVANIA

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 14, 2007

Mr. KANJORSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask you and my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to the late CAPT Ann Bernatitus of Exeter Borough, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, on the occasion of the placement of a monument in her memory in front of her hometown municipal building.

Captain Bernatitus is being honored by the people of Exeter because of her extraordinary service as a United States Navy nurse during the battles of Bataan and Corregidor in the Pacific theater of combat during World War II and also because she was the first person to receive the prestigious Legion of Merit award that was authorized by Congress in 1942. Others who were awarded the Legion of Merit include Dwight D. Eisenhower, George Patton, and Colin Powell.

Captain Bernatitus served as a nurse in the Philippines at the outbreak of the war, always on the front lines of combat. In the citation that accompanied the Legion of Merit award, it was noted that "Nurse Bernatitus courageously withstood the dangers and rigors of tropical combat, rendering efficient and devoted service during the tense days of the prolonged siege and evacuation."

Then a Navy lieutenant, she gained nationwide attention because of her dramatic rescue aboard a U.S. Navy submarine from Corregidor shortly after Japanese forces occupied the island.

Her epic journey aboard the USS *Spearfish* began on May 3, 1942, when Bataan had fallen and Corregidor's fall was imminent. She and 12 other nurses were evacuated and as soon as they were on board the vessel, it was forced to dive to escape the searching lights of the invading Japanese.

During their 17-day saga, the submarine continually ran on the surface from dusk to dawn and submerged during the day to avoid the threat of Japanese surface warships.

Following her arrival in Australia, she was sent home aboard a troop ship, arriving in the United States in July 1942. She was then assigned to Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland, eventually working with the Navy's public relations department assisting in bond drives.

After 22½ years in the Navy, she retired April 1, 1959, with the rank of captain after which she returned to her home in Exeter. She died in March 2003 at the age of 91.

Captain Bernatitus exemplified a life of fearless and selfless devotion to country and compassion for her fellow Americans. Her personal determination, coupled with her highly skilled nursing ability, was responsible for saving the lives of many American warfighters committed to answering the call to duty following the horrific events at Pearl Harbor.

Madam Speaker, please join me in remembering the many sacrifices made by Captain