

He is a hero for his selfless service to our Nation. He is a hero for paying the ultimate price for freedom and liberty.

Today, I echo the words written by neighbors of Sergeant Walsh's parents, Maggie and Jerry: "We know that no words we could say can comfort you, but our thoughts are with you and our hearts ache for you." Our hearts ache for Sergeant Walsh's wife Julie, his sons Triston and Tanner, and the many loved ones and friends Sergeant Walsh leaves behind.

Madam Speaker, Sergeant Walsh is a true hero. Today, with a heavy heart, I extend to Sergeant Walsh's family my deepest sympathies. I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring the patriotism and selfless sacrifice of SGT Nicholas Walsh.

TRIBUTE TO MR. JACK KESSLER

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of a constituent of mine, Mr. Jack Kessler; specifically his forty-two years of service as President of the Putnam County Library Board.

As the board's funding President, Jack oversaw the birth of the county's library which in 1961 consisted of little more than a bookmobile and storage house. From those humble beginnings, however, the library blossomed. By the time Jack retired, after four decades of leadership, the Putnam County Library had grown to comprise five buildings, including four branches servicing communities across the county.

Jack left another, more direct, legacy when he retired. His daughter Jackie now serves as the library's director. Noting the family connection, Jack jokes he always has more than enough books to read.

Madam Speaker, for much of American history local libraries have provided communities with opportunities for advancement through education. Putnam County Library's branches, summer programs and volume after volume of books has benefited generations of West Virginia residents. The most enduring aspect of Jack Kessler's legacy is the benefit for generations yet to come.

I thank Jack for his years of service and Putnam County is fortunate to call Jack one of its own.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TIMOTHY V. JOHNSON

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Madam Speaker, unfortunately yesterday, July 16, 2007, I was unable to cast my votes on H.R. 1980, H.R. 1982, and H.R. 799.

Had I been present for rollcall No. 630 on suspending the rules and passing H.R. 1980, to authorize appropriations for the Housing Assistance Council, I would have voted, "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall No. 631 on suspending the rules and passing H.R. 1982, the Rural Housing and Economic Develop-

ment Improvement Act of 2007, I would have voted, "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall No. 632 on suspending the rules and passing H.R. 799, the Appalachian Regional Development Act Amendments, I would have voted, "aye."

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
TO REFORM FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE GUARD CONTRACTING OPERATIONS

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today I introduce a bill that I believe Congress must pass forthwith to assure that Federal Protective Service, FPS, guard contractors are capable, responsible, and ethical as required by the Federal Acquisition Regulations. It was clear to me that this bill was necessary when a vital security contractor issue emerged from our Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management hearing on June 21, 2007. A security guard contractor had failed to pay its guards from FPS funds. At the hearing we learned that Weldon Waites, who had served five years in prison for money laundering and fraud, was the de facto owner, with his wife, of STARTECH, despite federal law barring felons from owning companies that do business with the federal government. In fact, it was Waites, not his wife, who came forward to defend the company after it failed to pay its 600 D.C.-based guards despite receipt of funds from FPS for payment. Mr. Waites' testimony concerning his operational control of the company was nothing short of a case study in evasion of existing law by merely taking advantage of obvious loopholes. Today I am filing the Federal Protective Service Guard Contracting Reform Act to prohibit FPS from contracting with any security guard service that is "owned, controlled or operated by an individual who has been convicted of a felony." My bill would eliminate proxy ownership of vital FPS contracting operations by relatives or spouses. The bill would be effective immediately upon passage and therefore would mean that FPS would be required to dismiss any felon exercising control over any FPS contracting operation now, not merely future contractors.

My bill reminds us that we must not lose sight of the mission of private contract guards who serve the federal government—to guard federal employees and sites as vital as nuclear plants and military posts against terrorism and crime, and in the case of Jenkins Security, two secure federal power plants here. The STARTECH example of unpaid contract guards and apparent misuse of federal funds directed to pay guards demonstrated why federal law requires these businesses have a "satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics."

Contract security officers are a critical component of federal strategies to protect the safety and security of federal employees and vital federal facilities. In the federal sector, security guards, many of whom carry guns, are as essential to protecting federal employees and sites as members of FPS. Although not a replacement for public law enforcement offi-

cers, whether local police officers, or FPS law enforcement officers, private security guards, like peace officers, are engaged in counter-terrorism activities in the post 9/11 environment. It was 9/11 and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security that led to the transfer of the FPS from the General Services Administration to the new Department of Homeland Security. Since the transfer, however, FPS has become even more dependant on contract guards, who have grown rapidly to 15,000, while the number FPS guards is down from an authorized 1,450 to about 1,000. In passing appropriations for FPS this year, the Appropriations Committee indicated that the administration is seeking to totally eliminate FPS, the official police force for federal government work sites and facilities. The Appropriation Committee took action that assures that FPS officer levels as of 2006 will remain in place unless certain strong conditions are met. Today's legislation concerning the vitality and integrity of contracting operations assume even greater importance in light of FPS downsizing.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

A TRIBUTE TO JOAN CACCAMO

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Brooklyn resident Ms. Joan Caccamo. Joan received her bachelor of science degree in Management from St. Francis College in Brooklyn in 1983; she later earned a master's degree with a specialty in Administration and Supervision from Fordham University.

Joan taught Business Education and Computer Science for 12 years and worked as a high school director of development and is currently employed as the assistant director of recreation, intramurals and athletics as well as a senior woman administrator at Brooklyn College.

Joan continues to give back to her community. She is currently the department president of the American Legion Auxiliary who has chosen for her special project the Special Olympics of New York. Under her leadership, members of the American Legion have donated more than \$40,000 to the project. Joan has traveled throughout New York State visiting 62 counties promoting Special Olympics, veterans', children's, and community issues.

Joan's accomplishments are many and include; the Empire Girl's Program service as housemother, vice-chair and chair of the Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation, certified leadership instructor, and the winner of the Public Relations Chair National Award.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize Ms. Joan Caccamo who has given more than 40 years of volunteer service. I'd also like to honor her for her accomplishments as a teacher and caring member of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Ms. Joan Caccamo.

INTRODUCTION OF COLORADO FOREST MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Colorado Forest Management Improvement Act of 2007, legislation intended to facilitate a coordinated response to beetle infestation in Colorado's forest lands. In shaping it, we have also attempted to develop a model that could be useful as a response to similar problems in other States.

This bill is cosponsored all my Colorado colleagues here in the House, and Senator SALAZAR is introducing an identical bill that is cosponsored by Senator ALLARD. So this is legislation supported by our entire delegation in Congress.

As we are daily reminded, in Colorado and other Rocky Mountain States the risk of severe wildfires is very real. Partly, this is because of drought. But there are other contributing factors.

One is that for many years, the Federal Government's policy emphasized fire suppression, even though fire is an inescapable part of the ecology of western forests like those in Colorado. Today, in many parts of the forests there is an accumulation of underbrush and thick stand of small diameter trees that is greater than would be the case if there had been more, smaller fires over the years. They provide the extra fuel that can turn a small fire into an intense inferno. The problem has been made worse by our growing population and increasing development in the places where communities meet the forests—the so-called "wildland-urban interface." And when you add the effects of widespread infestations of insects, you have a recipe for even worse to come.

I have put a priority on reducing the wildfire risks to our communities since I was elected to Congress. In 2000, with our then colleague, Representative Hefley, I introduced legislation to facilitate reducing the buildup of fuel in the parts of Colorado that the Forest Service, working with State and local partners, identified at greatest risk of fire—the so-called "red zones." Concepts from that legislation were included in the National Fire Plan developed by the Clinton administration and were also incorporated into the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003. As a member of the Resources Committee, I had worked to develop the version of that legislation that the committee approved in 2002, and while I could not support the different version initially passed by the House in 2003, I voted for the revised version developed in conference with the Senate later that year—the version that President Bush signed into law.

Since then, in Colorado there has been very welcome progress in developing community wildfire protection plans and focusing fuel-reduction projects in the priority "red zone" areas, two important aspects of the new law. But at the same time nature has continued to add to the build up of fuel in the form of both new growth and dead and dying mature trees. And now there is an additional factor—increasingly widespread infestations of bark beetles.

Many species of bark beetles, such as the mountain pine beetle, are native to our forests. They place stress on trees by burrowing through the bark. If a tree is healthy, it can defend itself by producing sap to repel and expel the invaders. But if the defense fails, the insects lay their eggs in the woody material below the bark. Once the eggs hatch, they feed on the tree's fiber and disrupt the flow of water and nutrients from the tree's roots to its needles and branches. In addition, the invading insects bring in fungi and other invaders that further damage the tree. If enough insects are able to penetrate the tree and lay eggs, the tree dies. The offspring then mature and fly to another tree and the cycle begins anew.

These insects are a natural component of forest ecosystems. They help to balance tree densities and set the stage for fires and thereby the generation of new tree growth. And when forests are healthy and there are adequate supplies of water, the insects' effects are relatively low-scale and isolated. But under the right conditions—such as during drought conditions or when there are dense stands of even aged trees—the insects can cause large-scale tree mortality, turning whole mountainsides and valleys rust red.

That is what has been happening in many mountainous areas in Colorado. And more and more our mountain communities find themselves in uncomfortable proximity to acres of dead trees, turned rust red by the insects and adding to their concerns about the danger of catastrophic wildfires.

Last year, I worked to develop a response, starting with a meeting in Winter Park that was attended by local elected officials, homeowners, timber industry representatives, Forest Service officials, ski area employees, and other Coloradans. They offered observations on the extent of this problem and proffered suggestions on ways to better respond to it. Based on information gathered at that meeting, consultations with experts, and other conversations, draft legislation was developed that Representative SALAZAR and I circulated widely so we could obtain further comments and suggestions. And in March 2006, we introduced the Rocky Mountain Forest Insects Response Enhancement and Support Act, also called the Rocky Mountain FIRES Act.

After that, other Members of Colorado's delegation in Congress, in both chambers, also proposed legislation. Senator SALAZAR introduced a measure similar to the Rocky Mountain FIRES Act, and other legislation was proposed by other delegation members.

Then, recognizing that this is an issue affecting the entire State and best addressed by a unified approach, we all agreed to work together to attempt to develop a single bill that all of us could support.

After very lengthy discussions, that consensus has now been achieved and the result is the bill being introduced today.

Its goal is not to eradicate insects in our forests—not should it be, because insects are a natural part of forest ecosystems. Instead, it is intended, first, to facilitate more rapid responses to the insect epidemic where that is needed to reduce the wildfire threats to our communities; and second, to promote research on ways to improve the health of our forest lands.

The bill includes a variety of provisions intended to further facilitate both the development and implementation of community wild-

fire protection plans and to enable the Forest Service and Interior Department, in cooperation with State and local authorities and other partners, to do more to reduce the threat of very severe wildfires. It also includes provisions to support research aimed at improving the long-term health of our forests as well as provisions to make it easier for Coloradans—including both small businesses and individual property owners—to assist the Federal, State, and local agencies in working toward the reduction of fire risks and improvement of forest health.

Madam Speaker, I want to express my personal appreciation for the cooperative and collaborative approach of my Colorado colleagues—in the Senate as well as here in the House of Representatives—as we have worked together to develop this legislation.

The result is not perfect. Not every provision is equally desirable to each of us, and the bill does not include all that it might if anyone of us had been the sole author. For example, I strongly supported requiring that in Colorado the federal agencies must continue to give at least the same priority to funding fuel-reduction projects in the wildland-urban interface as they are doing now. However, that was not acceptable to all, so I reluctantly agreed to its omission in order to reach a delegation consensus.

But this is a good, strong bill that I think deserves enactment, and I will do all I can to achieve that result.

Madam Speaker, for the information of our colleagues, here is a more detailed description of the bill:

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

TITLE I—AMENDMENTS TO THE HEALTHY FORESTS RESTORATION ACT

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act, enacted in 2003, includes provisions to expedite fuel-reduction—that is, removal of vegetation (including trees) that provide fuel for severe wildfires—from Federal lands. Title I of the new Colorado bill includes these changes to that law:

Sec 101. Community Wildfire Protection Plan Assistance—This section, based on a provision of the Udall-Salazar "Rocky Mountain FIRES" bill of 2006, would authorize grants to at-risk communities in Colorado for preparing, revising, or implementing community wildfire protection plans. Grant funding is provided through part of the Federal share of the receipts from leases of federal minerals. Funding under this section is set at \$5,000,000 per year for fiscal year 2008 through fiscal year 2012.

Section 102. Central Collection Points—This section, based on a provision of the Udall-Salazar Rocky Mountain FIRES bill of 2006, would amend the establishment of collection points for vegetative material from hazardous fuels treatment projects. Material placed at one of these points can be sold, donated, or otherwise made available to anyone who will remove it. If any of the material is sold, the money will go to help pay for thinning work to reduce fire risks.

Section 103. Biomass Commercial Utilization Grant Program—This section, based on a provision of the Udall-Salazar Rocky Mountain FIRES bill of 2006, would reauthorize and broaden a program of grants for owners and operators of facilities that use biomass for energy production, or other commercial purposes. The authorization level is \$5,000,000 per year for fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

Section 104. Healthy Forest Partnerships—This section is based on a recent Administration legislative proposal. It would authorize