



Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas, my friend, Mr. SESSIONS.

All time yielded during the consideration of the rule is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 763.

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

There was no objection.

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

House Resolution 763 provides for consideration of H.R. 1011, the Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2007, under a structured rule. The rule provides for 1 hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Natural Resources.

The rule makes in order the substitute reported by the Committee on Natural Resources and makes in order the amendment from the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE), the only amendment which was submitted to the Committee on Rules for consideration on this rule.

The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill, except for clause 9 and 10 of rule XXI. Finally, the rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The bill before us today, H.R. 1011, designates 43,000 acres as wilderness and nearly 12,000 acres as national scenic areas in the Jefferson National Forest in southwestern Virginia. The areas in the Jefferson National Forest that are protected by this bill are some of the most beautiful areas of the country. The areas offer numerous recreational activities, including fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, canoeing, horseback riding and skiing. These areas are virtually priceless and provide much-needed opportunities for visitors and families to spend time in the great outdoors and enjoying America's natural beauty.

H.R. 1011 ensures that critical habitat for bears, song birds, wild turkeys, brook trout, and other species, in addition to preserving countless stands of old growth, a 45-foot cascading waterfall, and breathtaking scenic views that encompass wide areas. Preserving this habitat is also critical for the economy, as tourism is the fattest growing industry in the region.

Each of these areas contained in H.R. 1011 were either recommended as part of the Jefferson National Forest plan or have been endorsed by the relevant county boards of supervisors in the local areas. The bill has broad bipartisan support from five other Representatives from Virginia, both Virginia Senators, Governor Tim Kaine and four county boards of supervisors. Local businesses and State organizations, faith groups, the International

Mountain Bicycling Association and local bear hunters also support this bill.

Finally, I would like to thank Chairman RAHALL and Mr. BOUCHER for their dedication and hard work in bringing this legislation to the floor today so that we can ensure that America's most treasured resources are protected once again for future generations.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the gentleman from California for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this structured rule and to a number of provisions included in the underlying provision in its current form. I oppose this legislation because it substitutes the deliberate and long-studied recommendation of well-trained Forest Service professionals with a purely political congressional action by designating 27,000 additional acres, which are land in the Forest Service today, as wilderness, beyond the Forest Service recommendation of 16,000 acres in southwestern Virginia's Jefferson National Forest.

This means that despite having spent millions of congressionally appropriated tax dollars and investing tens of thousands in on-the-ground Federal employee hours on studying this issue, the Democrat leadership will simply override the Forest Service's well-reasoned decision to force this additional acreage into wilderness status. This also, despite the fact that many of the areas proposed in this legislation do not meet the standards of the 1964 Wilderness Act, including roads, utility corridors, mountain biking areas, and a Federal Aviation Administration tower. These should not be considered within wilderness area, and yet, today, that's exactly what is happening.

Today's bill makes private landowners to the area vulnerable to the Jefferson National Forest Plan ultimate goal of obtaining all private lands within these expanded wilderness boundaries, including 722 total acres of outstanding privately held mineral rights.

What is even worse is that thousands of acres in this proposed wilderness area are at high risk for wildfire and require mechanical thinning for proper fire risk mitigation. Many of these areas are next to the small communities that will be placed at even greater risk of catastrophic wild fires if this land is not managed properly.

□ 1515

So even as the threat posed by wildfires to American communities all across this country is fresh on our minds, as we watch with great concern and sympathy the unbelievable damage these wildfires are inflicting on Southern California, nonetheless, the Democrat leadership of this House has decided that the best course of action is to extremely limit and outright prohibit commonsense reduction activities

across this Jefferson National Forest in Virginia.

Besides the private land owners and homeowners adjacent to this land, other losers created by this legislation include a number of animal species covered by the Endangered Species Act, including bats and bears. Currently, several of the proposed wilderness areas added by this legislation are professionally managed to maintain threatened endangered and sensitive species habitat. By passing the legislation under this rule, Congress will be preventing the Forest Service from using the equipment that they need to comply with the Endangered Species Act.

This makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. It makes absolutely no sense why this new Democrat majority throws aside not only the expressed opportunities that the Forest Service have given us to understand proper management, but they will override professionals who have studied this and do this for a living.

Perhaps worst of all, Mr. Speaker, because this draconian "wilderness" designation prevents any road or trails from being improved in these areas, a number of our Nation's most vulnerable populations such as the elderly and disabled will be effectively prevented from accessing and enjoying this piece of America under this bill. It absolutely makes no sense, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sorry we're having to be on the floor today to take this position, because the Republican Party is in favor of our national parks, is in favor of people utilizing our national parks, and we view these areas as very historic areas that we want to preserve and make right and keep them.

Mr. Speaker, this is bad public policy. I oppose this structured rule and the underlying legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California, an esteemed environmentalist and champion for our national resources, the Speaker of the House, Ms. PELOSI.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank him for bringing this rule to the floor that will enable us to vote for this important bipartisan bill which has broad support, H.R. 1011, the Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2007.

I commend our colleague, Mr. BOUCHER, for his persistent and relentless leadership on this legislation. In advancing this, Mr. BOUCHER, you have advanced the cause of protecting our existing wilderness, and all of us who care about the wilderness and our park lands are deeply in your debt.

As we come to the floor, though, today, Mr. Speaker, I do want to call additional attention of my colleagues that as we gather here this afternoon, wildfires are raging in my home State of California. The President has declared an emergency. I hope that it will

be limited to that. But the way the fire is raging, I'm afraid it may come to the point of a major disaster. The Governor of California, Governor Schwarzenegger, has just reported that 750 homes have been totally destroyed, 68,000 homes are endangered; 250,000 acres of land, an area the size of the entire City of New York, has been devastated by the fire, much of it wilderness areas. And in addition to that, 365,000 people have been evacuated from their homes.

In any consideration of what is happening there, it's very important to salute our firefighters for their courage and their tireless, tireless effort to end this fire, which is a tough battle because of the winds and, hopefully, they will die down soon. It is possible that if the fire continues to rage, we may have to appeal to the President to declare this a major disaster and therefore eliminate any capping of support that we would have for California, and that would have implications, as we know, for other fires that may occur in our country.

So this is when the American people look to government to step up to the plate and to be there for them. The firefighters are doing their share. The people are acting in a very responsible way in the evacuations. The local government is doing well, according to what the Governor says and, of course, the State of California has this as an emergency of the highest, highest order. So far they have been able to avail themselves of whatever is available from the Federal Government. We may have to expand on that if the fires continue to rage.

But to those who have suffered personal losses, whether it's the loss of a loved one, personal injury, loss of their homes and their communities, I extend the deepest sympathy and the fullest support as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

With that, again, I urge my colleagues to support Mr. BOUCHER's bipartisan legislation to protect the Virginia wilderness, and in advance of any needs that we may have for the wildfires in California, inform my colleagues of the extent of the damage that we know to date and the need that we have for support. This compact between the people and the Federal Government is never called upon more strongly than in time of a natural disaster of this kind.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from California's words about the tragedies that are occurring. Not only for the past few days, but also, as always, anytime there's a wildfire, people who get in the way, the brave men and women of the National Park Service and others who go to help fight those fires, I know the Nation is at this time very focused on the lives and the property and the effort that is going on in California.

With great respect, I too, join the gentlewoman from California for expressing our sincere appreciation for the firefighters who are trying to bat-

tle and save the property and the lives in California.

Mr. Speaker, for perhaps the same reason that the gentlewoman from California has come down to join in this discussion today, perhaps with an opposite result, I, too, am down on the floor to talk about how wise management of our natural resources, of our Parks Service, is important. You don't have to go back really as far as Teddy Roosevelt to understand what Teddy Roosevelt saw, that this great Nation had the abundance of beautiful woodlands, hills, mountains, streams, the acreage included within that, the beautiful animals, the birds, the fish, the wolves that were a part of our landscape. And that's why national parks were created. National parks were created with an opportunity for the Federal Government to have a chance to allow people to come and see this great country, to see the beautiful country that we had.

As a young man growing up and scouting, I remember well the opportunity that I had to not only visit national parks, but a chance to get what is called the Forestry Merit Badge. And even back in 1965 or 1966, when I was receiving this badge, I remember, this is not the term that was used, best practices, but one has become used as a term of best practice and that is, wise management of our forests to not only sustain them, but to protect them, and to protect the animals and all that lives and counts on that forest surviving. We've learned these wise management techniques, not just in scouting to get the Forestry Merit Badge, but we have learned them through the years. We've learned that sometimes unwise management and doing things to our park system, in fact, caused more damage than it did good.

I remember back with the fires that we had in Yellowstone, how the National Park Service said just let it burn, it is a fire created by an act of God. But they really, as a result of that, learned that they had to learn a better practice to save millions of acres and millions of animals that could be destroyed.

Well, part of that best practice is what the National Park Service is attempting to do right now and has been attempting to do in this national park today. It is against their recommendation that politically we override the best practices, the best thoughts and ideas that people have who manage our park system, who do see the balance, who are there every day with the careful consideration.

By designating this area, an extensive amount of area, as wilderness, it means that arbitrarily, we're taking something that would never qualify under the intended statutes and add it in. I think this is unwise. This is how you do have problems. This is how you do have fires that burn out of control when you're not able to come in and protect the forest properly as a result of this designation. This is how you

have problems when you're not able to take care of the endangered species that are in there and properly protect them, because it will have that wilderness designation.

And so with great respect for the same purpose that the gentlewoman from California came to notify us and to remember what America's paying attention to today, the wildfires in California, I would say we need that same sort of vision to avoid what could be in the time of drought or in the time of misdeed because of perhaps a lightning storm, something that's an unintended consequence, and that is to take this area and to move it into wilderness means that it will not receive or be able to receive the same kind of regular work that happens to protect these wilderness areas and national parks from destruction of a fire. I think it's a bad idea.

I think it's also a bad idea any time politicians in Washington, D.C. for political purposes decide to overrule common sense.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 5 minutes to the ranking member of the Rules Committee, the gentleman from San Dimas, California (Mr. DREIER).

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Dallas for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the well for the exact same reason that our California colleague, the distinguished Speaker of the House, Ms. PELOSI, has taken time, and that is to talk about what many have described as probably the worst fire that has ever hit Southern California.

I was just talking to the dean of our delegation, Mr. LEWIS, who is going to be returning to California. I know a number of our colleagues have gone now. He represents the Lake Arrowhead area where Governor Schwarzenegger and other elected officials are looking at this situation.

As the Speaker pointed out, 365,000 people have been evacuated from their homes, and literally hundreds of thousands of acres have been burned. And Mr. LEWIS just reminded me that one of the things that we can be extraordinarily grateful for is that we have been able to learn from previous fires how to deal with this. For example, we've had an increase in the number of what are known as the Mobile Airborne Firefighting System aircraft, the MAFS, which are going to be coming from other States. And we, as Californians, are very grateful for the fact that other States are working with us to deal with California's challenge in this time of need.

There are other environmental issues with which we've had to contend, the bark beetle that Mr. LEWIS just mentioned, and making sure that we are able to go in and clean up areas which create the potential for fire. And so we've learned a lot from the horrible

circumstances that we have faced in the past. And I'm convinced, Mr. Speaker that we will, in fact, learn from this tragedy as well.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost their homes. And if there is any kind of silver lining, when you think about the fact that 365,000 people have been evacuated, hundreds of thousands of acres, countless structures in the hundreds have been obliterated, and yet the report now is that there is only one loss of life. And obviously there are a number of firefighters who have been injured. According to a report I just saw on the television, another 25 individuals have been injured, and our thoughts and prayers are with them. But we are very grateful for those who have stepped up.

□ 1530

Governor Schwarzenegger just, Mr. Speaker, talked about the fact that at this time of need, calling on those in the grocer industry and a wide range of others coming in and providing water, diapers, baby formula, other foodstuffs that are necessary for those who have been evacuated and those who are engaged in firefighting is something that has really been remarkable, as our Governor just said.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that one of the things that I have been struck with is that, while some people try to make things like this partisan, we are coming together as a State delegation to deal with this. As I said, a number of our colleagues have already gone to California. I know some members of the San Diego delegation, because that area has been hit particularly hard, have already gone.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to express my appreciation to those who are on the front lines and to say, as our Governor has, again, we have all come together to try to provide assistance, and the one thing we need to do now is pray for an improvement in both the wind and create the potential for some rain, if that's at all possible, to help provide some kind of relief, and to again state that at this time of disaster we want every level of government as well as individuals to continue to work together, and I am convinced that we will be able to.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I share the comments of our prior speakers. Both the Speaker of the House and the gentleman from California spoke eloquently about the disasters that are happening in our home State. It is certainly a time of great need and a great need for us to come together to figure out how we proceed from here to battle this rage.

I see Mr. LEWIS in the audience, and I have been to his district at a hearing about this very topic, and I know the serious nature of some of the forest management issues that are around his district and we have discussed it on numerous occasions. And our sympathies are with you and those of your constituents, Mr. LEWIS.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague Mr. CARDOZA from California for yielding.

I also want to express solidarity with the concerns and expressions of sympathy expressed by the Speaker for the residents of California who are so afflicted by this terribly uncontrollable act of nature. I know the entire Congress, if they had the opportunity, would want to stand up and speak out on behalf of those very same sentiments.

We hope they can get that fire under control and that the people that have been displaced are able to find other housing and some safety. It's certainly one of the worst natural disasters. None of us can imagine what it would be like to be in the line of fire.

Mr. Speaker, my primary purpose for rising today is to express support for the legislation that has been introduced by my good friend and Virginia colleague Congressman RICK BOUCHER. It's an extraordinary proposal for what it accomplishes in the way of conservation and wilderness protection but also for the collaborative effort it represents to bring different public land uses together to the table and craft a proposal that almost everybody can and does support. In fact, Republican Senator JOHN WARNER, the dean of our delegation, has sponsored it over on the Senate side.

The Virginia Ridge and Valley Act will protect nearly 43,000 acres of the Jefferson National Forest in southwestern Virginia as wilderness or wilderness study areas and another 12,000 acres as scenic areas.

Today, wilderness designations are often very controversial. That's because our public lands are visited more frequently by a much more diverse and engaged public, a public that now holds very different views oftentimes and expectations on how the public land should be used. As a result, we have seen fewer and fewer wilderness designations work their way through Congress. That's unfortunate because saving some of our last pristine public lands from resource extraction is an obligation and should, in fact, be a legacy we can pass on to future generations.

My colleague from Virginia, however, is a very persistent colleague. And the time that he and the conservation community have invested to find middle ground and build a consensus to support this legislation is a model that other conservation groups around the country should look to to enact wilderness legislation. It can be done, but it takes that kind of commitment, persistent dedication that Mr. BOUCHER has shown.

This legislation will protect the scenic and undisturbed character of pristine areas of the Jefferson National Forest.

Now, while all terrain and four-wheel-drive vehicles are prohibited in

the wilderness areas, recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, picnicking, backpacking, bird watching, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, spelunking, rock climbing, and so many other outdoor activities are allowed and, in fact, encouraged. So it is not that the public can't be fully and actively engaged in enjoying this land. But motorized traffic will be permitted only in certain circumstances in the 12,000 acres that have been designated as national scenic areas.

This legislation, though, will protect the recreational, historic, and natural resources in the delineated areas in a manner that is generally similar to the protections wilderness status affords. By finding consensus, this bill has won the endorsement of all the local governments and the counties that it would affect. It is supported by a broad array of businesses and chambers of commerce and enjoys broad support from conservation organizations.

So I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill. It's a fine bill, and I congratulate Mr. BOUCHER for bringing it forward.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, as the entire country is focused upon California fires, the disasters that are occurring and the heroic efforts of the firefighters, the people who live in California are working together, community activities, the entire country has been called into action. And I'm sure every single one of us, as not only Members of Congress but just as proud Americans, want to respond in a way that is appropriate.

The gentleman who represents a vast area that is included within those wildfires is with us now. He's the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS). I would like to yield him 10 minutes at this time.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's yielding me the time.

I will not use anywhere near 10 minutes. But let me say that my colleagues have already expressed their support for the phenomenal work that has taken place over the recent years as we have learned from past tragedies like this. The law enforcement officials, local government, the State people with the Forestry Service in California, and the U.S. Forestry Service have been truly phenomenal. We have learned an awful lot. But I would mention two things.

The first is that in terms of managing our forests, we usually find our way very quickly to develop those dollars that are necessary following a fire to respond to the immediate tragedy. Those dollars seem to flow almost upon our call. The dollars that, on the other hand, are much more difficult are those that involve managing the forest long term. It is so important that we recognize that the U.S. Forestry Service does all that they can, but they know

full well that the great difficulty of getting the money for managing that which makes up the ground fire that can destroy a forest, literally can obliterate this territory when we are looking, must be a part of our Federal responsibility.

There is little doubt that we will overcome this tragedy. Hundreds and hundreds of homes lost in my own district in and around Lake Arrowhead, California, tragedies for each of those families. But I would say beyond remembering that we must find the money for managing the forests. We also should talk to our constituents about the fact that when faced with a fire tragedy, the first thing that all of our people should do is to respond to those warnings that suggest, when they are called to evacuate, to evacuate. One life lost is too many, and the danger of attempting to overcome a fire near your home, indeed, is a critical decision. I would urge all of our citizens who are faced with this difficulty to respond to those calls for evacuation.

With that, I appreciate very much my colleagues' response to our tragedy and I appreciate very much their help.

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

I just wish to again give my deepest condolences to the folks who have lost their property in your district, Mr. LEWIS. As you have said, we have traveled there and had hearings, and, frankly, with all the dry timber that was left behind there, we were fearful that that would have happened a couple of years ago, and I understand it's happening as we speak. And hopefully we will not lose any more lives. And our hopes and prayers are with the people that habitat that region in and around Lake Arrowhead.

With regard to the bill at hand, H.R. 1011, I would just like to say, as has been said before, that this measure is supported by the members of the Virginia delegation. We will be offering, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE), the only amendment that was proposed under this rule. It's supported by all the local boards of supervisors as well as Senator WARNER, Governor Kaine.

And, in fact, we have listened to the community. And Mr. SESSIONS is right. The local officials and local community leaders, citizens of a region should be consulted when we designate one of these wilderness areas. And, in fact, this bill does incorporate those suggestions and comments of the local community. They desire this wilderness designation for their area. And it is truly going to be a national treasure. It already is, and it will be preserved for our children and for their children.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I will be asking Members to oppose the previous question so

that I may amend the rule to have Speaker PELOSI, in consultation with Republican Leader BOEHNER, immediately appoint conferees to H.R. 2642, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill for 2008.

Yesterday a number of news publications, including Roll Call, reported that the Democrat leadership intends to hold off sending appropriations bills to President Bush so that they can use an upcoming anticipated veto of the Labor-HHS appropriations bill to serve as "an extension of their successful public relations campaign on the State Children's Health Insurance Program."

While the Democrat leadership plays politics on this issue, however, our Nation's veterans are paying the price. For every day that the Democrats allow the veterans funding bill to languish without conferees for their own political agenda, our Nation's veterans lose \$18.5 million, which could be used for veterans health care, veterans housing, and other important support activities for veterans and their families.

I would like to repeat that. Every single day there is \$18.5 million that is lost for our veterans and their families.

On October 18, the American Legion National Commander Marty J. Conaster, five national vice commanders, and all 55 Legion National Executive Committee members sent Speaker PELOSI a letter pleading with her to put partisanship aside and provide this funding now for our veterans and troops.

□ 1545

At this time, I will insert this letter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,  
Indianapolis, IN, October 18, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,  
Speaker, House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI: Today ends the Fall meeting of The American Legion's National Executive Committee, at The American Legion's National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. The National Executive Committee consists of an elected leader from each of The American Legion's 55 Departments (50 States, the District of Columbia and four foreign countries). In accordance with The American Legion's National Constitution and By-laws, the National Executive Committee serves as The American Legion's governing body.

The National Commander Marty Conaster briefed The National Executive Committee on an array of issues to include the status of the VA budget for FY 2008. The fiscal activities of the 110th Congress—the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution, the Budget Resolution for FY 2008, and the passage of the Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations for FY 2008 were reviewed.

However, in trying to grasp why such a bipartisan bill, which passed overwhelmingly in both chambers, still hasn't moved in over a month is rather difficult, especially since the President has already said he would not veto the bill, even though it exceeds his recommendations. Understanding why the appropriations process has come to a complete halt is difficult. What is preventing the ap-

pointment of conferees, the Conference Committee, or passage of a Conference Report?

We are now in the new fiscal year with no idea when the Mil Con-VA appropriations will be passed. If history repeats itself, this standoff may last well into the second quarter of the fiscal year. This uncertainty is disturbing to not only The American Legion and other veterans' and military service organizations, but to every veteran who is dependent on VA for timely access to quality health care, earned benefits, and other services provided by a grateful nation.

Madam Speaker, the newest generation of wartime veterans are reporting to VA medical facilities every day as troops are returning from deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Some will be determined to be service-connected disabled because of medical conditions incurred or aggravated while on active-duty. Others may very well have invisible scars that need attention as soon as possible. As VA welcomes new patients, the existing patient population cannot be ignored nor should their health care be rationed due to limited available resources. There are veterans dependent on VA as their life-support system.

The American Legion represents 2.6 million wartime veterans, but also speaks for the 24 million veterans of the United States Armed Forces and their families.

Please continue the appropriations process—name conferees, convene the Conference Committee, and pass the Conference Report.

Sincerely,

Marty Conaster, National Commander;  
Thomas L. Burns, Jr. (DE), National Vice Commander; Randall A. Fisher (KY), National Vice Commander; David A. Korth (WI), National Vice Commander; James L. Van Horn (AK), National Executive Committeeman; Ross Rogers (AK), National Executive Committeeman; Peggy G. Dettori (AK), National Vice Commander; Donald Hayden (MN), National Vice Commander; Floyd W. Turner (AL), National Executive Committeeman; Julius Maklary (AZ), National Executive Committeeman; James W. Hackney (CA), National Executive Committeeman.

Jeff Luginbuel (CO), National Executive Committeeman; John J. Jackson (DE), National Executive Committeeman; Robert J. Proctor (FL), National Executive Committeeman; Ray Hendrix (GA), National Executive Committeeman; Cleve Rice (ID), National Executive Committeeman; W. Darrell Hansel (IN), National Executive Committeeman; David O. Warnken (KS), National Executive Committeeman; Charles D. Aucoin (LA), National Executive Committeeman; Dr. Gordon B. Browning (MD), National Executive Committeeman; Richard W. Anderson (CT), National Executive Committeeman; Paul H. \_\_\_\_\_, for Walter W. Norris (DC), National Executive Committeeman; William E. Marshall (France), National Executive Committeeman; Andrew W. Johnson (HI), National Executive Committeeman; Kenneth J. Trumbull (IL), National Executive Committeeman; Michael E. Wanzer (IA), National Executive Committeeman; Randall Coffman (KY), National Executive Committeeman; Robert A. Owen (ME), National Executive Committeeman; James F. Army (MA), National Executive Committeeman.

John E. Hayes (Mexico), National Executive Committeeman; Virgil V. Persing (MN), National Executive Committeeman; David N. Voyles (MO), National Executive Committeeman; Michael J. Landkamer (NE), National Executive

Committeeman; John E. Neylon (NH), National Executive Committeeman; Bruce Jorgensen (NM), National Executive Committeeman; Jerry L. Hedrick (NC), National Executive Committeeman; Carl W. Swisher (OH), National Executive Committeeman; Charles E. Schmidt (OR), National Executive Committeeman; Gerald N. Dennis (MI), National Executive Committeeman; Charles E. Langley (MS), National Executive Committeeman; Bob O. Beals (MT), National Executive Committeeman; Ron Gutzman (NV), National Executive Committeeman; William A. Rakestraw, Jr. (NJ), National Executive Committeeman; Paul Mitras (NY), National Executive Committeeman; Curtis O. Twete (ND), National Executive Committeeman; Bobby J. Longenbaugh (OK), National Executive Committeeman; Alfred Pirolli (PA), National Executive Committeeman.

William J. Kelly (Philippines), National Executive Committeeman; Ernest Gerundio (RI), National Executive Committeeman; Paul A. Evenson (SD), National Executive Committeeman; Ronald G. Cherry (TX), National Executive Committeeman; Leslie V. Howe (VT), National Executive Committeeman; William F. Schrier (WA), National Executive Committeeman; Arthur D. Herbison (WI), National Executive Committeeman; Carlos Orria-Medina (PR), National Executive Committeeman; Billy W. Bell (SC), National Executive Committeeman; Jennings B. Loring (TN), National Executive Committeeman; William E. Christoffersen (UT), National Executive Committeeman; Rob R. Gordon, Jr. (VA), National Executive Committeeman; William W. Kile (WV), National Executive Committeeman; —, for Irvin A. Quick (WY), National Executive Committeeman.

On the same day, the commander in chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, George Lisicki, also asked Speaker PELOSI and the Democrat leadership to put partisanship aside for the benefit of our Nation's veterans and troops. These pleas from the American Legion and the VFW follow on the heels of requests from Republican Members to both Speaker PELOSI and Democrat Senate Majority Leader HARRY REID on September 17 and October 4 urging them to begin conference work on the Veterans Appropriations bills. Unfortunately, it appears as though all these commonsense requests have fallen on deaf ears, and our Nation's veterans are being forced to pay the price for continued Democrat partisanship and lack of leadership on this issue.

At this time, I will insert into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD these two letters so that everyone watching today's debate across the country can see the efforts that have been made by the Republican Party to end this impasse on an important issue of providing adequate funding for those who have sacrificed so much on behalf of our country.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,  
Washington, DC, September 17, 2007.

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER  
U.S. Capitol,  
Washington, DC.

MADAM SPEAKER: We write to urge you in the strongest possible terms to reach a

prompt agreement on the conference report on the FY2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 2642). Few issues are more important than adequate funding for our nation's veterans. The leadership in the House cannot allow this critically important funding to fall victim to the usual partisan wrangling which occurs all too often in Washington.

Veterans should not be used as tools for political bargaining and gamesmanship. Both the House and Senate passed the FY08 MilCon-Veterans appropriations with overwhelming majorities because our commitment to veterans rises above partisan squabbling. Tragedies such as the recent revelations at Walter Reed Army Medical Center must never be repeated. The findings of insufficient care at Walter Reed and other facilities should be seen by Congress as a mandate to finish the work and live up to the promises we have made to our veterans.

After decades of flat funding, total VA budget rose from \$48 billion in FY 2001 to approximately \$70 billion in FY 2006, a 46 percent increase. This year, the House voted to increase funding by \$6 billion dollars over FY07, one of the largest in the 77 year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Both the Senate and House versions received overwhelming majority support passing by a vote of 409-2 in the House and 92-1 in the Senate.

Earlier in the year, the new Majority agreed they would continue the trend of significant increases in veterans funding begun by the Republican Congress. We ask you to honor that agreement and see that the commitment we made to our veterans is honored.

We must never forget the sacrifice of our veterans. As members of Congress, we have a solemn obligation to fulfill our promises to them. We ask for you to look past the heightened partisanship of our times and unite us on this issue by making it a first priority to quickly bring a stand alone Veterans appropriations bill through conference so the Congress may present the President with a bill by October 1, 2007.

We stand ready to assist you in reaching this goal.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,  
Washington, DC, October 4, 2007.  
OFFICE OF THE SENATE MAJORITY LEADER,  
U.S. Capitol,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER REID: We write today to ask you to keep the Senate in session the week of October 8, to help pass this year's veterans appropriations. Now that we are already into the new fiscal year, it is imperative that the House and Senate reach a prompt agreement on the conference report on the FY2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 2642).

It is unfortunate the Senate has been unable to act upon many of its Constitutionally mandated appropriations bills. While the House continues to wait upon the Senate to complete its work, we call upon you to quickly move veterans appropriations through conference so a final version of the bill may be passed and presented to the President. We believe that veterans issues rise above the partisan divisions of Washington which is evident by the passage of the FY08 MilCon-Veterans appropriations with overwhelming majorities in both Houses, 501-3 combined.

The Senate cannot allow this critically important funding to continue to fall victim to the usual partisan wrangling which occurs all too often in Washington. If tragedies such as the recent revelations at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are to be diverted in

the future, we must pass veterans funding now. From FY 2001 the total VA budget rose from \$48 billion to approximately \$70 billion in FY 2006, a 46 percent increase. This year, the House voted to increase funding by \$6 billion dollars over FY07, one of the largest in the 77 year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Because we have asked so much of our brave men and women in uniform during the War on Terror we must uphold our commitment to veterans upon their return home.

Earlier in the year, the new Majority agreed they would continue the trend of significant increases in veterans funding begun by the Republican Congress. We ask you to honor that agreement and see the commitment we made to our veterans is upheld.

We must never forget the sacrifice of our veterans. As members of Congress, we have a solemn obligation to fulfill our promises to them. We ask you to look past the heightened partisanship of our times and unite us on this issue by making it a first priority to bring a stand-alone veterans appropriations bill through conference so the Congress may present the President with a bill no later than October 12, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask all of my colleagues to support this motion to defeat the previous question so that we can put partisanship aside and move this important legislation forward.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important vote for each of the Members of Congress to decide whether we are going to move forward for the best interest of our military and veterans, or whether we are going to play partisan politics.

I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of the amendment and extraneous material in the RECORD just prior to the vote on the previous question.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that I couldn't disagree more with the gentleman's last comments. What I heard just does not even make any sense to me, having spent the last 5 years of my life sitting here watching this House debate veterans issues.

The first 4 years that I was here, we saw the Republican Congress that was in power at that time refuse to take up a number of measures that were brought forward by the Democratic minority at that time. In fact, there were several discharge petitions that laid languishing at that desk for weeks and weeks on end until they finally died at the end of the session because they never got the attention of the Republican majority at that time. In fact, this year, since we have taken back the House and we have become a Democratic majority, we have been champions of veterans issues. And to say that they want to now lay letters upon the table that they're demanding of the Speaker's attention, we have been putting attention on this issue for a number of years. And not only are we taking care of our veterans now for the

first time in 12 years, but we are taking care of it in a way that would surprise them. And our Nation's veterans are very grateful that we are finally giving them the respect they deserve.

And I will tell you that this House, by a vote of 409-2, passed the Veterans appropriations bill. And, yes, we do need to go to conference; but we will do that when the conferees are appointed in the Senate, when it is appropriate to do it. We have passed, this year, an additional appropriation of \$3.4 billion to take care of our Nation's veterans. We will, in fact, make sure that all the veterans are taken care of. In fact, on November 11 of this year we will celebrate tremendous respect for our Nation's veterans and will, in fact, do everything that we have promised to do, and more.

We just saw today three bills taken up by the Veterans' Committee to, in fact, take care of the needs of our Nation's veterans. And I am highly offended by the insinuation that we are in some way acting in a partisan way not to take care of our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to H.R. 1011, this bill is, in fact, an important bill to protect the natural resources of the State of Virginia, a vital area for our country. Mr. BOUCHER and the delegation from Virginia have done a fabulous job in crafting this proposal. It is a bill that preserves tens of thousands of acres of pristine wilderness in Jefferson National Forest. It is necessary that these beautiful, natural landscapes remain protected and untouched so that they may be enjoyed by our children and our grandchildren for years to come. It deserves the strong support of all the Members on the floor today.

That is the bill that we will be moving the previous question on. Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on the rule and on the previous question.

The material previously referred to by Mr. SESSIONS is as follows:

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 763 OFFERED BY MR. SESSIONS OF TEXAS

At the end of the resolution, add the following:

SEC. 3. The House disagrees to the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 2642, making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes, and agrees to the conference requested by the Senate thereon. The Speaker shall appoint conferees immediately, but may declare a recess under clause 12(a) of rule I for the purpose of consulting the Minority Leader prior to such appointment. The motion to instruct conferees otherwise in order pending the appointment of conferees instead shall be in order only at a time designated by the Speaker in the legislative schedule within two additional legislative days after adoption of this resolution.

(The information contained herein was provided by Democratic Minority on multiple occasions throughout the 109th Congress.)

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Democratic majority agenda and a vote to allow the opposition, at least for the moment, to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's *Precedents of the House of Representatives*, (VI, 308-311) describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as "a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge." To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that "the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition" in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: "The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition."

Because the vote today may look bad for the Democratic majority they will say "the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever." But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the definition of the previous question used in the *Floor Procedures Manual* published by the Rules Committee in the 109th Congress, (page 56). Here's how the Rules Committee described the rule using information from Congressional Quarterly's "American Congressional Dictionary": "If the previous question is defeated, control of debate shifts to the leading opposition member (usually the minority Floor Manager) who then manages an hour of debate and may offer a germane amendment to the pending business."

Deschler's *Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives*, the subchapter titled "Amending Special Rules" states: "a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate." (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon."

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Democratic majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. 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.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1483, CELEBRATING AMERICA'S HERITAGE ACT

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 765 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 765

*Resolved*, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 1483) to amend the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 to extend the authorization for certain national heritage areas, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources now printed in the bill, modified by the amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions of the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 1483 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

I yield myself such time as I may consume. I also ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 765.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 765 provides for consideration of H.R. 1483, the Celebrating America's Heritage Act. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate controlled by the Committee on Natural Resources and makes in order the substitute reported by the Committee on Natural Resources.

The rule also contains a self-executing provision to the base text consisting of a technical correction that