

in order to greatly expand the Federal Government.

Let me be clear. Virtually all the measures which go beyond the scope of the powers granted to the Federal Government by the 10th amendment are well-intentioned. But unfortunately, many of them are not authorized by the Constitution. The Federal Government has ignored the Constitution and expanded its authority into every aspect of human conduct, and quite sadly, it is not doing many of those things very well.

The size and scope of the Federal Government has exploded, and there is a belief that the Federal Government can do anything. And yet, that is not what the Founding Fathers intended.

For too long, the Federal Government has operated without constitutional restraint, blatantly ignoring the principles of federalism.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting a review and a criticism and an evaluation of the proper role of the Federal Government in order to empower the American people and to distribute power as the Constitution contemplated it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. SALI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SALI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an issue that is of vital importance to Idaho's First Congressional District, my State as a whole, and the greater western region of our country.

It is critical that Congress include language in the Emergency Supplemental to reauthorize and fully fund a 1-year extension of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. It affects more than 615 rural counties and 4,400 schools near national forests in 39 states and literally, tens of thousands of students.

Without reauthorization, in Idaho alone, we would lose \$23.3 million in funding this next year. That is a staggering loss in my small rural state.

In order to fully understand this issue we need to go back to the final year of Theodore Roosevelt's presidency to the establishment of the 1908 Payment Act for National Forests. Under this act, the Forest Service has paid 25 percent of its gross receipts to the states for the use of roads and schools in the counties where our national forests are located. The receipts come from leases, rentals, timber sales

or other fees paid for using the National forest lands or resources. This is especially critical in Idaho, where more than 60 percent of our land is federally managed.

Congress realized at the time it was difficult for rural communities to be financially independent if they were surrounded by Federal land. If we privatized the land in those counties, they would be collecting property tax. But they cannot because the land is managed by Uncle Sam.

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, or a bipartisan Craig-Wyden plan was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton to provide funding to offset the loss of revenues to counties resulting from the severely reduced Federal timber sales in rural communities. The laws kept schools opened, roads maintained, search-and-rescue missions operating and many other essential services afloat.

The 5-year time frame of the Craig-Wyden measure was designed to allow counties sufficient time to broaden their economic bases to replace historic timber sale income. The Federal timber sale program in Idaho has, to put it mildly, come up short. Idaho's communities want to log and carefully make use of the State's timber resources, but regulatory restrictions won't let them.

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And that is why we need to take action.

Allow me to cite one example. I have the good fortune of representing the people of Shoshone County. Shoshone County is a rural county with about 13,000 students. Shoshone County receives the second largest amount of funds under the Secure Rural Schools Act, about \$4.3 million. This is an already economically depressed community. About 75 percent of Shoshone County is in the Federal system, and yet the county is responsible to maintain more than 400 miles of public roads.

On my recent trip home just days ago, I had the opportunity to meet with Shoshone County commissioners and superintendents of public schools. For Shoshone County, losing these funds, 40 percent of their budget, means massive layoffs in an already small school system, loss of transportation for children to get to school, placing children in hazardous conditions to get to school. The road system needs constant care and maintenance. They can barely get by with what they have now.

We don't let Idahoans harvest timber. We expect them to maintain Federal roads. We provide them no fiscal relief or support. We want a top quality education for our children, but they have no economic base to raise even modest taxes.

Congress has to step in. We have to act now. First, in the short term, the solution is for Congress to approve a 1-

year extension of Craig-Wyden in the emergency supplemental. Second, while providing interim funding, Congress must come up with a long-term solution to this situation. I believe ultimately the answer lies in increasing timber harvesting.

The House Appropriations Committee will mark up the emergency supplemental this week. The emergency supplemental will be the last opportunity to address this issue before counties have to start implementing cuts to schools and services. Without a 1-year reauthorization of and funding for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, the predicament will be an emergency without rescue for hundreds and hundreds of rural counties across America.

I want to urge my colleagues to support this crucial 1-year extension.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LAND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, today the Federal Government owns over 30 percent of the land in this country. State and local governments and quasi-governmental agencies are controlling the other 20 percent. Half the land, 50 percent, is in some type of government or public ownership or control.

We could probably live with this, but the problem is that government at all levels keeps taking over more and more property at a faster rate than ever before.

People don't get upset unless or until their property gets taken. And it sounds great for a politician to create a park, but now we have so many parks, recreation areas, nature preserves, national forests, and on and on that we can't take care of all of them.

We are constantly being told we have a mega-billion-dollar maintenance backlog for the national parks and all these other public areas; yet we keep taking over more land. You really can never satisfy government's appetite for money or land.

We just do not teach our young people how important private property is to both our freedom and our prosperity. We see this most clearly in the fact that counties that have high percentages of public land are almost always poverty areas or at least counties with incomes far below the national average. Also, because we keep taking so much land off the tax rolls, we keep shrinking our tax base at the same time that all of the schools and government agencies tell us they need more money.

Now almost every State has gone to lotteries, casinos, or some type of gambling in a desperate attempt to get more revenue because property taxes just don't raise enough money since so much land has been taken off the tax rolls. Because of this, I believe gambling addiction is going to become a real problem in this country in the years ahead.

Another part of this problem is that government at all levels keeps putting more and more restrictions on the land that remains in private hands. The Washington Post had a headline a few months ago that said: "Judge Saves Land From Development." It might also have said: "Judge Preserves Land for Wealthy" or "Judge Keeps Young People From Buying Homes."

Preventing more land from development is driving up the cost of homeownership and putting it out of reach for many young families. It is also forcing more people into apartments or townhouses or homes on postage-stamp-size lots, leading to new problems from congestion.

The Washington Times pointed out that more than five times as much land, more than five times as much land, has been set aside as national parks, wilderness areas, Federal forests, and Federal grazing areas than has ever been developed. Today, you could put every family of four in the State of Texas and give them 3 acres of lands each and leave the whole rest of the country empty. Over three-fourths of the population lives on 3½ percent of the land.

USA Today reported last November 30 that the U.S. now has 37 million acres of private land under some type of protective trust or restrictive easement, a 54 percent increase just since 2000. Also, conservation of private land from 2000 to 2005 averaged 2.6 million acres a year, which USA Today said was almost half the size of New Jersey, each year. This is information from the Land Trust Alliance, which represents 1,200 of the 1,667 local, State, and national land trusts.

Another group, the Nature Conservancy, manages 1,400 areas in the U.S. and now has assets of \$4.14 billion. Some people will recall The Washington Post series about the sweetheart deals the Nature Conservancy was doing for its wealthy contributors and board members. The Nature Conservancy had income of \$1.8 billion in 2004 and 2005 and has set aside 15 million acres. According to its tax returns, the Nature Conservancy in fiscal year 2005 received over \$97 million in government grants, over \$14 million in government fees and contracts, and over \$165 million from sales of land almost all to government. All this is always reported in the news as the greatest thing since sliced bread; but unless these activities are slowed, which is very doubtful, young people will find it extremely difficult to find places to start small businesses or build new homes. Also, there will be less money

for people to travel to and enjoy all the parks, preserves, national forests, and recreation areas we already have.

Mr. Speaker, if we keep taking more and more property off the tax rolls, we are going to really cut back on government services. Much worse, if we keep destroying private property and restricting development, we are going to slowly do away with the dream of homeownership and we are eventually going to bring about a lower standard of living for our children and grandchildren.

OUR MILITARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I have long believed that how we treat the most vulnerable in society says a great deal about who we are as a Nation. So you can imagine that I, along with tens of millions of Americans, was appalled at the recent revelations in the media about the care at the outpatient facility at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Now, let me say, having visited Walter Reed more than once with my wife to visit injured Hoosier soldiers returning from battle, that there are, in fact, dedicated caregivers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, doctors and nurses and members of the facility staff who spend their days and nights helping the wounded. But the now infamous Building 18, a decrepit former hotel outside the main gates of Walter Reed, has come to public notice. It housed more than 80 soldiers. With moldy walls, soiled carpets, leaky pipes, mice, and cockroach infested, this facility was a national embarrassment.

I am outraged that our wounded warriors were forced to endure these terrible conditions. Our troops deserve better care, and they deserve it as soon as possible.

But more than the filthy living conditions, Mr. Speaker, the dirty secret of the military health care system in this country is that our injured veterans, after navigating the dangers of the battlefield, must navigate a bureaucratic morass to get the care they deserve. After receiving lifesaving surgeries at military facilities, wounded soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines must negotiate an overwhelming amount of red tape. I have seen it firsthand, working with families attempting to make their way through our veterans' and military health care system.

I was at the President's speech this morning at the 47th annual gathering at the American Legion as the President said that these bureaucratic delays as well as these living conditions must come to an end. The President said, "It is unacceptable to me. It is unacceptable to you. It is unacceptable to our country. And it is not going to continue."

I applaud the President and Secretary Gates for all they have done to hold the entire chain of command responsible for the conditions at Walter Reed, but we must do more to fundamentally bring reform to the system whereby we provide health care services to our veterans.

Today, the American Legion signed an agreement, for instance, with Walter Reed Army Medical Center to establish an office at the facility to assist in the transition of wounded servicemembers from the Department of Defense to the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is a good start. The hope is that the legion office will significantly alleviate the long backlogs in out-processing wounded soldiers. Thank God for these veterans who are willing to help.

As a fiscal conservative, I have long called for smaller, more accountable government. In the area of military health care, we need now, more than ever, more accountable government. I appreciate the President's emphasis on the need to improve the delivery of services and not just throw more money at it. Washington D.C. and especially this Congress under current management and, quite frankly, prior management often solves problems by throwing more money at it. But assuming Congress enacts the President's 2008 budget, the VA health care budget alone will be up 83 percent since he took office.

Money alone is not the answer. We must change the way we serve the medical needs of those who have served us in uniform. We need substantive reforms, and it is my hope that the Dole-Shalala Commission and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs task force that the President announced this morning are able to meet those immediate needs.

The President said, and I would echo today, "We have a moral obligation to provide the best possible care and treatment to the men and women who have served our country. They deserve it, and they're going to get it."

But let us not just solve the problem with more money, with changes in the chain of command. Let us work in a bipartisan way in this Congress to fundamentally bring changes to our health care system that serves our military, that serves our veterans, that ultimately will rise to the level that each one of them deserves.

The Old Book says if you owe debts, pay debts; if honor, then honor; if respect, then respect. One of the ways that our Nation discharges a debt that we cannot ever fully repay to those who have worn the uniform is to ensure that they receive the medical treatment that they so richly deserve. And I commit myself to that today.

THE ENUMERATED POWERS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.