

As the second largest container shipping port in the U.S., the Sound is extremely important to the State and Nation as a whole.

The watershed that feeds the Sound includes several large population centers, but is also home to significant agriculture production, including many specialty crops including raspberries, flower bulbs and vegetable seeds. Agriculture contributes \$5.6 billion to Washington State's economy, establishing its rank in agriculture production as 12th in the Nation.

Unfortunately, the Puget Sound region is undergoing tremendous change as more people move into the region and water quality and soil concerns increase. The bill before us today helps address these environmental concerns by encouraging agricultural producers in the region to adopt voluntary conservation practices.

The bill also requires a comprehensive plan to encourage cooperation among the multiple agencies and landowners in the region. Many farms in the Puget Sound are adjacent to endangered salmon-bearing streams and bear the brunt of protection for these and other endangered species.

These regulatory requirements place significant burden on producers struggling to stay on the land. We must continue to encourage cooperation and proactive partnerships with producers in this region, as well as the other heavily agricultural regions in the country, helping to keep producers on the land and keep the Nation's agricultural economy healthy and diverse.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Washington, (Mr. LARSEN), an original co-sponsor of the bill.

□ 1715

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN for speaking on behalf of this critical legislation. I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member of the Committee on Agriculture as well for helping bring H.R. 3184 to the floor.

The livelihoods of many families in Washington State depend upon the health and vitality of the Puget Sound. Unfortunately, as we already heard, there is no denying the health of the Puget Sound has been declining. Salmon and other species call the sound home and are either threatened or endangered. Water quality is extremely poor in certain places, and some aquatic species have shown harmful levels of toxins.

Agriculture is a large and important part of the economy in the Puget Sound region, and I represent much of it; and we do not want to see our ag economy decline either. Ag producers face the constant challenge of keeping good ag land in production while being

responsible stewards of the land and of the Puget Sound watershed. That is why the State of Washington and our State's Governor Chris Gregoire have led the charge in pulling together ag producers, business, industry, and local nonprofits and many others to develop long-term strategies to restore the Puget Sound.

However, our State cannot do it alone. This legislation takes a first step, and only a first step, to provide critical Federal support to those efforts by developing a competitive, comprehensive, conservation program to help determine the right conservation planning efforts for local agriculture producers. As well, again, this is only a small piece of the puzzle. Most of that puzzle will come from State and local governments.

These types of efforts have been done or are being done in other areas of the country. The results of comprehensive conservation planning helps ag producers make smart conservation decisions and investments, and, in turn, takes important steps restoring the health of the Puget Sound. This bill will provide the capacity that local conservation districts simply do not have in meeting the unique challenges of this critical watershed.

Ag producers in Washington State have a role to play in protecting the health of the Puget Sound, and they are more than willing to do their part, but we need a comprehensive conservation strategy to get that job done, and that is what H.R. 3184 helps us do. I urge the passage of H.R. 3184 and again thank the chairman and the ranking member of the committee for helping to bring this to the floor.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3184, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out a competitive grant program for the Puget Sound area to provide comprehensive conservation planning to address water quality.

For generations, Puget Sound has been the most important geographic feature driving human settlement in the region—first Native American communities followed by the 4 million people who now call it home. With 2,500 miles of shoreline and 2,800 square miles of inland marine waters, it is the second largest estuary in the United States after Chesapeake Bay. Puget Sound is environmentally, culturally and economically linked to Washington State's way of life and it is truly one of America's most spectacular bodies of water, with more than 200 species of fish, 25 kinds of marine mammals, 100 species of sea birds as well as clams, oysters and shrimp.

But the health of Puget Sound is in decline—its waters are experiencing the stress of growth and development and its ability to sustain the abundant fishery we've always enjoyed is in doubt. Around the Sound we have detected low levels of oxygen and increasing concentrations of toxic substances in aquatic animals. With the overall health of this great ecosystem in decline, we have launched a cooperative effort involving all of the local government entities around the Sound, as well as the State and Federal governments, to curtail any harmful substances from being introduced

into its waters, to change unwise industrial and agricultural practices and to continue aggressively our research into the causes of pollution in this historically pristine inland sea.

One of our responses must be to encourage innovation and action at the local level and to help local communities recognize the importance of incremental actions in the overall solution. Congressman RICK LARSEN and I have introduced H.R. 3184, the "Puget Sound Watershed Comprehensive Conservation Project Act of 2007." This legislation is supported by all Members of the Washington State congressional delegation. It would authorize a total of \$25 million in grants to assist non-Federal governmental or non-governmental organizations, Tribes, and individuals in implementing land management practices and projects that improve water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife in the Puget Sound watershed.

H.R. 3184 authorizes conservation projects that will target innovative conservation measures where they do the most good. The program is intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.

Mr. Speaker, the Federal government is playing a very important role in restoring the health of Puget Sound, and I believe H.R. 3184 can make a vital contribution to this effort. I urge adoption of the resolution.

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

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3184.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill just adopted.

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

There was no objection.

EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMS

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3206) to provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 through December 15, 2007, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3206

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

SECTION 1. ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF PROGRAMS UNDER THE SMALL BUSINESS ACT AND THE SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENT ACT OF 1958.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1 of the Act entitled “An Act to extend temporarily certain authorities of the Small Business Administration”, approved October 10, 2006 (Public Law 109-316; 120 Stat. 1742), as amended by section 1 of Public Law 110-4 (121 Stat. 7), is further amended by striking “July 31, 2007” each place it appears and inserting “December 15, 2007”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on July 31, 2007.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, the legislation being offered today will extend the authorization of the Small Business Administration and its programs through December 15, 2007.

As Congress moves forward on improving SBA and the services it provides, this short-term extension will ensure that small businesses have many of the tools they need to be successful in today's economy.

I am pleased to say the Small Business Administration Committee has made significant progress in making long overdue improvements to this agency. During the 110th Congress, the House Small Business Committee has successfully reported nearly a dozen bills, each designed to update and upgrade SBA programs to meet the needs of the 21st-century entrepreneur.

Nearly all of this legislation has been passed out of the House, and every single bill has had broad bipartisan support. With their passage, we are well on our way to providing the most significant overhaul of the Small Business Administration and its programs in at least two decades.

During this Congress, the House Small Business Committee has successfully moved forward on legislation that will provide affordable loans to entrepreneurs, prevent large corporations from being awarded small business contracts, and ensure veterans, women, and minority-owned firms have access to the assistance that they need. And in light of the failures we saw during Katrina, the committee reported a bill that will improve SBA's disaster loan program. This has been completed in a span of a little over 6 months.

Our committee has been able to provide these changes due to the out-

standing leadership of Ranking Member CHABOT and our Chair, Nydia Velazquez. They have worked in a bipartisan manner to provide the necessary tools for this Nation's small businesses.

The extension before us today will allow the committees in the House and Senate to work out the differences in their bills and get them signed into law. These major changes require time to reconcile the House and Senate bills. H.R. 3206 provides the necessary time while ensuring operation of these programs are not interrupted. I urge support of this extension.

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

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

I rise today in support of H.R. 3206. This bill is very simple: it extends the authorization of all programs authorized by the Small Business Act, the Small Business Investment Act, and any program operated by the Small Business Administration for which Congress has already appropriated funds. This extension will last until December 15, 2007. This extension is necessary because authorization for various programs operated by the SBA ceases on July 31, 2007, tomorrow.

Working in a bipartisan manner with Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ and myself, the committee has ordered 12 bills to be reported out, of which nine have passed this body, the House of Representatives.

While the pace has been furious, more needs to be done in the examination of programs within the committee's jurisdiction. These include small business government contracting programs, investment programs for small businesses, and improving the management of the SBA.

This work cannot be done in a deliberative, thoughtful, and bipartisan manner by midnight tomorrow. Even if the committee and the House finish its deliberations on all aspects of the SBA and its programs, we operate, after all, in a bicameral legislative system. Time is needed for the legislative process in both bodies to function and, if necessary, for the two bodies to meet in a conference to iron out any disagreements concerning each body's deliberations about how best to ensure that the SBA and its myriad programs are best promoting the health of America's entrepreneurs. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3206.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3206.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 986, EIGHTMILE WILD AND SCENIC RIVER ACT

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 580 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 580

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 986) to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain segments of the Eightmile River in the State of Connecticut as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, 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. 986 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 gentleman from Florida is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS). During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

I yield myself such time as I may consume.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be allowed 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 580.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 580 will allow the House to consider H.R. 986, the Eightmile Wild and Scenic River Act.

Additionally, this rule makes a technical correction in the underlying bill by replacing a letter “a” with a letter “b” in the legislative text.

The rule provides 1 hour of debate in the House equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources.

Mr. Speaker, the Eightmile Wild and Scenic River Act, H.R. 986, was considered under suspension of the rules on