

see prices plummet just as easily as it saw prices skyrocket, and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns that decimate entire crops in mere seconds.

Despite those worries, I am even more concerned by those who view this bill as not having reformed our commodity programs enough.

No, not every single reform requested by President Bush has been met. No, we haven't reduced the AGI to \$200,000, or completely rearranged the accounting in this bill to deal with the changing baselines and budgetary gimmicking touted by the White House.

But, there has been meaningful compromise on behalf of the lawmakers to whom this legislation is most important. This legislation meets the White House demands by more than half way; this legislation represents billions of dollars to not just rural America, but to people living in every corner of this country.

And, if we can spend billions of dollars fighting a war and rebuilding another country, including supporting that country's land use and agriculture programs, I think we ought to be able to find it within our means here in Congress to support American agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, we must pass this conference report today, and we must do it by a sizable margin to send a message to the President that we will not be bullied by his negotiating tactics.

Today, I say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle "Let us not let the 'perfect' be the enemy of the 'good'." Let us pass this conference report today for our farmers and the others across this great Nation who rely on a safe and domestically grown food source.

STATEMENT FOR INTRODUCTION NASA AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2008

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the "NASA Authorization Act of 2008", a bill to reauthorize the programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for fiscal year 2009. I am pleased that Science and Technology Committee Chairman BART GORDON, Ranking Minority Member RALPH HALL, and Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Ranking Minority Member TOM FEENEY are joining me as original cosponsors. Their cosponsorship demonstrates the bipartisan nature of the support for NASA in this Congress, and I want to thank them for their efforts in helping to develop this legislation.

In addition to providing funding and programmatic direction for fiscal year 2009, this bill is also intended to provide congressional guidance for the next Administration relative to NASA. I believe that it is critically important for Congress to do so. Without a clear statement of congressional priorities and policies for the Nation's civil space and aeronautics enterprise, we run the risk of wasting both time and scarce resources during and after the transition from one Administration to the next. I want to avoid such an outcome if at all possible.

Madam Speaker, 2008 marks the 50th anniversary of the birth of the U.S. space program

and the establishment of NASA. NASA has accomplished a great deal in both space and aeronautical R&D over those past five decades, and we can all take pride in what has been accomplished. However, we cannot become complacent. If we fail to invest adequately in NASA now, it is unlikely that we will see a comparable record of accomplishment over the next five decades—at a great opportunity cost to the Nation.

That is because NASA's programs are strongly relevant to addressing the Nation's needs. In short, a properly balanced and focused NASA portfolio can pay large dividends to our society as well as to our standing in the world, and maximizing the value of the NASA portfolio to the Nation is one of the main goals of the NASA Authorization Act of 2008.

Thus, the bill emphasizes a number of important areas—areas that demonstrate the role that NASA can and should play in improving the quality of life of our citizens, enhancing our economic vitality, demonstrating American leadership in the international arena through the pursuit of challenging scientific and technological goals, and helping to advance knowledge.

To that end, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 establishes a role for NASA in leading a cooperative international effort on Earth observations research and applications, especially with respect to climate change—one of the major challenges facing our generation. It builds on the recommendations of the National Academies' Earth sciences and applications decadal survey to outline a robust and challenging agenda for NASA to pursue that will help us better understand the causes and impacts of climate change as well as other Earth system phenomena. It is an agenda that will also maximize the opportunities for transitioning those research results into applications that can benefit our society in a myriad of ways.

NASA's aeronautics research program is one of the most relevant activities that NASA undertakes as it impacts both public safety and our national economy, and the bill provides guidance to ensure that that aeronautics program will regain its former health and focus so that it can continue to contribute to the wellbeing of the nation. That guidance takes several forms. For example, the legislation provides enhanced funding for aeronautics, but it makes clear that the additional funding is to be used to take NASA's aeronautics research activities to a sufficiently mature state so that the results of that research can be transitioned to the commercial sector as well as to key public sector users. One of the most important examples of the latter is the interagency initiative to develop the next generation air transportation system for the nation, known as NextGen—a program that will improve both the safety and efficiency of our air travel system. The bill makes it clear that we need to do all we can to ensure that the aircraft of the future leave as small an impact on the environment as possible, whether it be noise, energy consumption, or harmful emissions—and that NASA has a critical role to play in that effort. And the bill requires an external review of NASA's aviation safety research to make sure that it is doing all that it can to protect the flying public.

Finally, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 recognizes that America's human space flight activities are not, and should not, be an end

in themselves. We need a results-oriented human space flight program that serves the nation's geopolitical goals in addition to advancing America's exploration of outer space. I believe that we provide the foundation for such a results-oriented approach in the bill I am introducing today. Thus, the bill includes provisions to ensure that the International Space Station—a unique orbiting R&D facility that represents a significant investment of resources by both American citizens and those of a host of other nations—will be utilized in as productive manner as possible.

In addition, the ISS is a compelling example of the value of undertaking a cooperative approach to space exploration that we would do well to emulate as we embark on exploration beyond low Earth orbit. To that end, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 makes clear that any human exploration initiative to return to the Moon and venture to other destinations in the solar system should be undertaken as a cooperative international undertaking under U.S. leadership—and that such a cooperative approach will have the best chance of being successfully sustained if the President is personally involved in inviting our friends and allies to participate in such a venture.

It is clear that the 21st century will see the emergence and growth of ambitious human space flight programs carried out by a number of nations. It is not in our national interest to get drawn into rerunning a "space race" that we already won almost 40 years ago. Instead, we should be looking to leverage that emerging global interest to promote a peaceful, cooperative approach to space exploration under American leadership. Such an approach can provide a compelling "soft power" rationale for NASA's human exploration program and be an approach that will deliver clear benefits to America beyond just the demonstration of our technological prowess and national commitment to space exploration.

Madam Speaker, those are just three ways in which continued investment in and support for a properly focused NASA can deliver important benefits to the nation, especially if NASA works hand in hand with our colleges and universities and our commercial sector. However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the important way in which NASA's basic and applied research activities help advance America's competitiveness and promote innovation as well as helping inspire and educate the nation's next generation of scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians. That is why I and many of my colleagues consider NASA to be just as much a part of America's innovation agenda as the other agencies called out for support in the "America COMPETES Act" that was enacted into law last year. This bill recognizes that reality and puts NASA on the same doubling path as those agencies.

However, NASA will not be able to contribute effectively in the ways I have just outlined unless we not only invest adequately in NASA's programs but, equally importantly, direct those investments in ways that maximize their utility. Thus the bill contains a number of provisions focused on each of NASA's main mission areas to ensure that NASA can make the best use of its capabilities to advance the nation's space and aeronautics agenda.

Madam Speaker, I am a passionate believer in the value of America's space and aeronautics programs and the role that NASA can

play in delivering significant benefits to the American people. I believe that the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 that I am introducing today will go a long way towards positioning the agency for a productive future when the next Administration takes office, and I hope that Members will support it.

CONGRATULATING DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT
DALE ENGQUIST OF MICHIGAN
CITY, INDIANA

HON. JOE DONNELLY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Dale Engquist of Michigan City, Indiana for receiving the Distinguished Service Award for his dedicated work for the National Park Service.

Dale Engquist has been with the National Park Service for 19 years. He has proven his leadership skills through developing partnerships and cooperative programs and providing collaborative opportunities for a diverse and complex audience. During Mr. Engquist's extensive career with the National Park Service, he increased the lakeshore at the Indiana Dunes by 15 percent and developed an educational program that serves over 35,000 students each year at the Paul Douglas Center for Environmental Education. Mr. Engquist is also responsible for the partnership formed between local community governments, LaPorte County, and the State of Indiana that collaborated to build a new visitor center, which is set to increase contacts with visitors to the area by 500 percent.

Mr. Engquist's vision and passion led to the development of a network of community organizations, state agencies, and environmental organizations to combat invasive species, which have been a pervasive problem along the southern tip of Lake Michigan. His participation on the Executive Steering Committee of the Chicago Wilderness greatly increased the awareness of the region to the biologically diverse and sensitive nature of the Indiana Dunes. Mr. Engquist has also signed a sister park agreement with Kampinoski National Park of Poland, formally providing opportunities for each park to meet and exchange ideas and information about resource management and education.

Due to his extended commitment to both residents and visitors to Indiana's Second District, it is my pleasure to rise today to honor Dale Engquist for receiving the Distinguished Service Award for his long and accomplished career with the National Park Service.

NATIONAL TRAIN DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support of H. Res. 1176, Supporting the goals and ideals of National Train Day, as a Member who appreciates and rec-

ognizes the vital role of trains in our economy and as a passenger who commutes between New York and Washington, DC, on the Amtrak Acela. I find my commute by train a convenient, efficient and relaxing way to travel that enables me to read and work in comfort and arrive refreshed, usually on time, and downtown, closer to my destination. I praise the efforts of visionary leaders who over the years have advocated the preservation and modernization of passenger rail service.

Trains have played a vital and historic role in this country, transporting cargo and passengers since the early 19th century, when the first steam locomotive was built by engineer George Stephenson. Without the creation of the steam engine, the Industrial Revolution would not have occurred and our great country would not have been able to prosper as much as it has. In 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was completed. Known as the 'golden pike,' it connected both the east and west coast of the United States, linking our Nation and bridging the geographical divide like never before.

Although there are a greater number of modes of transportation—planes, cars, buses—than there were in the early 1800s, trains are still relied on to transport large amounts of freight and millions of people every day. They have reduced congestion in major cities, helping to reduce pollution connecting people in rural areas to urban centers.

The history of trains has come a long way, from burning coal and going only 130 km/h to high-speed trains that can go from 200 km/h to 350 km/h and are electrically driven by overhead cables. Trains are constantly changing and improving. Due to global warming and greenhouse effects, trains now run more fuel efficiently, emitting only 0.2 percent of the travel industry's total greenhouse gases.

I support National Train Day because the train industry has been an important part of America's story and its economic development, as well as a large part of Americans' day-to-day lives.

TRIBUTE TO HARVEY SCHECTER

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to my dear friends of more than 30 years, Hope and Harvey Schechter. They are being honored at the 7th Annual Hillel 818 Dinner Celebration for their generous support and outstanding contributions to Los Angeles Valley College and to our community.

I have had the pleasure of working with Hope and Harvey throughout the years on many important issues of concern to the San Fernando Valley, the State of California and our Nation. I value their counsel, respect their knowledge and appreciate the help they have given me in my career.

Harvey is a remarkable individual who has dedicated his life to protecting our civil rights and combating anti-Semitism and racial discrimination. From 1952, when he began his impressive career with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), until 1993 when he retired as Western States Regional Director of the ADL Foundation, he has been at the forefront on

critical humanitarian issues of concern to the ADL, the Jewish community and the world at large. Harvey has been a mentor, confidant, friend, teacher and inspiration to others during his career. His speeches, writings, and incomparable wit have enriched all who have had the good fortune to know him.

Following Harvey's retirement from the ADL, he rediscovered the joy of learning at Los Angeles Valley College. He touched the lives of hundreds of students as he shared with them the knowledge he has gained in his 84 years.

Hope is an outstanding example of the American dream. Born in a small mining town in Arizona to Mexican-American parents who spoke no English, she overcame tremendous challenges to achieve great success. After dropping out of high school, she worked at menial jobs, including as an underpaid garment industry worker. Her personal experience with the injustices to unskilled workers led her to a career as a union organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. She helped improve the quality of life for hundreds of workers by her determination, positive attitude and resilience. Her career includes many significant contributions to our community, including Community Service Organizer, fighting for safe neighborhoods, establishing the first Head Start Operation in Los Angeles County, helping resolve racial issues as a member of the Board of Directors of the Council of Mexican American Affairs and many more. She became a Certified Court Reporter, established her own firm and was the first woman elected President of the General Court Reporters Association. During my brief period in law practice, Hope was my court reporter of choice.

Beyond her community contributions, Hope has been a valuable asset to the California Democratic Party, serving for many years on the California Democratic State Central Committee in a number of leadership positions and volunteering her time and efforts to numerous political campaigns. Hope's dedication and tireless efforts on behalf of our community are an inspiration to us all.

Hope and Harvey recently celebrated 53 years of a wonderful marriage. Although they have no children of their own, they have been "adopted" as parents by more than one hundred young people they have met on the campus and in the community.

I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in honoring two special people who's caring and contributions have benefited so many.

THE NEW RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, on May 7th, Dmitri Medvedev was sworn in as the new Russian President. It remains to be seen if he will be more than just a puppet controlled by Prime Minister Putin, but if the President's victory speech is any indication, we should expect a "direct continuation" of Putin's inflexible policies.

As Russia desires to regain its stance as a major world power, rest assured Putin and Medvedev will stop at nothing to achieve this. As Americans, we should be wary of Putin's legacy of government corruption, diminished democracy, and antagonistic stance