With early diagnosis and ongoing treatment, however, 90 percent of the cases where blindness occurs can be avoided. Awareness is crucial, so that individuals with known risk factors for glaucoma and those over the age of 40 should have regular, comprehensive eye examinations that include careful evaluation of the optic nerve and measurement of eye pressure.

So Mr. Speaker, I am happy today that the House of Representatives is considering this resolution, which seeks to expand global awareness about the incidence and burden of glaucoma.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize the American Glaucoma Society for its efforts to expand awareness of the prevalence and economic burden of glaucoma. Their advocacy surrounding the first-ever World Glaucoma Day has been truly valuable in promoting eye health.

Mr. TOWNS. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 981, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. TOWNS. 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 and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1112) recognizing 2008 as the International Year of the Reef.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1112

Whereas the International Coral Reef Initiative has designated 2008 as the International Year of the Reef;

Whereas the International Year of the Reef is a global effort to raise public awareness of the value of coral reefs and the significance of the threats faced by coral reef systems, and to mobilize action to develop and implement innovative solutions and strategies to protect and conserve these important natural resources;

Whereas over 225 organizations in 50 countries and territories participated during the first International Year of the Reef in 1997;

Whereas coral reef systems provide economic, environmental, and cultural benefits to millions of people around the world and are vital in protecting shorelines and supporting coastal economies;

Whereas coral reef systems are the most diverse ecosystem on earth, supporting at least 1,000,000 known species of plants and animals and 25 percent of all marine life;

Whereas coral reef systems contribute $375,000,000,000 each year to the worldwide economy;

Whereas over 50 percent of all federally managed fisheries species in the U.S. depend upon coral reefs for part of their life cycle;

Whereas coral reef systems provide for one-fourth of the total fish catch in the developing world;

Whereas coral reefs around the world are confronted by many grave threats, including destructive fishing methods, damage by marine vessels and divers, development, pollution, ocean acidification, increasing sea temperatures, bleaching, and invasive species; and

Whereas increased public awareness, as well as public and private investment, can prevent the further degradation of the world's coral reef systems in order to preserve this precious resource for future generations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the United States House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the International Year of the Reef;

(2) supports strong programs in environmental and marine research at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other Federal agencies to better understand the threats faced by coral reef systems;

(3) supports the efforts of the International Coral Reef Initiative to promote public awareness and encourage public stewardship of the world's coral reefs; and

(4) encourages further research and development efforts to preserve coral reefs around the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) and the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H. Res. 1112, the resolution now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

I am very pleased to be here today to speak in support of H. Res. 1112, a resolution I have introduced with my friend from Illinois, MARK KIRK. The resolution expresses the support of the House of Representatives for the International Coral Reef Initiative designation of the year 2008 as the International Year of the Reef, and for strong environmental and marine research efforts that will allow us to better understand the threats facing the planet's coral reef systems.

From the Great Barrier Reef that spans over 1,600 miles just off Australia's northeast coast, to the coral reefs found within the Red Sea, to the coral reef system that began forming off the Florida coast nearly 7,000 years ago, coral reefs are among the most vibrant and diverse ecosystems on the planet. Known as the Rain Forest of the Sea, these important treasures are not only the source of food and shelter to millions of sea creatures, they also provide environmental, cultural, and economic value for people around the world.

However, coral reefs across the planet are in peril and face an uncertain future. Global estimates suggest that 10 percent of the earth's coral reefs have already been seriously degraded, and an even greater share of reefs face serious decline. Rising sea temperatures, damage by divers and marine vessels, pollution, and other manmade threats have raised the specter that over the next century, a vast number of the world's coral reef systems will cease to exist.

One of the most troubling threats facing coral reefs is ocean acidification, a phenomenon that occurs when the ocean becomes so acidic that corals and other shell-making organisms are unable to produce the calcium carbonate or to use the calcium carbonate that they need to form their shells. Another disturbing trend is the onset of coral bleaching, which results from rising sea temperatures causing corals to expel the algae that live within their tissues and provide the corals' different colors. Once the algae has been expelled, corals lose their color and, lacking the nourishment provided by photosynthesis that algae provides, the coral dies.

In 1994, recognizing the increasing degradation of the world reefs, the U.S. partnered with other countries to establish the International Coral Reef Initiative. Through its efforts, the International Coral Reef Initiative has mobilized regional and national governments to pursue science-based management of coral reef systems, spurred the establishment of coordinated coral reef protection efforts, and assembled organizations and stakeholders throughout the world to address pollution and other manmade threats that imperil the coral reefs of the world.

The International Coral Reef Initiative has declared 2008 the International Year of the Reef. The Initiative is leading an international effort to continue to bring the preservation of coral reefs into the global spotlight so that we can do what needs to be done to protect these vital national resources for generations to come.

I would like to commend the International Coral Reef Initiative for its efforts and express my enthusiasm for the level of interest, participation, and action that has been generated as a result of its work. I would also like to thank Chairman GORDON and Ranking Member HALL, as well as their staff, for bringing this resolution to the floor. I look forward to working with them further to ensure that the world's coral reefs are protected and preserved, and I urge passage of the resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 1112, recognizing 2008 as the International Year of the Reef. For almost 15 years, the United States has been an active participant

in the protection of coral reefs around the world. In 1994, the U.S. was one of the founding governments of the International Coral Reef Initiative, ICRI. ICRI is a partnership among governments, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations that strive to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems. This year, the U.S. and Mexico share responsibilities for the joint secretariat of the ICRI.

The first International Year of the Reef was designated by ICRI in 1997, and this campaign proved to be very successful. Over 225 organizations in more than 50 countries participated and helped raise awareness of the importance of coral reef conservation and catalyzed international conversations and national level policy initiatives. This was certainly true in the U.S.A. when in 1998 an executive order established the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force that led to coordination and the strengthening of U.S. Government actions to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. In 2000, this task force developed the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs, a comprehensive strategy to conserve those coral reefs.

An example of the commitment of the U.S. Government to such coral reef conservation efforts included the establishment in 2006 of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument. President Bush set aside almost 140,000 square miles to receive the most extensive maritime environmental protection permitted under U.S. law. This national monument, which is, by the way, the largest in the U.S., includes a substantial number of coral reefs and related ecosystems.

The goals of the 2008 International Year of the Reef campaign include strengthening awareness about the ecology, economic and cultural value of coral reefs; improving understanding of critical threat to reefs and generating both innovative and practical solutions to reduce such threats; and action to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of coral reefs.

These worthwhile objectives will ensure the continued awareness of the American people in the environments that are not only beautiful, but provide substantial economic benefits. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will lead the U.S. effort on this campaign, and I applaud NOAA's hard work in preserving coral reefs for the enjoyment of future generations. Their dedication does not go unnoticed in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 1112.

And with that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Oklahoma. He and I have had the privilege firsthand of visiting some of the endangered reefs and hearing from some of the world's leading experts, and his eloquent comments about the leadership of our Nation in this regard are well put.

I have no speakers at this time, and would reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Washington, it has indeed been a pleasure to work with, and we have accomplished many things.

With that, I would like to yield such time as he might consume to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

Mr. KIRK. I thank my colleague from Oklahoma, and appreciate the leadership, and especially my friend from Washington for bringing forward this legislation. It is a strong resolution that follows up on a congressional recognition of 2008 as the International Year of the Reef in support of research and development to preserve coral reefs around the world.

We all know that coral reef systems are vital to the ecology of our planet. They provide food and jobs and recreation to millions of people around the world. Most importantly, they provide key environmental benefits, including resistance to climate change and protection of shorelines from harmful erosion.

Coral reefs and their surrounding ecosystems are now under siege. They face damage from marine vessels, destructive fishing methods, development, and especially increased ocean pollution. Climate change has contributed to increasing sea temperatures, which also threaten these critical habitats. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 60 percent of the world's coral reefs may be destroyed by the year 2050 if the present rate of destruction continues.

The International Coral Reef Initiative deemed 2008 as the International Year of the Reef. It established a global campaign to raise awareness about the value and importance of coral reefs and their threats to sustainability. The effort also aims to mobilize action to develop and implement innovative solutions and strategies to protect and preserve this important natural resource.

It's very important for the United States to lend its support and resources to this effort. I would also say it's very important for the Congress to complete its work on another piece of legislation that my friend and I backed, the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act, H.R. 2185. My colleague, Mr. BAIRD, and I supported this resolution, which is based on legislation coauthored by myself and Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. It would offer a key ''debt for nature swaps'' in developing countries to protect key coral reefs.

□ 1530

This legislation was based on work by my previous colleague, the former Member from Ohio, Rob Portman. We worked together since the late 1980s to pioneer a new strategy to support international ecology; that is, offering reductions for the debt of developing nations in return for investments in protecting key ecosystems. Using this technique, we created the largest park in the Western Hemisphere, the Beni Biosphere Reserve in Bolivia.

All combined, debt-for-nature swaps have now saved an area 50 times larger than Yellowstone National Park. The key addition of the Tropical Forest and Coral Conservation Act is to extend this debt-for-nature authority to the Department of the Treasury to protect coral reefs. This legislation passed the House overwhelmingly on October 9, 2007, but still remains pending in the Senate. Like so many other things, we would like to see the Senate complete the good work of the House of Representatives.

My hope is that by passing this legislation we continue to call attention on the attack of coral reefs across the world, on their critical role in preserving the biological diversity of the world, and especially the United States and its Caribbean coastline, and, most importantly, to pass the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act, so that we can offer more than just help on a resolution, that we can have visible support to developing nations so that they can protect their coral reefs, much as the United States should do on our own shores. I thank the gentleman from Washington.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Mr. KIRK for his leadership on this and thank him for mentioning Representative Portman, who is really a champion of efforts to preserve the global environment.

Mr. Speaker, it is entirely appropriate that we do this today, on Earth Day. I wore a tie which my wife gave me for Christmas which has a picture of my twin 3-year-old boys on it. When we talk preserving rain forests or preserving coral reefs, I think all of us have this commitment, that our children and our grandchildren should one day be able to enjoy these. But if we do not act promptly, quite frankly, I fear that they will not be able to.

I have witnessed firsthand the degradation of some of what were the most the magnificent reefs on Earth. If you did not know what they are supposed to look like, you might not recognize the difference. But when you go underwater and things that are supposed to be there are not, species of fish, certain types of corals, gone; when you see corals that have been knocked over; when you see bleaching of almost every coral you see; when you see areas where marine anchors have been dragged across them; when you see areas where excessive human pressure in the form of divers and other things have damaged the reefs; when you see invasive species that are devouring some of the creatures that should be there; when you see runoff from nearby rivers; that is what is happening already. As populations grow, as temperatures increase,

as ocean acidification worsens, it is a very, very real possibility that reefs which we are able to enjoy, that countless species depend on, that many nations depend on for their very survival, some of the coastal nations, our own areas in Florida and elsewhere on the coast depend on for security from storms, when you see these precious resources in peril, it is deeply moving and profoundly troubling.

By recognizing the International Year of the Reef, I hope we can follow what Mr. KIRK said and urge Congress to take more actions to protect these valuable resources. I am proud that we can cosponsor this in a bipartisan fashion, and I will urge passage.

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

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BAIRD. I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma, I thank Mr. KIRK and all the cosponsors of this resolution. Again, this resolution is somewhat of a symbolic act. What we really need to do in addition to this is support the various efforts, both nationally and internationally, to preserve these magnificent resources for generations yet to come and for the entire world.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time and would yield back the balance of my time and urge a ''yes'' vote.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1112.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF SPACE-BASED OBSERVATIONS OF THE EARTH BY THE LANDSAT SPACECRAFT

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 891) celebrating 35 years of space-based observations of the Earth by the Landsat spacecraft and looking forward to sustaining the longest unbroken record of civil Earth observations of the land, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 891

Whereas the year 2007 represents 35 years of continuous collection of space-based observations of the Earth's land cover by the United States Landsat satellites, which have enabled increased scientific understanding of the interrelationships of the Earth's land cover, energy balance, and biogeochemical processes as well as the realization of numerous societal benefits from the applied uses of the data;

Whereas on July 23, 1972, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration launched Landsat 1, originally called the Earth Resources Technology Satellite, as the first civilian Earth observation satellite to study the Earth's land cover and monitor natural resources;

Whereas since 1972, the United States Geological Survey has led the data archiving and distribution efforts for the Landsat program, which has continued to collect data without interruption through the successful launches of Landsats 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7, and has established the longest and most comprehensive record of global land surface data ever collected;

Whereas the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the United States Geological Survey, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense, and the private sector have all played a role in Landsat's history;

Whereas Landsat greatly enhanced remote sensing science, helped give rise to a global change research plan and international initiatives to study the Earth system, and led to new types of careers in engineering and natural sciences;

Whereas Landsat data have been used for multiple scientific and applied purposes including cartography, land surveys and land use planning, agricultural forecasting, water resource management, forest management, mapping of sea ice movement, assessment of tropical deforestation, food security, mineral and oil exploration, and global change research;

Whereas Landsat data are being widely used by Federal, local, county, and State governments, and by foreign nations, nongovernmental organizations, private industry, and universities;

Whereas Landsat data are collected at a scale that enables the study of both natural and human-induced changes in land cover over time and their impacts on the Earth's ecosystems;

Whereas Landsat data illuminated for the first time how human decisions, such as the expansion of cities, led to large-scale impacts on the environment;

Whereas the U.S. Climate Change Science Program has recognized Landsat and its long-term data record as instrumental to the study of climate and environmental change, noting that ''Landsat data are invaluable for studying the land surface and how it affects and is affected by climate''; and

Whereas the scientific and societal benefits of the Landsat program and its 35-year data record illustrate the significant return on the public investment in Earth observations and the need for continued support for this critical national asset: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its appreciation to all of the dedicated scientists, engineers, and program personnel who have contributed to the successful development and operation of the Landsat program over the past 35 years;

(2) looks forward to another 35 years of continuous Landsat-like observations of the Earth;

(3) urges the continuation of the Landsat program and data record so as to sustain Landsat's value to scientific research, especially the study of global and climate change, and to the myriad applied uses of the data for societal benefit; and

(4) believes that the Nation should continue to support the research, technological improvements, educational outreach, and development of decision making tools required to expand the use of Landsat data separately and as integrated with other Earth observations data.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) and the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 891, the resolution now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise on this occasion, again I mention it is on Earth Day, to seek support for House Resolution 891, as amended, celebrating 35 years of space-based observation of the Earth by the Landsat spacecraft.

This resolution celebrates the world's longest unbroken record of civil Earth observations of the land beginning with the launch of the first Landsat satellite on July 23, 1972. The data collected from Landsat satellites have helped advance our scientific understanding of global change and fostered applications that benefit our private sector, as well as our State, local, regional and Federal Government activities.

Mr. Speaker, the scientific and applied uses of these space-based land observations are vast. Landsat data are used to monitor crop patterns, manage natural resources such as water and forests, assist in land use and urban growth planning, help protect wildlife habitats and support national security objectives, to name just a few examples. Landsat's 35 year data record has also been critical in helping to understand the interactions between land cover changes and variations in the Earth's climate.

The most recent report of the U.S. Climate Change Science Program Report references Landsat as one of two critical satellites. It states, ''Without these satellite observations, the current pace of discovery and innovation in global land use and land cover change climate research would not be possible.''

Mr. Speaker, this celebration of Landsat's continuous 35 years record of land observations provides a clear example of the societal benefits derived from our Nation's space program. But there is more to be gained from Landsat data. Increases in computing and communications capabilities are stimulating innovative approaches to using Earth observations data such as Landsat. One need only look to the Internet, where anyone can access images of neighborhoods, cities and regions to see firsthand the ways in which Landsat data are finding their ways into our lives.

Mr. Speaker, in reflecting on the contributions that Landsat has made over