

Sadly, these types of religious freedom violations are happening in my own district in the State of West Virginia.

Almost a year ago, a high school student who is a Christian, in Buckhannon, West Virginia, was forced by his teachers in his public high school to attend a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender club, and then he was punished for expressing that he did not want to attend the club on the grounds that it went against his religious beliefs.

The hypocrisy of those who claim to promote tolerance, yet display such an intolerance towards those with traditional religious values, is stunning. These are just a few examples. These attacks know no boundaries. They are not based on political party, race, sex, or ethnicity. These attacks go after everyone in America.

Mr. Speaker, we need to let the citizens of our great country know that we disapprove of these continued infringements on our religious freedom.

I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in signing on to my resolution, which I plan to introduce tomorrow, to express the sense of the House of Representatives that Federal, State, and local governments should not infringe on the ability of citizens to act in accordance with their sincerely held religious beliefs.

CELEBRATING VETERANS DAY AND VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, next week Americans throughout the country will celebrate Veterans Day. In cities and towns and hamlets, which all of us come from, we will take the time to thank and to honor those men and women who have served our Nation so nobly, to protect our freedoms and to keep this country safe, safe from all harm, foreign and domestic.

Americans take a great deal of pride in their service to our country, and we must also remember those men and women who are today serving in Active Duty in harm's way throughout the world.

I want to take this opportunity to honor two veterans who passed away this last September, who I worked with closely and who were community leaders, Charlie Waters and Earl Watson, both gentlemen who exemplified what is the best and the brightest our Nation has to offer.

Earl Watson, or as many like to call him, "Earl, the Pearl," was a World War II veteran. After the war, he moved to Los Angeles, where he worked as a doorman in the famous Hotel Knickerbocker. During a difficult time in our Nation's history, during World War II, when segregation was still in many places the law of the land, Earl was most proud that he could serve his Nation. He wrote a bi-

ography titled "Earl 'The Pearl' Watson: Doorman to the Stars." But what he was most proud of was his service to our Nation.

Earl loved people. He had a big smile, a friendly demeanor, and an eagerness to help those in need. Anytime a veteran ever came to him or a veterans organization had a problem, he was there to be helpful. Earl told me, when we were able to retrieve his medals that he had earned during his service to our country, that the proudest moment of all the many things he had done in his life was his service to our country.

Earl is survived by his wife of 71 years, Melba; his children, Alan and Coleen; and grandchildren, Eric, Ashley, and Jonathan, who he was so, so very proud of.

Another veterans' advocate who we all miss in the San Joaquin Valley is Charlie Waters, who served in the United States Marine Corps during the Korean war. Charlie, as he was affectionately known by all, never ever stopped fighting on behalf of veterans. I worked closely with him for many years, from working to get recognition for Hmong veterans to advocating for the funding of the opening of the veterans home that we successfully did that provides residence to those who deserve it. As a matter of fact, in Charlie's last days, he was able to stay there.

He was a true champion of veterans not only throughout the Valley, but the Nation. But he did not stop there: supporting the Veterans Administration Hospital in Fresno and providing support for their efforts; organizing and helping continue the Veterans Day parade, which is one of the largest veterans parades in the entire nation that is shown on Armed Services Television; and individuals. No problem was too big or too small, as long as a veteran was there who needed Charlie's help.

Therefore, we miss both Charlie and Earl very much for all that they have done and all that they exemplified in terms of honor, duty, and service to country. Charlie is survived by his wife, Cathy; and children, Charlie Waters, III, Karen, and Jennifer.

Mr. Speaker, we want to take this time to recognize those leaders, those leaders who made a difference during their lives in serving our country. They are both shining examples of those who always—always—cared first and foremost for our Nation.

As we celebrate Veterans Day next week around the country, in towns and hamlets and cities throughout the Nation, we should think about all these veterans. We should think about the men and women who have served our Nation today in Active Duty. Never ever forget to say thank you for their service to a grateful Nation.

□ 1030

COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF MINERAL RIGHTS ACT OF 2015

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, since first being elected to serve the citizens of Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District, I have had the honor to represent both the Allegheny National Forest and Pennsylvania's historic Oil Region, where the commercial oil industry began in 1859. This region of north central Pennsylvania was built on our natural resources, and this legacy remains a deep part of our heritage.

The Oil Region designation came about because of the city of Titusville, which has been aptly nicknamed "the valley that changed the world." It was there in 1859 that Colonel Edwin Drake drilled the world's first commercial oil well, which set the wheels in motion for the worldwide commercial use of petroleum. Some 60 years following Colonel Drake's historic well, the Allegheny National Forest was created in nearby Warren, Elk, Forest, and McKean Counties.

Like so many areas of the West, this national forest is intrinsically connected to the prosperity of our communities. A mixed use of oil and gas production, timbering, hardwood research, recreation, and tourism make the Allegheny National Forest unique to the East Coast and truly a treasure for the mid-Atlantic region.

In the Allegheny, more than 90 percent of the mineral rights are owned by the private sector. With the long history in oil and gas development in the region, private landowners had the foresight to reserve their mineral rights when the Federal Government acquired these surface lands.

You see, Mr. Speaker, there is not a national government-run oil company. There has long been an understanding in our great country that, when it comes to resources, and specifically energy development, the private sector does it better. For generations, this arrangement successfully operated with oil and gas development taking place in the Allegheny National Forest.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, some opponents of production made attempts to mandate new regulations or limit access to the private mineral rights through numerous lawsuits. After years of litigation, a Federal court rightfully ruled in favor of the private landowners maintaining reasonable access to their property.

Federal courts have consistently ruled that the United States Forest Service lacks regulatory authority over these private mineral rights. Similar rulings and new regulations that would seek to limit production have also been issued.

Today, I am introducing the Cooperative Management of Mineral Rights Act of 2015, and I ask my colleagues who believe in the importance of private property and private property rights to join me as cosponsors. We need to provide clarity and continue to respect the longstanding importance of

private property rights in our country. This legislation will set the tone for addressing other cases dealing with these rights.

I urge my colleagues to join me in protecting private property and private property rights by cosponsoring the Cooperative Management of Mineral Rights Act of 2015.

LONG RANGE STRIKE BOMBER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. KNIGHT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KNIGHT. Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to address an issue of critical importance to our Nation's security: the Long Range Strike Bomber.

Since World War II, our defense has relied on the ability to respond quickly to any threats to our national security anywhere in the world. The bedrock of this strategy has always been the strategic bomber.

This past week, it was announced that Northrop Grumman would be producing our next strategic bomber for future generations. Potential adversaries are deterred because only the United States possesses the capability to strike any target in the world with precision weapons within 24 hours.

Last week, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Air Force made the announcement that Northrop Grumman won the contract to build the Long Range Strike Bomber. This bomber will be produced in my district. The B-1, the B-2, and now the Long Range Strike Bomber will all follow in the same role of being built in the Antelope Valley in southern California.

Congratulations to the Air Force and the men and women of Northrop Grumman on this contract. I have seen firsthand the work that Northrop Grumman employees do in support of our men and women in uniform at Plant 42 in my district. I am here to congratulate them on the opportunity to bring the expertise and commitment to the Long Range Strike Bomber.

This means thousands of jobs to this country. It means thousands of jobs to southern California, in a much-needed area in my district where jobs are very scarce. Both Plant 42 and the many surrounding small businesses Northrop Grumman will have a contract with will have support in this area.

The road that led to Tuesday's announcement was a long one paved with hard work by many people in our community and State. The Antelope Valley has long since been the home to the aerospace industry and has built B-1s, B-2s, all of the space shuttles, and currently builds the F-35. Naturally, it would be a good selection for the next bomber being built there.

On any given day, the F-22, F-35, the F-16, B-1, or B-2 will be flying over the Antelope Valley in their test missions. I am confident that the Long Range Strike Bomber will help us continue this legacy, and I thank everyone who has helped bring its production to our community.

The Air Force has called the Long Range Strike Bomber a top modernization priority, and there are sobering facts behind that. Today, only 10 percent of our Nation's bomber force is capable of penetrating sophisticated adversary air defense systems. The average age of our bomber fleet is 32 years old, with most of our bombers more than 45 years old. Only the B-2 stealth bomber, proudly built, maintained, and modernized in my district, can penetrate advanced air defenses; however, we only have 20 B-2s.

Given Northrop Grumman's 35 years of expertise designing, building, delivering, and modernizing the B-2 stealth bomber at Plant 42, I know the men and women who work there are incredibly qualified to build our Nation's next long-range strike aircraft.

WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, after a wave of strong bipartisan opposition, after being stayed by two Federal courts, the administration is still pushing its flawed waters of the United States regulatory expansion. However, this week, the Senate will finally consider rejecting this regulatory overreach.

While the administration describes their plan as a minor clarification, it is, in fact, the most sweeping expansion of Federal regulatory authority in our Nation's history.

Mr. Speaker, this map of my home State of California demonstrates exactly how far the EPA's proposal would reach. Fully 95 percent of California, depicted in black, would fall under EPA's jurisdiction, though you will notice that the city of San Francisco, in white, does not. That is because San Francisco, the source of so much of this excessive regulatory mindset, long ago paved over every waterway in the city, and who knows what is in the runoff of rainwater flowing off the streets of that city.

It isn't just farms that would be hurt by the EPA's plan. Virtually every business and homeowner in the State would be faced with regulation at the whim of Federal bureaucrats under a rule written to ensure that the EPA has any jurisdiction anytime it wants.

Do we really believe the Federal Government should play a role in local land use decisions, even down to whether individual homes could be expanded? This is exactly the power the EPA claims that it needs. Dry streambeds, manmade ditches, even temporary puddles which exist only during rainstorms are all locations over which the EPA wishes to claim jurisdiction. Even Imperial County, a desert with virtually no natural waterways, would fall under the EPA's control with this plan.

Perhaps the most concerning isn't just that the EPA is seeking to expand

its authority. That is the nature of any bureaucracy, and it is to be expected from this administration. Most concerning is that we can't even trust the EPA with authority to regulate navigable waterways it already has or to respect exemptions included in the Clean Water Act.

In my northern California district, residents have experienced regulatory actions so ludicrous that we can't make them up. In Tehama County, a farmer was fined for planting wheat in a manner that the government claimed damaged so-called navigable waters, which begs the question anyway: What is or what should be determined to be a navigable waterway? Is it a puddle or is it something you can actually run a boat up and down?

Never mind that the farm I mentioned has been recognized as a wheat allotment by the USDA for decades or that the farmer had simply been continuing to farm the land exactly as it has been farmed for generations. Instead, government bureaucrats wanted this activity stopped, and they used their power to prevent this farming activity.

In another instance, the government used the Clean Water Act to attack a family farm for shifting to a more efficient irrigation system—yes, for shifting to more efficient irrigation system. One might think that is a laudable goal, especially during a drought period in California in the West, but the government claimed this activity would negatively impact the Sacramento River, which is a full 7 miles away from this farm and unconnected to that farm by any waterway.

Of course, in both of these instances, the government sanctioned farmers for activities that are clearly exempt under the Clean Water Act as specified by Congress, who makes the laws. Even in the EPA's only early draft, they exempted mud puddles, but they just couldn't quite leave them out. They had to include them as well in their regulation.

The ongoing efforts of the administration to ignore exemptions for normal farming activities like planting crops and maintaining irrigation systems are in clear violation of the Clean Water Act, as written by Congress. In fact, language I sponsored to defund this sort of regulation of exempt activities was passed by both Houses last year and signed into law in December, yet the EPA persists in its illegal activities.

Mr. Speaker, when Congress can't trust Federal agencies to judiciously use authority they already hold, when we can't trust agencies to follow clear congressional direction, how can we possibly consider granting or allowing them even more power?

It is time the Senate joined the House in rolling back this proposal and remind this administration that Congress writes the law, not bureaucrats.