

burden on the defense budget. They say these costs detract from our ability to respond effectively to more serious potential threats from Iraq and North Korea. Some even suggest the U.S. no longer has the capability to face down another Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

While I believe the combat readiness of our armed forces needs improvement, I think comments about a "hollow military" are overstated. Military operations abroad have led to low readiness ratings in three of the Army's 12 divisions and placed strains on other elements of the force, such as airlift. These trends must be promptly reversed. Even so, we still have by far the best-equipped and best-trained military in the world. The transition to a more mobile force is involving painful adjustments in personnel, base closings and cancellations of new weapons systems. Yet, a recent report authored by a former Army Chief of Staff concluded that readiness is acceptable in most areas.

Improving the readiness of U.S. forces should be the top budget priority for defense spending. Congress, with my support, has taken several steps this year toward this objective. These steps include: protecting military pay raises to ensure retention of high quality personnel; increasing overall spending on operations and maintenance, the key Pentagon account for readiness; increasing spending on airlift and sealift capabilities, which allow our forces to respond quickly to overseas threats in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere; boosting training support for battalion-sized units; promoting "interservice" cooperation in combat and other missions, as evidenced by the joint Army-Navy effort in Haiti; and enhancing battlefield weapons systems. I will continue to support efforts to maintain our readiness. I think the military's humanitarian and peacekeeping operations must not be permitted to bleed the Pentagon's budget.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. must be careful about picking and choosing its military missions, so that U.S. forces do not become overextended. We cannot and should not commit U.S. forces to every trouble spot in the world. The key test is whether U.S. interests are threatened. Maintaining the readiness and morale of our military requires that we identify the interests we are prepared to defend by force, while using other means, including coalitions with our friends and allies, to deal with lesser threats to the U.S. national interest. A combat ready American military is essential to our national security.

RETIREMENT DISABLED LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' COUNSELING NETWORK

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce an important piece of legislation that I sponsored in the 103d Congress that would establish a national retired disabled law enforcement officers' counseling network, and I urge my colleagues to become cosponsors.

We call on police officers in emergencies. We trust them with our lives, families, and homes. Day in and day out most of us take them for granted to ensure our safety. Yet few of us truly appreciate the overwhelming stress, both mental and physical, that they endure in order to serve us. But there has never been

a national proposal to give disabled retired police officers the psychological counseling they may need. Until now.

Too often, retired disabled police officers suffer from depression, feelings of isolation, uncertainty of their futures, and worsening medical conditions. With appropriate counseling, many of these officers will learn to cope with their new lives and some will be able to obtain meaningful employment.

My legislation would establish up to eight officer counseling centers throughout the United States to provide counseling to retired disabled officers and members of their immediate families. Any retired disabled Federal, State, county, city law enforcement officer, or special agent would be eligible to participate in this innovative and necessary program.

I ask all Members to help those who have helped us. Please cosponsor this important legislative initiative.

THE RESCISSION OF CORPS OF ENGINEERS USER FEES

HON. BILL EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to prevent the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from collecting so-called user fees at certain facilities maintained and operated by the Corps. Specifically, this bill will repeal section 5001, Title V, of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 [OBRA] which authorized the Secretary of the Army to establish and collect fees for the use of developed recreation sites and facilities.

These fees have been part of budget fiction for years. The White House has always proposed these onerous taxes and Congress has always rejected them. Unfortunately, these fees became a reality with the passage of OBRA. Furthermore, there are no guarantees that the revenue from these fees will be used by the Corps of Engineers for the maintenance of its facilities. I believe that with these fees going into general revenue—not the Corps budget—people who want to enjoy the great outdoors actually will end up paying twice, once as a taxpayer and once as a user of Corps facilities.

While these fees, ranging from \$3 per vehicle to \$25 for a yearly pass, may not seem like a lot, the fact of the matter is that the American public has already paid once for these facilities and their continued upkeep. This, in my opinion, is double-dipping by the Federal Government. My legislation would seek to rescind the fee now required as outlined in OBRA for the use of public recreation areas at certain lakes and reservoirs under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers.

It's also important to note that the cost of installing boxes at the collection sites, in some instances, can exceed \$25,000 depending on the location of the facility. So we are using operating and maintenance funds from the Corps to build the collection boxes in order to hit up the public for more funds that won't necessarily go to the Corps. It's reprehensible that an agency like the Corps of Engineers will spend its own funds so that it can collect money for the general treasury.

This fee structure, as modest as it may be, sets a dire precedent. Americans who want to

go boating, camping, or swimming should not be singled out to foot the bill for more Federal spending. Tourism and other recreational activities throughout the country could be negatively impacted with these fees. Folks simply do not want to pay over and over again for something that is already paid for; nor should they.

REFORM OF THE MINING LAW OF 1872

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing into the 104th Congress legislation to reform the mining law of 1872. Joining me in sponsoring this measure are GEORGE MILLER of California, CHRISTOPHER SHAYS of Connecticut, BRUCE VENTO of Minnesota, NEIL ABERCROMBIE of Hawaii, PETER DEFAZIO of Oregon and JERRY KLECZKA of Wisconsin.

This bill, the Mineral Exploration and Development Act of 1995, is identical to the version of H.R. 322 which passed the House during the last Congress on November 18, 1993, by a bipartisan vote of 316 to 108. In fact, our new Speaker, the gentleman from Georgia [NEWT GINGRICH], voted for this bill at that time. Unfortunately, last year the House-Senate conference committee on mining law reform was unable to reach an agreement.

Today, with the introduction of this measure, we begin where that historical debate left off. In my view, the advent of a new Congress with a Republican majority does not change the fundamental and bipartisan support that continues to be displayed for reforming the mining law of 1872. Indeed, the fiscal austerity being advanced by the Republican leadership may very well enhance our prospects for gaining enactment of this legislation, which has enjoyed the support of the National Taxpayers Union, during this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of my colleagues, many of whom may be new to this issue, in order to explain this measure perhaps it is best to briefly go back to the year 1872. At the time, Ulysses S. Grant resided in the White House. Union troops still occupied the South. The invention of the telephone and Custer's stand at the Little Bighorn were still 4 years away. And in 1872 Congress passed a law that allowed people to go onto public lands in the West, stake mining claims, and, if any gold or silver were found, produce it for free.

In an effort to promote the settlement of the West, Congress said that these folks could also buy the land from the Federal Government for \$2.50 an acre.

That was 1872. This is 1995. Yet, today, the mining law of 1872 is still in force.

In 1995, however, for the most part it is not the lone prospector of old, pick in hand, accompanied by his trusty pack mule, who is staking those mining claims. It is large corporations, many of them foreign controlled, who are mining gold owned by the people of the United States for free, and snapping up valuable Federal land at fast-food hamburger prices.