Achievement Medal, and the Army Staff Identification Badge. I know my fellow Members of the House will join me in thanking him for his many years of service to his country and wish him all the best in the years to come.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JIM GIBBONS

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 21, 2004

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer a personal explanation of the reason I missed rollcall votes Nos. 267–271 on June 18, 2004. These votes were on amendments to H.R. 4567 and on final passage of H.R. 4567, Making Appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for FY 2005. At the time these votes were called, I was in my Congressional District in Reno, Nevada with President Bush for his speaking engagement.

I respectfully request that it be entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD that if present, I would have voted: rollcall Vote No. 267, on the Jackson-Lee Amendment—"No"; rollcall Vote No. 268, on the DeLauro Amendment—"No"; rollcall Vote No. 269, on the Roybal-Allard Amendment—"No"; rollcall Vote No. 270, on the Tancredo Amendment—"Yes"; rollcall Vote No. 271, on the Maloney Amendment—"Yes"; rollcall Vote No. 272, on the Sabo Amendment—"No"; rollcall Vote No. 273, on the Markey Amendment—"No"; rollcall Vote No. 274, on the Velázquez Amendment—"No"; rollcall Vote No. 275, on Final Passage of H.R. 4567—"Yes".

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 17, 2004

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4567) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes:

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Chairman, yesterday's CONGRESSIONAL RECORD reflects my vote as "Nay" on Rollcall Vote 266, Representative SWEENEY's amendment to Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2005. I would like to state for the Record that my vote should have been "Yea."

Representative SWEENEY's amendment would increase funding to Urban Area Security Initiative, which provides discretionary grants to high-threat, high-density urban areas, providing that program with $1.45 billion. This initiative will significantly enhance the ability of urban areas to prevent, deter, and recover from threats and incidents of terrorism. This program is essential for urban cities like Sacramento, California to address its unique security challenges as a large urban area. Right now funds previously directed from this initiative are being used to protect high-risk critical infrastructure facilities and to promote comprehensive regional coordination and planning. I strongly support this amendment that will increase the ability for urban areas to protect against the potential threats they face.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 17, 2004

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4568) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes:

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my disappointment about the rejection of several amendments offered to the Interior Appropriations Bill, which aimed at protecting the flora and fauna of our country. These amendments would at least have undone some of the harm the current administration has done to our environment since it has taken office.

It has always been the priority of this administration to serve special industrial interests and not to preserve the natural beauties of our country. Clean rivers and oceans, healthy forests, fresh air and a diverse wildlife have not been of any concern to this executive and the Bush Presidency has thereby rightly been called the most anti-environmental one in the modern era by several grassroots organizations.

The New York Times, in an editorial published two days ago, called upon the House of Representatives "to partly redeem itself" from its failures to hinder the anti-environmental policies of the President and to endorse stricter environmental policies by passing several amendments to the Interior Appropriations Bill. Unfortunately, the House missed this opportunity for redemption.

A majority of 224 members rejected Representative RUSH HOLT's amendment prohibiting the use of funds to permit recreational snowmobile use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park. Visitors go to our national parks to experience the miracles of nature and to find quietness and relaxation. Snowmobiles not only pollute the environment, but they also disturb humans and wildlife alike. I do not understand why so many Members of the House decided to vote against this amendment, which benefits for our environment and our citizens so heavily outweigh the sacrifice of not being able to ride a snowmobile in these particular parks.

I was also dismayed that a majority of my colleagues decided to vote against an amendment offered by Representative MAURICE HINCHEY to stop the killing of buffalos in Yellowstone National Park. The slaughter of these gracious animals is not only cruel but also expensive for American taxpayers. The National Park Service currently spends $1.2 million a year to kill buffalos only because they do exactly as their instinct tells them: They migrate. They get killed because they do not observe state borders and dare to cross from Wyoming to Montana during the winter. They get killed under the premise that they transmit diseases to cattle—a thesis that has never been confirmed and for some reason is a concern to farmers in Montana, but not to farmers in Wyoming.

Another amendment benefiting the health of our environment was offered by Representative TOM UDALL and again defeated. It would have prohibited the use of funds for the implementation of the Forest's Service new planning regulations. These regulations, which have been proposed by the administration in 2002, will substantially weaken the protection of our nation's wildlife and natural resources and reduce public participation in the environmental decision-making process.

Representative NICK RAHALL made an effort to present the interests of Native Americans in this country by offering an amendment protecting their sacred sites located on federal lands from energy development and other exploitation. The Native Americans in this country have undergone and are still suffering from discrimination and poverty. Representative RAHALL's amendment would at least have ensured that the holiest sites of the tribes are not further destroyed by capitalist interests. NICK RAHALL asked us, the Members of the House, how we would feel if open-pit mining was allowed in Arlington Cemetery or bulldozers leveled down the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem to build a highway. Only imagining these scenarios give me feelings of grief and anger. But just these things have happened to sacred sites of the Native Americans and it is a disgrace that so many members voted against Representative RAHALL's amendment to stop this evil.

But I am happy that at least one strong environmental amendment to the Interior Appropriations Bill was passed by the House of Representatives. This was Representative STEVE CHABOT's amendment to prohibit the use of funds to plan or construct forest development roads in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. Last year, the Bush administration announced to completely eliminate the Roadless Area Conservation Rule's protection for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska and to severely weaken the rule everywhere else in the National Forest System. The Tongass National Forest is a national heritage. It is the largest forest our nation has and the biggest intact temperate rainforest worldwide. The exemption of "America's Rainforest" from the roadless protection rule was another present of the Bush administration to big industrial interests, in this case timber logging companies and was paid for by the American taxpayers.

Representative CHABOT's amendment will only restrict the construction of roads that are subsidized by American taxpayers and not those paid for by the timber industry. I do not think that this amendment goes far enough to sufficiently protect this pristine forest, but I think it is a step into the right direction.

I sincerely hope, that those Members of the House of Representatives who have voted against the aforementioned amendments will wake up and recognize that an environment once destroyed will not be easy and mostly impossible to restore. I hope that they will remember that there will be future generations who need clean air and water, healthy oceans and forests and a diverse wildlife not only for their enjoyment, but for their survival.