

Given the popularity of these areas, it is necessary to find a compromise between protection of the land and local wildlife, and recreational sport. This legislation provides such a compromise, affording land for recreation and preservation. Preserving wilderness areas for future generations is imperative, and I am pleased to present this bill as an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is the result of a great deal of compromise, cooperation, and support. Assistance from the Mono County Board of Supervisors which claims the Hoover and Emigrant Wilderness Addition, and the Inyo County Board of Supervisors which claims the Amargosa River Addition has been vital to the introduction of this legislation. This bill required compromise and cooperation between the local environmental community and the Bureau of Land Management, and I am pleased with the agreement that has been reached by both parties. Support from Senators DIANNE FEINSTEIN and BARBARA BOXER, as well as my constituents in the 25th District make it a distinct pleasure to introduce this legislation, and I encourage my colleagues to support the Eastern Sierra Rural Heritage and Economic Enhancement Act.

CECIL D. ANDRUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 2006

Mr. OTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call the attention of the House to a most important lesson in civic virtue.

We hear much today about the shortcomings of our education system, about a growing sense of frustration and despair on the part of students, parents and policy makers. Today I have the honor and privilege of telling you about a success story that we all can celebrate.

The heroes in this story are fifth graders at Cecil D. Andrus Elementary School in Meridian, Idaho. I recently received almost 30 letters from these young Americans requesting that I do whatever I could to stop Congress from removing funds that pay for the "We the People . . ." civic education program at schools throughout America. Mr. Speaker, these students are to be congratulated and encouraged to continue participating in the process of our government, to fully realize their potential as citizens of our great nation.

I also congratulate their teacher, Heidi Fry and their principal, Barbara Horn, whose dedication and example have worked their magic with these students.

The "We the People . . ." program is funded through the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress. It was established in 1987 under the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution.

Letter upon letter from the students at Andrus Elementary related stories about lessons they had learned through the "We the People . . ." program—visionary quotations from the Founding Fathers and the Framers of the Constitution, the history of the documents that became our blueprints for freedom, and how leaders of the founding generation knew that survival of our new American Republic

would require each successive generation to learn and embrace the value, price and responsibility of living in a free country.

No greater testament could exist to the value of this educational program than the words of these young people, Mr. Speaker. No more compelling argument could be made for its continued existence in our schools. I therefore gave them my word I would do what I could to restore the funding.

As a side note, the namesake of the school those children attend—Cecil D. Andrus—was Secretary of the Interior during the Carter administration and four times was elected governor of the great state of Idaho. I served with Governor Andrus as Lieutenant Governor during his third and forth terms. He was a leader who put great store in the value of educating Idaho's young people to prepare them for shouldering the responsibility of freedom and the stewardship of our human and natural resources. He also placed great importance on people meaning what they say and keeping their word—especially those in positions of public trust.

In closing I should like to add the names of these students to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD so that one day in the not-too-distant future, when citizens of Idaho and this Nation are reviewing the background of their generation's leaders, I'm confident these names will surely be among them.

Elaine Beech, Natalie Bowman, Steven Bowman, Ashley Charles, Nicole Covell, Madisson Cutbirth, Alejandro Delaloza, Cole DeSilvia, Joneya Dunn, Amber French, Talia Johnson, Corey Kerensky, Joseph Koetter, Jordan Lee, Brian Luke, Taylor McQuiston, Summer Moffet, JT Moore, Brianna Pantell, Courtney Paul, Dillon Pierce, Zach Poralla, Rhett Suciu, Eric Swider, Jakob Thompson, Lindsay Williams, and Chanel Zeko.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all my colleagues to recognize the value of the "We the People . . ." program and help me restore the funding. Let's keep our word to these Idaho students, and to the generations of American students yet to come.

NIDIS BILL

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 2006

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce a bill to create a National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS). Our nation is unfortunately very aware of the damage droughts bring to our citizens. In my home state of Texas, the wheat crops have been decimated by drought conditions, producing the worst ratings in 20 years. My own home district in northeast Texas is experiencing the most severe damage statewide from the drought. In Missouri, farm ponds have been drying up in record numbers, and in Oklahoma, the wheat crop rated 58% poor to very poor. Droughts cause between \$6 billion and \$8 billion a year in direct estimated losses to the U.S. economy, and they have devastating impacts on our society.

While we cannot stop nature, we can do a better job predicting, monitoring, and mitigating this problem. Our nation needs a comprehensive drought information system that

enables our local, state, and national leaders to be more proactive in their approach to droughts. This bill establishes an integrated system and designates NOAA as the lead agency. NOAA will coordinate with local, state, and federal entities to create a comprehensive network of drought information and provide decision-makers with the best tools to manage our resources. NOAA will do this by building a national drought monitoring and forecasting system, create a drought early warning system, provide an interactive drought information delivery system, and designate mechanisms for improved interaction with the public.

This NIDIS initiative will hopefully improve our analysis of conditions, provide us with more accurate seasonal forecasts, and equip us with a better understanding of climate interactions that produce droughts. I would like to encourage Members to join me in supporting this vital and important initiative.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 2006

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, because of official business in Colorado, I was not able to be present yesterday for three votes.

Had I been present, I would have voted as follows:

Roll call No. 82, H.J. Res. 81—Providing for the appointment of Phillip Frost as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution—I would have voted "yes."

Roll call No. 83, H. Res. 703—Recognizing the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and supporting continued efforts to control radiation and mitigate the adverse health consequences related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant—I would have voted "yes."

Roll call No. 84, H. Res. 744—Expressing support for the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 as the blueprint for lasting peace in Northern Ireland and support for continued police reform in Northern Ireland as a critical element in the peace process—I would have voted "yes."

THE OCCASION OF THE 91ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

HON. MICHAEL R. McNULTY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 6, 2006

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, I join today with many of my colleagues in remembering the victims of the Armenian Genocide. April 24th will be the 91st anniversary of this human tragedy.

From 1915 to 1923, the world witnessed the first genocide of the 20th century. This was clearly one of the world's greatest tragedies—the deliberate and systematic Ottoman annihilation of 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children.

Furthermore, another 500,000 refugees fled and escaped to various points around the