

Valley National Heritage Area supports and enhances these local efforts to interpret, preserve, and showcase the diverse historic, cultural, and natural resources of the valley.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the many dedicated advocates in Connecticut, whose dogged efforts led to today's achievement.

#### LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP ACT

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to celebrate final passage of the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act. I am proud to have coauthored and introduced this bill in the Senate in April 2004. This body passed the bill that October, but then the bill died in the House. So we reintroduced it in the Senate last January, and Representative ROB SIMMONS reintroduced its House companion. The House passed its bill on Wednesday, and we in the Senate have just followed suit. Now the bill will go to the President, who is expected to sign it into law without delay. Today's final passage will ensure expanded protection and restoration of a national treasure.

A healthy Long Island Sound is crucial to our region's economy, quality of life, and heritage. I am deeply gratified that Congress has acted to support a new way for communities and citizens to work together to preserve this ecologically important estuary for years to come. The Long Island Sound Stewardship Act, or LISSA, will help protect the sound by providing financial incentives for land owners within the sound area to preserve the environmental quality of and public access to this endangered habitat.

Long Island Sound is a unique estuary with profound economic, ecological and cultural importance for the United States. This critical resource contributes approximately \$6 billion annually to the economy of the region, and it is especially important to the tens of millions of people who live within 50 miles of its shores.

We have come a long way in restoring the Sound and its rich biodiversity. Take, for example, the osprey—a bird that has come to symbolize the Sound. In 1940, there were approximately 1,000 osprey nests along the Sound shoreline. But by 1974, pollution reduced the number of osprey nests to just nine. Because of proactive conservation measures, the osprey has rebounded. That is real progress.

Despite our efforts, however, the sound remains in a diminished condition. It suffers from hypoxia, habitat loss, and contamination by toxic substances, pathogens, and solid waste, all of which negatively affect the health of all the organisms, including humans, who live in or near the sound.

I have been working to defend the sound since I arrived in the Senate. In 1989, I sponsored legislation that established a Long Island Sound office within the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency. EPA's Long Island Sound Office went on to identify the sound region as vulnerable to degradation and, with my support, established the Long Island Sound Study to develop a plan for protecting the sound. In 2000, I kicked off a "Listen to the Sound" campaign, which focused on establishing a comprehensive network of open space and natural areas along the sound's rim, as well as creating more opportunities for public access and habitat restoration. More than 1,500 Connecticut and New York residents attended those meetings. In 2002, the EPA released the results of its Long Island Sound study, which concluded that coordinated action to save the sound was necessary.

Building on several of the EPA study's recommendations and on feedback from my Listen to the Sound meetings, I introduced LISSA in April 2004 with Senators DODD, SCHUMER, and CLINTON as cosponsors.

LISSA establishes a broad-based Long Island Sound Stewardship Advisory Committee comprised of all sound stakeholders, including Federal, State, local governments, tribal interests, nongovernmental organizations, academic interests, private interests including land, agriculture, and business interests, and recreational and commercial fishing interests. The advisory committee is charged with evaluating the parcels of land within the sound region and recommending crucial parcels for designation by the Environmental Protection Agency as Stewardship Sites eligible for special preservation funds. LISSA authorizes \$25 million per year for fiscal years 2007 through 2011 to the EPA Administrator to carry out this act.

By enacting this legislation, we aim to preserve the natural beauty and ecological wonder of this majestic waterway between New York and Connecticut. LISSA will ensure that our children and grandchildren can enjoy the sound's beauty, ecology, and recreational opportunities.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge the many Long Island Sound advocates in Connecticut and New York who have worked so hard to achieve today's great success.

#### TRIBUTE TO ALTHIA HARRIS

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today I rise to honor a longtime member of my staff, Ms. Althia Harris, who has served over 30 years in the Senate. Ms. Harris has reached an incredible benchmark in her career, and I stand today to reflect on her service.

Ms. Harris began working in the Senate on April 30, 1975, for distinguished Senator Philip A. Hart of Missouri. Just a few days before the end of his term, Senator Hart lost his battle with cancer on December 26, 1976. Ms. Harris then served Senator Adlai E. Stevenson III of Illinois for 5 years. Upon Senator Stevenson's retirement, she joined the office of his successor, Senator Alan J.

Dixon. I was then lucky enough to inherit a most loyal and experienced Senate employee when Ms. Harris joined my staff in 1984.

Upon joining my team, Althia initially helped with my transition from the West Virginia Governor's office to Capitol Hill. An immeasurable and invaluable aide, I am sure without Althia's able assistance the job would have taken much longer to accomplish. I know it would have been more difficult without a seasoned Senate staffer knowledgeable in how to really make things work in the Senate.

On September 12, 1986, Althia began working part time in my office so she could take on new challenges in the private sector and other areas of government. She first worked for the Advertising Council and then for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA. At NASA, she continues to work as a contractor for the Office of Education. As an active member of her community, she has never abandoned her work here in the Senate.

With continual service in my office for over 20 years, Althia is someone who has helped keep my office operation running with important day-to-day tasks. She is a lover of urban gardening, a collector of African art, and a domestic and international traveler.

As Senators, we are each here to represent our respective States and to work on the needs of our constituents. But the work we do is directly dependent on those who support us—our staff who are always there, always pushing behind the scenes. Each and every devoted member of my staff helps me accomplish the job I am here to do, and Althia has made a real contribution to my work for over 20 years.

I am honored to recognize Althia's devotion and service and to extend my deepest appreciation for her ongoing contributions. Althia is a true gem—the kind of person you are lucky to find and retain for what time they can give. It has been a wonderful 20 years.

#### INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, in honor of the seventh annual International Education Week, November 13 to 17, 2006, I would like to talk about the importance that international education and exchange programs play in establishing closer relations between the United States and the world.

The U.S. Government has a proud tradition of supporting international education and exchange programs, and we must continue that tradition. Why? First of all, international education is necessary for our children to remain competitive in the increasingly global economy. Second, exchange programs also attract future leaders from abroad, exposing them to the opportunities and freedoms afforded by our democratic system. Third, international education and exchange programs expand horizons and change the