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Platts
Poe
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Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
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Richardson
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Rogers (KY)
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Rohrabacher
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Visclosky
Walberg
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ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that there is 1 minute remaining on this vote.

□ 1736

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H. RES. 106

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that my name be removed as a cosponsor of H. Res. 106.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H. RES. 106

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H. Res. 106.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken tomorrow.

RECOGNIZING THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 725) recognizing the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 725

Whereas clean water is a natural resource of tremendous value and importance to the Nation;

Whereas there is resounding public support for protecting and enhancing the quality of the Nation's rivers, streams, lakes, marine waters, and wetlands;

Whereas maintaining and improving water quality is essential to protect public health, fisheries, wildlife, and watersheds and to ensure abundant opportunities for public recreation and economic development;

Whereas it is a national responsibility to provide clean water for future generations;

Whereas since the enactment of the Clean Water Act in 1972, substantial progress has been made in protecting and enhancing water quality due to a deliberate and national effort to protect the Nation's waters;

Whereas substantial improvements to the Nation's water quality have resulted from a successful partnership among Federal, State, and local governments, the private sector, and the public;

Whereas serious water pollution problems persist throughout the Nation and significant challenges lie ahead in the effort to protect water resources from point and nonpoint sources of pollution and to maintain the Nation's commitment to a ''no net loss'' of wetlands;

Whereas the Nation's decaying water infrastructure and a lack of available funding to maintain and upgrade the Nation's wastewater infrastructure pose a serious threat to the water quality improvements achieved over the past 35 years;

Whereas the Environmental Protection Agency, the Congressional Budget Office, and other stakeholders have identified a funding gap of between $300,000,000,000 and $400,000,000,000 over the next 20 years for the restoration and replacement of wastewater infrastructure;

Whereas further development and innovation of water pollution control programs and advancement of water pollution control research, technology, and education are necessary and desirable; and

Whereas October 18, 2007, is the 35th anniversary of the enactment of the Clean Water Act: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the 35th anniversary of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (commonly known as the Clean Water Act);

(2) recommits itself to restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters in accordance with the goals and objectives of the Clean Water Act;

(3) dedicates itself to working toward a sustainable, long-term solution to address the Nation's decaying water infrastructure; and

(4) encourages the public and all levels of government—

(A) to recognize and celebrate the Nation's accomplishments under the Clean Water Act; and

(B) to renew their commitment to restoring and protecting the Nation's rivers, lakes, streams, marine waters, and wetlands for future generations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution, H. Res. 725.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we meet on the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act from 1972; a bill that started out in the House, made its way through the Committee on Public Works, as it was known then, through the House, to the Senate Committee on Public Works, and then through a 10-month House-Senate conference, a remarkable meeting of Members of the House and Senate which, in a time very different from the times we experience recently, where Members actually participated, sat across the table from one another, not separated by staff, although I was a member of the staff at the time, not relegating their responsibilities to others, but actually participating vigorously with informed judgment, with strongly held views in shaping what everyone in that conference knew was going to be a new future for the waters of the United States.

That legislation was considered against a backdrop of 14 years of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, crafted by my predecessor, John Blotnick, who was Chair first of the Subcommittee on Rivers and Harbors and then Chair of the Full Committee on Public Works, to clean up the Nation's waters.

In that year, 1955, and then following, in 1956, John Blotnick wanted to acquaint himself with the new responsibilities of being a chairman of the Subcommittee on Rivers and Harbors, and managing the inland waterways of the United States and the locks and dams and the harbors of this country, of the saltwater coast and the fresh water of the Great Lakes. So he journeyed down the Mississippi, part of the Ohio-Illinois river systems.

He was a biochemist by training, and a teacher of biochemistry, and observed that by the time he got to New Orleans, there was so much trash, discharge, waste, feces and raw phenols bubbling in the Mississippi River by the time they reached New Orleans, he was appalled. And he said the purpose no longer became how can we move goods through the inland waterway system and barges of this Nation, but how can we, what must we do to clean up this resource of fresh water.

On return to Washington that spring, he visited the Tidal Basin, the cherry blossoms in bloom, and he observed all of the debris and all of the foul smell in the Tidal Basin and called it the best dressed cesspool in America, and crafted a three-part program to deal with this problem of cleaning up America's waters.

□ 1745

And he undertook what was then a unique activity: a Dear Colleague letter. It's very common. We see them by the hundreds today. But it was very rare in 1955 and 1956 to do something of that nature, and reserved the Caucus Room of the Cannon House Office Building, which can seat over 600 people, because he thought so many would want to come and participate in this great enterprise of protecting America's waters and restoring our rivers and lakes.

And three people showed up: John Blotnick; Congressman Bob Jones from Alabama, who was elected in 1946, the same year as John Blotnick; and Murray Stein, an attorney in the U.S. Public Health Service whose office was, as John Blotnick described it, in the 7th sub-basement of HEW, the Health, Education, and Welfare building. And there they crafted broad outlines of what became the Federal Water Pollution Control Act.

Research, engaging the best minds in this country to understand what are the limiting factors in our waters that, if removed, would restore good health. Nitrogen, phosphates, toxics, phenols, how do you get them out of the water once they're in? How do you prevent them from getting in? The second point, treatment. Treating our wastes before they get into the receiving waters. And, third, an enforcement program to bring the States together to resolve common problems of enforcing a program of cleaning streams before they get into the receiving waters.

It was signed into law by President Eisenhower in 1956. It had $30 million in Federal funding, 30 percent Federal grants to municipalities to build sewage treatment facilities. It was supported by the garden clubs of America. They were the first ones, the leaders, seeing the need for a national program of clean water.

The next 3 years saw broad acceptance of this legislation, a need for increased funding. So John Blotnick proposed a successor to increase to $50 million Federal funding and 30 percent Federal grants and a stronger enforcement and more money for research. And that bill was vetoed by President Eisenhower with a veto message that read in its last sentence: ''Pollution is a uniquely local blight. Federal involvement will only impede local efforts at cleanup.''

But that was an election year. John F. Kennedy, Democratic candidate, committed to an expanded program of clean water. And he came in and signed a bill that moved through our committee for $100 million in Federal funding with 50 percent Federal grants and an expanded research and development and much stronger enforcement.

And over the succeeding years, the program grew, and so did our understanding of the broader needs and the broader reach of a Federal program to go beyond point sources but to get to the watershed, to go beyond the point of discharge, to reach further out into the country.

At the same time, great suds, mounds of suds, were floating down the Ohio River system and the Illinois River system and the Mississippi. And people were turning on their faucets and finding soap coming out instead of clean water. And then the Cuyahoga River caught on fire in 1968 in the town of the distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE), and the Nation was galvanized into action. That led to increased funding for the clean water program and a recognition that we need to have a much broader scope program.

So in 1970 the committee began extensive hearings on a much wider reach of the program. And in 1971 I was chief of staff of the Committee on Public Works when we began this much broader scope program.

The result of all these efforts was the Clean Water Act of 1972, whose opening paragraph reads: ''The purpose of this act is to establish and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters,'' not just the navigable waters, which had been the signature word of previous legislation but the Nation's waters, going beyond what you can paddle in a canoe, going to the source of pollution.

That massive bill was vetoed by President Richard Nixon. But the veto was overridden by a 10–1 vote in the House and a similar 10–1 vote in the United States Senate and has remained our cornerstone act for maintaining the integrity of the Nation's waters.

It is our legacy to pass on to other generations that all the water there ever was in the world or ever will be is here now, and we have the responsibility to care for it. This Clean Water Act is our guarantee that it will be done.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to manage the time on this important resolution for the minority to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act.

Clean water is critical to the Nation and our standard of living. The Clean Water Act has resulted in significant water quality improvement in the last 35 years. However, we still have work to do before all of our lakes and streams meet State water quality standards.

H. Res. 725 encourages the American people to recognize and celebrate the water quality improvements we have achieved and recommit ourselves to the goals of the Clean Water Act.

No committee in the Congress has done more to work towards the clean water goals that all of us want to achieve than the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which was called, as Chairman OBERSTAR has mentioned, the Public Works and Transportation Committee for many years before the new name. And no one man who has ever served in this Congress has done more than has Chairman JAMES OBERSTAR in working to achieve clean water in this country, first as a staff member and then staff director for 11 years for the committee and then for the last 33 years representing his district and, indeed, the entire Nation in working to clean the waters of this Nation.

And we have made great progress over that time. The leading liberal magazine, the New Republic, said in an editorial a short time ago that to listen to some people ''is to learn that the environment is in bad shape today and, with the smallest push, could be in disastrous shape tomorrow . . . Fortunately, this alarm is a false one. All forms of pollution in the United States,'' the New Republic said, ''air, water, and toxic materials have been declining for decades.''

In 1972 only 30 to 40 percent of our waters were estimated to have met water quality standards. Today, monitoring data indicate that 60 to 70 percent of our waters meet these goals and twice as many Americans are served by advanced or secondary wastewater treatment.

Twenty-five years ago, we were losing almost 400,000 acres of wetlands annually; yet the latest data collected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicate that we are close to achieving a net gain in wetlands nationwide.

Our Nation's health, quality of life, and economic well-being rely on adequate wastewater treatment. Industries that rely on clean water, like farmers, fishermen, and manufacturers,

contribute over $300 billion a year to our gross domestic product.

To provide clean water, our Nation already has invested over $250 billion in wastewater infrastructure. But this infrastructure is now aging and our population is continuing to grow, increasing the burden on our existing infrastructure. If communities do not repair, replace, and upgrade their infrastructure, we could lose the environmental, health, and economic benefits of this investment. And no matter how much progress has been made in the past, you can always do better. People always need to improve, although we need to do this in a way that doesn't overregulate, but that brings about progress in a commonsense, practical manner and one that doesn't impede progress.

Various organizations have quantified wastewater infrastructure needs. The Congressional Budget Office, EPA, and the Water Infrastructure Network have estimated that it could take between $300 billion and $400 billion to address our Nation's clean water infrastructure needs over the next 20 years to keep our drinking water and waterways clean and safe. This is twice the current level of investment by all levels of government. These needs have been well documented in our committee and subcommittee hearings.

We can reduce the overall cost of wastewater infrastructure with good asset management, innovative technologies, water conservation and reuse, and regional approaches to water pollution problems. But these things alone will not close the large funding gap that now exists between wastewater infrastructure needs and current levels of spending.

Increased investment must still take place. That leads to the question where is the money going to come from. There is no single answer to that question. Municipal wastewater services are a State and local responsibility, but there is clearly a strong Federal interest in keeping our waters clean.

With all due respect to President Eisenhower, who I think was a great President and who, especially, was certainly right in warning about the dangers of the excesses of the military industrial complex, I believe there is a legitimate Federal interest in clean water in this country. The people in Tennessee drink the water and use the wastewater systems of people in other States, and the people of other States fish and swim and drink the water in Tennessee. So there is a legitimate Federal interest, I believe.

But what we need is an effective partnership between all levels, Federal, State, and local. That means all partners need to contribute. If we do not start investing in our wastewater system now, it is going to cost our Nation many billions more in the future if we delay.

In any event, the Federal Government, while its role is important, is not going to be able to solve this problem alone. The Democratic Governor of Montana told us at a committee hearing earlier this year that his State did not want the ''long arm of the Federal Government'' imposing regulations that would threaten the livelihoods of ranchers, farmers, and miners. He asked that the Federal Government be a ''partner and collaborator'' with the States in a joint effort to protect water resources.

Clarity and reasonableness and common sense are needed in the regulatory program. It is unknown exactly what are the maximum limits of Federal authority under the Clean Water Act. Neither Congress nor the courts have defined them explicitly. This uncertainty is a matter for much speculation and probably much future litigation. What we may ultimately need is legislation that clearly and reasonably delineates the Federal role and the State role and the local role in regulating activities affecting the Nation's waters.

While the historical perspective of the Clean Water Act is interesting and informative, we must decide under today's circumstances what is appropriate Federal regulation of the Nation's waters.

We should celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act by providing the tools and resources needed to achieve the goals of that act.

We need to reform the Clean Water Act State Revolving Loan Fund program to make it more efficient, effective, and flexible to improve the management of infrastructure assets, fund those activities that will best improve water quality, address the needs of small and disadvantaged communities, and encourage private financing of treatment works to help bring private resources to bear on the overwhelming needs of the Nation's water infrastructure.

It is also time to fashion new water quality management tools so we can continue the job of achieving clean water. These new tools could include utilizing more in the way of performance-based standards than rigid Federal mandates; harnessing market forces within the public and private sectors to safeguard and improve the environment more effectively; protect individual and private property rights; and adequately considering the costs and benefits of government actions so we can set priorities.

□ 1800

It is appropriate today that we celebrate this anniversary of the Clean Water Act, but we must be prudent as we go forward. We all want the same thing, clean water. I encourage all Members to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds to thank the gentleman from Tennessee for his splendid statement, comprehensive, thoughtful overview of the needs of the Clean Water program, and also for his very generous comments about my service in the Congress.

I will also point out that the gentleman from Tennessee chaired the Water Resources Subcommittee for 6 years and led the committee in vigorous hearings on the issue of clean water, and we are the better for it.

I yield now such time as he may consume to the distinguished gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER), the author of the resolution recognizing the 35th anniversary, and thank the gentleman for his splendid service to the Congress.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I deeply appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on this, his kind words, and his leadership in expediting this legislation to come to the floor.

I am honored that Chairman OBERSTAR and Congressman DUNCAN are cosponsors of this legislation. And I was privileged to work on the Water Resources Subcommittee for those 6 years that Congressman DUNCAN chaired it, and it was a valuable and productive time. It was an opportunity for me to learn about this critical area.

And the reason we are introducing this resolution today is because of the history that was recounted by my good friend from Minnesota. There is nothing more critical to our survival than water. It is essential to our survival; it sustains human life. Its patterns have dictated the development of species and ecosystems, and more recently, of the bilky environment. I am pleased that we are celebrating this landmark legislation, and not just a celebration, but an opportunity to reflect upon what has worked and why, as my friend from Tennessee indicated, where we might go. We have an opportunity to understand where there are continuing challenges and what else needs to be done.

We must move beyond commemoration. We must make a commitment not to celebrate another milestone with the Clean Water Act without more demonstrable progress here at home and abroad. And I hope this resolution inspires further action that is both quick and ambitious.

Issues confronting us today and over the next 35 years are even more complex than when the Clean Water Act was enacted. There are still problems with pollution, water supply, infrastructure integrity, and the technical jurisdictional issues. The growth and development we've seen across the country compounds that. And global warming gives these issues a new sense of urgency. We just finished a meeting, and I know the Transportation and Infrastructure team met with officials from the Netherlands, who are dealing with immediate challenges with their water resources as a result of climate change, rising water levels and extreme water events.

Changing climate will have an influence on many aspects of our lives, and it will take many of them in the form

of water; floods, sea levels, drought. This will make water supply and quality issues much harder to deal with.

In the Pacific Northwest, for instance, where we rely heavily on hydroelectric power, where the snowpack in the mountains every year determines the amount of our drinking water, we have a sense of urgency as we watch that snowpack diminish.

Just this last month, there have been two additional reports highlighting the work in front of us. A report by the U.S. PIRG found that thousands of facilities across the United States continue to exceed the limits under their Clean Water Act permits; 57 percent violated those permit limits at least once during the year 2005, many for more than once, and many for more than one pollutant.

A report by Food and Water Watch found that the majority of States are facing current and projected wastewater infrastructure needs that are far out of line with their available funding. At the same time, Federal support for State and community wastewater projects has declined.

When my good friend first came to Congress in the early days of this program, 78 percent of the funding was supplied by the Federal Government in 1978. Now, maybe we don't want to return to those glorious days of yesteryear, but last year it was 3 percent of the funding. It undercuts the potential partnership that we have. And all of this at a time when our decaying water infrastructure was recently given a grade of D minus by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

For these reasons, I believe we need a sustainable, reliable, dedicated revenue source that will help communities address these important needs.

Clean water is critical to environmental and public health. But I think it also, as demonstrated by the action here on this floor, has the potential of bringing people together. Mr. OBERSTAR mentioned the history back in contentious times when there was an overwhelming vote to sustain a veto, not the easiest thing to do. As was shown by this bipartisan resolution, I found working with the Water Resources Subcommittee that this brings people together and there is common ground.

This bipartisan resolution is evident of recent polling that shows that more than eight in 10 Americans are very concerned about America's water, that it will not be clean or safe enough for their children or grandchildren. Eighty-nine percent of Americans say that ''Federal investment to guaranteed clean and safe water is a critical component of our Nation's environmental well-being.''

I hope that, even as we move beyond commemoration and towards addressing some of these critical unresolved issues, that we can keep the same spirit of bipartisanship.

I hope our colleagues will do more than just vote for this resolution. I hope we educate ourselves and our constituents about what it represents, what it represents in terms of the status of water quality and infrastructure in our own State and community, offer our own contributions to practical solutions, and, as I said, a dedicated trust fund and financial resources to do the job right.

Mr. OBERSTAR gave us 50 years of history in a very short period of time. I hope this commemoration is a point of departure for the next 50 months under the leadership of the chairman, with the work of Mr. DUNCAN, with a new administration that's coming to town, that we will have, over these next 50 months, a landmark in water quality, and I look forward to working with you all in achieving it.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, Chairman OBERSTAR was kind enough to mention my 6 years as chairman of the Water Resources Environment Subcommittee. I tried to have an active subcommittee with many hearings because I thought that that work was among the most important that the Congress could deal with, and that's why I'm here tonight, because I don't believe there is any topic, or very few topics, anyway, more important than clean water. And certainly the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) was one of the most active members of that subcommittee.

Another member, though, who has also been very active on these issues is the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK), and I yield him such time as he may consume.

Mr. KIRK. I thank the gentleman, and I rise in celebration of this, one of the most important environmental laws in the history of our country, the Clean Water Act.

For 35 years, the Act has helped limit the discharge of pollution that poisons our water and our beaches. I think it's not enough just to commemorate groundbreaking legislation. As illness, beach closings, habitat loss, and billions of dollars in lost economic opportunity and environmental damage continue, Congress should move to strengthen the Clean Water Act.

This year sheds particular light on a gaping hole in the Clean Water Act. Just a few months ago, we learned that the State of Indiana ended a decade-long dumping ban in the Great Lakes, allowing British Petroleum to increase by 54 percent its ammonia dumping in Lake Michigan, and adding 35 percent more sludge to the lake each day. It was only due to the vigilance of citizens and environmental organizations and lawmakers around the Lake Michigan shore that we got BP to back down.

Thanks to the thousands of Illinois volunteers, BP has now agreed to maintain its current discharge levels. But shockingly, the permit that was issued by the State of Indiana was completely allowed under the current Clean Water Act. Now, Indiana is once again seeking to renew a discharge permit that failed to protect Lake Michigan.

The draft permit for United States Steel—Gary Works, already the largest polluter of Lake Michigan, will delay for 5 years compliance with Clean Water Act limits on dangerous toxic chemicals such as mercury, free cyanide, zinc, copper and ammonia.

The draft permit sets a very weak standard for mercury, oil and grease, free cyanide and other harmful pollutants. It also would allow United States Steel to follow a 10-year-old storm water pollution prevention plan.

I want to commend the Environmental Protection Agency, especially from my region, for at least delaying the issuance of this Indiana permit because I think this permit fails to protect the people that depend on Lake Michigan for their drinking water.

Current law right now will fail to protect the drinking water for nearly 30 million Americans who rely on the Great Lakes. I believe it's time to commit this Congress to upgrade our Federal protection of the Great Lakes under the Clean Water Act. We should move forward in a bipartisan way to enact a complete future ban on all dumping in the Great Lakes and bring forward a 21st century clean water act that builds on the tradition that we commemorate today.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time remains on both sides?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Minnesota has 2 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Tennessee has 8½ minutes remaining.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I will just simply close for our side by saying that I think this is a resolution that all of our Members can support. And it is very appropriate to commemorate this 35th anniversary of, as the gentleman from Illinois just said, one of the most important environmental pieces of legislation that this Nation has ever seen.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time, first to observe that Congresswoman EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, Chair of the Water Resources Subcommittee, would have been here to manage this bill were it not for the death of her mother. And we join with her in mourning that loss. I know that she and her mother were very, very close. She spoke so warmly of her mother so often, and we join in prayers for both of them.

We have engaged in spacecraft missions to the Moon, to Mars, to Saturn, to the asteroid belt in quest of water. The very first effort is to look for water on distant planetary objects in our system, for primitive life forms that may exist in that water, and yet we have not looked closely enough at the water here on Earth.

This recognition of the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act will give us that opportunity to stop, to reflect upon the journey that we have made

over these three and a half decades, and the journey yet ahead of us to clean up that remaining one-third, to protect that other two-thirds of water, to pass on to the next generation this priceless heritage of fresh water, that we do not have to go wandering in space looking for water that we may have destroyed on Earth so that we may bring it from some extraterrestrial planetary system to replenish our fresh water on Earth. No, let us be custodians of that fresh water that we have. It's only 2 percent of all the water on Earth. Let us resolve and renew our efforts. Let's resolve to maintain the purpose of that Clean Water Act, to protect the waters of the United States.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 725, to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. This landmark legislation established the basic structure for our national commitment to restoring and maintaining the environmental integrity of our Nation's waters.

When the Cuyahoga River caught fire and Lake Erie was declared "dead", Congress finally took action and passed the Clean Water Act, which is now the cornerstone of surface water quality protection in the United States. The statute employs a variety of regulatory and nonregulatory tools to sharply reduce direct pollutant discharges into waterways, finance municipal wastewater treatment facilities, and manage polluted runoff. These tools are employed to achieve the broader goal of restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters.

Even as the population of the United States has increased by close to 50 percent, the Clean Water Act has enabled our waterways to show dramatic improvement in water quality. In 1972, only one-third of the country's waters met water quality goals—today two-thirds do.

And for those of us who live in the Great Lakes region, the success of the Clean Water Act is even more personal and poignant. As a kid, my brothers and I used to have to hold our breath to swim past the dead fish in Lake Michigan before we could pop up and play in the cleaner water. Today, my children are able to enjoy a much cleaner Lake Michigan.

This success deserves our praise, but at the same time, we must recognize that there is still much work to be done. We have the opportunity to recommit ourselves to the goals and objectives of the Clean Water Act by dedicating ourselves to working toward a sustainable, long-term solution to the Nation's decaying water infrastructure. Recent events involving BP and U.S. Steel looking to expand the pollutants they discharge into Lake Michigan heighten concern for those of us who are committed to protecting and restoring the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes provide drinking water and recreation for over 30 million people, and they are the economic engine that drives the Midwest. The Clean Water Act has helped preserve this national treasure, but we have more work to do to restore it and invest in the environmental and economic health of the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Speaker, clean water is not a partisan issue. I am proud to have worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to fight to clean up our Lakes, and I will continue to do so. The Clean Water Act has been a fundamental tool in the protection of our Nation's environment, and I hope my colleagues will join me in commemorating this important legislation and its accomplishments by supporting H. Res. 725.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALZ of Minnesota). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 725.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1815

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF AMERICA'S WATERWAY WATCH PROGRAM

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 549) recognizing the importance of America's Waterway Watch program, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 549

Whereas the United States has a maritime border that exceeds 95,000 miles;

Whereas the Department of Homeland Security has begun to focus greater attention on potential security threats from small vessels and the importance of increasing maritime domain awareness;

Whereas the Coast Guard currently conducts a maritime homeland security public awareness program called America's Waterway Watch program;

Whereas America's Waterway Watch is a public outreach program to encourage America's 70,000,000 boaters and others who live, work, or engage in recreational activities around America's waterways to maintain a heightened sense of awareness in the maritime domain and report suspicious and unusual activities to the Coast Guard National Response Center and other appropriate law enforcement agencies;

Whereas America's Waterway Watch program educates the public on what suspicious activity is and provides a toll-free telephone number, (877) 24–WATCH, for the public to report such activity to prevent terrorism and other criminal acts;

Whereas the Coast Guard promotes this program by distributing educational materials, boat decals, posters, and reporting forms to recreational boaters, marine dealers, marinas, and other businesses located near waterways;

Whereas America's Waterway Watch program acts as a force multiplier for the Coast Guard and local law enforcement and builds on local and regional security programs;

Whereas the Department of Homeland Security conducted a National Small Vessel Security Summit on June 19 and June 20, 2007, to educate small vessel operators and other stakeholders on current security risks and initiate dialogue on possible solutions to mitigate gaps in United States maritime domain awareness; and

Whereas, during the National Small Vessel Security Summit, participants highlighted America's Waterway Watch program and recognized its importance to increasing maritime domain awareness: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the importance of increasing maritime domain awareness;

(2) encourages those who live, work, or engage in recreational activities around America's waterways to maintain a heightened sense of awareness in the maritime domain and report suspicious and unusual activities to appropriate authorities; and

(3) supports the goals of America's Waterway Watch program.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 549.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. House Resolution 549, introduced by Congressman GUS BILIRAKIS, recognizes the contributions made to our Nation's security by the Coast Guard's Waterway Watch program. As chairman of the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, I strongly support the Waterway Watch program, and I support the resolution offered by the gentleman from Florida.

Put simply, America's Waterway Watch program enlists the 70 million Americans who work, play or live around our Nation's waterfronts, rivers, lakes, and coastal regions to become part of our Nation's first line of defense by observing and reporting suspicious activities. Founded by the Coast Guard in 2004, the Waterway Watch is similar to earlier Coast Watch programs instituted during World War II.

At the time, the Coast Watch program was comprised of a group of volunteers who scanned our coasts for U-boats threatening U.S. shipping. Today, America's Waterway Watch calls on volunteers to aid in the war on terrorism on our home front. People are advised to take note of suspicious activities and, if it can be done safely, they are encouraged to take photographs or videotape of the occurrence. Observers are then asked to immediately report incidents they have witnessed by calling 911 or the America's Waterway Watch 24-hour national toll-free telephone number, 1–877–24–WATCH. Reported information is then sent to the National Response Center located at Coast Guard headquarters to be evaluated and dispersed to local Coast Guard responders.

I emphasize that this watch program is meant to be a simple deterrent to potential terrorist activity by asking