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RELEASE AUSTIN TICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. KILMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, almost 7 years ago, Austin Tice, an American journalist, disappeared in Syria. Since the day he vanished, his parents, family, friends, and supporters have tirelessly worked to ensure that no stone is left unturned and no avenue ignored in a global campaign to see Austin returned home safely.

As we approach the end of the seventh year of Austin's captivity, we request that whomever continues to hold Austin release him immediately so that he can return to his family and his friends.

We also ask for the assistance of the Government of Syria. I ask that they do whatever they can to help facilitate Austin's release.

There are things that transcend politics and diplomacy, bridge cultural divides, and need no translation across different languages. Those are things like love and hope, represented by a mother and a father who wake up each day with the unshakable faith in their son and the belief that today could be the day when they get the chance to hug him again.

We ask for your help, without the assignment of blame or malice to anyone, so that this year is the last that Austin remains so far from home and from family.

RESTORE OUR PARKS

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Restore Our Parks Act, and I thank Mr. BISHOP for his leadership and partnership on this bill.

I was lucky enough to grow up near one of the crown jewels of our national park system, the Olympic National Park, right in my backyard in the Pacific Northwest. I have seen firsthand how our public lands have captivated both visitors and residents alike and served as key economic drivers for our local communities.

I think there is little doubt that our national parks are some of America's greatest natural and cultural treasures. I am proud that my home State boasts not only Olympic National Park, but also Mount Rainier National Park and North Cascades National Park, true gems of the national park system.

Unfortunately, these crown jewels are getting a bit rusty, and they require our attention to return them to glory. If you have visited one of our parks lately, you will no doubt have noticed that they are facing a good problem.

In 2017, Washington State had a record 8.45 million park visitors, including families, campers, and adventurers, who came to explore our iconic landscapes. While they were there, these visitors spent more than \$500 million, supported more than 6,600 jobs,

and created nearly \$700 million in economic impact.

While this is undeniably great news for Washington's growing outdoor economy, the rise in visitation has also strained our park resources, like roads, interpretive centers, campsites, and trails, that visitors rely on to access and truly experience our parks. If we as a country don't start investing in our parks, I believe we risk loving them to death.

The National Park Service manages more than 400 sites across the country and is facing a nearly \$12 billion backlog in necessary repairs. In Washington State alone, our national parks suffer from nearly \$400 million in deferred repairs needed to restore historical structures, fix eroding trails, fix roads, and update unsafe electrical and drinking water systems.

This significant maintenance backlog threatens the health, accessibility, and safety of our parks, their visitors, and the communities that depend on them. That is why we need to take this opportunity to build on recent successes of investing in our public lands and turn our attention to passing the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act.

Passing this legislation sponsored by my good friend from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) will establish a long-term investment in our parks that will create jobs and boost economies throughout Washington State and across this country. An analysis commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts shows that investing in the maintenance of our national parks could create or support more than 3,800 new jobs in Washington State alone and 100,000 jobs across the country.

Now, these days, Congress can hardly agree on what day it is or what color the sky is; but, with 300 Members of the House of Representatives cosponsoring this bill and 40 Members of the Senate, it is crystal clear that this is an area that we might actually see some progress. My hope is that we can get folks behind this and get this done.

RESTORE OUR PARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. KILMER for leading off on this particular issue and all the work that he has been doing on this particular concept. It is important.

I am very happy that this bill has 300 cosponsors now here in the House. That is the largest number of cosponsors who have ever supported a bill coming from the Natural Resources Committee. I think there are only 10 other bills that have more cosponsors in the House. It passed our committee on a 36-2 vote and is now awaiting the chance of being heard here on the House floor.

There is a companion bill in the Senate, not quite as good as our ours, that

already has one-third of the Senate as cosponsors of that.

This is an idea whose time has actually come. We talk about the maintenance backlog of our national parks and all of our public lands, including fish and wildlife land, BLM land, and also our national forests.

Especially as we now enter August, when there will be the largest participation of Americans going out to visit these parks and public lands, it is important that their experience be a positive one and not be stopped by broken roads, lack of sewers, lack of facilities, or lack of any kind of access that they may need. That is why it is so significant.

We have almost around \$17 billion of maintenance backlog only in our parks. If you add up the maintenance backlog we have on all other public lands, including our national forests, it is \$30 billion that we would need to spend just to get them to standard—not to do any kind of really human moving it forward, but just to get them to where they are workable, livable, and enjoyable.

That kind of backlog did not take place overnight. There are a lot of people who are simply looking at saying: Well, let's just try and use the same old stuff we have been using for a long time. We will appropriate more money.

That doesn't work. We have developed a significant problem that needs a significant new solution. This solution is one that was coming out of, actually, the administration that has the support of over two-thirds of the House and that has the support of one-third of the Senate. This is one of those things which, all of a sudden, this is a cool idea to solve an existing problem that we have ignored for a number of years.

The goal of this is to take excess—and that is the key word—royalties that are coming from energy production on all Federal lands, all kinds of energy production, whether it is traditional, renewable, onshore, or offshore, any kind of royalties coming into the Federal Government from those. If there is an excess, which means we take the commitments we have already to things like GOMESA and LWCF, and after those are funded, then if there is excess, that excess now goes into a fund to start working at these kinds of problems, to solve our problems with public lands. The restoration fund only receives the amounts after all these other programs have received that.

If there is no excess in the royalties—I clearly doubt that will happen, but if there is no excess in the royalties, then there is no money that goes into this program.

Some people have said this is mandatory spending. No, it is not.

Mandatory spending, by definition, means you have to spend the money whether it appears or not; you have to find it from somewhere else. This is one of those programs that said, if there is excess, then the first billion of this money will go to fund our national

parks, our public lands. If there is no excess, then you don't have to find it anywhere else because there will be no money that goes to that.

This is not mandatory in any way.

Also, some people are saying, well, maybe there should be an offset for this new program. This is really not a new program. The parks and public lands exist. The responsibility to make sure that they are viable, they are paid, and they are sustainable already exists. This is an existing program.

We are not taking anything from any other program for this. We are simply basing it on what is already our existing responsibility.

If you were to try and go through a traditional approach of trying to appropriate more money through our budgeting process, that wouldn't have to have an offset. What we are talking about here is existing programs, existing needs, and existing responsibilities.

We have spent a whole lot of time buying up land. The Federal Government owns one-third of America already. It is easy to buy up more property. It is easy to establish a park because that sounds really cool. You get your name on it, and it gives you a legacy. The hard part is maintaining that land.

And for heaven's sake, if we are going to take the responsibility and build a legacy, to actually buy something and create something, we have to take the responsibility of maintaining it, and this is exactly what we are talking about.

I am so proud that there are so many Republicans and so many Democrats who have realized this is our obligation, this is our responsibility, and we have to do it.

This bill is extremely important because it is a proper approach to solving an existing problem. I encourage the leaders of this House to bring it to the floor soon so it can be debated and heard.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 10 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR) at noon.

PRAYER

Rabbi Gershon Avtzon, Yeshivas Lubavitch Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, master of the universe, I invoke Your blessing today on the Members of this honorable institu-

tion, the House of Representatives of the United States of America. May they humbly serve their constituencies, aware that creating just legislation is one of the seven laws that You, almighty God, gave all humanity through Noah, as detailed in Genesis.

Almighty God, as a descendant of Chassidic Jews who fled the Stalinist regime that persecuted religious observance, I am especially grateful and blessed to be in America, the nation called the "country of kindness" by the great spiritual leader of our generation, the Lubavitcher Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. We thank you for the freedom we have here to practice our faith, and we pray for those who still suffer persecution around the world.

While legislating, by definition, includes differences of opinion and rigorous debate, I pray that we, nevertheless, anticipate our shared bright future in the time of redemption and, thus, remain "one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PAYNE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING RABBI GERSHON AVTZON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the rabbi for coming to the Capitol today to share with us a time in prayer, a time when we often need it.

America has been through many battles. We have many debates. But we always come out strong, and we come out together, at the end of the day.

I thank the rabbi for his kind prayer and thoughtfulness as we proceed forward as a Nation.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 further re-

quests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HONORING THE PAYNE FELLOWSHIP

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Donald M. Payne, Sr., International Development Graduate Fellowship Program.

My father, the late Donald M. Payne, was committed to human rights at home, in Africa, and around the world. I am honored by the Payne Fellows' commitment to my father's legacy, and I have developed a deep appreciation for everything they have done to uplift humanity.

I am proud that the fellowship named for my father helps talented young people enter the USAID Foreign Service program. Today, the Payne Fellows are leading the charge on some of the greatest global challenges of our time.

Since its inception in 2013, the program has trained 50 talented young individuals who come from diverse backgrounds to enrich and enhance the USAID Foreign Service.

This year, I hosted one of the Payne Fellows in my office. Her name is Meklit Gebbru.

Meklit's intellect, work ethic, humor, and, most of all, her positive attitude will truly be missed in my office. The day after her arrival, she was writing questions for me to use in Committee on Homeland Security subcommittee hearings.

Again, I thank the USAID and the Payne Fellows for their commitment to providing humanitarian efforts while in support of America's foreign policy.

REMEMBERING THE CARLTON COMPLEX FIRE

(Mr. NEWHOUSE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, it has been 5 years since the largest single wildfire in Washington State history.

The Carlton Complex fire raged through north-central Washington, burning more than a quarter of a million acres and leaving more than 500 homes and structures destroyed in its path. Still today, the communities, small businesses, and families in Okanogan County continue to rebuild and work to address the long-term consequences of this disaster.

While the devastation was heart-breaking, what we saw on the ground was a testament to the resilience and spirit of Washingtonians, as well as the generosity and bravery of those from across the region and the Nation who came to north-central Washington's aid.

At the height of the fire, in those frightening days of late July 2014, more