in Rockingham County and McDowell in Highland County.

Residents of the Shenandoah Valley are fiercely proud of their heritage and the role that their valley played in the American Civil War. Not only did the battles fought in the valley play a pivotal role in the Civil War and have national importance, but the ravages from these battles on the lives of local citizens and their property were great and remain an important part of our local history. Many of the descendants of the native valley families who farmed the land where these battles were fought some 130 years ago still reside on those same family farms today.

This tremendous pride in the valley's rich heritage is the key to why public participation in the drafting of this legislation was overwhelming. More than two dozen public hearings were held throughout the valley and support has been widespread.

Prior to the introduction of the bill, I participated in a public meeting held in my congressional district by the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors to find out if support for the proposal to create the Shenandoah Valley National Battlefields Park was as widespread as we anticipated. This meeting provided a forum where all voices in the area could be heard.

The community's support was very strong. Property owners, preservation groups, and local government officials and businesses voiced their support for the bill and the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors subsequently endorsed it. This type of support has been universal. Every Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council in the five counties affected have endorsed this bill.

That is because our bill not only protects the irreplaceable resources of the battle sites, it also protects property rights through its entirely voluntary approach and provides opportunity for continued economic development for the region. This is achieved in a cost-efficient manner.

This legislation does not involve acquisition of thousands of acres of land by the Federal Government. There will be no Federal ''taking'' of local property. That approach would be antithetical to the residents of the valley who as I mentioned earlier are fiercely proud of their heritage, yet deeply suspicious of big Government.

Rather, this legislation is built on providing incentives designed to encourage local governments and landowners to voluntarily manage their communities and property in ways best to further the preservation of these sites and park objectives. It respects private property rights and recognizes federal budgetary limitations resulting from the Federal budget deficit. It creates a model, partnership between the local communities and the Federal Government to protect our valley's rich historic resources for future generations.

With regard to provisions modifying the boundary of the Shenandoah National Park—ever since my first campaign for Congress in 1991, I have heard from citizens and local governments concerned about the possible expansion of the Shenandoah National Park and the impact such an expansion would have on their property values and those communities which lie on the parameters of the park. Since 1991 this issue has been one of my top priorities.

Shenandoah National Park now encompasses 196,000 acres of land, however it has a much larger authorized boundary of 521,000 acres created by Congress in 1926. Under this authorization, the SNP has the potential to expand in three ways without any action by Congress: by accepting donated property, by purchasing property with donated funds and through land transfers with private property owners. In fact, the only time that the park must come to Congress in order to expand is if they seek to purchase property with appropriated funds.

This situation causes local communities and property owners to constantly fear such an expansion and the potential for crippling effects upon property rights and local tax bases. In Rockingham County for example, there is the community of Beldor Hollow which has lived for several generations with the threat that citizens of the community could actually be surrounded by park land, ''land-locked'' if you will. In fact two members of the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors spoke to the National Parks Subcommittee about those concerns back in March when the subcommittee held hearings on this bill.

By freezing the boundaries of the park to the land that the SNP currently owns we will alleviate this threat of out-of-control expansion that has plagued these communities since the 1930's. This bill does not eliminate the potential for the park to expand in the future—it just requires that Congress approve such an expansion which provides the park's neighbors the opportunity to have a voice in the matter.

We've also taken care of another Shenandoah issue with this legislation by transferring secondary roads within the park to the state so that they can continue to be maintained. Virginia has maintained and operated these secondary roads under a series of temporary use permits since the park's creation. These permits have expired and since the National Park Service has not renewed them the State can no longer maintain these roads, many of which are in need of repairs. Our bill returns these roads to the State so that they can be maintained.

I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation which is vitally important to the entire State of Virginia.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by stating that I will support this bill. I have some reservations. Again, I think we should give our Park Service professionals the opportunity in their boundary studies to work their will, but I am compelled to support it because of the respect I have for many Members on both sides of the aisle that would like to see this bill become law. Tomorrow when we cast the vote, I will be voting ''aye.''

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1091, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1630

NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM REFORM ACT OF 1995

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 260), to provide for the development of a plan and a management review of the National Park System and to reform the process by which areas are considered for addition to the National Park System, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 260

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''National Park System Reform Act of 1995''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

As used in this Act:

(1) The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) The term ''Plan'' means the National Park System Plan developed under section 101.

(3) The term ''Commission'' means the National Park System Review Commission established pursuant to section 103.

(4) The term ''Congressional resources committees'' means the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate.

TITLE I—NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM PLAN

SEC. 101. PREPARATION OF NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM PLAN.

(a) PREPARATION OF PLAN.—The Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the National Park Service, shall prepare a National Park System Plan to guide the direction of the National Park System into the next century. The Plan shall include each of the following:

(1) Identification of goals and objectives for use in defining the mission and role of the National Park Service and the National Park System in preserving our Nation's heritage, relative to other efforts at the Federal, State, local, and private levels. This statement shall include a refinement for the definition of ''nationally significant'' for purposes of inclusion in the National Park System.

(2) Criteria to be used in determining which themes and types of resources are appropriate for representation in the National Park System, as well as criteria for judging individual sites, areas, and themes that are appropriate for inclusion as units of the National Park System.

(3) Identification of what constitutes adequate representation of a particular resource type or theme in the National Park System.

(4) Identification of which aspects of the Nation's heritage are adequately represented in the existing National Park System.

(5) Identification of appropriate aspects of the Nation's heritage not currently or adequately represented in the National Park System.

(6) Priorities of the themes and types of resources which should be added to the National Park System in order to provide more complete representation of our Nation's heritage.

(7) A thorough analysis of the role of the National Park System and the National Park Service with respect to (but not limited to) conservation of natural areas and ecosystems; preservation of industrial America; preservation of intangible cultural heritage such as arts, music, and folklife; presidential sites; open space protection; and provision of outdoor recreation opportunities.

(8) A comprehensive financial management plan for the National Park System which identifies all funding available to the agency, how funds will be allocated to support various programs, and the level of service to be provided.

(b) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION.—During the preparation of the Plan under subsection (a), the Secretary shall ensure broad public participation in a manner which, at a minimum, consists of the following two elements:

(1) Solicitation of the views of the American public with regard to the future of the National Park System. Opportunities for public participation shall be made available throughout the planning process and shall include specific regional public meetings.

(2) Consultation with other Federal land management agencies, State and local officials, resource management, recreation and scholarly organizations, and other interested parties as the Secretary deems advisable.

(c) TRANSMITTAL OF REPORT.—Prior to the end of the second complete fiscal year commencing after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall transmit the Plan developed under this section to the Congressional resources committees.

(d) CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL.—Unless Congress enacts a joint resolution rejecting all or modifying part of the Plan within 180 calendar days after the date of its transmittal to Congress, the Plan shall be deemed approved.

(e) IDENTIFICATION OF UNITS OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.—The Secretary shall submit to the Congressional resources committees an official list of areas or units of the National Park System within 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act. The Secretary shall establish a set of criteria for the purpose of developing such list and shall transmit those criteria to the Congressional resources committees.

(f) AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH UNITS OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.—After the enactment of this Act, units or areas of the National Park System may only be established pursuant to an Act of Congress or by Presidential action in accordance with the Act entitled ''An Act for the preservation of American antiquities'' (16 U.S.C. 431 et seq.).

SEC. 102. MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.

(a) SELECTION CRITERIA.—(1) The Secretary shall, not later than 45 days after transmittal of the Plan under section 101(c), publish in the Federal Register and transmit to the Congressional resources committees the criteria proposed to be used by the Department of the Interior in reviewing existing units of the National Park System under this section. The Secretary shall provide an opportunity for public comment on the proposed criteria for a period of at least 30 days.

(2)(A) The Secretary shall, within 60 days of the transmittal of proposed criteria under paragraph (1), publish in the Federal Register and transmit to the Congressional resources committees the final criteria to be used in carrying out this section. Except as provided in subparagraph (B), such criteria shall be the final criteria to be used unless disapproved by a joint resolution of Congress enacted not more than 30 legislative days after receipt of the final criteria. For the purpose of the preceding sentence, the term ''legislative day'' means a day on which both Houses of Congress are in session.

(B) The Secretary may amend such criteria, but such amendments may not become effective until they have been published in the Federal Register, opened to public comment for at least 30 days, and transmitted to the Congressional resources committees in final form.

(b) REVIEW.—(1)(A) Using the Plan deemed to be approved pursuant to section 101(d) and the criteria developed pursuant to subsection (a), the Secretary shall review the existing National Park System to determine whether any existing units or significant portions of such units do not conform to the Plan. For any such areas, the Secretary shall determine whether there are more appropriate alternatives for managing all or a portion of such units, including through partnerships or direct management by States, local governments, other agencies and the private sector.

(B) The Secretary shall develop a report which contains a list of any unit of the National Park System where National Park Service management should be terminated and a list of any portion of units where National Park Service management should be modified as a result of nonconformance with the Plan. No area or portion of an area which Congress has designated as a national park may be included in the report.

(2) Should any such unit or portion of such unit not be recommended for continued National Park Service management, the Secretary shall make recommendations regarding management by an entity or entities other than the National Park Service.

(3) For any such unit or portion of such unit determined to have national significance, prior to including such unit or portion of such unit on a list under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall identify feasible alternatives to National Park Service management which will protect the resources of and assure continued public access to the unit.

(c) CONSULTATION.—In developing the report referred to in subsection (b), the Secretary shall consult with other Federal land management agencies, State and local officials, resource management, recreation and scholarly organizations, and other interested parties as the Secretary deems advisable.

(d) TRANSMITTAL.—Not later than 18 months after the Plan has been deemed approved, the Secretary shall transmit the report developed under this section simultaneously to the Congressional resources committees and the Commission. The report shall contain the recommendations of the Secretary for termination of National Park Service management for any unit of the National Park System that is determined not to conform with the Plan, a list of portions of units where National Park Service management should be modified, and the recommendations for alternative management by an entity or entities other than the National Park Service for such unit.

SEC. 103. NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM REVIEW COMMISSION.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION; DUTIES.—(1) Following completion of the Plan as specified in section 101, a National Park System Review Commission shall be established.

(2) The Commission shall either review the report developed under section 102 or, if the Secretary fails to develop and transmit such report, develop the report itself. In conducting its review (or developing the report, if necessary), the Commission shall be subject to the provisions of sections 102 (b) and (c) in the same manner as such provisions apply to the Secretary. If the Secretary develops and transmits the report, the review of the Commission shall be limited to the manner in which the criteria have been applied to the existing National Park System. In addition the Commission shall seek broad public input and ensure the opportunity for input from persons who would be directly affected by recommendations regarding National Park System units identified in its report.

(3) Within 2 years after the date of its establishment, the Commission shall prepare and transmit to the Congressional resources committees a report of its work under paragraph (2) in which the Commission recommends a list of National Park System units where National Park Service management should be terminated and a list of portions of units where National Park Service management should be modified.

(b) MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission shall consist of 11 members, each of whom shall have substantial familiarity with, and understanding of, the National Park System and related fields. In addition, the Commission members shall have expertise in natural sciences, history, archaeology, and outdoor recreation. Five members of the Commission, one of whom shall be the Director of the National Park Service, shall be appointed by the Secretary. Two members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives in consultation with the chairman of the Committee on Resources, and one member shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the House or Representatives in consultation with the ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources. Two members shall be appointed by the President pro tempore of the United States Senate, in consultation with the chairman of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and one member shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate in consultation with the ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Each member shall be appointed within three months after the completion of the Plan as specified in section 101.

(c) CHAIR.—The Commission shall elect a chair from among its members.

(d) VACANCIES.—Vacancies occurring on the Commission shall not affect the authority of the remaining members of the Commission to carry out the functions of the Commission. Any vacancy in the Commission shall be promptly filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

(e) QUORUM.—A simple majority of Commission members shall constitute a quorum.

(f) MEETINGS.—The Commission shall meet at least quarterly or upon the call of the chair or a majority of the members of the Commission.

(g) COMPENSATION.—Members of the Commission shall serve without compensation as such. Members of the Commission, when engaged in official Commission business, shall be entitled to travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in the same manner as persons employed intermittently in government service under section 5703 of title 5, United States Code.

(h) TERMINATION.—The Commission established pursuant to this section shall terminate 90 days after the transmittal of the report to Congress as provided in subsection (a).

(i) LIMITATION ON NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STAFF.—The Commission may hire staff to carry out its assigned responsibilities. Not more than one-half of the professional staff of the Commission shall be made up of current employees of the National Park Service.

(j) STAFF OF OTHER AGENCIES.—Upon the request of the Commission, the head of any Federal agency may detail, on a reimbursable basis, any of the personnel of such agency to the Commission to assist the Commission.

(k) EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.—Subject to such rules as may be adopted by the Commission, the Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services to the same extent as authorized by section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, but at rates determined by the Commission to be advisable.

(l) POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.—(1) The Commission shall for the purpose of carrying out this title hold such public hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission deems advisable.

(2) The Commission may make such bylaws, rules, and regulations, consistent with this title, as it considers necessary to carry out its functions under this title.

(3) When so authorized by the Commission, any member or agent of the Commission may take any action which the Commission is authorized to take by this section.

(4) The Commission may use the United States mails in the same manner and upon the same conditions as other departments and agencies of the United States.

(5) The Secretary shall provide to the Commission any information available to the Secretary

and requested by the Commission regarding the Plan and any other information requested by the Commission which is relevant to the duties of the Commission and available to the Secretary.

SEC. 104. SUBSEQUENT ACT OF CONGRESS REQUIRED TO MODIFY OR TERMINATE A PARK.

Nothing in this Act shall be construed as modifying or terminating any unit of the National Park System without a subsequent Act of Congress. This limitation shall not limit any existing authority of the Secretary.

SEC. 105. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are hereby authorized to be appropriated $2,000,000 to carry out the purposes of this title.

SEC. 106. COMMENDATION AND PROTECTION OF NATIONAL PARK RANGERS.

(a) FINDING.—The Congress recognizes the dedication, expertise and courage of the men and women who serve as rangers and other employees of the National Park Service and finds their service to the protection of our park resources and the safety of the hundreds of millions of Americans who visit our national parks each year to be indispensable.

(b) PROTECTION OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EMPLOYEES.—As soon as possible as part of the report developed under section 101, the Secretary shall report on the procedures that have been instituted to report to the United States Attorney or other appropriate law enforcement official any intimidation, threats, or acts of violence against employees of the National Park Service related to their duties.

TITLE II—NEW AREA ESTABLISHMENT

SEC. 201. STUDY OF NEW PARK SYSTEM AREAS.

Section 8 of the Act of August 18, 1970, entitled ''An Act to improve the Administration of the National Park System by the Secretary of the Interior, and to clarify the authorities applicable to the system, and for other purposes'' (16 U.S.C. 1a–1 and following) is amended as follows:

(1) By inserting ''GENERAL AUTHORITY.—'' after ''(a)''.

(2) By striking the second through the sixth sentences of subsection (a).

(3) By redesignating the last two sentences of subsection (a) as subsection (f) and inserting in the first of such sentences before the words ''For the purposes of carrying'' the following: ''(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—''.

(4) By striking subsection (b).

(5) By inserting the following after subsection (a):

''(b) STUDIES OF AREAS FOR POTENTIAL ADDITION.—(1) At the beginning of each calendar year, along with the annual budget submission, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate a list of areas recommended for study for potential inclusion in the National Park System.

''(2) In developing the list to be submitted under this subsection, the Secretary shall give consideration to those areas that have the greatest potential to meet the established criteria of national significance, suitability, and feasibility. The Secretary shall give special consideration to themes, sites, and resources not already adequately represented in the National Park System as identified in the National Park System Plan to be developed under section 101 of the National Park System Reform Act of 1995.

''(3) No study of the potential of an area for inclusion in the National Park System may be initiated after the date of enactment of this subsection, except as provided by specific authorization of an Act of Congress.

''(4) Nothing in this Act shall limit the authority of the National Park Service to conduct preliminary resource assessments, gather data on potential study areas, provide technical and planning assistance, prepare or process nominations for administrative designations, update previous studies, or complete reconnaissance surveys of individual areas requiring a total expenditure of less than $25,000.

''(5) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to or to affect or alter the study of any river segment for potential addition to the national wild and scenic rivers system or to apply to or to affect or alter the study of any trail for potential addition to the national trails system.

''(c) REPORT.—(1) The Secretary shall complete the study for each area for potential inclusion in the National Park System within 3 complete fiscal years following the date of enactment of specific legislation providing for the study of such area. Each study under this section shall be prepared with appropriate opportunity for public involvement, including at least one public meeting in the vicinity of the area under study, and after reasonable efforts to notify potentially affected landowners and State and local governments.

''(2) In conducting the study, the Secretary shall consider whether the area under study—

''(A) possesses nationally significant natural or cultural resources, or outstanding recreational opportunities, and that the area represents one of the most important examples of a particular resource type in the country; and

''(B) is a suitable and feasible addition to the system.

''(3) Each study—

''(A) shall consider the following factors with regard to the area being studied—

(i) the rarity and integrity of the resources;

(ii) the threats to those resources;

(iii) whether similar resources are already protected in the National Park System or in other public or private ownership;

(iv) the public use potential;

(v) the interpretive and educational potential;

(vi) costs associated with acquisition, development and operation;

(vii) the socioeconomic impacts of any designation;

(viii) the level of local and general public support, and

(ix) whether the area is of appropriate configuration to ensure long-term resource protection and visitor use;

''(B) shall consider whether direct National Park Service management or alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector is appropriate for the area;

''(C) shall identify what alternative or combination of alternatives would in the professional judgment of the Director of the National Park Service be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing for public enjoyment; and

''(D) may include any other information which the Secretary deems to be relevant.

''(4) Each study shall be completed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

''(5) The letter transmitting each completed study to Congress shall contain a recommendation regarding the Secretary's preferred management option for the area.

''(d) NEW AREA STUDY OFFICE.—The Secretary shall establish a single office to be assigned to prepare all new area studies and to implement other functions of this section.

''(e) LIST OF AREAS.—At the beginning of each calendar year, along with the annual budget submission, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate a list of areas which have been previously studied which contain primarily historical resources, and a list of areas which have been previously studied which contain primarily natural resources, in numerical order of priority for addition to the National Park System. In developing the lists, the Secretary should consider threats to resource values, cost escalation factors, and other factors listed in subsection (c) of this section. The Secretary should only include on the lists areas for which the supporting data is current and accurate.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] will be recognized for 20 minutes and the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON] will be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN].

(Mr. HANSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 260, the bipartisan National Park System Reform Act of 1995 introduced by Mr. HEFLEY. This bill is very similar to a bipartisan measure which passed the House last session by a vote of 421–0. As was testified to in our hearing on the bill, it is one of the most important measures on the National Park Service to come before the committee since the 1916 Act establishing the National Park Service. I am pleased to note that the bipartisan nature which characterized this bill last session continues this session, despite the extensive effort of those who seek to misrepresent this legislation.

This bill reflects the concern of a number of Members on both sides of the aisle and in both Houses that over the years since its establishment, the Park Service mission seems to have expanded far beyond what was originally envisioned, and far beyond what can be afforded. In the words of GAO at our joint hearing with the Senate last spring, the ''NPS is at a crossroads.''

We can either continue down the path of designating questionable areas we cannot afford, or we can choose another course. This bill by Mr. HEFLEY helps us to choose another course.

First, and most importantly, the bill requires the NPS to develop a plan for where it should go. Should we include urban beaches in the National Park System. What about outdoor performing arts amphitheaters? What about historic re-creations? All these questions need to be asked and answered. Through this bill, those answers will be forthcoming.

Second, we must have a process to ensure that only the best areas get added to the park system in the future. We cannot go forward adding every new proposal in sight, just because a Member or interest group has a particular desire. We must have better screening criteria and a prioritization of areas to be added to the park system.

Finally, we must look at where we have been, and what is included in the existing park system. Anyone who has looked at the park system for very long has a list of questionable sites in his/her pocket. Two weeks after the administration testified against this bill, Secretary Babbitt stated his intention to transfer three NPS areas to the States of Virginia and Maryland. Congress has no way to know what other areas are on Secretary Babbitt's park

closure list, but we cannot go around arbitrarily listing parks to be closed. Rather, there should be an objective, public process to review our existing park system. That is precisely what this bill provides.

I point out that this bill does not close a single park, either directly or indirectly. It will lead to a possible list of park areas where future Federal involvement should be re-examined in the minds of objective observers. From there, Congress would be free to act, just as we have deauthorized parks 24 times in the last 100 years. However, actions taken would be on the basis of solid information.

While it is true that parks could be reviewed on a piecemeal basis, such an approach would be subject to the same political pressures which have resulted in the addition of the questionable areas to the park system in the first place.

The most enlightening and disturbing aspect of the debate over this bill has been how the interest groups have lined up. The bill is supported on a bipartisan basis by members from the Resources Committee who routinely receive a ''0'' from the League of Conservation Voters and by Members who score in the 90's. It is supported by both Republican and Democratically-appointed Directors of the NPS. It is supported by employees of the agency, as represented by the largest employee organization, the Association of National Park Rangers. Finally, it is supported by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

It is opposed only by the extreme environmental groups and those who carry their banner. It is ironic to me that those who claim to be such friends of the parks have put their personal political and financial gain ahead of the well-being of the parks.

I have no grand illusions that we will solve the financial woes of the National Park Service through this bill, but we will help protect the integrity of the park system. After all, the agency as a whole will be judged by its most questionable area, which is the only standard against which any new potential addition to the park system must be judged.

I commend this bill to my colleagues and I know that those who support our park system, will support this important legislation.

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

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

(Mr. RICHARDSON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, this is a parks-closure bill. And this is why I am going to read a series of national environmental groups that are opposing this bill: The Defenders of Wildlife; the American Hiking Society; the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund; the Friends of the Earth; the Izaak Walton League of America; the Wilderness Society; the National Parks and Conservation Association.

Let me also state, Secretary Babbitt's name has been invoked, the Clinton administration strongly opposes H.R. 260, unless amended to delete provisions that deal with a closure commission.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bad bill, but what is worse, it is here under suspension. Why is there a railroading of this bill? Why in subcommittee, as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Lands, was I not allowed to proceed with an amendment, an alternative, that said basically there are other ways to finance the national parks? Let us look at a trust, let us look at concessions or let us look at fees. Let us look at better ways to manage the parks.

But what we are doing here is a parks closure commission. My good friend, the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN], the chairman of the subcommittee, has been quoted that he would like to see 150 parks closed in his own newspaper.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. RICHARDSON. I yield to the gentleman from Utah.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, that was a quote that came out of the Elko paper, and the Elko paper wrote a retraction of that saying that they never heard that before and they were sorry they brought that up. So, that retraction was in there and any Member would be a fool to make a statement like that, and I hope I do not fall in that category.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I accept what the gentleman just said.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to submit it for the RECORD.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, again, reclaiming my time, I am quoting many publications and I am simply stating that what we are doing in this bill is we are setting up a process that is similar to a military base closing commission.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is, along with the cuts on the national parks, and the cuts are substantial in the national parks budget, 36 percent cut by the year 2002, would be achieved by closing 200 smallest and least-visited national parks, or by cutting the budget of all parks by amounts which render them less safe, the Congress will have indirectly and quietly achieved what some are attempting to do with a parks closing commission. Mr. Speaker, this is by the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Speaker, no one is calling us or saying that we have too many parks. On the contrary, the American people love and support our national parks. That is why many of us are deeply troubled by this bill. This is a parks closure bill, basically, with some viewing it as means to close parks they believe are nonessential.

Contrary to what some might believe, it is not easy to get an area designated as a unit of the National Park System and should not be easy to remove them from the system as well. Those who think the authorization is a panacea for whatever ails the National Park System are wrong.

We could deauthorize all the 30-plus units designated since 1980, yet we would save less than 2 percent of the national parks budget, annual operation and maintenance budget.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that this legislation relies too heavily on a park closure commission which would have the authority to recommend the closure of any unit in the National Park System, with the exception of the 54 national parks. The Statue of Liberty, Independence Hall, the Washington Monument are all national monuments and would be subject to consideration for closure or privatization under the provisions of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, what makes these sites any less worthy than Yellowstone or Grand Canyon National Park? National park units are not at all like military bases. We do not need a closure commission that could only justify its existence by recommending park closures.

If there is any question as to the marching orders of the commission, one only needs to look at the Republican budget resolution that was adopted: A 10-percent cut in NPS operating funds, a 5-year land acquisition moratorium, and a 50-percent cut in NPS construction. Is there any doubt what this commission is supposed to produce?

Mr. Speaker, there are not quick fixes to find out how we improve the management of the parks. All I am saying is let us send this bill back to the Committee on Rules where there would be an opportunity to debate an alternative that I have. I only want one amendment, 10 minutes, 3 minutes, that says there is a better way than a closure commission; that this is far too drastic.

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

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. HEFLEY], the author of the legislation.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we are able to bring this bipartisan measure, the National Park System Reform Act, to the floor of the House today.

Mr. Speaker, in the past few months I have heard this bill called many things and blamed for many others. Most of these, as well as what we have just heard on the floor, simply are not accurate.

This is not a park-closing bill. This is not a base-closing commission. In fact, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON], I think, is arguing against the bill which is simply not before us on the floor of the House today. Maybe it was a concept somewhere

back in the history of this legislation, but it simply is not something that is before us, after many months of working with the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER] and the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO] in trying to massage this bill and make it be something that we could all be very proud of.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply not the bill that the gentleman from New Mexico describes. H.R. 260 is a balanced policy initiative that will set the stage for future, reasoned debate on park reform.

The bill directs the Park Service to take 1 year to develop both a mission statement and a set of criteria for inclusion within the Park System.

Following Congress' approval, the Park Service would then take that criteria, remember that, following Congress' approval, the Park Service would take that criteria, hold it up against the existing Park System, see what is there, what is not there, and possibly on some rare cases what does not belong there.

Mr. Speaker, if those rare cases occur, the Park Service would study alternative forms of management which would range from transfer to other government agencies or levels of government or to other interested parties.

Only if those prospective managers could guarantee preservation of the resource which made the site significant in the first place, could any transfer take place.

So, we are not closing parks with this bill. In fact, we are not making it easy to close parks with this bill. After 3 years of study, the Park Service will turn its findings over to an independent review commission. During the next 18 months, the review commission would look over the Park Service's recommendations and receive additional public comment on them, before passing those recommendations along to Congress.

Mr. Speaker, if the Park Service does the kind of job we expect it to, then the commission will serve as little more than a rubber stamp to its findings. But, if it becomes clear after 1 year that the Park Service has no intention of carrying out the review outlined in this act, then the review commission may undertake to review on its own.

In this way, the commission may serve as a hammer over the Park Service, or its peer reviewer. The choice is up to the Park Service.

Mr. Speaker, whatever the findings of this review, it is up to Congress to act upon them in whole or in part or not at all. This is no base-closing bill. There is nothing in it that says, ''Take it or leave it all,'' about the review in H.R. 260.

Title II of the bill tightens the criteria for admission of new units into the Park System.

□ 1645

It directs the Interior Secretary to develop a priority system for new units, then submit these priorities to Congress with the annual budget request until action is taken.

Further, the bill centralizes planning for new units at Park Service headquarters. If this is to be a system of nationally significant places, then there should be a coordinated effort to identify such places.

Let me tell you what H.R. 260 does not do. H.R. 260 does not mandate the closure of any parks. Indeed, the Nation's 54 national parks were exempted. There were those who were saying we were going to close Yellowstone, close Grand Canyon. Of course, not. Those are going to stand up to any scrutiny, as I think most units of the Park System will. We just took those out. That will not even be a question. H.R. 260 does not create an independent commission selling off parks to the highest bidder. The commission can act alone only if Interior ignores the will of Congress. Even then it would be assisted in its review by the Park Service and even then any action on its findings would be left to Congress, which created the parks in the first place.

It would not mean the end of urban or Alaskan parks, as has been charged. It is not an outgrowth of the wise-use movement in the West. It has nothing to do with the cutbacks in budget or appropriations, real or imagined.

The gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO] and I have worked on this bill now for almost 2 years. Last year we passed its 1994 counterpart by a record vote of 421 to zero. This, I think, is a better bill. We have sat down with more people since then. We have 42 or so environmental groups we sat down with and tried to take their concerns into account as we tried to develop this bill. I think it is a better bill now.

Yet, H.R. 260 appears to have become a lightning rod for every fear about Park Service matters voiced against this Congress. I hope the membership will push aside the perceptions that have been advanced by a number of special interest groups and, instead, support the reality embodied in H.R. 260. It is a good bill. It is one which will keep our national parks the envy of the world.

I urge support for this bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me disabuse the gentleman and everyone that is listening of one fact. This is not the same bill that passed last year which contained all of our votes. There is a huge difference.

This is a bill that has as the primary source the park closure commission. The past bill had a backup. First, the Park Service made their determinations. Then you had the park closure commission. That is the difference. There is a huge difference.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], a member of the committee.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 260. I also rise in opposition to the manner in which this controversial measure is being brought before the House.

H.R. 260 would set up a mechanism for restructuring portions of the National Park System and includes provisions that would allow an Interior Secretary or an unelected commission to recommend the closure of units of the Park System.

I oppose H.R. 260 for a number of reasons, but primarily because I disagree with a fundamental premise of the bill. H.R. 260 rests upon the presumption that the Park System is overextended and that the only way to help the system is to restructure and strategically downsize it.

Restructuring and downsizing are terms we often hear these days in Congress, but we are not talking about military bases here.

What we are debating is the fate of one of our Nation's greatest treasures. This is cultural, historical, and natural resource preservation we are talking about.

As Mr. RICHARDSON said in his dissenting views on H.R. 260, no one outside the beltway is calling or writing to say we have too many parks. In fact, the contrary is true in my State. I have constituents and elected officials writing me all the time to try to get new areas designated as parks or refuges or to get existing parks expanded. And despite the rhetoric we hear in this body, it is not easy to get that done; it takes years of work.

Of course, even if we except the premise that we need to trim the Park System, the deck has already been stacked in favor of some units and against others. The legislation exempts from consideration for termination 54—mainly Western—national parks. And what was the scientific policy basis for leaving these parks out? I do not know. If this is a fair process this bill is establishing, and these parks are so superior, would those parks not be protected anyway?

Why aren't important parks like the Statue of Liberty, Independence Hall, and the Washington Monument protected from scrutiny? Why aren't Gateway and Sandy Hook—which is in my district—protected? Perhaps it is because these are urban units which, in addition to being significant cultural, historical, and natural areas, provide education and recreation to lower income people who cannot afford to travel to Colorado or California to take advantage of the Park System their tax dollars support. Or maybe it is merely because some in this body have a very narrow and elitist view of the Park System.

Now, I know that supporters of this bill will say it is not a closure bill; that it is not a BRAC for the parks. But I would just like to draw my colleagues' attention to a bill that those same people supported last Congress, H.R. 1508. Section 105 of that bill, sponsored by Mr. HEFLEY, was entitled ''Termination of National Park Service management at nonessential National Park

System areas.'' Now today's bill may be a so-called compromise bill, but it is clear what the intent is behind it. I am now a member of the Resources Committee—and I have watched some of my colleagues on that committee oppose parkland acquisition even though it was proposed by a Republican member. I have even seen ''Dear Colleague'' letters and a newspaper op-ed entitled ''Do We Need All These Parks?'' where a park in my district is singled out. But those same people seem to be saying ''trust us, we really don't want to get rid of the park system.'' I am sorry, but I just cannot take that on faith.

I could go on about my objections to this legislation, but I want to talk a bit about the way in which this bill is being considered. On June 12, BILL RICHARDSON, the ranking Democrat on the National Parks Subcommittee—which has jurisdiction over this legislation—sent a ''Dear Colleague'' letter to each and every Member of the House. In that letter he said that he opposed H.R. 260. But more importantly he said the following: ''When the House considers H.R. 260, I will offer amendments * * *.'' I told the ranking subcommittee member that I supported him and that I, too, might want to offer amendments. Other Members did the same.

Then, on Friday of last week, I found out that the National Park System Reform Act was coming before the House under suspension of the rules—a format that would prohibit all of us from offering the amendments we said we wanted considered. I did not believe it. I actually asked my staff to call the Democratic Cloakroom to make sure this was actually H.R. 260 we were bringing up. You see, I was under the impression that the Suspension Calendar is only for noncontroversial items, not legislation that is opposed by the National Parks and Conservation Association. It is not for legislation that is so controversial that the Secretary of the Interior came all the way to my district to tell me and my constituents that he opposed it. And it is certainly not meant for legislation that is opposed by the ranking member of the subcommittee of jurisdiction.

Yet here we are. We have not suspended the rules, what we have suspended is the right of my constituents and others to dissent.

Maybe you do not agree with my point of view on the bill's substance. Or maybe you do. However, I hope that you support the rights of myself, my friend from New Mexico, and others who want to offer amendments to this bill.

I urge my colleagues to vote for the Park System and for the Democratic system by voting ''no'' on this legislation.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO].

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO].

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support to H.R. 260, and I want to commend the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN], the chairman of the subcommittee, and the principal sponsor, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. HEFLEY], for their work on this.

Actually, this product is a product of the 103d Congress in many respects.

As was indicated, we hammered this proposal out last year. It passed on Suspension Calendar. It was considered on suspension. It was basically a measure that is noncontroversial. It is not identical to the bill, but most of the major elements are the same, and the proposal and the agreement that was made then really holds true in terms of my work on this measure.

This is a necessary piece of legislation. This really provides a formal process for the establishment of a criteria, criteria which do not exist today with regard to the national parks. We need the Park Service to establish that type of criteria.

Furthermore, it establishes, in order to be certain that the Park Service itself will go through the process of this establishment of criteria, and once submitted, Congress then has to ratify it. Beyond that, it suggests the Park Service then take the criteria that it develops and review almost all the parks.

Obviously, there are 50 of the outstanding parks not included. In essence, I do not think anyone questions the review of that would probably not be a good use of resources. That is the basis to me of the workload here, somewhat more realistic here in terms of how we march forward.

Once that has been accomplished, they go through review of the 300 or so parks. They report back to the Congress and report of the commission.

We establish commissions in the Congress often, often, I think, without careful thought. But in this case, the commission has been very carefully constructed. It is a commission that has a certain amount of independence, but they have no independent authority to act on removing designation from any park. In fact, the power to designate parks resides in the Congress today, and once this legislation were to be passed in the form it is before us today, that authority to designate or remove designation would continue to reside in the Congress.

I find, obviously, some of the hyperbole and paranoia that has crept into this debate very curious. There has been a tendency for the advocates and opponents of this bill to overstate the case. There should be no mistake about mistaking this bill. This bill is the same bill supported by the administration in the 103d Congress. It was supported by the Park Service, which helped craft and write this legislation in the 103d Congress. It was supported by the conservation groups. It was supported by Democrats and Republicans.

That is why it passed on the floor on suspension by 421 votes in favor, with none against it.

It, in essence, is the same bill. What has changed this year obviously, there is a change in the Congress. I am here because I do not have a horse in the race. It is not one of my parks that is affected. I am here because I think this is good policy. I think the Members of this body ought to vote for it. I am here because I just think this is good policy. This is where we ought to go.

What are we afraid of in this bill? We do not want the Park Service to study the park units? Can we not trust the Park Service? If we can trust it to run these units, should we not be trusting them to do the study?

We are asking the professionals first and foremost to do it and report back to us. We are asking the commission to be there to make certain and somehow have an independent voice to also report to us. You have got to trust the Congress.

I think Members of this body and the Senate can be trusted to designate and take responsible actions with regard to this. That is really where it is at. If we do not want to today, that action could take place without any commission, without any study, without any consideration. Is that what the opponents of this bill would like to see, no review, no consideration in process? I do not think so.

I think this bill provides good process, good review. It is a rational, reasoned way to reinvent and deal with the problems facing the National Park Service in this year and which I have worked on for 20 years that I have been in this body.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 260, the National Park System Reform Act of 1995. This legislation, which I have cosponsored, is similar to a proposal considered and approved by the House of Representatives during the 103d Congress under the Suspension Calendar.

Mr. Speaker, for a decade, I had the privilege and the pleasure to chair the House subcommittee with jurisdiction over national park policy. I am very concerned about the state of our national parks and well understand the need to move forward, this Congress, important park reform, review, and reinvention policy. Park review and reform legislation is reasoned, rational, and in the public interest. This measure is an effective policy not random, arbitrary action; it is a good public policy.

The National Park Service [NPS] is charged with the management of the Nation's most important natural, cultural, and historical resources. These areas are known throughout the world for their natural qualities, scenic beauty, and historical significance. Each year, the areas which make up the National Park System are visited by over 260 million people, and this number continues to grow.

It is our obligation to ensure that only outstanding resources are included in our National Park System and that parks currently in the system are managed effectively. This concern, shared by my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, the administration, and the American people, enabled the House to unanimously pass, on the Suspension Calendar and without dissent, the National Park Service Reform Act in the past Congress.

This legislation was a product of compromise involving the current administration,

the National Park Service, environmental groups, and Members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans.

It was with this spirit and support that I joined my colleagues Mr. HEFLEY and Mr. HANSEN, in re-introducing a National Park Service reform bill in the 104th Congress. That is the legislation pending before us.

Unfortunately, we now have a perception problem that has injected controversy anew. What was once a unanimously supported reform bill has now been dubbed by some as a ''Park Closure'' bill. In my judgment, both the advocates and opponents have been guilty of fanning the flames and generating misunderstanding and controversy where none need exist. Perception for some has been conjured up as reality. When all else fails, the admonition should be to read the legislation.

A close review and literal reading of the proposed law shows that the apprehension that was raised is not justified. H.R. 260 remains very consistent with the legislation considered in the last Congress. The NPS sets criteria, Congress approves the criteria, the NPS studies a reduced number of parks, conveys this to the Congress and an appointed commission within 3 years. The commission reviews and reports to Congress. Congress and only Congress has the responsibility to remove parks from the National Park System. The responsibility comes back to Congress under this proposal and under current law.

There are many issues before this Congress where significant differences in philosophy have made for some heated debates and will continue to do so. I suggest that we hold back on our desire to draw the lines in the sand over this park review and reform issue and that we save our passion for those debates in which there is true disagreement on issues of which there seems to be no shortage.

Certainly, National Park Service reform is especially needed in an era of fiscal constraint and large demands on the existing Park System. We still have the opportunity to enact a forward looking bill. I do not agree with those who think that our National Park System is complete and that nothing else should be added, or worse still, that we should begin closing parks just to save money. However, I hope that all of us can agree that effective management of our National Park System will benefit us all. While today the National Park Service is judged by the crown jewels, there is an increasing tendency to highlight only the rhinestones in the system—some of which are as costly or even more costly than the crown jewels of our national parks.

The issue of effective park management is not a simple one and narrow-minded solutions are inappropriate when considering the reform of our precious natural, cultural, and historic resources.

The National Park System needs the ability to expand in order to reflect the progression of history and to respond to a rapidly growing population. At the same time, efficient management and strategic planning will achieve savings as will the consideration of alternative management plans for parks that do not meet the criteria guidelines outlined in the bill. This bill can accomplish such goals.

As for the commission enacted in this measure, the NPS has had numerous standing and shorter term commissions and while we should proceed carefully and curtail the profusion of commissions this initiative is hardly some unusual precedent and in reality will serve as leverage on the NPS and Congress to take this task more seriously.

Finally, this is not and should not be a base realignment and closure commission as was established within the Department of Defense. The responsibilities are defined; the authority limited and the sunset of the commission is certain. Its policy path is clear—to report its recommendations to the Congress for our consideration.

This measure is a good bill and responds to the reasoned criticisms and questions raised beyond the version the House acted upon last year. As for the hyperbole and paranoia that have dogged H.R. 260, I would hope that Members will deal with the tangible today not the surreal.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. HINCHEY].

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, in spite of the great respect and admiration I have for the sponsors of this bill, I find that, nevertheless, I feel strong opposition to it.

I think that there are aspects of the bill which do make a constructive contribution. First of all, a comprehensive review by the Secretary of the Department of Interior, I think, is constructive, and would be helpful.

But the underlying philosophy of this bill is what I find so troubling about it. It seems to suggest that we have too many parks and that we ought to deauthorize units of the National Park System and, furthermore, I believe the sentiments in this bill, as they are expressed in the language here, would tend to focus attention on those parks and national resources which tend to be in the urban areas, which tend to be in those parts of the country where they get the most use and the most attention, which tend to be used by those people who are least likely to travel to some of the national parks in the western part of our country.

□ 1700

Why are we doing this? Are we spending too much money on our National Park System? I do not think so. The National Park System, which is one of the most treasured possessions of this country, takes up less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the national budget. It is a very small portion of what we spend nationally.

Is it true that the National Park Service does not get enough funding? Yes, unquestionably, it is. But that is a failure of ourselves, it is a failure of this Congress. The Congress ought to realize the value of the National Park Service and apportion to it a greater portion of the Federal budget. The National Park Service has been starved for funds, and this particular budget that is before us this year goes on to do that in an even greater degree than has been done in the past.

Construction is cut by 50 percent. Operating funds are cut by 10 percent. That is wrong. It is the wrong direction in which we should be going, and it mitigates toward the kind of philosophy which is expressed in this bill which indicates that we have too many parks and we ought to be closing them down.

We need more recreational opportunity in this country, if anything. We need greater recognition of our national heritage, if anything. We need a better understanding on the part of our citizenry, particularly our younger people, with regard to our national and ecological heritage, which is enshrined in the system of our national parks.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that this bill, in spite of the fact that it does some things that are good, takes us inevitably in the wrong direction. The idea that we have too many parks is wrong; the idea that we should be closing some of them down, in my opinion, is misguided. What we ought to be doing is spending more, not less, on our National Park System, raising it up, making it be what it ought be in the minds of the American people, the greatest expression in many ways of our national and historical heritage.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER].

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER].

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). The gentleman from California [Mr. MILLER] is recognized for 3 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Members would focus on this legislation. This is not a park closing bill, and this is not the bill that passed last year. What this is, is a very, very good piece of legislation to allow us to deal with some of the problem that exist within the national parks of this country. Let us not pretend that the process by which all of the units and all of the obligations and all of the duties were given to the National Park Service was a pure process that nobody can question or raise issue with, because the fact is, we know that this Park Service and its resources have been assaulted from time to time by this Congress in the middle of the night in a conference committee without hearings, without jurisdiction, but based upon the individual power of a Senator here or a Congressman here, or what have you. We ought to now reexamine the operations of this most valuable, valuable agency of the Federal Government.

This is not to pass judgment whether there should be more or less parks. This is about making sure that we are using the resources to the best extent that we can, that we can assure the people of this country that we are doing all that we can to maintain and improve the parks that we have, and to maintain the standards for the creation of those parks, and that we are making the best utilization we can out of the resources of the National Park Service. Nobody in this body can stand before the American public and say that is the situation today, and if we

cannot say that, then we ought to put into motion a process by which we can review that.

Because of the contributions of the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. HEFLEY], the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN], the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO], and even the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON], this legislation in fact does that. It lets us look at the system.

This is the rational way to go about reforming or reorganizing or reinventing, whichever term you are comfortable with, because it lets the front-line agencies, the Secretary of the Interior and the Park Service, make some determinations, and we all know that privately they come to us. Whether they are rangers in the West or they are in the seashores in the East or in the Gulf, they come to us privately and tell us, this is not working terribly well, Mr. Speaker.

There is another way to do this. We ought to know that. They ought to be able to bring that forward and then have the citizens commission screen that process, screen that process so that there is input from affected parties, from localities, because all of us know that all of these parks have different importance to different communities and States and local jurisdictions. Some of them are huge engines of economic activity. Some of them are huge engines of activity, but you do not have the economics to take care of it. Some of them, quite simply, nobody knows why they are there, except that somebody got it done in the legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, this is a process that is reasoned out, that has protections in it, that is very thoughtful, and does not mandate that any action take place, but it puts us in a position that at one point we can stand before our constituents and say that this is the best run agency, the best use of resources of the National Park Service.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of the bill.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HANSEN. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I may have missed some of the debate earlier that went on on this legislation, and I was watching this in my office, and I came over because I happen to agree with a lot of what has been said by the proponents of this legislation.

I guess the only question I had is, with respect to all of the review that would go on on all of the parks, I guess all of the monuments, all of the various facilities that are run and operated by the Park Service, why are not all of them on the list? Is there a reason that we left some of them off?

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, originally we looked at all of them and then we figured that possibly it would be smart to alleviate the fears of a lot of people, because we tried to convince them that this was not the park closing bill, that they would have the opportunity to take 54 spectacular parks, and I agree with the gentleman from New Jersey, it is kind of in the eye of the beholder, but I do not think that people have found what we are looking at.

The gentleman from Colorado [Mr. HEFLEY] said, ''What bills are in front of us?'' It is like Chairman Seiberling when he was with us used to say, ''When all else fails, read the legislation.''

The only place that refers to the fears that have been brought up by our friends is on page 13, starting on line 12 that says: ''Nothing in this act shall be construed as modifying or terminating any unit of the National Park System without a subsequent act of Congress.''

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I would just ask the gentleman, I mean I agree, I read that. I saw that. But again, I am surprised as to why we did not put Yosemite on that list. I mean, I guess that is what you suggested.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. HEFLEY], a sponsor of the bill, who possibly has a better answer on that.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman answered the question very well. They were all on the list when we first started out. But there were many groups out there that were trying to pick this as some kind of a closure bill and were saying, well, they are going to close Yellowstone or Yosemite or Grand Canyon, and in order to alleviate those fears, those are national parks. They are the highest level of recognition that you can have in our parks system. They have undergone the scrutiny of the ages. They are not going to be closed, there is no question about that. So we thought in order to alleviate that fear and concern, we just took them off.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I guess what the gentleman from Colorado just said hits right home in the Southwestern part of the United States. I mean I think that what you are doing is creating the same kind of fear. A lot of this is in my district, but a lot in the Southwest think exactly the same of the national monument in the same context as we do of Yosemite that somebody else may think looks prettier. Like you said, it is in the eye of the beholder.

Mr. Speaker, we should have listed all of them, if this is a true process, one that is going to be fair and open, and I think it is a mistake for us to pass legislation that is not fair.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO].

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I think the distinction here is one you ought to pay attention to. These are national parks. We are talking about those that are designated national parks in law, by the Congress; we designated them national parks. So the issue is in terms of 368 units. In other words, there are different designations and you have to pay attention when they are talking about using resources wisely. If in fact something is meritorious and should be designated a national park, then you should do it. It is not a unit of the National Park System, these are actually designated. So there is a difference in designation, a difference in where you want to concentrate your resources. That is why pulling them out makes sense in terms of dollars and in terms of what is going out.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. HANSEN. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would please answer me, why not allow an alternative to finance the parks that involves concessions fees, and please address the point that this is not the same bill as we passed last year. This is a much stronger parks bill.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me quickly respond. The gentleman realizes and knows that the park committee has in front of it a park fee bill right now. We love our parks. We want to take care of our parks. We have to get more money in our parks, and we have a bill that we think would take care of it. It is not included in this bill, but we have one that I would hope we would have the support of the House and the Senate when we are able to bring it forth.

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

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remainder of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Mexico is recognized for 1 minute.

(Mr. RICHARDSON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, this is a parks closure bill and we should vote ''no'' so that it can go back to rules and there can be proper debate. The League of Conservation Voters has just issued a statement opposing this bill signed by the major environmental organizations. I want my colleagues in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD tomorrow to read the national park units, the smaller ones, that might be at risk in their congressional districts if this bill passes.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bad bill, it creates a Parks Closure Commission, it weakens our authority, it says to the National Park System, the park rangers, your views are not important, and it puts a lot of national monuments like Mount Rushmore, Lincoln, Jefferson, at risk. This is a railroad process. Let us go back to committee, allow for alternatives.

This is why the Clinton administration is against this bill. Every major

environmental organization is against this bill, and hopefully, the House of Representatives tomorrow will vote a resounding ''no'' that we should do this bill right.

Mr. Speaker, I include the following material for the RECORD.

[From the Salt Lake Tribune, May 6, 1995]

DON'T CLOSE THE PARKS

Generally, people want to enter a national park; they want to leave a military base. Indeed, there is little that the two have in common, other than that they are both federally owned. Yet there is inexplicable sentiment in Congress for providing a common element to both—a closure commission.

A bill known as HR 260, which has already passed Utah Rep. Jim Hansen's subcommittee and is due up before the full House Resources Committee this month. Proposes the formation of a Park System Review Commission. It would do for national park units what the Base Realignment and Closure Commission has done for military bases: It would close them.

Closure is appropriate for some unneeded military bases, but not so for national park units, which presumably have an unchanging value. After all, national parks were created for purposes of preservation and posterity, not for the every-shifting requirements of national defense. Existing park units simply should not be exposed to the whims of an independent commission.

The issue has surfaced because the National Park Service has been having problems adequately funding all 368 units in its system. One complaint is that the system is overloaded with units that don't belong, units that were designated at the behest of some congressman trying to bring home the pork for his district.

This problem can be addressed without the creation of a park closure commission. For starters, Congress can support the portion of HR 260 that calls for the Interior secretary to devise tighter criteria for additions to the NPS, thereby safeguarding the system from selfish lawmakers.

Then, if Congress still feels that undeserving units have crept into the system, it can simply deauthorize them itself, as it did last year with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. It does not need some new level of bureaucracy to do this.

The rationale behind a park closure commission is that it would save money for the NPS. Well, as the BRAC members can testify, it would cost a lot of upfront money to close these units. And once closed, who would operate them—the states, or some other division of the federal government? How do the taxpayers save on that?

If the goal is to improve NPS finances, then start with passage of park concessions reform or entrance fee reform. Start funneling such fees back into the parks, instead of the national treasury. It makes little sense to set up a mechanism to close parks when proposed methods to increase park revenues have not been implemented first.

National parks are not at all like military bases. They were created to establish a natural or historical legacy for future generations. They don't need a closure commission; they need more creative ways to stay open.

[From the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 17, 1995]

AMERICA FOR SALE

Americans can be justifiably proud of their national park system. This treasure preserves areas of awesome natural beauty, monuments of historical significance, indigenous wildlife and an appreciation of this country's remarkably diverse landscape. But that record apparently isn't good enough to save the national parks from the GOP budget ax.

The Republican budget resolution would make excessive cutbacks in the National Park Service. This year's budget of $1.42 billion, already drastically insufficient to maintain the system properly, would be sliced to $1.12 billion in 1996, a 21 percent reduction. By the magic date of 2002, the year of the balanced budget, the Park Service would be down 36 percent from today. At the same time, visits to national parks are expected to grow from an estimated 270 million this year to 300 million in the next five years. It doesn't take much of imagination to figure out that something has to give.

The victim could be the parks themselves. A bill in Congress, H.R. 260, would dismantle the national park system. It would set up a commission, along the lines of the commission on base closures, to determine which parks should be closed—and presumably sold off to the highest bidder. Supposedly, the process would exclude the so-called crown jewels of the system, such as the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone or Yosemite. But less popular parks, or parks that cater mostly to locals could be dumped.

For too long, the National Park Service has been grossly underfunded. The result has been deferred maintenance, repair and construction, especially in parks like Yellowstone or the Grand Canyon, which are deluged with visitors. After years of starving the parks, the answer isn't to kill them outright. It's to give the National Park Service the money to do its job right.

In a time of belt tightening, how can that be done? Entrance fees can be raised, although care must be taken not to deprive Americans of modest means of their ability to enjoy the parks. Another solution is to increase the paltry sum paid by private concessions to the National Park Service for the privilege of operating hotels, restaurants and other services—and to introduce competitive bidding in the process of awarding concessions. According to The New York Times, concessions in national parks made $653 million in 1993, but the parks got back only $18.7 million, or 2.8 percent.

The national parks are too precious to lose. They can and should be saved, without destroying the whole system.

[From the Wichita Eagle, Aug. 25, 1995]

NATIONAL PARKS DESERVE HELP TO PROTECT NATION'S HERITAGE

The lines of cars, trailers and campers pile up at Yellowstone National Park, at Yosemite, all across the land. Americans love their national parks.

You'd think the passion for parks would spur more and better maintenance and improvements at these national treasures. But the reverse seems to be true. Sadly, the more Americans use the national parks, the more run-down they become.

The National Park Service has an annual budget of $972 million, of which users fund about $100 million. The budget falls short of the need; the result is a backlog of maintenance and construction projects that has now reached to more than $4 billion.

In recent years, Congress has been in no mood to come up with a big infusion of cash. Now, in fact, some members are talking about closing some parks to make the system more ''cost-efficient.''

Certainly, a hard look at the National Park System is a good idea. Yes, the system's spending priorities haven't always been on target. The new $80 million Steamtown National Historic Park in Pennsylvania is one example; critics rightly say it has little to do with railroad history, or any other kind. And the park system has some questionable elements: the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is a city park and Wolf Trap in Virginia is really a venue for concerts.

But this country needs more national park space, not less, and it needs to do a much better job of maintaining and improving what it has. That, of course, creates a sizzling conflict between two American values: a love for parks and a passion for cutting federal spending.

There's a bottom line here that is not totally about the bottom line. Yes, the national parks should be run efficiently. Yes, users should pay more. But the parks are priceless public places—for preservation, education and recreation for all Americans. If it costs more money to protect and expand them, it's a worthy investment in America's spectacular natural and historical heritage.

[From the Las Vegas Sun, Aug. 27, 1995]

GOP READIES LAND GRAB OF OUR PARKS

When the Republican House prepares to decimate the nation's parks next month get ready for the bull-dozers. Our national heritage will never be the same.

Several conservative congressmen, who like to throw out government babies with the bath water, have taken aim at the National Park Service to cull out parks they don't like.

One plan would create a commission, much like the panel to close military bases, to select parks to be turned over to the States or private interests.

And which parks would suffer? Rep. James Hansen, R-Utah, offers a clue. He says Great Basin Park, the only national park in Nevada, ''does not have the true definition of park criteria.'' Great Basin was created in 1986 and protects 77,000 acres of pristine woodland northeast of Ely. About 90,000 people a year visit the park.

The park was the result of hard-fought efforts by Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., who wanted to preserve a small piece of Nevada for future generations. Sen. Richard Bryan, D-Nev., says parks provide recreation for families.

He doesn't understand how closing national parks squares with ''family values'' oriented GOP.

But this isn't a family value issue. It has more to do with GOP's links to big business and land exploiters and a growing disdain for the public interest.

Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, a proponent of littering Southern Nevada with nuclear waste, wants alternative solutions for parks, like private operations.

Rep. Jerry Lewis, R-Calif., has fought the California Desert Protection Act tooth-and-nail to benefit land exploiters.

Critics point to inefficient park management and a growing backlog of maintenance projects.

But it was Congress that expanded the park system without providing additional funding. Park personnel are spread more thinly than before.

Critics insist, under their plan, parks like Steam National Historical Park in Pennsylvania wouldn't have been created.

But that $80 million park was the brainstorm of Pennsylvania congressmen, not the Park Service.

We think there's more afoot here than Park Service efficiency. A massive land sell-off is more likely. Arizona may be a good example.

Republican Gov. Fife Symington has lobbied for his state to take over Park Service properties, while his agents sold off a portion of a historic landmark.

These same congressmen have conveniently forgotten that the public lands and parks systems were the legacy of their party.

President Theodore Roosevelt, never a liberal big-spender, nevertheless set aside thousands of acres of dwindling wilderness lands to benefit future generations.

He was afraid an important heritage might be lost.

Lucky for Teddy he isn't around to see the latest crop of House Republicans.

[From the New York Times, July 4, 1995]

PARKS IN PERIL

This is the time of year when Americans begin flocking to their national parks. Some will find what they were looking for: vistas of spectacular beauty, hours of restorative silence. But others may find themselves wondering whether they have traded one rat race for another. The national parks contain most of America's greatest scenic wonders. They also suffer from the urban nuisances vacationers had hoped to leave behind: traffic jams, noise, dirty air and garbage.

There is, as Representative Bill Richardson of New Mexico notes, ''trouble in paradise.'' If past experience is any guide, for example, there will be gridlock today in Yosemite. By one estimate, the Grand Canyon alone needs $350 million to repair roads, sewers and water systems. Many of the park system's 22,000 historic buildings, as any visitor to Ellis Island can confirm, are simply falling apart.

Human overload is the most visible culprit. Nationwide attendance at the Park Service's 368 separate units is expected to reach 270 million this year, 300 million by the turn of the century. But the real culprit is Congress. In the past 20 years, it has established more than 80 new parks while refusing to give the Interior Department's Park Service enough money to do its job. The service's $1.5 billion annual budget barely covers operating costs. The result is an estimated $6 billion repair and construction backlog.

Congress is responsible for cleaning up the mess it created. The question is how. Not surprisingly, given Washington's anti-environmental, budget-conscious mood, the most popular option is to trim back the system itself. A bill before the House would direct the Interior Department to review all parks and determine which ones are ''nationally significant.'' At that point, a special commission would decide which parks should get the ax and then present its list to Congress.

The proposal excludes 54 ''major'' national parks but leaves open for review more than 300 monuments, historic sites, scenic trails, urban parks and assorted recreation areas.

On its surface, this bill, co-sponsored by Joel Hefley, Republican of Colorado, and Bruce Vento, Democrat of Minnesota, has an appealing simplicity. The park system definitely includes substandard sites—what Mr. Hefley calls ''pork parks,'' shoe-horned into the system to enhance local economies and the careers of the politicians who sponsored them. Get rid of these, Mr. Hefley argues, and we will have more money to spend on the ''crown jewels'' like Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon.

In the end, though, this is an unnecessarily messy and potentially dangerous approach to the problem. Mr. Vento says that Congress will vote on each recommendation ''on its merits.'' But a more likely scenario is that the proposed closings will be lumped together in one omnibus ''closings'' bill, threatening valuable wilderness along with mediocre sites that do not belong in the system.

A more positive approach to rescuing the parks is contained in two other bills confronting the Senate and House. One would overhaul entrance fees, which are ridiculously low. The average entrance fee is $3, less than half the cost of a ticket to ''Batman Forever.'' A carload of people can explore Yellowstone for a whole week for only $10—the same price they would have paid in 1916. Doubling entrance fees, a not unreasonable proposition, could generate an extra $100 million for the parks.

The second bill would end the sweetheart contracts awarded years ago to the companies that run the lodges, souvenir shops and other facilities inside the parks. In 1993, concessions generated gross revenues of $657 million but returned only $18.7 million—2.8 per cent—to the Federal Treasury. The bill would mandate competitive bidding for these lucrative enterprises, giving the Park Service a bigger cut of the proceeds and generating $60 million more for long-neglected repairs.

Both measures were well on their way to approval when time ran out on the 103d Congress last December. There is now in place a vastly different Congress, more inclined to budgetary parsimony than environmental stewardship. Its basic philosophy is that to save the patient we have to cut off an arm here, a leg there.

That is the wrong way to go. The right way is to provide the park system with enough resources not just to survive but to renew itself. The language in the original mandate establishing the Park Service was unambiguous. The national parks should be left ''unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.'' Congress wrote that language, and Congress needs to honor it now.

[From the Miami Herald, June 27, 1995]

FOR SALE: NATIONAL PARKS

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET CUTS AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT ATTITUDES THREATEN AMERICA'S HERITAGE

''Pssst, want to buy a national park? No, not Yellowstone, not Yosemite, not Grand Canyon (or at least not yet). How 'bout Gateway overlooking Manhattan, Cuyahoga Valley outside Cleveland, San Francisco's Golden Gate and Presidio? Miami's Biscayne on the Atlantic Coast? Now, there's a deal. Right on the highway to the Keys, perfect for development * * *''

Haven't you heard? Congress's Republicans want to sell the nation's urban parks. They cost too much, you know? Got to cut taxes, balance the budget. Government shouldn't own land—this whole idea of public lands, public parks * * * passe * * * not something government should be doing.

Did American voters knowingly seat a Congress that shows such antipathy to the environment, natural resources, public parks, even recreation? Bill after bill keeps coming—mostly from the House: a Clean Water Act that dismantles pollution controls; a regulatory reform act that encourages junk science and invites lawsuits; a property-rights bill intended to spike protection for endangered species; and now HR 260, setting up a park-closure commission, and a 1996 budget resolution too skimpy to keep the 368 national parks and historic sites open.

The National Park Service will spend $1.42 billion this year. The Republican budget resolution scheduled for House debate this week cuts that by 21 percent to $1.12 billion for 1996. By 2002, spending for parks is to be 36 percent less. There will be no choice but to close some parks, recreation areas, monuments, battlefields, and riverways, while reducing hours, programs, and maintenance at others.

Targeted are the 200 ''smallest'' units including Biscayne, but also Tennessee's Obed Wild and Scenic River (adjacent to the site of next year's Olympic whitewater competition), historic homes of Abraham Lincoln and Booker T. Washington, the Civil War battlefields of Antietam and Petersburg, California's channel Islands, and Utah's great red sandstone Arches. At Philadelphia's Independence National Historical Park, nine of the 14 buildings now open would be closed. At Great Smoky Mountains, the nature walks and talks would be eliminated. At Everglades, the Long Pine Key and Flamingo campgrounds would close. The Clinton administration has recommended alternatives, but the GOP isn't interested.

That's because the budget resolution effectually implements a program laid out by the House Resources Committee to sell parks. Although not yet voted on by the House, HR 260 gives Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt two years to come up with a list of parks to close and establishes a National Park Service Review Commission to do the job if the secretary doesn't. The list would be sent to Congress for the final say.

How does one countenance selling these national treasures? Ask the Republicans in Congress.

[From the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Aug. 14, 1995]

PRESERVE AMERICA'S PAST

Everyone seems to agree that the national park system is in trouble. Its budget has not kept pace with the parks' ever-increasing popularity. The result is obvious and predictable: deferred maintenance and the deterioration of facilities and resources, both natural and historic.

When Americans think of their national parks, they think mostly of their natural beauty and of their plants, animals and spectacular landscapes. But these parks also include archaeological and historic structures. As The New York Times has reported, far too many of these structures under the care of the National Park Service—the system's ''parkitecture''—are in a state of serious, perhaps irreparable decay. The price tag to preserve these historic buildings could reach $1.5 billion, considerably more than the $1.12 billion the Republicans want for the entire 1996 National Park Service budget.

Public-private partnerships have been formed to rescue some prominent structures, such as the Sperry and Granite Park Chalets in Montana's Glacier National Park, and such projects should be encouraged wherever possible. Yet the condition of the parks and its ''parkitecture'' argues for a far more comprehensive approach to their care.

That approach can be found in H.R. 2181, the Common Sense National Park System Reform Act, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Bill Richardson, a Democrat from New Mexico. This reform bill, which has bipartisan support, stands in distinct contrast to a more Draconian bill, H.R. 260, that would establish a park closure commission. Mr. Richardson's intent is to save the system, not gut it. It is an especially helpful approach at a time when the park service's budget, which should be increasing to meet the public's demand, is actually decreasing.

Mr. Richardson's bill would raise more money for the parks from concessionaires operating in the parks and from visitors and users. Right now businesses operating in the parks, including hotels and restaurants, pay next to nothing for the privilege of making gigantic profits. Introducing a system of competitive bidding for concessions would provide more money, part of which would go into a park improvements fund. This bill would also raise entrance and user fees, though not outrageously, and divert part of the proceeds into a park renewal fund.

The national parks are among the most precious and most cherished resources in

this country. This bill would help restore them to their past glory.

[From the Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 27, 1995]

PARK BENCHMARKS

WINNOW IMPOSTORS FROM THE NATION'S PARK SYSTEM? SURE, BUT DON'T REDUCE IT TO JUST A FEW, SELECT JEWELS

Anyone who has paid a lick of attention knows that America's national parks aren't without their problems—a chief one being, interestingly, that many are too darn popular for their own good. You've seen the pictures of Yellowstone traffic jams. Maybe you got stuck in one in the Great Smoky Mountains. And it's not exactly a secret in Philadelphia that a jewel of our nation's history—Independence Hall—had to wait far too long for its ongoing overhaul.

Fewer people know that there are a couple of ringers in the system, too. Steamtown National Historical Park in Scranton, for instance, poses as a site of significance in the development of the U.S. rail system, but is really more of a monument to the pork-winning talents of a Scranton congressman.

And it seems like only a more handful of folks are tuned in to the fact that come fall, Congress has teed up a bill that would set up a park-closure commission, and as is fashionable these days, consider foisting management of some of them off onto the states. (Not that the cash-strapped states are clamoring for the honor.)

At first glance, the bill seems harmless—and it taps all the voguish budget-cutting buttons. One of its prime movers, Rep. James V. Hansen, a Utah Republican, says he's just looking for ''a better return from our parks,'' and a way to raise money for the bigger parks' backlogged maintenance budgets.

But there are flies in the ointment. One is that Congress can already decommission any part it wants to—without a new commission. (Last year, in fact, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington was congressionally removed from Park Service jurisdiction.)

Opponents of the bill ask whether the new commission—which itself would cost upward of $2 million—would be biased at the outset against urban and historical parks.

Another problem is that once the system is balkanized by farming out operations to state park systems and such, Americans may find themselves facing—instead of uniformly run parks—a checkered quilt of good, bad and ugly operations. (How long would it be, indeed, until an outcry went up to turn over more federal funding to states hard-pressed to keep certain parks up to standard?)

Third, though the West's treasured parklands are technically off the table, aspects of the ''park-reform'' agenda would make it more difficult to donate land to parks such as Virginia's Shenandoah National Park, thus making their periphery ripe for commercial developments.

But the largest flaw in the legislation—and the one that subverts its pretense of going to bat for the taxpayer—is that its sponsors have actively blocked action on concession reform that would give the Park Service more of each dollar spent at privately run eateries and lodgings at national parks.

By some estimates, if concessionaires such as Philadelphia-based ARA services had to pay the same cut of their gross from park business that they do at stadiums and other public facilities, the parks could pocket $50 million or more annually.

If Congress wants to tighten up on the requirements to become part of the park system, no problem. (See Steamtown above.) If it wants raise some user fees that don't overburden families, no problem. But we're skeptical of those who argue that Americans deserve better value from their parklands, while failing to argue that they deserve a better return from the businesses that make a bundle from park concessions.

[From the Deseret News, Dec. 17, 1994]

PLAN FOR PARK-CLOSURE PANEL ASSAILED

ASSOCIATION SAYS THE AGENDA SHOULD INCLUDE MORE THAN SHUTDOWNS

The National Parks and Conservation Association, an advocacy group with 475,000 members, has opposed the idea of establishing a commission to decide which national parks should be closed.

Rep. Jim Hansen, R-Utah, is among conservatives advancing the idea of cutting back the nation's park system.

The parks association ''cannot support a commission whose predetermined goal is solely park closures,'' said Paul C. Pritchard in a three-page letter to Hansen. ''If a commission is formed, it should be a body dedicated to reviewing the existing system and identifying additions and potential closures based on the standards of national significance.''

Allen Freemyer, an attorney for the House Natural Resources Committee, said, ''The basic policy direction is to stop the growth of the national-park system for a little while . . . It's not a matter of whether we're going to close some parks. It's a matter of how we're going to close them.''

Hansen, the second-ranking Republican on the Natural Resources Committee, suggested during the last election campaign that Great Basin National Park on the Utah-Nevada border should be reviewed by a closure commission.

''If you have been there once, you don't need to go again,'' he told the Ogden-Weber Chamber of Commerce.

Hansen last week issued a two-page letter the need for a closure commission. Pritchard responded to that letter.

''Our national-park system currently faces a crisis which stems from too many parks and insufficient funding,'' Hansen wrote. ''In the first 50 years of the national-park system, Congress designated only about 60 park areas. However, in the last six years alone, Congress established 30 new park areas across the country. While Congress is busy creating new parks, our crown jewels are falling into disrepair.''

Hansen said the Park Service has a construction backlog of $6 billion and needs $400 million to $800 million from Congress each year to subsidize its budget.

Pritchard said that last year Hansen opposed a bill that would have generated an extra $45 million to $60 million by increasing the fees paid by park concessionaires. Hansen said higher fees would have driven concessionaires out of business and cost the government more in the long run.

[From the Elko Daily Free Press, July 31, 1995]

ESA REWRITE DOMINATED WESTERN STATES SUMMIT

(By Don Bowman)

Rewriting the Endangered Species Act was the focus of the Western States Summit IV, which concluded in Albuquerque, N.M., July 15. The meeting was strongly supported by state legislators of Utah and Arizona, as well as county commissioners and congressmen from many western states.

Shaken by the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision on Sweet Home, there was consistent call for Congress to make the act more sensitive to the people or repeal it. Rep. Jim Hansen, R-Utah, said, ''The Endangered Species Act degenerated from a protective law into something Congress never anticipated, nor intended to foist on the people. The agencies went far beyond the intentions of the act.'' He advocated a new ESA that protected private property, changed the listing process, required sound social and economic concerns, allowed local voice and made people who filed for a listing of species post a bond and show credentials.

Continuing on, Hansen said the National Park Service needed serious reform. ''One hundred and fifty parks of the some 368 need to be dropped,'' Hansen said, giving an example of one park that had a budget of $300,000 per year and only 50 visitors per year. ''When a bureaucracy reaches a certain critical mass, its only goal is to insure its own propagation. It begins to serve the monster rather than the people.'' Hansen said.

The state rights issues also was a hot topic and most attendees agreed the highlight of the meeting was the talk given by Lana Marcussen, a New Mexico attorney working with lands issues. Speaking on states' rights and sovereignty with an extraordinary amount of case reference recalled at will, the attorney was surrounded by people wherever she stopped. Her federalism argument was used in the New Mexico vs. Watkins case that went to the Supreme Court, which ruled the federal government had to apply to the State of New Mexico for low level nuclear waste permits. Her talks focused on the rights of the people to hold the state and federal governments accountable.

Marcussen said there had been a tremendous shift by the courts in favor of state sovereignty. The court has limited the federal government's power to compel states to do their bidding in the case of New York vs. U.S., another nuclear waste case. In addition, the Brady bill has been declared unconstitutional in at least three district courts.

Federal control seems to be crumbling under the challenges of the people time after time, she said.

During the conference, the Supreme Court ruled a governor could not make a special pact for Indian gambling. This is the first time a court has ruled against a governor after the Interior Department has approved the compact. ''With recent court decisions such as Adarand (affirmative action) and Lucas (federal powers under the Commerce Clause), Indian sovereignty is no more,'' Marcussen said. ''This is the beginning of the end of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. How can a racially oriented agency continue?''

Perry Pendley of the Mountain States Legal Foundation, who argued the Adarand case in the Supreme Court, told attendees ''The environmentalists want it all—even the two thirds of this country that is private land.—The very basis of this government was built on property rights. If you have no property right you have no freedom.''

The summit was sponsored by the Western States Coalition, founded by Met Johnson and Rob Bishop. the organization has been instrumental in establishing state constitutional defense councils, involved in legislative protection of property rights and a major voice in Congress on rural issues. The next Western States Summit is expected to be held in California.

CONGRESSMAN BILL RICHARDSON—TALKING POINTS IN OPPOSITION TO H.R. 260

WHO OPPOSES H.R. 260?

The Clinton Administration.
The Department of Interior.
The National Park Service.
The League of Conservation Voters.
National Parks and Conservation Association.
The Wilderness Society.

Sierra Club.
Izaak Walton League of America.
Friends of Earth.
Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund.
American Hiking Society.
Defenders of Wildlife.

WHAT NEWSPAPERS HAVE ISSUED EDITORIALS AGAINST H.R. 260?

The Salt Lake Tribune.
The St. Louis Post-Dispatch.
The New York Times.
The Miami Herald.
The Philadelphia Herald.
The Wichita Eagle.
The Las Vegas Sun.

WHAT DOES H.R. 260 DO?

Creates a park closure commission to recommend specific units of the National Park System for closure, privatization or sale to the highest bidder.

Weaken Congress' statutory authority to make decisions on park management by granting broad powers to a politically appointed commission;

Send a strong signal to the American people that Congress does not have the political will to carry out its responsibilities of oversight over the National Park Service;

Exempt the 54 National Park units from closure, leaving less visited, smaller budgeted parks and important national monuments like Independence Hall, the Statue of Liberty, Mt. Rushmore, the Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson Monuments and the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic Site on the chopping block.

Require the National Park Service (NPS) to prepare a financial management plan for Congress to ensure accountability within the system;

Require the NPS (not a politically-appointed park closure commission) to prepare a description of types of resources not currently in the system, refine the definitions for current units of the system and submit a report to Congress identifying which units of the System do not conform with the revised park criteria from the new plan;

Reform the current NPS concessions policy to mandate open competition for large concessions contracts while shielding high-performance ''mom and pop'' or small businesses with revenues under $500,000 per year from preserving the right to match competing bids on contract renewals AND require that a portion of the concession fees paid remain in the park unit in which they are generated to fund necessary improvements on site, etc.

Reform the current NPS entrance fee policy to increase the amount of money coming into the park from visitors AND require that a portion of these fees remain in the park unit in which they are generated for site specific needs.

LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS,
Washington, DC, September 18, 1995.

Re oppose H.R. 260, the National Park System Reform Act.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: The League of Conservation Voters is the bipartisan, political arm of the national environmental movement. Each year, LCV publishes the National Environmental Scorecard, which details the voting records of Members of Congress on environmental legislation. The Scorecard is distributed to LCV members, concerned voters nationwide and the press.

This Tuesday, the House of Representatives is expected to vote on a motion to suspend the rules and consider H.R. 260, the National Park System Reform Act. Under the guise of reforming and improving the National Park System H.R. 260 creates a politically appointed commission, whose sole responsibility would be to determine which park units should be closed. While there may be units in the National Park System that deserve scrutiny, LCV opposes the creation of a politically appointed parks closure commission and urges you to vote against passage of H.R. 260.

H.R. 260, and the parks closure commission it creates, threatens 315 units of the National Park System including: urban parks, historic sites, national monuments, national seashores, national recreation areas, and Civil War Battlefields. Instead of considering ways to improve the National Park System H.R. 260 unnecessarily creates a new layer of government and an expensive bureaucratic process, when in fact Congress already has the authority to remove units from the National Park System.

LCV views H.R. 260 as an assault on the protection of our cultural and natural heritage. By bringing H.R. 260 to the House floor on the suspensions calendar Members are prevented from offering amendments which could significantly improve this flawed legislation. LCV beleves that the full House of Representatives, like the House Resources Committee, should have an opportunity to vote on an amendment to delete the park closure commission. LCV urges you to oppose H.R. 260 so that this and other amendments can be offered under regular House procedures. LCV's Political Advisory Committee will consider including a vote on passage of H.R. 260 in compiling its 1995 Scorecard.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. For further information, please call Betsy Loyless in my office at 202/785–8683.

Sincerely,

FRANK LOY,
Acting President.

AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE, ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION FOUNDATION, FRIENDS OF THE EARTH, IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE, NATIONAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, SIERRA CLUB, SIERRA CLUB LEGAL DEFENSE FUND, THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY,

September 18, 1995.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: We are writing to urge you to vote against H.R. 260, the National Park System Reform Act, when the House considers this ill-advised legislation. The bill will be debated on the suspension calendar on Monday, September 18 and a vote is expected to occur the following day.

Unlike the version of this legislation which passed the House of Representatives last year, H.R. 260 would formally establish a politically appointed park closure commission as part of a review of the National Park System. This would set in motion a process to close parks, or portions of parks.

This is controversial legislation that has no place on the suspension calendar. Evidence of its contentiousness has been demonstrated by the dozens of newspapers across America that have editorialized against H.R. 260. By limiting debate and prohibiting Members of Congress from offering amendments, the legislation cannot be improved by the whole House of Representatives. The precedent for how this bill is being considered, and the process it sets in motion are ominous. If the Resources Committee gags the House of Representatives, what will the park closure commission do to the American people?

This legislation also creates another unnecessary layer of government and an elaborate bureaucratic process. It requires the National Park Service to conduct a review of the National Park System and recommend sites to be deleted from the system; then, it creates a politically appointed commission to conduct the same process. The National Park Service already has the authority to recommend the removal of a unit from the National Park System, and Congress has the authority to remove units from the National Park System. It has exercised this authority throughout the history of the National Park System, as demonstrated when Congress removed the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts last year.

The consideration of H.R. 260 on the suspension calendar is tantamount to a closed process to close parks. By voting against H.R. 260, you will be voting for a fair and open process on important decisions with respect to the management of our nation's cultural and natural heritage.

Sincerely,

David Lillard, President, American Hiking Society; James K. Wyerman, V.P. for Programs, Defenders of Wildlife; Margaret Morgan-Hubbard, Executive Director, Environmental Action Foundation; Brent Blackwelder, V.P. for Policy, Friends of the Earth; Paul Hansen, Executive Director, Izaak Walton League of America; William J. Chandler, V.P. for Conservation Policy, National Parks & Conservation Association; Melanie Griffin, Director of Public Lands, Sierra Club; Marty Hayden, Senior Policy Analyst, Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund; Rindy O'Brien, V.P. for Public Policy, The Wilderness Society.

THE 200 SMALLEST BUDGET PARKS

[Fiscal years]

	National Park Service park units	1995 park base	Cumulative 1995 park base
1	Cane River Creole NHP	0	0
2	New Orleans Jazz NHP	0	0
3	Salt River Bay NHP and Ecological Preserve	0	0
4	Natchez Trace NST	25,000	25,000
5	Saint Croix Island IHS	54,000	79,000
6	Bluestone NSR	61,000	140,000
7	Devils Postpile NM	92,000	232,000
8	Rainbow Bridge NM	99,000	331,000
9	Hovenweep NM and Yucca House NM	107,000	438,000
10	Thaddeus Kosciuszko NMem	128,000	566,000
11	Ebey's Landing Nat'l Historical Reserve	135,000	701,000
12	Hamilton Grange NMem	139,000	840,000
13	Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural NHS	155,000	995,000
14	Aniakchak NM and Preserve	160,000	1,155,000
15	Thomas Stone NHS	172,000	1,327,000
16	National Park of American Samoa	192,000	1,519,000
17	Obed Wild and Scenic River	199,000	1,718,000
18	Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace NHS	200,000	1,918,000
19	Russell Cave NM	202,000	2,120,000
20	Gila Cliff Dwellings NM	205,000	2,325,000
21	Maggie L. Walker NHS	210,000	2,535,000
22	City of Rocks National Reserve	211,000	2,746,000
23	Keweenaw NHP	212,000	2,958,000
24	Gauley NRA	217,000	3,175,000
25	Ninety Six NHS	221,000	3,396,000
26	John F. Kennedy NHS	225,000	3,621,000
27	Dayton Aviation NHP	228,000	3,849,000
28	Manzanar NHS	232,000	4,081,000
29	Moores Creek NB	238,000	4,319,000
30	Coronado NMem	251,000	4,570,000
31	Hagerman Fossil Beds NM	257,000	4,827,000
32	Eugene O'Neill NHS	260,000	5,087,000
33	Cedar Breaks NM	263,000	5,350,000
34	Muir Woods NM	273,000	5,623,000
35	Big Hole NB	274,000	5,897,000
36	Saint Paul's Church NHS	280,000	6,177,000
37	William Howard Taft NHS	283,000	6,460,000
38	Cowpens NB	285,000	6,745,000
39	Edgar Allan Poe NHS	286,000	7,031,000
40	Palo Alto Battlefield NHS	297,000	7,328,000
41	Pipe Spring NM	297,000	7,625,000
42	Roger William NMem	299,000	7,924,000
43	De Soto NMem	302,000	8,226,000
44	Puukohola Heiau NHS	302,000	8,528,000
45	Brown v. Board of Education NHS	303,000	8,831,000
46	Mary McLeod Bethune Council House NHS	305,000	9,136,000
47	Fort Point NHS	311,000	9,447,000
48	Mojave NP	312,000	9,759,000
49	Klondike Gold Rush NHP (Seattle)	313,000	10,072,000
50	Monocacy NB	314,000	10,386,000
51	Horseshoe Bend NMP	321,000	10,707,000
52	Knife River Indian Village NHS	322,000	11,029,000
53	Tonto NM	322,000	11,351,000

THE 200 SMALLEST BUDGET PARKS—Continued

[Fiscal years]

	National Park Service park units	1995 park base	Cumulative 1995 park base
54	Natural Bridges NM	327,000	11,678,000
55	Congaree Swamp NM	328,000	12,006,000
56	Fort Caroline NMem	336,000	12,342,000
57	Fort Union Trading Post NHS	336,000	12,678,000
58	Friendship Hill NHS	338,000	13,016,000
59	Charles Pickney NHS	339,000	13,355,000
60	El Morro NM	342,000	13,697,000
61	Aztec Ruins NM	343,000	14,040,000
62	Casa Grande Ruins NM and Hohokam Pima NM	348,000	14,388,000
63	Tumacacori NHP	353,000	14,741,000
64	Fossil Butte NM	357,000	15,098,000
65	Andrew Johnson NHS	359,000	15,457,000
66	Piscataway Park	361,000	15,818,000
67	Weir Farm NHS	367,000	16,185,000
68	Boston African American NHS	376,000	16,561,000
69	Federal Hall NMem	380,000	16,941,000
70	Stones River NB	380,000	17,321,000
71	Homestead NM of America	382,000	17,703,000
72	Niobrara/Missouri NR	387,000	18,090,000
73	Whitman Mission NHS	388,000	18,478,000
74	Longfellow NHS	389,000	18,867,000
75	Hampton NHS	391,000	19,258,000
76	John Muir NHS	393,000	19,651,000
77	Agate Fossil Beds NM	394,000	20,045,000
78	Oregon Caves NM	396,000	20,441,000
79	Capulin Volcano NM	398,000	20,839,000
80	John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Mem Parkway	400,000	21,239,000
81	Jimmy Carter NHS	404,000	21,643,000
82	Arkansas Post NMem	417,000	22,060,000
83	Guilford Courthouse NMP	422,000	22,482,000
84	Florissant Fossil Beds NM	423,000	22,905,000
85	San Juan Island NHP	431,000	23,336,000
86	Abraham Lincoln Birthplace NHS	450,000	23,786,000
87	Fort Union NM	452,000	24,238,000
88	Effigy Mounds NM	456,000	24,694,000
89	Fort Frederica NM	466,000	25,160,000
90	Pipestone NM	467,000	25,627,000
91	Fort Smith NHS	472,000	26,099,000
92	Booker T. Washington NM	477,000	26,576,000
93	Kings Mountain NMP	478,000	27,054,000
94	Tuskegee Institute NHS	478,000	27,532,000
95	Timpanogos Cave NM	482,000	28,014,000
96	Hopewell Culture NHP	495,000	28,509,000
97	Eleanor Roosevelt NHS	497,000	29,006,000
98	Ocmulgee NM	498,000	29,504,000
99	George Washington Carver NM	499,000	30,003,000
100	Hubbell Trading Post NHS	501,000	30,504,000
101	Ulysses S. Grant NHS	502,000	31,006,000
102	Castle Clinton NM	503,000	31,509,000
103	Dry Tortugas NP	506,000	32,015,000
104	Fort Clatsop NMem	510,000	32,525,000
105	Pea Ridge NMP	511,000	33,036,000
106	Perry's Victory and Intnl Peace Memorial	511,000	33,547,000
107	Scotts Bluff NM	516,000	34,063,000
108	Timucuan Ecological and Hist Preserve	517,000	34,580,000
109	Devils Tower NM	535,000	35,115,000
110	Ford's Theatre NHS	537,000	35,652,000
111	Navajo NM	539,000	36,191,000
112	George Rogers Clark NHP	547,000	36,738,000
113	Christiansted NHS and Buck Island Reef NM	550,000	37,288,000
114	Golden Spike NHS	552,000	37,840,000
115	Jewel Cave NM	556,000	38,396,000
116	Fort Stanwix NM	558,000	38,954,000
117	Saint-Gaudens NHS	559,000	39,513,000
118	Carl Sandburg Home NHS	563,000	40,076,000
119	General Grant NMem	572,000	40,648,000
120	Kaloko-Honokohau NHP	572,000	41,220,000
121	Grand Portage NM	573,000	41,793,000
122	War in the Pacific NHP	575,000	42,368,000
123	El Malpais NM	579,000	42,947,000
124	Little Bighorn NM	581,000	43,528,000
125	Fort Scott NHS	586,000	44,114,000
126	Fort Larned NHS	597,000	44,711,000
127	Appalachian NST	598,000	45,309,000
128	Fort Pulaski NM	601,000	45,910,000
129	Springfield Armory NHS	613,000	46,523,000
130	Saugus Iron Works NHS	614,000	47,137,000
131	Johnstown Flood NMem	622,000	47,759,000
132	Lincoln Boyhood NMem	622,000	48,381,000
133	Black Canyon of the Gunnison NM	624,000	49,005,000
134	Bent's Old Fort NHS	648,000	49,653,000
135	Fort Donelson NB	655,000	50,308,000
136	Andersonville NHS	661,000	50,969,000
137	Craters of the Moon NM	661,000	51,630,000
138	Fort Davis NHS	679,000	52,309,000
139	Martin Van Buren NHS	687,000	52,996,000
140	Salinas Pueblo Missions NM	693,000	53,689,000
141	John Day Fossil Beds NM	695,000	54,384,000
142	Hopewell Furnace NHS	699,000	55,083,000
143	Great Sand Dunes NM	704,000	55,787,000
144	Little River Canyon Nat'l Preserve	716,000	56,503,000
145	Pu'uhonua O'Honaunau NHP	726,000	57,229,000
146	Appomattox Court House NHP	728,000	57,957,000
147	Greenbelt Park	733,000	58,690,000
148	Montezuma Castle NM and Tuzigoot NM	736,000	59,426,000
149	Wilson's Creek NB	741,000	60,167,000
150	Sagamore Hill NHS	744,000	60,911,000
151	Fort Laramie NHS	746,000	61,657,000
152	Kennesaw Mountain NBP	746,000	62,403,000
153	Petroglyph NM	756,000	63,159,000
154	Herbert Hoover NHS	760,000	63,919,000
155	Colorado NM	765,000	64,684,000
156	Lava Beds NM	776,000	65,460,000
157	Mississippi NR and RA	784,000	66,244,000
158	Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS	786,000	67,030,000

THE 200 SMALLEST BUDGET PARKS—Continued

[Fiscal years]

	National Park Service park units	1995 park base	Cumulative 1995 park base
159	Women's Rights NHP	796,000	67,826,000
160	Arches NP	798,000	68,624,000
161	Yukon-Charley Rivers Nat'l Preserve	802,000	69,426,000
162	Shiloh NMP	806,000	70,232,000
163	Bering Land Bridge National Preserve	816,000	71,048,000
164	George Washington Birthplace NM	839,000	71,887,000
165	Fort Vancouver NHS	850,000	72,737,000
166	Chiricahua NM and Ft. Bowie NHS	878,000	73,615,000
167	Sitka NHP	888,000	74,503,000
168	Cabrillo NM	899,000	75,400,000
169	Harry S. Truman NHS	902,000	76,302,000
170	Natchez NHP	912,000	77,214,000
171	Eisenhower NHS	919,000	78,133,000
172	Fort Sumter NM	929,000	79,062,000
173	Vanderbilt Mansion NHS	933,000	79,995,000
174	White Sands NM	947,000	80,942,000
175	Kenai Fjords NP	949,000	81,891,000
176	Canyon de Chelly NM	953,000	82,844,000
177	Saratoga NHP	955,000	83,799,000
178	Salem Maritime NHS	1,028,000	84,827,000
179	Manassas NBP	1,038,000	85,865,000
180	Lake Clark NP and Preserve	1,055,000	86,920,000
181	Fort Necessity NB	1,077,000	87,997,000
182	Cape Lookout NS	1,081,000	89,078,000
183	Pecos NHP	1,081,000	90,159,000
184	Kalaupapa NHP	1,091,000	91,250,000
185	Castillo de San Marcos NM and Ft. Matanzas NM	1,092,000	92,342,000
186	Richmond NBP	1,120,000	93,462,000
187	Organ Pipe Cactus NM	1,129,000	94,591,000
188	Nez Perce NHP	1,141,000	95,732,000
189	Cumberland Island NS	1,156,000	96,888,000
190	Fort McHenry NM and Historic Shrine	1,162,000	98,050,000
191	Baltimore-Washington Parkway	1,163,000	99,213,000
192	Mount Rushmore NMem	1,198,000	100,411,000
193	Pictured Rocks NL	1,209,000	101,620,000
194	Wind Cave NP	1,214,000	102,834,000
195	Chaco Culture NHP	1,273,000	104,107,000
196	Gates of the Arctic NP and Preserve	1,285,000	105,392,000
197	Cumberland Gap NHP	1,292,000	106,684,000
198	Pinnacles NM	1,294,000	107,978,000

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remainder of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I hope the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON] realizes that the amendment of the gentleman failed 30 to 9 in committee.

Let me again point out, this is not a park closing bill. Nothing in this act shall be construed as modifying or terminating any unit of the National Park System without an act of Congress. That is clear. That is the law we are trying to pass. The GAO came before the committee. They said, it is a mess right now; we urge you to do something. This same piece of legislation, with only one difference, and that was this commission, passed unanimously in this House.

The GAO said, you have three options. Eliminate parks, reduce service, or raise the fees. We are going to come before the American people and ask to raise the fees. In 1960, if you drove your car up to Yellowstone, it cost you $10 to get in. In 1995, if you drive to Yellowstone, it is $10 to get in.

The parks are the best deal in America. We want to keep the parks, we want to enhance the parks, we want to make the parks better. We are not like this thing that points out here in the Washington Times of the park giveaway. We do not agree with that idea from the Clinton administration or Mr. Babbitt.

Please join us in supporting this bill. Let us do something good for the national parks and pass this legislation and move on to other legislation which is very important for the parks of America.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise to protest a most contentious piece of legislation that threatens the security of our National Park System [NPS]. H.R. 260, the National Park System Reform Act, puts in jeopardy more than 300 NPS units—some of our smallest and lowest-budget parks, but units that nonetheless capture the essence of our Nation's history, culture, and natural beauty.

The bill would call for a ''death list'' for parks in the development of a National Park System Plan—a recommendation of units among national recreation areas, monuments, preserves, historic sites, and heritage areas—which may be proposed for termination under the bill. This represents an outright denial of our responsibility to protect the American legacy embodied in our national parks.

This bill would repudiate the expertise and discernment of the National Park Service [Service] by instituting a review commission similar to the commission overseeing closure of our military bases. Additionally, Congressional distrust of the Department of Interior [DOI] is evident by a stipulation that should DOI fail to produce the National Park System Plan, this commission would be required to do so. H.R. 260 would introduce a mechanism of excessive congressional oversight in the termination or modification of NPS units by requiring 6 members of this 11-member commission to be appointed by congressional leadership. Through passage of this bill, we would serve the park system a tremendous disservice by allowing it to be highly politicized.

H.R. 260 would strip DOI—the administrative arm overseeing the NPS—of its freedom to work with willing landowners, State governments or municipalities in the creation of new park units. Without the ability to enter into cooperative agreements, DOI will be compromised by an additional level of bureaucracy. The Department will be forced to go through the congressional process to establish new units, which in several cases would mean unnecessary use of taxpayer dollars and a waste of effort.

The State of Hawaii under H.R. 260 would be threatened with the loss of five valuable parks. Kalaupapa National Historical Park is a monument to those with crippling Hansen's Disease. Closure of this park would be most tragic at this time when the figurehead of Kalaupapa, Father Damien deVeuster, is undergoing the process of sainthood.

Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park is unique within the NPS as the former site of a thriving settlement of one of our country's native peoples—Native Hawaiians. Within the park's boundaries remain plentiful evidence of the ancient Hawaiian culture that can be found in no other place in the world other than the Hawaiian Islands.

Pu'uhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park also holds very special meaning for Native Hawaiians as the place of refuge—a sacred place upholding basic rules of the Hawaiian society.

Pu'ukohola Heiau National Historical Park preserves a sense of the deep spirituality of the Native Hawaiian people.

H.R. 260 also jeopardizes the future of USS Arizona Memorial which sits at Pearl Harbor as the final resting place for many of the ship's 1,177 crewmen who lost their lives there in 1941.

H.R. 260 would cheat current and future generations of a significant part of American heritage and culture. The National Park System should be reformed through an honest and effective review of park service management and operations, not through the rash elimination of valuable parks benefiting communities in every State.

I emphatically urge my colleagues to defeat this egregious legislation.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I attach a great deal of importance to our system of national parks. It includes many sites that reveal our history and our respect of nature.

Just this past weekend, I had occasion to visit the national military park at Gettysburg, PA. Who could question the wisdom of preserving our country's heritage by providing such a park. That park and many others, including one of the crown jewels, Yosemite National Park, located in my own congressional district, are examples of what national parks are supposed to be. It is out of a concern for the future of our national parks that I support H.R. 260, the National Park Service Reform Act.

This legislation will help solve many of the problems currently facing the National Park Service [NPS] so that it can better meet its objectives of serving visitors and protecting the natural and cultural resources entrusted to it. H.R. 260 does not close a single park or unit. It does require the NPS to further develop a plan and mission for the agency. It then requires that the NPS review the existing 368 areas managed by the agency to determine whether all of them should continue to be managed by the NPS. Any NPS recommendation for the closure of an NPS unit would be subject to review by an independent commission and would require the passage of a separate act of Congress.

As a member of the National Parks, Forests and Lands Subcommittee, I commend Chairman JAMES HANSEN's able leadership for prompting the General Accounting Office's [GAO] telling August 1995 report entitled, ''National Parks: Difficult Choices Need To Be Made About the Future of the Parks.'' The GAO report sights what I, too, view as a ''further deterioration in—national—park conditions.'' I want to acknowledge my acceptance of one of the remedial routes offered in the GAO report, namely, cutting back on the number of units in the system. We do not want to clutter the system with Steamtowns and Suitland Parkways without considering budgetary factors. Though as I said recently in the Fresno Bee, this process ''won't be easy and I'm not saying there won't be problems.''

It is true that some national park entities might eventually be transferred out of the National Park System. Some such transfers may well be warranted, and they would not be new. Just last year the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC., was transferred out of the National Park System. The Kennedy Center still operates, and people still enjoy attending concerts there, but it is simply under new management. Similarly, commuter highways serving Washington, DC, like the Suitland and Baltimore-Washington Parkways should be considered for new management outside of NPS.

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that H.R. 260 has the support of both Republican and Democrat members of the Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over this legislation. It is a good bill, and I am convinced that it will help bring fiscal sanity to the operation of the NPS.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 260. I am especially troubled that a controversial bill, with bipartisan opposition, would be considered under the Suspension Calendar.

There are some much needed reforms proposed in this bill, including the establishment of a National Park System plan and the requirement for suitability studies of future potential parks.

However, this bill would also seek to sell off much of our Nation's natural, cultural, and recreational heritage: our National Parks.

This bill would create a politically appointed commission whose sole purpose would be to close National Parks for alleged budgetary concerns, not to achieve Park Service reform.

Mr. Speaker, look no further than the recently passed Republican budget for the rationale behind this closure-commission: a 10 percent cut in National Park Service funds, a 5-year land acquisition moratorium, and a 50 percent cut in NPS construction.

This legislation could have a dramatic impact on my Congressional District. My constituency is proud to have three scenic and historically significant park units located within its borders. The pristine environment and preserved historical viewshed of Mount Vernon is captured within the nearly 4,500 acres of Piscataway Park.

This park is just one of the nearly 370 National Parks frequented last year alone by more than 260 million people from the world over.

Greenbelt Park is one of the last truly development-free plots of land left in the Washington Metropolitan Area. This park serves to remind Marylanders of the importance of our environment and our resources.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, I was very proud to have the home of Thomas Stone, an original signer of the Declaration of Independence, located in Charles County designated as a national historic site in 1993.

If we would have lost that historical plot of land, we would almost never have the opportunity to get it back again. All three of these parks, which benefit not only the citizens of the Fifth Congressional District, but also all Americans, would be eligible for closure under this legislation.

However, this House ought not be fooled about the intent of this bill. Members on the other side insist that a park-closure commission is necessary to prioritize for the National Park Service.

What we are in essence telling the Park Service is that you do not know how to do your job—that after years of management and oversight we are now going to go over your heads and let a politically appointed commission decide what to keep open and what to close.

We just create another level of bureaucracy at a time when people are claiming to reduce bureaucracy.

Mr. Speaker, what we need is financial management reform, and enhancement of resource protection efforts. This will enable us to deal with needed Park Service reform without selling off our Nation's most valuable lands and resources.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this shortsighted and very damaging bill so that we can consider commonsense reform that will also protect our Nation's most prized lands.

H.R. 2181, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Representatives RICHARDSON, BOEHLERT, and MORELLA does just that while not abandoning our efforts to preserve our Nation's history and beauty.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to bringing HR 260 to the floor under Suspension of the Rules. This procedure should be reserved for non-controversial legislation which has widespread bi-partisan support. I do not believe that HR 260 fits this description. By placing this measure on the Suspension Calendar, the majority is denying Members the ability to offer amendments to this potentially far-reaching bill. By closing off debate, Members on both sides of the aisle will be denied the opportunity to vote on an alternative which the gentleman from New Mexico, Mr. RICHARDSON, my colleagues from New York, Mr. HINCHEY and Mr. BOEHLERT, and I have introduced. Members of this body should have the opportunity to vote on our alternative which will improve management of the Park System without creating a special commission to close our parks. If Members want to keep our parks open, especially smaller and urban parks, then they should vote against HR 260.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that HR 260 is designed to close some of our parks, national monuments, urban recreation areas and historic sites. This bill establishes a BRAC-style commission charged with developing a list of park units which should be removed from Federal management and ownership. Make no mistake about it, this bill would not create a special commission unless it had closure in mind. I do not support closing any of our parks and I do not believe the American people support such action. Contrary to what the advocates of HR 260 will argue, we have not created parks ''willy nilly.'' I believe that each unit of the Park System is nationally significant and represents an important part of our history, culture and heritage. We have set aside spectacular natural treasures, homes of Presidents and recreation areas for the benefit of future generations. The Federal Government has a responsibility to protect these resources, interpret and communicate their significance, and make them available to every American. I do not believe any other entity can adequately safeguard these assets while making them widely available to every citizen.

I am also concerned that HR 260 is merely one in a long line of proposals put forth by some of our Republican colleagues to transfer large tracts of Federal land to States or private interests. For example, legislation have been introduced to transfer more than 260 million acres of Federal land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to a handful of western States. With the enactment of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Congress and the American people made a commitment to preserve Federal ownership of public lands. These lands contain billions of dollars worth of minerals, timber and other natural resources and provide hundreds of millions of Americans with recreational opportunities. These proposals will benefit narrow special interests at the expense of the vast majority of the American people.

The bill that Mr. RICHARDSON has developed will improve management of our National Park System, generate important revenue to assist the National Park Service [NPS] in addressing a multibillion dollar maintenance backlog, and

ensure that our national treasures are protected for generations to come. It requires the Service to develop a master plan for the system which includes an inventory of existing resources and prioritizes which cultural, natural, and historical resources should be added to the system. It streamlines the process of designating new units by requiring the Service to annually provide the Congress with a list of areas to be studied and those areas of sufficient national significance to warrant inclusion in the system. Finally, our bill requires Congress to authorize studies and designate new park units to ensure that this body retains final authority to determine the scope of the system.

Our bill will also reform out-dated parks concession policy. The current framework was put in place when our parks were remote, visitorship was low and companies had to be enticed to offer visitor services. Today, more than 270 million people visit our parks yearly, easy access is provided via highways and airports, and operating a business in our parks is extremely lucrative. While business is great for concessioners, the American people have failed to receive a fair return for the privilege of operating in their national parks. In 1994, while concessioners earned more than $640 million from park operations, the American people received only $19 million in franchise fees, or about 3 percent of gross receipts. To make matters worse, there is no competition in the awarding of concession contracts and companies receive possessory interest in structures in the public's parks. Possessory interest forces the American people to pay concessioners for the privilege of doing business in their parks. Moveover, possessory interest is not enjoyed by concessioners in sports stadiums or airports.

Our bill contains the text of legislation passed by the House in the 103d Congress which would completely overhaul concession policy. It requires contracts to be awarded on a competitive basis and provide a fair return to the American taxpayers. It eliminates possessory interest and allocates franchise fees to our parks to support a wide range of activities. At the same time, it protects the interests of river guides, outfitters, and other small businesses who provide specialized services and are overwhelmingly family-run operations. These provisions will ensure that the American people continue to receive high-quality services and begin to enjoy a fair return on the use of their resources.

Finally, this legislation will also generate additional revenue to support park operations by authorizing moderate fee increases at parks which are currently authorized to charge fees. By allowing fees to increase slightly at certain park units, we can generate badly needed revenue to improve park roads and trails and to safeguard increasingly threatened natural resources. It is estimated that this measure will generate $30 million in revenue to maintain our parks. Importantly, these fees will go into a special fund in the Treasury which will be directly available to the Secretary of Interior for park-related purposes. This provision guarantees that fees paid by visitors will go to the parks and not be used to offset the deficit or to fund other programs. The American people are willing to pay a little more as long as they know that their entrance fees will be reinvested in the parks.

Mr. Speaker, by bringing H.R. 260 to the floor under Suspension of the Rules, the Republican leadership is denying Members on both sides of the aisle the opportunity to vote for a reasonable alternative. Once again, we see that talk about openness and giving Members of this body the opportunity to work their will is hollow. As a result, the American people are going to see their parks close or be sold to the highest bidder. These treasures are too important to be a pawn in a game of legislative chess. I urge my colleagues to vote against H.R. 260.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, it is with both surprise and concern that a piece of legislation as far reaching, complex, and, yes, controversial, would be offered on the Suspension Calendar. This bill, H.R. 260, passed through the Resources Committee by a 34 to 8 vote which does, superficially, indicate there may be the ⅔ support that is necessary for a suspension bill to pass. However, there are serious dissenting views that should be considered and debated by Members of Congress.

In addition, another bill was introduced by beginning of August by the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Lands, Representative BILL RICHARDSON, that has bipartisan support. Two Republicans, Mr. BOEHLERT and myself, and two Democrats are original cosponsors. I feel very strongly that Members should be allowed to consider this thoughtful and comprehensive substitute bill, H.R. 2181, inasmuch as H.R. 260 is not the only choice we have to manage effective reform of our National Park System.

H.R. 2181 was introduced primarily in response to the more contentious sections of H.R. 260, including Section 103, National Park System Review Commission, which includes the establishment of what has been characterized as a Park Closing Commission. This section is very troublesome to me because I believe that it is unnecessary—a system already exists to close any park that does not meet specified standards. And it is overly threatening to the smaller, less glamorous parks in our system that lack a voice of advocacy, but represent an idea, a culture, or an area that is significant to our national heritage. I have two parks in my district that could come under this classification: Glen Echo Park and the C & O Canal Historical Park. I suspect that almost every Member of Congress has similar unheralded park in their district.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are entitled to a full discussion of H.R. 260 on the floor of the House.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 260, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5, rule I, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF CERTAIN PRESIDIO PROPERTIES

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1296), to provide for the administration of certain Presidio properties at minimal cost to the Federal taxpayer, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1296

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

(1) the Presidio, located amidst the incomparable scenic splendor of the Golden Gate, is one of America's great natural and historic sites;

(2) the Presidio is the oldest continuously operated military post in the Nation dating from 1776, and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962;

(3) preservation of the cultural and historic integrity of the Presidio for public use recognizes its significant role in the history of the United States;

(4) the Presidio, in its entirety, is located within the boundary of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, in accordance with Public Law 92–589;

(5) the Presidio's significant natural, historic, scenic, cultural, and recreational resources must be managed in a manner which is consistent with sound principles of land use planning and management, and which protects the Presidio from development and uses which would destroy the scenic beauty and historic and natural character of the area; and

(6) the Presidio can best be managed through an innovative public/private partnership that minimizes cost to the United States Treasury and makes efficient use of private sector resources that could be utilized in the public interest.

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

(a) INTERIM AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of the Interior (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the ''Secretary'') is authorized to manage leases in existence on the date of this Act for properties under the Administrative jurisdiction of the Secretary and located at the Presidio. Upon the expiration of any such lease, the Secretary may extend the lease for a period terminating 6 months after the first meeting of the Presidio Trust at which a quorum is present. After the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary may not enter into any new leases for property at the Presidio to be transferred to the Presidio Trust under this Act. Notwithstanding section 1341 of title 31 of the United States Code, the proceeds from any such lease shall be retained by the Secretary and such proceeds shall be available, without further appropriation, for the preservation, restoration, operation and maintenance, improvement, repair and related expenses incurred with respect to Presidio properties. For purposes of any such lease, the Secretary may adjust the rental by taking into account any amounts to be expended by the lessee for preservation, maintenance, restoration, improvement, repair and related expenses with respect to properties within the Presidio.

(b) PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION.—The Secretary shall be responsible, in cooperation with the Presidio Trust, for providing public interpretative services, visitor orientation and educational programs on all lands within the Presidio.