SIERRA CLUB SUPPORTS THE TROPICAL FOREST PRESERVATION ACT

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON OF INDIANA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, March 17, 1998

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to my colleagues’ attention a letter from the Sierra Club dated March 13, 1998, in support of H.R. 2870, the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998.

There is widespread and growing bipartisan support for this bill, which now has over 40 cosponsors. Members of the environmental community have also voiced their support. The Sierra Club, on behalf of its 550,000 members, praises H.R. 2870 as an "innovative solution" to tropical forest preservation.

I hope my colleagues will join me in support of this important bill when it comes before us this week.

The letter follows:

Sierra Club

Re: H.R. 2870, tropical forest debt swap bill.
Hon. Robert Portman,
Hon. John Kasich,
Hon. Lee Hamilton,
U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Dear Representatives Portman, Kasich and Hamilton:

On behalf of the 550,000 members of the Sierra Club we are writing to support the early passage of your Tropical Forest Debt for Nature Swap legislation. As you know, primary forests are under assault in almost all countries. Tropical forests are being cleared at the rate of 50 to 100 acres per minute, or 40 to 50 million acres per year—an area the size of the State of Washington. If we do nothing to stop this destruction, the many of these lush forests may be irreparably damaged within our lifetimes.

While the causes of this destruction are complex, your legislation demonstrates that innovative solutions to their preservation can be found. H.R. 2870 follows in the tradition of the successful Enterprise for the Americas Act which led to the establishment of national parks and protected areas in many Latin American countries. These trust funds—managed by non-governmental organizations—have empowered local citizens to initiate and manage protected area programs and projects throughout Latin America. Your bill will bring this creative initiative to the rest of the tropical countries. If properly funded, the trust funds should greatly facilitate the development of long-term solutions, designed to preserve the remaining primary tropical forests.

We welcome this initiative and urge its quick passage into law. Thank you for your leadership in helping to slow the destruction of these treasure houses of biological diversity.

Sincerely,

Larry Williams,
Director, International Program.

LET STARR SHINE

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, March 17, 1998

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, it is tragic enough that doubts abound about the integrity and motivations of many of our elected officials in the eyes of the people of this country. It is even more unjust when those doubts are planted by people we should trust. Recently, the Clinton Administration has deflected the public’s attention away from the accusations against the President and toward Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr. All of the president’s people are repeatedly attacking Mr. Starr and distracting him from doing his job. What makes this a tragedy is the fact that Mr. Starr is merely performing the duties legally delegeted to him. Kenneth Starr has impeccable integrity. He should be allowed to continue his investigation without undue interference or political attacks. In that way only, will he be able to discern the truth. I have enclosed two relevant editorials. The first was written by four outstanding former attorneys general, and was published on March 11 in the Wall Street Journal. The second article was found in The Poughkeepsie Journal, a Gannett newspaper that serves some of my constituents in Dutchess County, New York.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Mar. 11, 1998]

LET STARR DO HIS JOB

(The following statement was issued last Thursday by four former U.S. attorneys general. A related editorial appears nearby.)

Four former attorneys general of the United States, we oppose the Independent Counsel Act. We believe in the past, and we believe now, that the United States Department of Justice is capable of investigating all criminal and civil matters involving the United States government. We also believe that the Independent Counsel Act raises serious constitutional issues involving, among other things, separation of powers and due process. However, we also believe in the rule of law. In Morrison v. Olson, the United States Supreme Court ruled the Independent Counsel Act is constitutional. Moreover, in 1994, after the law had lapsed, Congress reauthorized the Independent Counsel Act, and President Clinton signed it into law. Therefore, the Independent Counsel Act is today the law of the land, and it must be enforced.

As former attorneys general, we are concerned that the severity of the attacks on Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr and his office by high government officials and attorneys general are in retaliation for his investigations. In September, among others, appear to have the improper purpose of influencing and impeding an ongoing criminal investigation and intimidating possible jurors, witnesses and even investigators. We believe it is insignificant that Mr. Starr’s investigative mandate has been sanctioned by the Attorney General of the United States and the Special Division of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

Further, Mr. Starr is effectively prevented from defending himself and his staff because of the legal requirements of confidentiality and the practical limitations necessitated by the ongoing investigation.

As former attorneys general, we know Mr. Starr to be an individual of the highest personal and professional integrity. As a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and Solicitor General of the United States, he exhibited exemplary judgment and commitment to the highest ethical standards and the rule of law.

We believe any independent counsel, including Mr. Starr, should be allowed to carry on their duties without political interference by government officials and members of the bar. The counsel’s service can then be judged, by those who wish to do so, when the results of the investigation and the facts underlying it can be made public.

Griffin B. Bell,
LET STARR DO HIS JOB
Spin doctors in Washington have apparently performed successful surgery on President Clinton's reputation—his approval ratings are soaring with the angels. But Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr’s numbers are down in the cellar.

The steady beat of the president’s people, all saying the same thing, has had the obviously desired effect—it’s distracted the attention of the American public away from questions of Clintonian wrongdoing, and onto a special prosecutor supposedly running amuck.

Clinton’s people loudly proclaim Starr really is overstepping his bounds in his inv estigations of the president. If he really were, there would be grounds for dismissal by the judges who appointed Starr. Or Attorney General Janet Reno, or the president himself could.

But nobody’s moving to dismiss the special prosecutor. They’re just making lots of noise on television about him.

Fortunately, the one person whose attention should be on questions of presidential wrongdoing, is Starr is simply doing his job. The major issue is not whether Clinton had affairs with Monica Lewinsky, Paula Jones or anyone else—though that certainly is a significant moral matter that he may be forced to address, if the allegations turn out to be true.

The major issue is whether the president obstructed justice, whether he committed perjury and urged others to do the same. And whether evidence was tampered with, and witnesses bought off. That is a significant legal issue that could drive him out of the White House.

We must, of course, presume Clinton is innocent, unless he is proven guilty. He deserves that constitutional privilege as much as any American.

It’s also wrong, lacking proof, to paint Kenneth Starr as the guilty party. He’s just doing his job. Maybe his investigation will come to nothing. Maybe not. But let him take as much time as he needs to do that job and discern the truth.

The nation deserves truth. Not spin.

SALUTING THE ORGANIZERS OF THE THYAGARAJA FESTIVAL
HON. LOUIS STOKES
OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, March 17, 1998

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize the dedicated work of an extraordinary group of citizens in my Congressional District. For the past twenty years, the Music Department at Cleveland State University and other volunteers under the direction of Dr. T. Temple Tuttle, have organized and hosted the Thyagaraja Festival. This festival has brought musicians from Asia, Africa, Europe, and Australia to perform in the City of Cleveland and have their traditional art forms, cultures, and values celebrated and honored by political and business leaders. The event also offers attendees the opportunity to experience an array of truly exceptional cultural performances. Audiences have come from as far as Alaska to enjoy these festivities.

In its 21st year, over one hundred volunteers assisted with food preparation and arrangements for the festival. The festival will highlight the Chief Guest, Sri Mukherjee, and the great vocalist, T.N. Seshagopalan will be honored as “Sangeetha Rathnakara,” a high honorific meaning “Jewel of a Performer.” In addition to the scheduled performers, who will come from India this year, 70 to 100 amateur performers are expected, and a crowd of over two thousand.

Mr. Speaker, the Thyagaraja Festival stands as a reminder of our commitment to international unity and an appreciation for the beauty of cultural diversity and artistic expression. Again, I salute the organizers of the 1998 Thyagaraja Festival for creating an opportunity for the City of Cleveland and our great nation to participate in an event whose ultimate objective is to increase multi-cultural awareness and acceptance, and secure global peace.

TRIBUTE TO WOMEN IN BUSINESS
HON. DANNY K. DAVIS
OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, March 17, 1998

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Women’s History Month, I rise today to pay tribute to women in business and to express pride in the fact that the women of Chicago and Cook County have benefited from the successful programs of the Women’s Business Development Center.

Based in Chicago, the Women’s Business Development Center serves 2,000 women annually with counseling, training, financial assistance, certification, procurement and advocacy on behalf of women’s economic empowerment. The programs of the Chicago-based center are effective, successful and benefit diverse women. These centers serve an array of women and their families, including self-employment for former welfare recipients, business development, expansion and job creation.

The work of the Women’s Business Development Center and other women’s business assistance centers are essential to strengthening the economy of this Nation by fostering women’s business development nationally.

The WBDC and women’s business assistance centers are funded by the United States SBA office of Women’s Business Ownership and by private and public sector support. They help support a diverse and growing population of new and emerging job-creating women entrepreneurs, including women in transition off welfare.

These centers are unique in that they provide long-term training, involve public and private partnerships for their support, and can be measured on the basis of their economic impact. These centers have served tens of thousands of women.

The women’s business assistance centers serve our constituencies by offering quality programs to effectively leverage scarce public and private resources into successful job creation, poverty alleviation and business expansion. Most of them, even after they are no longer eligible for Federal funding, continue to be sustained by the private sector.

These centers are committed to economic self-sufficiency programs that are as diverse as the women served; women on public assistance, women seeking self-employment, rural and urban women, and women starting home-based businesses. Therefore, it is appropriate that we pause to recognize the great work of the Women’s Business Development Center and women’s business assistance centers throughout the country.

I take special note of the work of Hedy Ratner and Carol Dougal of the Women’s Business Development Center, Counselor Pope of the Cosmopolitan Chamber of Commerce, Connie Evans, Director of the Women’s Self-Employment Project, Karen Yarbrough, proprietor of Hathaway Insurance, Deborah M. Sawyer, founder Environmental Design International and other outstanding women in the City of Chicago and the state of Illinois who provide immeasurable help and support to other women seeking to go into business.

HONORING ALEXANDRIA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM ON WINNING THE 4A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP
HON. BOB RILEY
OF ALABAMA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, March 17, 1998

Mr. RILEY. Mr. Speaker, Paul “Bear” Bryant, the legendary football coach at the University of Alabama, used a now famous quote to inspire his football team. “If you believe in yourself and have dedication and pride—and never quit, you’ll be a winner.” Well, the Alexandria High School Football Team of Alexandria, Alabama took Coach Bryant’s words to heart as they worked, practiced, and sacrificed throughout their season to be the best that they could be. It was this dedication and desire that enabled the Alexandria High School football team to win the 4A State Championship on December 12, 1997.

While their victory deserves to be recognized, what is more impressive is that this victory marked their second state football title in three years. In addition, this team ended their season with an impressive 13–1 record.

Over the course of the season, Mr. Speaker, the 51 players of this team bonded into a well-knit family, creating a strong following not only within the high school itself, but also throughout the small town of Alexandria. In fact, this team was such an inspiration to the community that well wishers converged on the stadium as early as 3:00 P.M. (nearly four hours before the kickoff) just to find seats. Such loyal fans are normally found only on college campuses, and I believe that through such a strong following, the players and