

RENDEZVOUS WITH OBSCURITY

(Mr. DOGGETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, when this House recesses early today at 2:00 in the afternoon, it will be another recess from reality. To continue the normal operation of our Federal Government, Mr. Speaker, 13 appropriation bills should be passed by next Thursday, the last day of the Federal fiscal year. One has thus far been signed into law. With so much yet to be done and so many other issues, from gun safety to public education that this Congress should be addressing, the Republican leadership response is to declare a long weekend recess and to meet next week for 3½ days before the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, if this plan represents "making the trains run on time," as the Republican leadership has so often professed, maybe we would be better off taking a plane or even a bus.

Little wonder that one distinguished congressional historian recently observed that "this Congress has a rendezvous with obscurity."

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1487, NATIONAL MONUMENT NEPA COMPLIANCE ACT

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 296 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 296

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1487) to provide for public participation in the declaration of national monuments under the Act popularly known as the Antiquities Act of 1906. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Resources now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without

intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida).

The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 296 would grant H.R. 1487, the National Monument NEPA Compliance Act, an open rule providing one hour of general debate to be equally divided between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources.

The rule makes in order the Committee on Resources' amendment in the nature of a substitute as an original bill for purpose of amendment which shall be open for amendment at any point. The rule further authorizes the Chair to accord priority in recognition to Members who have preprinted their amendments in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The rule allows the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole to postpone votes during consideration of the bill and to reduce voting time to 5 minutes on a postponed question if the vote follows a 15-minute vote. Finally, the rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

H.R. 1487, the National Monument NEPA Compliance Act, would provide for much needed public participation prior to the designation of national monuments under the Antiquities Act of 1906. Unfortunately, under current law such designations can be made by the administration acting without the benefit of public input into the decision-making process.

For example, on September 18, 1996, President Clinton designated the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah without informing or consulting with the citizens of the State or their elected congressional representatives. This incident is especially troubling in light of documents obtained from the Clinton administration indicating that the monument in question was being planned for months. Incredibly, Mr. Speaker, State officials in Utah were not even notified, or I

should say were notified only at 2 a.m. in the morning of the day that the proclamation was signed into law.

Enactment of H.R. 1487 will ensure that this never happens again. Mr. Speaker, the bill requires the President to actively solicit public participation and comment before creating any national monument and to consult with the Governor and the congressional delegation of the affected State at least 60 days prior to the designation.

After all, the establishment of a national monument is a significant step with far-reaching consequences for surrounding States and communities. Simple common sense dictates that local jurisdictions at least should be consulted before any land use change as dramatic as the designation of a national monument.

The authors of H.R. 1487 have proposed a mechanism for doing exactly that. The bill received bipartisan support in the Committee on Resources, and the Congressional Budget Office estimates that enactment of H.R. 1487 would have no significant impact on the Federal budget.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to adopt both this open rule and the underlying bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding me the time.

This is an open rule which will allow consideration of H.R. 1487, a bill to clarify the requirement for public involvement in the designation of national monuments under the Antiquities Act.

As my colleague from Washington explained, this rule provides 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources. Under this rule germane amendments will be allowed under the 5-minute rule, the normal amending process in the House. All Members on both sides of the aisle will have the opportunity to offer amendments.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 permits the President to protect a historic or scientific landmark by designating it as a national monument. This bill requires that the President seek public participation and consult with the affected Governor and congressional delegation before making such a designation. Although the bill was reported out of the Committee on Resources on a voice vote with bipartisan support, some changes are needed in the bill to clarify congressional intent. Since this is an open rule, Members will have the opportunity to offer amendments improving the bill. The rule was adopted by a voice vote of the Committee on Rules. I urge my colleagues to support the rule.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he