

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. RILEY).

Mr. RILEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 4286, a bill that would establish the Cahaba River national wildlife refuge. I also wish to acknowledge efforts by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS), my good friend and colleague who has worked very hard to make this bill a reality.

The Cahaba River bill provides a rare opportunity for Congress to do something that is finally supported by environmentalists, industry groups, and all of our local municipalities. The Cahaba River runs through five counties in central Alabama, but as it meanders its way south of metropolitan Birmingham, water quality and habitat are adversely affected due to water degradation, siltation, and habitat destruction. Fortunately for all of us, this damage is not irreparable.

Right now, the Piper Bridge area of the third district of Alabama's Bibb County is used largely for silvaculture. In purchasing the land, the Federal Government would agree to maintain the area for public use and would ensure access.

The Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge will conserve, enhance, and restore one of the most distinct and threatened rivers in the world. In its main stem, the Cahaba River is one of the most diverse rivers in North America, containing over 130 species. Of these species, 13 are found only in this river, and another 22 are believed to be seriously imperiled in this and other ecosystems.

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These 3,500 acres are currently owned by four different landowners. All four have agreed to sell or convey the land, and all four have expressed their support for the national wildlife refuge. The approximate cost of \$7 million, which will come out of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, is a relatively small sum for what we stand to gain.

Furthermore, it can be expected that this magnificent area will generate ecotourism revenue, which still remains a priority for many of us that represent rural districts.

Madam Speaker, I suggest that the return on investment for the wildlife refuge makes this one of the best deals before Congress this session. I would also like to invite all of my colleagues on either side of the aisle to view this river for themselves. There are few sites as moving, as stunningly beautiful, as the Cahaba River when it is covered by the Cahaba Lily in full bloom. It looks to be like a sheet of pure white over the river, while a multitude of creatures flourish beneath.

In closing, Madam Speaker, we must protect this most beautiful of rivers while we still have the opportunity, so I ask for the support of all my colleagues in the House in helping to pre-

serve what I truly believe is a national treasure.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS).

Mr. BACHUS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Madam Speaker, the Cahaba River has 131 species of fish, fresh water fish. That may not mean a lot, we have heard that figure twice today, but let me put that in comparison. That is more species of fresh water fish than the entire State of California. It has more mussels, more species of mussels, than Europe. It has, as the gentleman has already said, more endangered species among those 131 of any river in the United States.

But it goes beyond that. It has eight plants which had never been discovered. They were discovered on an expedition in 1992. It has more species of crayfish than any other river in the United States. So we are talking about a national treasure. We are talking about a national treasure that will not be here for our grandchildren unless we pass this bill.

The reason for that is that this river has been preserved along its lower course in its natural state until the past 5 or 10 years, as metropolitan Birmingham began to encroach on its watershed, and there was a tremendous amount of development in the upper watershed. In fact, today during the dry season as much as 99 percent of the water flow is diverted from the Cahaba River. That has had a tremendous negative impact on the lower stretches of the river.

Also, as this river becomes more and more known for its beauty, it has the largest stand of what is called aquatic lilies in the world. That has been advertised in the past 4 or 5 years. People have come down by the hundreds to view these lilies. Unfortunately, when they have come, they have actually gotten into the river and used crowbars and ripped some of these bulbs from the river, because this stand of lilies is in an area of the river that is owned by private landowners.

This has disturbed the people of Bibb County, who have enjoyed this beautiful river for years. The Bibb County Commission, the cities along the lower stretches of the river, and the landowners themselves all uniformly agreed that something needed to be done.

The Nature Conservancy, this is the national Nature Conservancy, they published a book in 1998, and in that they said, and I think this is something that all of us in Congress probably do not realize, and I know I did not, it said, "Few of us realize that the diversity of life in fresh water systems in the United States is exceptional, even when compared to the tropics. However, two centuries of dam construction, water withdrawals, land use alterations, pollution, and introduction of non-native species have led to the ac-

celeration and in many cases irreparable losses of fresh water species."

They then went on to identify some watersheds that contain these endangered species. Unfortunately, this publication points out that Alabama leads the Nation in the number of species which are now extinct. Eight percent of the fresh water in the United States flows through Alabama. We have more passable rivers, more navigable rivers in miles, over 1,400, than any other State, but we have the dubious distinction of having the most extinct species.

We also have 69 that are endangered. Fortunately, almost all of those reside within this 15-mile stretch, so this piece of legislation is the first step in preserving this river and these species not only of fish but also of mussels and crayfish and other animals in the river from extinction. I would urge a "yes" vote.

Madam Speaker, in addition to my remarks, I would also like to express my sincere thanks to several people who have made this legislation a success.

Wendy Allen and the Members of The Nature Conservancy of Alabama.

Beth Stewart and the Members of the Cahaba River Society.

U.S. Alliance—Coosa Pines and the other private landowners who have been extremely supportive and patient throughout this entire process.

The Bibb County Commission and local Cahaba River Authority.

Commissioner Riley B. Smith of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, as well as, Majority Leader ARMEY for scheduling the bill on the Suspension Calendar today and Chairman DON YOUNG and Subcommittee Chair Mr. SAXTON for their support of this bill.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I think the Members obviously have made a compelling case, the case that we heard in committee for the protection of the Cahaba River. I would hope that all Members would support this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4286, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM CENTENNIAL ACT

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and

pass the bill (H.R. 4442) to establish a commission to promote awareness of the National Wildlife Refuge System among the American public as the System celebrates its centennial anniversary in 2003, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4442

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 Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

(1) President Theodore Roosevelt began the National Wildlife Refuge System by establishing the first refuge at Pelican Island, Florida, on March 14, 1903.

(2) The National Wildlife Refuge System is comprised of more than 93,000,000 acres of Federal lands managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in more than 520 individual refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas located in all 50 States and the territories of the United States.

(3) The System is the only network of Federal lands dedicated singularly to wildlife conservation and where wildlife dependent recreation and environmental education are priority public uses.

(4) The System serves a vital role in the conservation of millions of migratory birds, endangered species and threatened species, fish, marine mammals, and the habitats on which these species depend.

(5) Each year the System provides millions of Americans with opportunities to participate in wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation.

(6) Public visitation to National Wildlife Refuges is growing, with more than 35,000,000 visitors annually. It is essential that visitor centers and public use facilities be properly constructed, operated, and maintained.

(7) The National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-242) significantly enhances the ability to incorporate volunteers and partnerships in refuge management.

(8) The System currently has an unacceptable backlog in critical operations and maintenance needs.

(9) The centennial anniversary of the System in 2003 offers an historic opportunity to appreciate these natural resources and expand public enjoyment of these lands.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are the following:

(1) To establish a commission to promote awareness of the National Wildlife Refuge System among the American public as the System celebrates its centennial anniversary in 2003.

(2) To develop a long-term plan to meet the priority operations, maintenance, and construction needs of the System.

(3) To require each fiscal year an annual report prepared in the context of—

(A) the budget submission of the Department of the Interior to the President; and

(B) the President's budget request to the Congress.

(4) To improve public use programs and facilities of the System to meet the increasing needs of the public for wildlife-dependent recreation in the 21st century.

SEC. 3. NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM CENTENNIAL COMMISSION.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is hereby established the National Wildlife Refuge Sys-

tem Centennial Commission (in this Act referred to as the "Commission").

(b) MEMBERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall be composed of the following members:

(A) The Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(B) Up to 10 persons recommended by the Secretary of the Interior and appointed by the President.

(C) The chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and of the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, the congressional representatives of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, and the Secretary of the Interior, who shall be ex-officio members.

(2) APPOINTMENTS.—Members of the Commission shall be appointed no later than 90 days after the effective date of this Act. Persons appointed by the President as members of the Commission may not otherwise be officers or employees of the Federal Government and shall, in the judgment of the President, represent the diverse beneficiaries of the System and have outstanding knowledge or appreciation of wildlife, natural resource management, or wildlife-dependent recreation. In making such appointments, the President shall make every effort to ensure that the views of the hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation communities are represented on the Commission.

(3) VACANCIES.—Any vacancy in the Commission—

(A) shall not affect its power or functions; and

(B) shall be expeditiously filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(c) CHAIRPERSON.—The President shall appoint one of the members as the Chairperson of the Commission.

(d) BASIC PAY.—The members of the Commission shall receive no compensation for their service on the Commission.

(e) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

(1) LEGISLATIVE BRANCH MEMBERS.—Members of the Commission from the legislative branch of the Government shall be allowed necessary travel expenses otherwise authorized by law for official travel.

(2) EXECUTIVE BRANCH MEMBERS.—Members of the Commission from the executive branch of the Government shall be allowed necessary travel expenses in accordance with section 5702 of title 5, United States Code.

(3) OTHER MEMBERS AND STAFF.—Members of the Commission appointed by the President and staff of the Commission may be allowed necessary travel or transportation expenses as authorized by section 5702 of title 5, United States Code.

(f) FUNCTIONS.—The Commission shall—

(1) prepare, in cooperation with Federal, State, local, and nongovernmental partners, a plan to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the National Wildlife Refuge System on March 14, 2003;

(2) coordinate the activities of such partners undertaken pursuant to such plan; and

(3) plan and host, in cooperation with such partners, a conference on the National Wildlife Refuge System, and assist in the activities of such a conference.

(g) STAFF.—Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Commission may employ staff as necessary to carry out its functions.

(h) DONATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may, in accordance with criteria established under paragraph (2), accept and use donations of money, personal property, or personal services.

(2) CRITERIA.—The Commission shall establish written criteria to be used in determining whether the acceptance of gifts or donations under paragraph (1) would—

(A) reflect unfavorably upon the ability of the Commission or any employee of the Commission to carry out its responsibilities or official duties in a fair and objective manner; or

(B) compromise the integrity or the appearance of the integrity of any person involved in those programs.

(i) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.—Upon the request of the Commission—

(1) the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, may provide to the Commission the administrative support services necessary for the Commission to carry out its responsibilities under this Act, including services related to budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, personnel, and procurement; and

(2) the head of any other appropriate Federal department or agency may furnish to the Commission such advice and assistance, with or without reimbursement, to assist the Commission in carrying out its functions.

(j) REPORTS.—

(1) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Commission shall submit to the Congress an annual report of its activities and plans to Congress.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than September 30, 2004, the Commission shall submit to the Congress a final report of its activities, including an accounting of all funds received and expended by the Commission.

(k) TERMINATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall terminate upon the submission of its final report under subsection (j).

(2) DISPOSITION OF MATERIALS.—Upon termination of the Commission and after consultation with the Archivist of the United States and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, the Secretary of the Interior—

(A) may deposit all books, manuscripts, miscellaneous printed matter, memorabilia, relics, and other similar materials of the Commission relating to the 100th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System in Federal, State, or local libraries or museums or otherwise dispose of such materials; and

(B) may use other property acquired by the Commission for the purposes of the National Wildlife Refuge System, or treat such property as excess property.

SEC. 4. FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM: LONG-TERM PLANNING AND ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE BACKLOG.

(a) UNIFIED LONG-TERM PLAN.—No later than March 1, 2002, the Secretary of the Interior shall prepare and submit to the Congress and the President a unified long-term plan to address priority operations, maintenance, and construction needs of the National Wildlife Refuge System, including—

(1) priority staffing needs of the System; and

(2) operations, maintenance, and construction needs as identified in the Refuge Operating Needs System, the Maintenance Management System, the 5-year deferred maintenance list, the 5-year construction list, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service report entitled "Fulfilling the Promise of America's National Wildlife Refuge System", and individual refuge comprehensive conservation plans.

(b) ANNUAL SUBMISSION.—Beginning with the budget request for fiscal year 2003, the Secretary of the Interior shall prepare and submit in the context of each annual budget submission, a report that contains—

(1) an assessment of expenditures in the prior, current, and upcoming fiscal years to

meet the operations and maintenance backlog as identified in the long-term plan under subsection (a); and

(2) transition costs in the prior, current, and upcoming fiscal years, as identified in the Department of the Interior analysis of newly acquired refuge lands, and a description of the method used to determine the priority status of these needs.

SEC. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall become effective on January 20, 2001.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN).

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, today we are considering H.R. 4442. This is the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act. This legislation was introduced by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), along with a list of distinguished cosponsors, including the committee chairman, the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG), and the ranking member, my colleague and friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

This legislation recognizes a great achievement in conservation, 100 years of the National Wildlife System. While this is an important milestone, H.R. 4442 recognizes that we still have work ahead of us to reduce the operations and maintenance backlog within the refuge system. H.R. 4442 establishes a commission to plan activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of this system. The bill also requires the Secretary to submit a comprehensive plan for addressing the maintenance and operations backlog within the refuge system.

This bill is supported by the administration and is noncontroversial. The American people deserve the finest refuge system in the world. I urge an aye vote on this important measure.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I want to join my colleague from Oregon in calling for the support of this legislation to establish the Centennial Committee to coordinate the 100th anniversary of the refuge system.

Our National Wildlife Refuge system is one of the most magnificent land systems that we have in this country. It is the only system that we have where lands are set aside exclusively for the protection and conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats, and it is something that we can be very proud of as a nation. It is envied by countries all over the world for the foresight that so many people in different locations had to try and protect these available ecosystems and the refuge systems to protect fish and wildlife.

I also want to recognize that the workload of the Fish and Wildlife Service to manage these refuges has continued to soar as the public has continued to want to enjoy them, as they become outdoor schoolrooms for children to learn about fish and wildlife, for communities to learn about the interaction of fish and wildlife and our environment.

I want to thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST), the Audubon Society, and others for working out an amendment to the legislation with the Department of the Interior.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I am pleased that today the House is considering H.R. 4442, the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act. I am joined in this important effort by 17 cosponsors, including the distinguished Chairman of the House Resources Committee, DON YOUNG, the Ranking Democratic Member of the Committee, GEORGE MILLER, the Ranking Democratic Subcommittee Member, ENI FALEOMAVAEGA, the Dean of the House of Representatives, JOHN DINGELL, and our colleague, DUKE CUNNINGHAM.

Since becoming Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, I have held many hearings on the operation, maintenance, and management of our nation's National Wildlife Refuge System. This unique system of Federal lands provides essential habitat for hundreds of fish and wildlife species, including more than 258 species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

The first wildlife refuge was created at Pelican Island, Florida, in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt. Today the System has 521 refuges and 38 wetland management districts, which are located in all 50 States and the 9 Commonwealths, Territories, and island possessions. These units range in size from the smallest of less than one acre, the Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota, to the largest of 19.3 million acres in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Money for refuge land acquisition primarily comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund.

During the past five years, my Subcommittee has taken a leadership role in approving legislation to improve our National Wildlife Refuge System. Without question, the most important change was the enactment of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. This landmark Act, P.L. 105-57, was sponsored by Chairman DON YOUNG and, for the first time, it created a comprehensive "organic law" governing the management of the world's largest and most diverse network of lands devoted to fish and wildlife. This historic measure also created a statutory shield to ensure that hunting and fishing and other forms of wildlife-dependent recreation will continue within the Refuge System, and it facilitates these traditional activities where compatible with conservation.

The second improvement, which I was honored to sponsor, was the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act. This legislation will improve the infrastructure of the Refuge System by encouraging volunteer activities. In 1999, over 28,000 individuals volunteered more than 1.3 million hours, which was worth more than \$11 million in services. These serv-

ices included staffing visitors centers, conducting hunter safety classes, landscaping, and operating heavy equipment. My bill, which was signed into law on October 5, 1998, and will encourage additional volunteers by establishing up to 20 pilot projects for the purpose of hiring full-time volunteer coordinators. It also made it easier for interested individuals and groups to donate money or services to a particular refuge.

Finally, during the past four years, a bipartisan group of Members, including myself, DON YOUNG, GEORGE MILLER, ENI FALEOMAVAEGA, NEIL ABERCROMBIE, JOHN DINGELL, and others have vigorously lobbied the House Appropriations Committee to increase funding to reduce the Refuge System's operations and maintenance backlog. Together with the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement [CARE], we were successful in persuading our Appropriations colleagues to increase funding for this account by \$86 million, which is a down payment on the maintenance backlog. While these increases were significant, there is much work to be done to reach the goal of having a fully operational Refuge System by 2003.

The legislation we are considering today recognizes the vital importance of the Refuge System and the fact that the System will celebrate its Centennial Anniversary in three years. Under the terms of this bill, a Commission will be established to promote awareness of the System; develop a long-term plan to meet the priority operations, maintenance and construction needs of the System; and to improve public use programs and facilities.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Commission would be composed of 11 voting members, including the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition, the Chairman and Ranking Minority Members of the House Resources and Senate Environment and Public Works Committees, plus the Congressional Members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, would serve as ex officio members.

The Commission would be charged with the responsibility for preparing a plan to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the System, coordinating activities to celebrate that event, and hosting a conference on the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Commission would issue annual reports and would terminate no later than September 30, 2004.

Finally, this bill directs the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and submit to the Congress a long-term plan to address priority operations, maintenance, and construction needs of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Madam Speaker, the American people deserve the finest Refuge System in the world. This bill is supported by the Administration and is noncontroversial. It is an appropriate next step in our efforts to ensure that the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, one of our nation's greatest conservationists, will live on in the years ahead.

Again, I want to thank my distinguished colleagues for joining with me in this endeavor, and I urge enthusiastic support for the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act.

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, I wish to voice my strong support for H.R. 4442, The National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act. My congressional district in western Wisconsin has more miles along the Mississippi River than another other district in the basin. My district is also home to the Upper Mississippi

River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, a refuge whose 200,000 acres extend 261 miles southward from Wabasha, Minnesota to just north of Rock Island, Illinois.

The Upper Mississippi Refuge lies at the heart of an area that serves as a migratory flyway for 40 percent of North America's waterfowl. It provides habitat for some 292 species of birds, 57 species of mammals, 37 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 118 species of fish. Moreover, it is the most widely used of all our National Wildlife Refuges, attracting roughly 3.5 million visitors a year—more than Yellowstone National Park.

Despite this fact, the Upper Mississippi Refuge currently lacks a full-time refuge manager. The nation's busiest refuge does not have a visitor center and there is only one handicapped boat landing along the entire border of the refuge.

I support Mr. SAXTON's National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act of 2000 because it will draw much needed public attention to the rich resources and the serious needs of Region 3 refuges as well as others across the nation. H.R. 4442 endorses Secretary Babbitt's directive to the Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a long-term plan to address the priority operations, maintenance, and construction needs of the Refuge System. This legislation goes a long way toward ensuring that the Refuge System will remain strong and vital for many years to come.

I urge my colleagues in the House to vote in favor of H.R. 4442.

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, March 14, 2003 will mark a milestone in the history of wildlife in America—the centennial anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

When President Theodore Roosevelt set aside tiny Pelican Island on Florida's East Coast for birds nearly a century ago, he began a conservation legacy that now spans 93 million acres across the United States and its territories.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is America's only network of federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation, representing a steadfast commitment to protecting our wildlife heritage.

This vast network of strategically located habitats protect hundreds of endangered species, serves as stepping stones for millions of migratory birds and conserves our premier fisheries.

Incredibly, one of these stepping stones lies just 26 miles west of New York City's Times Square. The Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Morris County, New Jersey, which is just north of my district, was established in 1960.

This 7,500-acre refuge consists of swamp woodland, hardwood ridges and cattail marsh. In the heart of one of the most densely populated areas in the world, the Refuge is home to more than 220 species of birds, as well as white tail deer, mink, beaver, river otter and coyote.

As development and sprawl continue to swallow more and more of our nation's critical wildlife habitat, we need to ensure that refuges like the Great Swamp continue to thrive. I have worked with my colleagues in Congress to protect our irreplaceable ecosystems by reinstating full state funding in Land and Water Conservation Fund. We are now setting aside proceeds from offshore oil drilling to protect our open spaces.

H.R. 4442, the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act would greatly help improve the operations, maintenance and expansion of the refuge system to ensure that wildlife gets the protection it deserves. The refuge system currently has a \$1 billion operations backlog and a \$800 million maintenance backlog. H.R. 4442 would require the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and submit to Congress a long term plan to address these deficiencies and outline system expansion.

Maybe most importantly, however, this legislation would establish a commission to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the refuge system. This would be instrumental in broadening public understanding and appreciation of protecting our wildlife heritage.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I urge support for this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4442, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

SENSE OF THE HOUSE REGARDING ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL OCEAN DAY

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 415) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that there should be established a National Ocean Day to recognize the significant role the ocean plays in the lives of the Nation's people and the important role the Nation's people must play in the continued life of the ocean, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 415

Whereas the oceans cover 71 percent of the Earth's surface and are key to the life support systems for all creatures on this planet;

Whereas the oceans contain a wondrous abundance and diversity of life, from the smallest microorganism to the mammoth blue whale;

Whereas 2/3 of the world's people live within 50 miles of a coast and 1 out of 6 American jobs are in fishing, shipping, or tourism;

Whereas the oceans provide almost limitless opportunities for exploration and discovery, and could supply a key source of life-saving medicines and treatments;

Whereas oceanography has contributed to an understanding of global climate change and the effects of the ocean on climate and weather,

which inevitably has an impact on safety and quality of life;

Whereas efforts are underway to develop a new ocean monitoring system that will give us a better understanding of the critical relationship between oceans and global climate change;

Whereas a deepened understanding of the seas will enable us to track marine mammals, predict deadly storms such as those associated with El Nino, detect illegal fishing, and gain new insights into the complexities of climate change;

Whereas the oceans and coastal areas supply vital sources of food upon which people depend and that could be deteriorated by poor stewardship;

Whereas decades of pollution from industrial waste, sewage, and toxic runoff have taken their toll on the health of the oceans and on the marine life in them;

Whereas recent studies suggest that nearly 60 percent of the world's coral reefs, the "rainforests of the sea", are being degraded or destroyed by human activities and ten percent of the reefs may already be degraded beyond recovery;

Whereas fisheries and the food and products they produce are essential to the world's economy and steps should be taken to ensure that they do not become overexploited;

Whereas in the 21st century, people will look increasingly to the oceans to meet their everyday needs;

Whereas the oceans' resources are limited, and nations must work together to conserve them;

Whereas the oceans are the core of our own humanity, a treasure shared by all nations of the world, and our stewardship of this resource is our responsibility to our children, grandchildren, and all of Earth's inhabitants;

Whereas June 8th was declared Oceans Day at the Earth Summit Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and similar declarations have been made by individual nations;

Whereas the State of Hawaii has designated the first Wednesday of June as Ocean Day, in recognition of the very significant role the ocean plays in the lives of Hawaii's people, as well as Hawaii's culture, history, and traditions; and

Whereas the establishment of a National Ocean Day will raise awareness of the vital role oceans play in human life and that human beings must play in the life of the ocean: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that a National Ocean Day should be established to recognize the significant role the ocean plays in the lives of the Nation's people, and the important role the Nation's people must play in the continued life of the ocean.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) and the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVEGA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 415, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased today that the House is considering House