I opposed this bill for two reasons. Number one, I do not believe it is right to single out an individual group in legislative remedies. If change in any area of law occurs it should apply to all affected, not as, in this case, with only the Boy Scouts. It does not make sense to repeal the Scouts' charter and leave in place charters for groups such as the Society of American Florists and Ornamental Horticulturists, National Ski Patrol System, Aviation Hall of Fame, or any of the roughly 90 other groups who hold charters.

If Ms. WOOLSEY'S bill repealed all federal charters, it might represent a legitimate debate, unfortunately, this bill has a more narrow scope. According to a report published by the Library of Congress, the chartering by Congress, of organizations is essentially a 20th century practice and does not assign the group any governmental attributes. The report continues by stating, that the attraction of charter status for national organizations is that it tends to provide an ''official'' imprimatur to their activities. With these facts in mind, in 1989, the House Judiciary Committee decided to impose a moratorium on granting new charters.

However, the bill does not address this point, instead it focuses solely on the Boy Scouts. The intend of the bill is to pressure the Boy Scouts to change their practices, which brings me to my second point.

The First Amendment provides all American's the right of association. Whether a group preaches race-based hatred or the teachings of Christianity, their right to gather together has continually been protected by our nation's courts. In fact the courts have already ruled on the practices of the Boy Scouts. State courts in California, Connecticut, Oregon, Kansas, and the U.5. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit have ruled in the Boy Scouts favor.

On June 28, 2000, the Supreme Court affirmed the Constitutionally protected right of the Boy Scouts to set its own standards for membership and leadership. In his ruling Chief Justice Rehnquist stated, though alternative lifestyles are becoming more socially acceptable, ''this is scarcely an argument for denying First Amendment protection to those who refuse to accept these views,'' he continued. ''The First Amendment protects expression, be it of the popular variety or not.'' This decision, once again, reaffirms the Boy Scout's First Amendment rights.

This bill attempts to circumvent the courts ruling by forcing the Boy Scouts to change their practices or else lose their charter. Upon reflection, I have come to agree with Chief Justice Rehnquist and the Supreme Court's, ruling, it should not be the federal government's role to alter the Boy Scout's values. More significantly, the, Boy Scout case is ultimately about something much bigger than scouting, it was a decision of whether or not our Constitutional right of association should remain intact. Passing this bill would have had just the opposite effect and for this reason, I voted against the bill.

ESTUARY RESTORATION ACT OF 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 12, 2000

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1775, the Estuary Restoration Act. This important piece of legislation provides a strong framework and strategy for protecting, maintaining and strengthening the nation's estuaries.

Estuaries are essential and fragile ecosystems that deserve a comprehensive plan to ensure their long-term viability. They are home to thousands of species of aquatic plant and animal life. They are also some of the most productive commercial fisheries in the world. And, millions of Americans flock to estuarine areas for vacations and recreation.

The legislation we are considering today gives us another tool to use for estuary preservation and restoration. This bill streamlines financing for estuary projects and integrates existing federal and non-federal programs. The bill also gives priority to those estuaries currently part of a management plan or pollution mitigation plan. This is so important that my colleague, ROSA DELAURO, and I introduced H.R. 1096, to provide special funding to States for implementation of national estuary conservation and management plans. I hope that with the passage of this legislation we can continue to provide the funding necessary to truly safeguard these essential natural resources.

Unfortunately, I can also tell you, from recent experience, about the tenuous nature of estuaries. Many of my constituents live near and fish from Long Island Sound. The Sound, until recently, was the third largest lobster fishery in the United States, behind Maine and Massachusetts. But the last two seasons have been a disaster for the Long Island Sound fishery. All of the lobsters in Long Island Sound have died. Lobster harvesters are finding their traps empty and their lives thrown into turmoil. The cause of this die-off is being studied and investigated, and it reinforces the need for greater protection of the nation's estuary habitats.

I am a proud cosponsor of this legislation and I urge my colleagues to support it.

BILL TO COMPENSATE POISONED NUCLEAR WORKERS

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 14, 2000

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I am today introducing another bill dealing with the pressing matter of providing compensation and care for current and former nuclear-weapons workers made sick as a result of their on-job exposure to radiation, beryllium, and other dangers. Let me explain why I am doing so at this time.

Earlier this year, I joined in supporting the Whitfield amendment to the Defense Authorization bill for fiscal year 2001. That amendment, which was adopted by the House, clearly stated that Congress needs to act this year to make good on the promise of a fairer deal for these people who helped America win the Cold War.

This is a very important matter for our country. It's particularly important for many Coloradans because our state is home to the Rocky Flats site, which for decades was a key part of the nuclear weapons complex. Now the site's old military mission has ended, and we are working hard to have Rocky Flats cleaned up and closed. But while we work to take care of the site, we need to work just as hard to take care of the people who worked there.

The people who worked at Rocky Flats and the other nuclear weapons sites were part of our country's defense just as much as those who wore the uniform of an armed service. They may not have been exposed to hostile fire, but they were exposed to radiation and beryllium and other very hazardous substances—and because of that some have developed serious illnesses while others will develop such illnesses in the future. Unfortunately, they haven't been eligible for veterans' benefits and have been excluded from other federal programs because they technically worked for DOE's contractors—and for far too long the government was not on their side. That has changed, I'm glad to say—the Department of Energy has reversed its decades-old policy of opposing workers claims.

I strongly supported that amendment because, as Len Ackland, writing in the Denver Post, has correctly said, ''The shape of such legislation will determine whether or not this nation, through its political leadership, will finally accept responsibility for the physical harm to thousands of the 600,000 workers recruited to fight the cold war by producing nuclear weapons.''

So I was encouraged when the House adopted that amendment and went on record as saying that now is the time for the Congress to accept that responsibility. Adoption of the amendment signaled that the House recognized this to be a matter of high priority and that it was important for Congress to pass legislation this year to create an efficient, uniform, and adequate system of compensation for these civilian veterans of the cold war.

But that amendment was only a very modest first step. Since its adoption, both the House and Senate have completed initial action on the defense authorization bill—and the bill as passed by the Senate includes a separate title, Title 35, that would set up a compensation system for these workers who played such a vital role in winning the Cold War. That title, and the other differences between the House and Senate versions of the defense authorization bill, are now being considered by a conference committee.

I am sure that this Senate-passed legislation could be further refined. But we are rapidly nearing the end of this Congress, and time is of the essence. That is why, along with more than 100 of our colleagues, I have strongly urged the House's conferees to agree to this part of the Senate bill. I remain convinced that having the Senate-passed legislation included in the conference report on the defense authorization bill would be the very best way to take the essential first step toward the vital goal of doing justice to these workers.

However, some questions have been raised about the details of that Senate-passed legislation—and, next week, there will be a Subcommittee hearing in the Judiciary Committee