

AUTHORIZING FUNDS FOR ILLINOIS/MICHIGAN CANAL COMMISSION

SPEECH OF

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 17, 2000

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 3926, bipartisan legislation I introduced with Representatives LIPINSKI, BIGGERT, and GUTIERREZ. H.R. 3926 will increase the authorization cap of the Illinois and Michigan Canal Heritage Corridor from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000.

The Illinois and Michigan Canal Heritage Corridor was the first park of its kind, established by Congress in 1984. Created for the historical and cultural importance of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, it was a "partnership park" which involved local decision making and input combined with federal designation and support. The corridor is special for many reasons; it includes valuable natural resources, state and local parks, transportation networks, cities and towns, rural and industrial uses, wildlife preserves and nature activities such as hiking, fishing, canoeing and camping. The heritage corridor has been critical to preserving historic sites that played a critical role in the history of Illinois and the nation.

The I&M Canal was the first of the man-made waterways that established the corridor as a nationally significant transportation network. Much of the canal still exists along with the towns and cities and farms surrounding it. In fact, the canal encompasses five counties stretching from Chicago to LaSalle-Peru.

Among the first visionaries of the Canal was Louis Joliet who conceptualized a system for bringing together the Great Lakes and the Mississippi as early as 1673. Plans and funding were developed in 1827 and the route of the canal was settled upon. Twenty-one years later, the canal was opened for traffic for the first time—but this was only a beginning. The canal would grow substantially over the coming decades as it was influenced by enormous economic growth. In turn, the canal spurred its own economic growth and became the economic center of the region. The 97-mile canal was dug by hand, largely from immigrant Irish labor out of rock and was a minimum of 6 feet deep and 60 feet wide.

The Canal helped to build Chicago and was the center of not only industrial growth but also agricultural growth. Mining industries grew along the canal and plants to process farm products were built. The canal also fostered the growth of the wallpaper and watch industry. Towns developed around the rapidly growing canal area and tolls on products shipped on the canal generated \$1 million for the state.

Shipping on the Canal peaked in 1882 then began a gradual decline due to rail and other forms of traffic. The I&M Canal closed in 1933 after the development of the Illinois Waterway, but in that same year the Civilian Conservation Corps began work that created many of the parks and trails that line the canal today. In 1974, the 60 mile section from Joliet to LaSalle was designated the Illinois & Michigan

Canal State Trial under the stewardship of the Illinois Department of Conservation.

Now as the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, the canal continues to provide unparalleled cultural and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. A partnership exists between The Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission, the Canal Corridor Association, the Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources which ensures the continuing development of the canal and its resources.

The I&M Canal needs to be able to access additional funds for many worthwhile projects including heritage tourism projects, heritage education, and preservation and conservation. An increase in the authorization cap will allow the possibility of increased funding, providing the development and improvement of parks and museums across the canal. Teachers will be able to be trained and student resources will be developed and enhanced. Vital historic resources such as the I&M Canal, architecture, landscapes and Native American archaeological sites will be preserved and revitalized.

Mr. Speaker, 16 heritage corridors have been created since the Illinois and Michigan Canal Heritage Corridor, and all but three have received \$1,000,000 authorization caps. It is time to bring the Illinois and Michigan Canal in line with these other heritage areas and provide it the opportunity for additional funding. I thank Chairmen YOUNG and HANSEN for allowing this bill to come to the floor today and I thank all cosponsors of this legislation and urge its passage.

LAKE BARCROFT: PAYING TRIBUTE TO A COMMUNITY CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

HON. THOMAS M. DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 18, 2000

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay honor to the community of Lake Barcroft, in Falls Church, Virginia, which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this coming Wednesday, October 18, 2000. Driving or walking through the community, the natural beauty of Lake Barcroft may be taken for granted. It is easy to overlook the obvious and never think to question why or how the present evolved. Trees and bushes planted 35 years ago turned mud flats into gardens. Street signs unique to Lake Barcroft grace the landscape. Curbs and gutters prevent flooding and erosion, and the lake itself is a glittering gem.

The Barcroft community was named in memory of Dr. John Barcroft, who built both a home and a mill on a tract of land that came to be known as Barcroft Hill. The surrounding land, known as Munson Hill Farm, was a large tract of land between what is now Bailey's Crossroads and Seven Corners. During the Civil War, both Munson Hill Farm and Bailey's Crossroads were scenes of military action. Dr. Barcroft's home and mill were overrun by the retreating Union Army after the Battle of Bull Run. Bailey's Crossroads became a Union encampment while the Confederates occupied

positions in both Annandale and Fairfax County. Later, the Federals constructed Fort Buffalo at the present site of Seven Corners. Fort Buffalo become one of the ring of forts protecting the District of Columbia during the war.

Almost 90 years later, on February 23, 1954, the residents of Lake Barcroft officially launched the Lake Barcroft Community Association (LABARCA). The residents had come together informally over the prior 18 months to build a new life in a new community and, most importantly, to save the lake. Like most Washingtonians, they came from other places. This created a common bond and a reliance on each other. Their varied backgrounds and individual talents resolved numerous problems from water sedimentation to litigation. Much was accomplished by the few people who first formed the community association.

In the summer of 1952, almost two years after the start of development, 15 families had completed homes in Lake Barcroft. Of these, eleven families present at the first meeting of the homeowners association formed the Executive Committee. The Committee took a strong stand against mass, speculative housing development in the area. Other civic actions provided voter information concerning registration and local elections. The association coordinated mail delivery to roadside mailboxes with the U.S. Post Office. Unique, wooden road signs were designed and installed. Landscaping and a sign with lighting enhanced "Entrance One." Beautification and the installation of storm drains at the beach commenced.

Lake Barcroft achieved up-scale status at the beginning of the sixties. Over just a few years, the number of families living at Lake Barcroft increased substantially: from 368 in 1956, to 650 in 1958, 783 in 1960. By mid-1960, Lake Barcroft Community Association membership reached a record high; of the 783 families in Lake Barcroft, 78 percent were members.

The first competitive race for president in LABARCA history took place in late 1959. The election featured two candidates, each highly qualified and dedicated to the community. Ralph Spencer, an official at the Department of Agriculture, had been asked to run in recognition of his work as Chairman of the Planning Committee. Ralph promoted the community center despite pessimistic arguments against a "dance hall" on the lake.

A faction in favor of dredging the lake convinced Stuart Finley to enter the election based on his knowledge of sediment and erosion; he had produced a fifty-part television series, *Our Beautiful Potomac*. Funding for slit removal had been approved by Fairfax County, so association pressure mounted to resolve a festering sore, the gradual decay of the lake. Stuart won the low-key and friendly election. Ralph Spencer pitched right in and volunteered to take on the task of procuring and maintaining street signs, a responsibility he has held to this day.

Mr. Speaker, today Lake Barcroft is a thriving community of approximately 1,025 homes. The families of Lake Barcroft have formed a tight-knit community featuring annual civic affairs meetings, beach parties, Easter egg hunts, annual Labor Day games, and golf outings. I am proud to represent this tremendous group of citizens, and I am honored today to recognize their rich and storied history.