

“Our Western Agenda” is designed to provide suggestions on specific Idaho and Western issues. It proposes a compass for how our natural resource policy should address these issues.

While the list of issues that touch the West is much longer than this, I believe the following ideas comprise the core. First, I believe access must be guaranteed to our public lands for multiple uses, including ranching, mining, and recreation.

In order to maintain the values of public lands, I believe the most critical characteristic that needs to be preserved is access. Conservation and multiple use, for a century now the dominant policy of our public lands, require access. Only by accessing these areas can active management take place, providing protection for our public lands against disease, wildfire, and insect epidemics.

Next, the long struggle over public access to our lands has left many with battle fatigue and I believe through collaborative conservation, mutual goals of various user groups can be accomplished. Clearly, we need a new approach to solving natural resource conflicts, user conflicts, and management conflicts.

In order to resolve conflict, all the players need to come “to the table” to explore our shared ideals instead of reinforcing our disagreements.

I think we should adopt the strategies of some local activists who have turned away from the existing national standoff. Instead, they are working to bridge differences, to find a common solution that reflects the national environmental ethic. In a phrase: collaborative conservation.

I believe collaborative conservation should include the following. We must discard the doctrine of national communities of interest, where decision makers are selected from national organizations, and return to a doctrine of local community interest. We should not allow Federal bureaucracies and national organizations to upset the fragile process of local consensus making.

We need a process of continuous improvement in reducing our impacts on the land. We must stipulate that for all the progress made by commodity-producing industries, loggers and ranchers, and recreationists, we can always do better.

Federal Government policies desperately need modernization. The Government needs to manage better. It must not allow restrictive approaches based upon inflexible national mandates to trump what would otherwise be environmentally sound activities and shut out local people who have to live with the consequences of Federal decisions.

As a community, we need to come together to solve the challenges of multiple-use in order to achieve conservation and balance on our public lands. I also believe as our Nation’s energy policy continues to develop, we will con-

tinue to look to have access to our public lands to provide resources.

During the past decade, we have heard a chorus of energy marketers and environmentalists sing the praises of natural gas as a cost-effective and environmentally sensitive energy source. The past administration hailed natural gas as the cleanest fuel for home heating and aggressively pushed utility companies to convert oil and coal-fired electric plants to gas.

The irony is that all this aggressive promotion has not been backed by commensurate efforts to ensure supply. Indeed, the Clinton administration complicated our ability to retrieve adequate supplies of gas by locking up Federal land deposits of this valuable energy source, with an estimated 40 percent of potential gas resources in the United States on Federal lands that are either closed to exploration or covered by severe restrictions.

Increases in Federal red tape and bureaucratic inefficiency raised consumer costs while denying consumers the choices they were promised. The fact of the matter is as the United States enters the 21st century, our Nation lacks a readily available and sufficient supply of natural gas to satisfy current demand, let alone the increasing demand that we expect in the immediate future. Consequently, natural gas prices are high and will likely rise in the future.

This will not change until we reverse government policies that have foreclosed opportunities for choice of fuels.

Furthermore, failure to encourage investment in the transmission of electricity has threatened the reliability of service throughout the country.

The Department of Energy has estimated that we will need to construct over the next several years an additional 255,000 miles of distribution lines, at an estimated cost of \$120 to \$150 billion, to ensure that our electric system remains the most reliable in the world.

The notion that our Nation can rely so heavily on natural gas, maintain severe restrictions on exploration and production, and still enjoy low prices is, as Secretary Abraham has stated, “a dangerous assumption.”

Last, I believe a common sense approach will protect our public lands against catastrophic fires, weeds, and exclusive policies. Fire is a natural component of any ecosystem. It stimulates plant growth, maintains a plant understory, and creates diversity. All of these aspects are healthy characteristics of a thriving forest.

However, when fire is suppressed and active forest management activities—thinning, prescribed burns, etc.—that mimic fire behavior are ignored, this is a prescription for disaster.

The neglectful management practices of the past will continue to plague our public lands unless we pursue active management practices that result in a balanced ecosystem. In order to prevent devastating fires, the agencies

need the resources and flexibility to make management decisions that maintain our public lands.

Increased fuel loads create catastrophic fires, contribute to declining watersheds, increase sedimentation and decrease water quality, and lead to the demise of fisheries.

This disastrous spiral must be stopped. Non-native weeds are a serious problem on both public and private lands across the Nation. They are particularly troublesome in the West, where much of our land is entrusted to the management of the Federal Government.

Like a “slow burning wildfire,” noxious weeds take land out of production, force native species off the land, and interrupt the commerce and activities of all those who rely on the land for their livelihoods, including farmers, ranchers, recreationists, and others.

Forests and rangelands are dynamic systems that constantly change in response to both natural and man-made events. They are never static. Any scientist will tell you that a healthy forest or rangeland requires active management. Like your backyard garden, you can’t just let it go and expect it to be productive and healthy. You have to actively manage the resource by doing everything from thinning trees, to spraying for weeds, to maintaining roads.

Without access to our lands, it is impossible to manage our public lands properly. Without access, we will end up with unhealthy lands that are prime candidates for catastrophic wildfires and insect infestations of epic proportions.

It is time to move our public lands management agencies away from a “one-size-fits all” management policy and back toward their original missions.

As set forth in law, the missions are to achieve high-quality land management under the sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of all users.

In all of this, I believe we still have an Old West, a rural society centered on the original commodity-producing industries and agriculture, and then there is a New West, centered on the vigorous quest for a quality of life that includes the enjoyment of the outdoors.

What ties “the old” and “the new” together is an appreciation for the resources and the value that multiple uses contribute to our livelihoods and communities.

Natural resource management is about bringing the Old West and the New West together to balance the needs of all the people with the needs of the land.●

HADASSAH’S 90TH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in honor of Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, on its 90th Anniversary. Hadassah, the largest Zionist, largest

Jewish, and largest women's membership organization in the country, was founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold to help meet medical needs in what was then Palestine.

Since that time, Hadassah has been a leading force in Israel's medical needs through Mt. Scopus Hospital, Ein Karem Hospital, and various clinics across the country. Hadassah hospitals, in addition to serving as a model of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East, provide state-of-the-art health care to 600,000 patients a year—regardless of race, religion, creed or national origin—and often treat the most critically wounded in the region's ongoing conflicts.

Through the College of Technology, the Career Counseling Institute, and Youth Villages in Israel and through Young Judaea and the Hadassah Leadership Academy in the United States, Hadassah has been critical in upgrading the educational and learning opportunities for the people of Israel.

In the United States, Hadassah women sold \$200 million in US World War II bonds as its first national domestic effort. Since then, Hadassah women have been actively engaged in health education programs on breast cancer and osteoporosis; voter registration efforts; Jewish education; grassroots advocacy on US-Israel relations, Jewish communal concerns; women's issues; humanitarian relief to distressed communities and countries; and volunteer work in literacy programs and at domestic violence shelters.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the continued efforts of Hadassah members and their ninety year history.●

TRIBUTE TO FREDERICK BISHOP

● Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Frederick W. Bishop of Hooksett, NH. Frederick has been chosen as New Hampshire's Citizen of the Year for his exceptional leadership and devoted service to the community.

I commend his active role in both the community of Hooksett and the Granite State. He has served countless hours on Boards and holds positions in numerous organizations within the state. Mr. Bishop has served as Chairman of the Hooksett Police Commission, President of the Hooksett Men's Club, member of the Memorial School Booster's Club, Chairman of the Hooksett Winter Carnival, Treasurer of the Hooksett Underhill School PTO, Chairman of the Librarian of the Year Award Event, and numerous other positions and memberships.

Along with his positions, Frederick has found time to serve as a Little League Coach, a member of the Hooksett Emergency Medical Services Committee, and a volunteer for Catholic Charities. Frederick is also a member of the Business and Industry Association of NH, the New Hampshire

Easter Seal Society, and the Kiwanis Club. His efforts to improve the community in which he lives serve as a positive role model for people in towns across the country. He has been instrumental in raising the membership of the Hooksett Kiwanis Club by personally sponsoring 180 new members.

Frederick Bishop is one of the most deserving candidates of this recognition that I have encountered. His efforts and devotion have made the Town of Hooksett a better place to live. He should be proud of his accomplishments and service. It is truly an honor to represent him in the U.S. Senate.●

STEEL INDUSTRY RETIREE BENEFITS PROTECTION ACT OF 2002

● Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I am pleased to join as a cosponsor of this extremely important legislation, S. 2189, the Steel Industry Retiree Benefits Protection Act of 2002. This legislation is coming none too soon, for hardworking steelworker retirees who, through no fault of their own are facing the loss of health and death benefits, and for the industry itself that needs this relief in order to revitalize itself and remain competitive.

In particular, the act would preserve the health and death benefits for the retirees of steel, iron ore, and coke companies facing consolidation or liquidation. The bill establishes a health benefits program for steel retirees of acquired or shuttered steel companies modeled on health plans available for Federal workers. Like its model, the new program will require retirees to pay reasonable monthly premiums, will provide coverage for prescription drugs, and will deliver medical care through preferred provider organizations. In addition to health coverage, the proposed legislation extends a \$5,000 death benefit to the designated beneficiary of each enrolled retiree.

The hard working families of the Iron Range of Minnesota are facing excruciatingly tough times. Their situation is truly desperate and they need our help.

The taconite industry in which generations of workers have proudly labored has been ravaged by surges of semi-finished steel slab dumped in this country by our trading partners. Many have lost their jobs, just last year 1,400 workers were laid off when LTV Steel Mining closed its doors. Now, 10,000 former employees, their spouses and dependents face loss of health insurance and many are finding that they stand to lose a good portion of the pensions the company had promised.

Last month, the HELP Committee held hearings on the need for legacy cost legislation both for retirees and for the industry. The testimony was riveting. The need compelling. My good friend, Jerry Fallos, president of Local 4108 of the United Steelworkers of America, testified at those hearings. The stories he had to tell were grim indeed.

As Jerry said, the people of the Iron Range are used to hard times. They

have weathered any number of challenges over the years. They are good people, proud, hard-working, the best you can find anywhere. They are survivors, and they will get through these difficult times as well. They have given much to their country, and now they need our help.

I am determined to give them that help. The good people of the range have responded to their country in its times of needs. Over the years our Nation's economy flourished and our manufacturing industries boomed from the iron ore produced through the labors of steelworkers on the range.

There is both a moral imperative to meeting this challenge as well as a business necessity in doing so.

As a matter of fairness and economic justice, we must help the working families who gave their all to this industry and who, through no fault of their own, indeed because of the unfair practices of our trading partners, find themselves without jobs, health care or adequate pensions. In the last 2 years, 32 U.S. steel companies have filed for bankruptcy, and these companies represent nearly 30 percent of our domestic steel making capacity. These failures were not the fault of the workers at these companies. These failures resulted from unfair and predatory practices of our trading partners over an extended period.

Equally as important, our domestic steel industry will simply not be able to revitalize itself and remain competitive while shouldering the massive legacy cost burdens that exist. With on average three retirees for every active employee, the industry faces virtually insurmountable barriers. Government assistance is essential and we will need the President's active support for legacy cost legislation if we are to prevail.

Unfortunately, however, the President appears to have washed his hands of this problem. He claims to have done his part by providing section 201 relief to the industry. The issue of legacy costs, he says, for the sake of retirees and to permit industry consolidation, is someone else's problem.

It is not, however, as simple as that. First, the jury is still out on whether the section 201 relief will in fact be that meaningful. According to recent accounts, there are over 1,000 exceptions to the President's section 201 decisions being considered. And, Secretary O'Neill is reported as saying that he suspects "a significant proportion of them will be favorably decided." Moreover, the President's section 201 decision did nothing for the iron workers in Minnesota and Michigan. While the President imposed a fairly significant tariff on every other product category for which the International Trade Commission found injury, for steel slab he decided to impose "tariff rate quotas." This brings us virtually no relief. Nearly 7 million tons of steel slab can continue to be dumped on our shores before any tariff is assessed. The injury will continue.