

before us shows our effort and commitment to ensure that programs aimed at the prevention of child abuse and neglect continue. I would like to thank my colleagues on both sides for their hard work and efforts in developing this mutual compromise in the bill before us for consideration today.

I especially want to thank the full committee chairman, Mr. BOEHNER, for his support of this bill, and Mr. GREENWOOD for his diligence in ensuring that infants born addicted to alcohol or drugs receive necessary services.

I want to also thank the ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. ROEMER, and the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. MILLER, for their cooperation in working towards this alternative bill before us today.

This bill provides for the continued provision of important federal resources for identifying and addressing the issues of child abuse and neglect, and for supporting effective methods of prevention and treatment.

It also continues local projects with demonstrated value in eliminating barriers to permanent adoption and addressing the circumstances that often lead to child abandonment.

Mr. Speaker, this bill emphasizes the prevention of child abuse and neglect before it occurs. It promotes partnerships between child protective services and private and community-based organizations, including education, and health systems to ensure that services and linkages are more effectively provided.

The bill retains language that appropriately addresses a growing concern over parents being falsely accused of child abuse and neglect and the aggressiveness of social workers in their child abuse investigations. It retains language to increase public education opportunities to strengthen the public's understanding of the child protection system and appropriate reporting of suspected incidents of child maltreatment.

The agreement continues to foster cooperation between parents and child protective service workers by requiring caseworkers to inform parents of the allegations made against them, and improves the training opportunities and requirements for child protective services personnel regarding the extent and limits of their legal authority and the legal rights of parents and legal guardians.

It also ensures the safety of foster and adoptive children by requiring states to conduct criminal background checks for prospective foster and adoptive parents and other adult relatives and non-relatives residing in the household.

Lastly, this bill expands adoption opportunities to provide for services for infants and young children who are disabled or born with life-threatening conditions, and requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study on the annual number of infants and young children abandoned each year.

I again want to thank my colleagues for their work on this bill and urge them to join me in support of this effort to improve the prevention and treatment of child abuse by supporting H.R. 5601, the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2002.

KEEPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SAFE ACT OF 2002

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES C. GREENWOOD

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 10, 2002

Mr. GREENWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the adoption of H.R. 5601, The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act. I am pleased that after the House passed a similar version of this bill in the Spring with overwhelming support, we have the opportunity to make this critical legislation a reality.

The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act, in combination with other federal child welfare statutes, assists in our national efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect. The Act requires that the Federal-State child welfare system supports and improves the infrastructure of child protective services, develops statewide networks of community-based family support and child abuse prevention programs, and supports demonstration projects to determine how best to improve the well being of abused or neglected children.

The bill continues to provide important Federal resources for identifying child abuse, neglect, and family violence, and for supporting effective methods of prevention and treatment. It also continues local projects with demonstrated value in eliminating barriers to permanent adoption and addressing the circumstances that often lead to child abandonment.

I believe this bill strikes a successful balance between providing appropriate treatment services, such as a plan of safe care for infants affected by illegal substance abuse, and accountability, such as the report that the Secretary of Health and Human Services must submit describing the extent to which States are implementing the policies outlined in the bill.

I want to thank Congressmen PETE HOEKSTRA and TIM ROEMER in this effort, Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Select Education, as well as Chairman BOEHNER and ranking member MILLER of the full Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 5601, and I reserve the balance of my time.

NATIONAL FOREST ORGANIZATIONAL CAMP FEE IMPROVEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JIM KOLBE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 10, 2002

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5316 is the culmination of a year and a half of work by parents and volunteers who wanted to save the camps that serve under-privileged children and disabled adults.

The Forest Service is in the midst of pricing off forest lands, the very camps that serve these children and adults. Government should not be making a profit on disadvantaged children. We should charge these camps a mod-

est fee that pays for the paperwork and maybe a little extra if the camps use a lot of land. But not \$71,000 per year, which could happen in at least one instance if this bill is not enacted.

If we, the Congress, cannot change a law that requires the Forest Service to charge exorbitant use fees on youth camps and camps for disabled adults, fees that almost certainly will lead to the camps closing down their operations, then what laws should we pass?

This bill before us today reforms and improves the fee structure used by the Forest Service for non-profit recreational camps—camps operated by organizations such as the Girl Scouts and church groups. Blame should not be attached to “Scrooge-like” Forest Service officials. Let's face it; the re-calculation of fees is required by a law enacted by Congress. But the result is the same. Fees will dramatically increase for camps across the nation. In one case in Tucson, Arizona, the fee would go from \$4,500 to \$71,000 per year.

The Tucson Citizen put it well in a recent editorial:

With so many arms of government raising fees on just about every service known to taxpayers, one might start to wonder how their general tax dollars are being spent . . .

Ever vigilant for new revenue-raising opportunities, the Forest Service then proposed raising the rents on national forest land that is used by nonprofit organizations for summer camps. Targeted cash cows include the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, religious and men's groups. The Forest Service pulled that one off by borrowing a trick from local governments loathe to commit political suicide by raising tax rates. They accomplish the same thing, however, by reappraising the value of land, making it subject to higher taxes under the old rates once it's deemed more valuable.

We must establish a new, common-sense fee system that is rational and will allow camps to remain on forest lands while providing a fair return to the American taxpayer. Surely, there can be no better use of Federal land than by under-privileged children and disabled adults.

The National Forest Organizational Camp Fee Improvement Act will establish a new fee system based on acreage used by the camps, providing incentives to make the most efficient use of the Federal lands. To prevent large spikes in fees, the camp's fee would be 5%—a reasonable rate of return to the U.S. Government—of the value of the land based on rural land values, not developable land values.

Therein lies the key. We are not going to turn these camp sites inside our beautiful national forests into suburban housing tracts. So, why should the fee be based on a value of the land which will never be realized, rather than the only alternative use to a camp site, which is agricultural uses?

The land value we propose to use is a statistic calculated by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). NASS is not part of the Forest Service, thus ensuring it is independent and appraises the value fairly. The NASS valuation is based on previous sales of farmlands. This is a departure from the current methodology, where valuation is determined by future probable sale prices of land for development. Further, the land value is a 5-year rolling average of agriculture lands by County, thereby taking into account geographical differences and the need to even out large fluctuations in fees over time.