

The exemptions we are debating this week are wrong on so many different levels.

First of all, the legislation is unnecessary. There is already a waiver provision in place in the law for years. There has never been a case where for military necessity a waiver has not been granted. Never, not one. Not one example has been produced before the committees that are examining this.

Additionally, it misses the real threat to military readiness, what is termed encroachment. This is the same sprawl and unplanned growth that threatens our farms and forestlands, pollutes our air and water, and congests our roadways, and this is a real threat to our ability to train and maintain the world's mightiest fighting force.

Across the country, from Ft. Stewart, Georgia, to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, development is threatening the armed forces' ability to fly planes, maneuver and conduct other readiness activities. This has led the State of California to pass their Senate bill 1468 which recognizes the long-term operations of military installations must involve a partnership between the State, local agencies and the Federal Government.

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It provides the military, environmental organizations and local planning agencies the tools to work together to fight common enemies of military readiness like suburban sprawl. But this proposal is completely absent from the legislation coming before us.

The defense authorization bill is also wrong on a very fundamental level. It is missing an opportunity to use the Department of Defense to set the highest standards. Again, given adequate resources and the right orders, our Department of Defense can achieve any mission. We are missing that opportunity.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is a fundamental arrogance and hypocrisy that somehow the Federal Government's rules and regulations are necessary to protect the environment. We will impose them on small business or local government but not on us ourselves. It is the wrong signal and the wrong direction to protect endangered species and the health of our planet.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1904, HEALTHY FORESTS RESTORATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-109) on the resolution (H. Res. 239) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1904) to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to plan and conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and

Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

TRIBUTE TO HONORABLE LARRY COMBEST ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Chairman LARRY COMBEST on a long and successful congressional career. I was privileged to serve on the Committee on Agriculture under LARRY. We were certainly at opposite ends of the spectrum. My first 2 years on the committee were LARRY'S last 2. I was without status. He was the chairman. Regardless of seniority, each person had access to LARRY and his staff on an equal basis. I have always felt that the true measure of a person's character was how he treated those who could do nothing for him. In that respect, I thought that LARRY was really exemplary and I really appreciated the way I was received.

The most significant accomplishment of the Committee on Agriculture the last 2 years was reauthorization of the farm bill. This was a very exhaustive process. It went on over 2 years, involving roughly 50 hearings, 25 of those in various parts of the country and 25 here in Washington. Input was received from such diverse groups as the Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, corn and soybean, rice and cotton, fruits and vegetables, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club. Everybody had a chance.

What the chairman did was ask each group to write the farm bill as they saw it needing to be written and also to score it, to come up with what it was going to cost; and so this was kind of a unique approach because I think everybody that tried began to realize how complex this was.

Again, he took input from every group. The bill was written in full committee, which I appreciated. Everybody had a chance to speak their piece. It was truly bipartisan. We hear the term bipartisan around here all the time, but this was a case where I can really, honestly say that I do not believe either side was given any advantage and that each side felt they had equal ownership, and as a result the farm bill was passed almost unanimously out of the Committee on Agriculture.

LARRY was under a great deal of pressure to delay the writing of the farm bill until 2003. Yet he realized that agriculture was in trouble, that we were surviving each year on roughly a 7, \$7.5

billion emergency payment and this simply could not go on, so he pressed forward and got the bill done in 2002 in the face of a fair amount of criticism. I thought that he showed great tenacity in doing so, and I really appreciated his efforts.

I visited South America with LARRY and other members of the Committee on Agriculture a little bit more than a year ago, and I can recall one meeting in Brazil with their agriculture leadership in which they were very critical of U.S. farm policy. They thought they were poised to take over the soybean market of the world, and I remember LARRY'S response. He said, "My responsibility is to protect the interests of American farmers and ranchers." That is what he did. Our farmers and ranchers really comprise only 1 percent roughly of our population. At one time they were a very significant part of our population. Now they are about 1 percent, and so they certainly need advocates. I really appreciate the fact that Chairman COMBEST truly did all that he could to represent a very important and often unappreciated part of our Nation.

I would like to thank the chairman for his contribution and for his career here and for the way that he worked with other people to bring agriculture to the forefront during the farm bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TEXAS REDISTRICTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, before I discuss some comments I would like to make about the courageous acts of 51 Texas legislators last week, I want to join my Republican colleagues in thanking Congressman LARRY COMBEST for so many years of dedicated public service to the State of Texas and to our country.

Those of us who believe that one of the strengths of our country comes from the values of rural America, one of the strengths of our economy comes from the productivity of our family farmers and ranchers, all of us who believe those things owe a debt of gratitude, an everlasting debt of gratitude to LARRY COMBEST for his bipartisan and strong leadership in our country not only as chairman of the Committee on Agriculture but as chairman of the very important Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence through which he served our Nation's security in so many important ways.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk about the actions of last week where we had