

This recognition is long overdue for a man who served his country with distinction and valor during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Dorie Miller is just one example of African-American war heroes and veterans who have gone beyond and above the call of duty to persevere freedom's full measure, although they themselves were denied it in many quarters at home.

As Americans, we owe a debt of gratitude to our veterans. It is our duty to ensure that they receive the support they need from the country they so diligently served.

As we daily witness the courageous and professional efforts of our armed forces engaged in Iraq, Afghanistan and in Southeast Asia, we are all reminded of the tremendous sacrifices our veterans have made on our behalf.

As we celebrate another Veteran's Day this November, we must back up our promises with our meaningful action. We must honor all of our veterans, irrespective of their station in life, their gender, or the color of their skin.

Like Dorie Miller, many have died for the freedom we cherish. Death is not a respecter of persons. Nor should we be.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JOY
RASMUSSEN

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an amazing woman from Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Joy Rasmussen, a member of the US Women's National Triathlon team, is set to compete at the International Triathlon Union World Championships in December in Queenstown, New Zealand. Joy is ranked 15th nationally in her division and is eligible to compete in next year's World Championship in Portugal. I rise to pay tribute to Joy today before my colleagues here in the Congress.

Joy took up competing as a way to make new friends, though her athletic prowess in this event appears to come natural to her, which is no easy task. Triathlons encompass a quarter-mile to half-mile swim, a 12 to 18 mile bike ride, and a 3 to 5 mile run. Joy's athletic feats are especially commendable, as she pursues excellence outside of a full-time career. Before putting in a full day as a realtor with the Colorado Group Realty, Joy trains in the early morning and makes longer training runs, rides, or swims on the weekend. Even after a nasty spill last February that sidelined her for five months, Joy has continually driven herself to improve.

Mr. Speaker, I stand before you to show my appreciation to Joy Rasmussen for being a beacon of inspiration to Americans who attempt to achieve excellence in their personal and professional endeavors. Joy's accomplishments are extraordinary and I am honored that she will be representing America at the upcoming World Championships in New Zealand.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 269,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
AND RELATED AGENCIES APPRO-
PRIATIONS ACT, 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 30, 2003

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose the Fiscal Year 2004 Interior appropriations bill conference report for a number of reasons.

I applaud the committee for approving \$400 million to reimburse accounts that the Forest Service borrowed from to fight this past Summer's forest fires. Unfortunately, the Forest Service borrowed \$695 million this year to fight fires. This appropriations bill leaves the public land management accounts that were borrowed from in the hole by nearly \$300 million—and most of these accounts were underfunded to begin with.

Accounts that the Forest Service borrowed from this fire season include the fuel reduction, law enforcement, forest research, recreation, forest jobs programs, fish habitat enhancement, and road and trail maintenance, among many others. These accounts represent some of the most important public lands management programs the federal government funds, and they will be reimbursed at just 57 cents on the dollar.

One of the most important is the fuel reduction account. Even if Congress fully reimburses the fuel reduction account, fuel reduction projects get delayed and pushed to the next year when the accounts are once again robbed. For the safety of our communities and the health of our forests, this cycle cannot continue.

This cycle of robbing other accounts is perpetuated every year by not adequately funding wildland fire suppression. The Forest Service borrowed almost \$700 million this year, in what was a below average fire year. This appropriations bill has a \$289 million increase over last year, but it's not near enough. Regardless of how severe next year's fire season is, this bill guarantees that the Forest Service will have to borrow yet again because Congress is not stepping to the plate and sufficiently funding fire suppression.

In addition to under-funding firefighting, this appropriations bill has a wholly inadequate increase for hazardous fuel reduction projects.

The build-up of hazardous fuels in our national forests is a problem brought about by nearly a century of forest mismanagement. It is a problem with a multi-billion dollar price tag to fix, but so far the President and the Congress have been unwilling to put up the money. This appropriations bill does nothing to rectify the dismal record of under-funding fuel reduction.

The project in the Metolius basin, the location President Bush originally planned to visit during his August trip to Oregon, is an excellent example why restoring forest health will require a substantial investment.

The Metolius project is on relatively flat ground, with sufficient road access, and a substantial amount of large, commercial Ponderosa pine. The project will log more than 20 million boardfeet of timber. Yet, even with that commercial return, it will still cost the Forest Service \$400 an acre to complete the project.

It's clear that even under optimal conditions, with ample commercial timber, it is impossible to clear the large amounts of brush and small trees necessary in successful fuel reduction projects, without spending substantial sums of money.

In contrast, the nearby area where the Davis Butte fire burned is more typical than the Metolius and provides a better picture of the real costs of fuel reduction. Visiting the Davis Butte fire one can see where dense stands of lodge-pole pine provided ladder-fuel for the fire to climb into the crowns of the ponderosa. It is essential that these types of trees be removed, unfortunately, they have little or no commercial value. They may have some value as pulp, mulch, or hog fuel, but most of the vegetation would have to be burned, or chipped and left on-site.

This type of treatment would be in line with the Pacific Northwest Research Station study that was conducted on the Klamath National Forest that estimated cost of fuel reduction at \$1,685 an acre. So not only can we pretend that fuel reduction won't cost anything—as the President has done thus far with his "Healthy Forest Initiative"—we can't pretend that it will be cheap.

There is a multi-billion forest health problem that needs a significant federal investment, but this bill does not make that funding commitment.

Another glaring problem with this appropriations bill is that it includes a fifteen month extension of the Recreational Fee Demonstration program.

This program was created by a rider to the 1996 Interior appropriations, and has been extended numerous times through appropriations riders, without ever having gone through the appropriate authorizing process. It is well past time to end these back-door extensions and allow the Resources Committee to do its job.

Under this program, the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Parks Service can charge citizens fees to recreate on public land, including primitive trails and unimproved campgrounds. Charging citizens a stealth tax for hiking in the woods, walking on the beach, or picnicking with their family is unfair and punitive. It is appropriate to charge a modest fee for campgrounds or boat launches to pay for facilities and upkeep. But to charge a fee to park a car on the side of a logging road or at a trail head turns our public lands into the king's domain.

Beyond my philosophical objections, the mismanagement of the program by the Forest Service is staggering. The program was created to address the maintenance backlog on public land facilities, but only 50 cents of every dollar collected goes toward maintaining or improving our public lands. The rest is eaten up by administrative and collection costs. Fifty percent overhead costs does not make an effective government program.

And a recent investigation by the General Accounting Office (GAO) found that in 2001—the last year for which data is available—the Forest Service erroneously used \$10 million in appropriated funds to bolster the program. The Forest Service did not report these additional costs to Congress in their annual report. Nor did they report \$2.8 million of other administrative and vendor costs. This kind of deceptive representation in the Forest Service's annual report on the effectiveness of the program is disgraceful.

In addition, it is entirely unclear whether the program is actually fulfilling its purpose of reducing the maintenance backlog on forest system lands. The GAO states that "the Forest Service does not have a process for measuring the impact of fee demonstration expenditures on reducing the deferred maintenance problem. In addition, the GAO found that the Forest Service has yet to reliably estimate its deferred maintenance needs. Why would Congress continue to renew a program through an appropriations rider when the beneficiaries of the program don't know to what extent it's working, or even to what extent it's needed?"

It is time to end the Forest Service's abuse of the Recreational Fee Demonstration program, but this appropriations bill perpetuates the abuse by again extending the program, this time by more than a year.

Finally, this bill negates a federal court's decision that Native American tribes have a right to a full accounting of their own trust monies and assets. I find it hard to believe that this Congress would support an appropriations rider that amounts to an unjust taking of property without just compensation or due process of law.

Last year this House overwhelmingly voted to strip a similar provision that would have kept the Department of Interior from conducting a complete accounting of the Indian trust fund. Rectifying the historic mismanagement of the Indian trust fund is one of the most critical issues facing Native American tribes, and is simply a matter of justice. This appropriations bill will surely delay the resolution of the Indian trust fund accounting for years.

This Interior appropriations bill conference report woefully under-funds wildland fire-fighting and hazardous fuel reduction projects. In addition, it extends an unwarranted recreation tax on the American people, and denies Native Americans a full accounting of their trust accounts. For these reasons I urge my colleagues to oppose the report.

ACKNOWLEDGING MASTER SERGEANT DENNIS TAKESHITA'S 37 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE IN DEFENSE OF OUR GREAT NATION

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my deepest mahalo and aloha to Master Sergeant Dennis Takeshita of Hawai'i as he retires from an illustrious career spanning 37 years of tireless and dedicated service to our country.

Master Sergeant Takeshita's service to our great nation began in 1966, when he received a commission in the United States Air Force Reserve upon graduation from the University of Hawai'i, and went on to serve on active duty until 1972. Shortly after his discharge, Master Sergeant Takeshita joined the Hawai'i Air National Guard and served for 30 more years, earning numerous citations and awards for his professionalism and service.

Throughout his long career, he served in the Vietnam Conflict, the Kosovo Campaign, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Noble

Eagle, and Operation Joint Forge. He also served the people of Hawai'i both during and after Hurricane Iniki, which ravaged the Island of Kaua'i and parts of O'ahu, earning him the Humanitarian Service Medal.

Of course, as with all great men, he owes a debt of gratitude to those who supported and nurtured him throughout his life. Master Sergeant Takeshita's father, Lawrence K. Takeshita, his mother, Frances M. Takeshita, his daughter Alison and son Brian have been there to lend their support. They are immensely proud of him and his successes during his military career.

Serving one's country is a selfless act. I commend Master Sergeant Takeshita on his commitment to our country. His patriotism, loyalty and courageous leadership are the embodiment of the Air Force Core Values. And, of course, his island home is deeply proud of him.

I close by saying to Master Sergeant Takeshita: aloha, on a well-deserved retirement, and I wish you the very best on your future endeavors.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JAMES RICHARDS

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a sad heart that I rise to pay tribute to the passing of a great man from my district. James Richards, a native of Western Colorado, recently passed away at the age of 69. James dedicated his life to public service and to the challenging legal profession. I am honored today to bring his contributions to the attention of this body of Congress and this nation.

After graduating from Western State College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History-Political Science and English in 1955, James went on to law school at the University of Colorado, receiving his degree in 1960. Upon passing the Colorado Bar, James briefly served as Colorado's Assistant Attorney General, before becoming a legislative assistant and executive assistant for Senator Peter Dominick.

James proved his versatility and multifaceted talents throughout his distinguished career. James held positions as the Assistant US Attorney in Denver, the Chief of Buffalo, New York's Organized Crime Strike Force, and the Vice President of the Capital Legal Foundation. His stellar career of public service attracted the attention of President Reagan when he was nominated and confirmed as Inspector General to the Department of Energy in 1981, and Inspector General to the Department of the Interior in 1985. James' appeal reached across partisan lines as President George H. W. Bush and President Bill Clinton asked him to continue in his position until he chose to retire on March 31, 1993.

Mr. Speaker, James Richards was a dedicated man that selflessly served his community and country, and I am honored to pay tribute to such an industrious public servant. His lifetime of service is an incredible model for America's youth. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family during this time of bereavement.

EXTENDING THE TERM OF THE FOREST COUNTIES PAYMENTS COMMITTEE

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, the Forest Counties Payments Committee was created by Congress in 2000 to make recommendations and report on certain payments to counties. Perhaps most important, the committee was charged with monitoring and submitting a report on payments made under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-determination Act (Pub. L. 106-393), also known as "County Payments" legislation. But the Committee and the payments were created by different pieces of legislation and were erroneously set to expire at different times. This bill will correct that error and extend the authorization of the Committee so that it expires with the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-determination Act.

County Payments legislation has provided rural counties in the West with some level of economic certainty following the precipitous decline in timber revenue from federal land. These payments have been critical for education funding in rural school districts that were once timber-dependent. In addition, payments have been used for road maintenance, successful community policing programs, vital search and rescue equipment, noxious weed control, collaborative forest health projects, and the restoration of important fish habitat, just to name a few benefits.

The committee submitted its Report to Congress on County Payments legislation in February. The report provided invaluable information about the implementation of the County Payments legislation, and recommendations for reauthorization. Unfortunately, Congress has yet to act to reauthorize this important law. As Congress prepares to reauthorize it, hopefully in the next year, the Committee's expertise and advice on the law will be vital to ensuring Congress acts in the best interest of those in need of County Payments funding. Approving this bill to authorize the Forest Counties Payments Committee throughout the duration of the County Payments law will make sure that happens. I urge the bill's adoption.

THE HEALTHCARE EQUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2003

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join my colleagues in the introduction of our proposed Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act, a bill that will address the glaring disparities in health care of our minority populations.

While significant advances in health care have been made, it has been empirically demonstrated that minority populations disproportionately lack access to quality health care. For example, minority groups are less likely to