

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