TRIBUTE TO MARE ISLAND ORIGINAL 21ERS

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to invite my colleagues to join me in honoring the Mare Island Original 21ers for their efforts to end racial discrimination at Mare Island Naval Shipyard.

On Nov. 17, 1962, twenty-one African American workers at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, CA, took a historic step by filing a racial discrimination complaint with President Kennedy's newly created Committee on Equal Job Opportunities. The complaint quickly helped lead to sweeping changes locally at the shipyard and nationally at military installations, including early Affirmative Action-type programs. All the men wanted was a wage comparable to their white co-workers and to be treated equally. What they started was a chain reaction that reverberated around the country. The group would become known as the Mare Island Original 21ers, and would forever change the base's social landscape.

Despite these pioneering steps, their early civil rights efforts remain in obscurity. The group's surviving members still talk about the movement, but the full story was buried in the 1960s and only recently came to light as a result of a series of newspaper articles by Vallejo Times Herald reporter Matthias Gafni.

Their story is typical of the time. Vallejo was a Navy town, and a separated one. With its naval shipyard, Vallejo has always had a population reflecting a wide range of ethnic backgrounds; but it was not always harmonious. In the late 1950s minorities were mostly working in unskilled positions at Mare Island as sandblasters, laborers and cleaners, with efforts to keep them out of certain positions. The discrimination was not restricted to withholding promotions and unfair hiring practices, according to one of the workers. At every phase of each work day they faced discrimination.

By 1960 the Civil Rights Movement was in its infancy and the African American workers were losing patience. In March 1961, President Kennedy issued an executive order establishing a sweeping, government-wide Equal Employment Opportunity Policy. Twenty-one workers began organizing under the leadership of Willie Long, meeting in complete secrecy to protect their safety and their jobs. A complaint was drafted and twenty-five workers ultimately signed it. The complaint covered deplorable conditions for black workers, involving promotions, the apprenticeship program, and general unfair treatment. The shipyard commander found no pattern of discrimination, but President Kennedy's committee was inundated with similar complaints from around the country and changes were finally made after several years. Almost everyone who signed the original complaint was promoted to supervisor and fortunately escaped any of the serious reprisals they feared.

Their quiet but risky fight for equal treatment helped change our Nation. These heroic men included Willie Long, Boston Banks, Jr., Matthew Barnes, Louis Greer, Jake Sloan, Charles Fluker, Clarence Williams, James Davis, Thomas King, Robert E. Borden, James O. Hall, Matthew Luke, Herman Moore, Jimmie James, John L. McGhee, James J. Colbert, Virgil N. Herndon, Eddie Brady, Brodie Taylor, W.J. Price, Levi Jones, Herbert H. Lane, Kermit Day, and Charles Scales.

Madam Speaker, in tribute to these men and their fight for equal rights, it is proper for us, and it is indeed my honor, to formally recognize the Mare Island Original 21ers, and thank them for their heroic actions.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE UDALL-EISENHOWER ARCTIC WILDERNESS ACT

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Speaker, the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act honors two great American visionaries by designating the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness in their names and giving permanent protection to this great unspoiled wild place. Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower began the bipartisan legacy of fighting to protect this majestic area for future generations of Americans when he set aside the core of the Refuge in 1960. Twenty years later, in 1980, Democratic Representative Morris Udall succeeded in doubling the size of the Refuge, protecting even more of this untrammeled wilderness from oil drilling.

President Eisenhower and Morris Udall had the vision to protect a remote but very special piece of pristine wilderness. I am proud to introduce legislation today along with Representative JIM RAMSTAD of Minnesota that would complete the job they began by giving permanent protection to the coastal plain of the Refuge.

I am also proud to introduce this legislation under the bill number H.R. 39, a bill number with important historical significance in the effort to preserve the land within the Arctic Refuge. H.R. 39 was the bill number given to Mo Udall's Alaska Natural Interest Lands Conservation Act that became law in 1980, expanding the area President Eisenhower had set aside and renaming it as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Representative Udall later began introducing his legislation to designate the coastal plain of the Refuge as wilderness under that same bill number. This bill number offers an important reminder of the history of this special place.

The coastal plain is the biological heart of the Refuge and is central to the survival of many unique species of animals including caribou, polar bears, musk oxen, wolves, and over 160 species of birds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service calls the coastal plain the "center for wildlife activity" in the Refuge. If we were to allow drilling in the Refuge it would irreparably disrupt this important ecosystem and one of our last great wild places will be forever scared and destroyed.

In this last year, we have seen so-called "environmentally-gentle" oil drilling exposed once and for all as the myth that it is. On March 2, 2006, BP workers discovered a quarter-inch hole in a pipeline on Alaska's North Slope that had leaked 267,000 gallons of oil onto the arctic tundra. That recent spill was the largest in the history of the North Slope. Subsequent spills led to the discovery that BP had grossly mismanaged and severely neglected its pipelines and North Slope oil drilling operations, which had previously been touted by drilling proponents as the best and most technologically advanced in the world. The reality is that drilling for oil is a dirty business and opening the Arctic Refuge to drilling would forever ruin this untouched special place.

Moreover, if we were to allow drilling in the Arctic Refuge, the crown jewel of the Wildlife Refuge System, it would represent a colossal shift in the policy and precedent governing our wildlife refuges. Prying open the Arctic Refuge for drilling would set a dangerous precedent that would allow the oil companies to select any of the other 544 as the next target for oil drilling.

The Bush administration has argued that we have no choice—that we are so dependent on oil that we must start defiling our wildlife refuge system to keep feeding our oil addiction. That is wrong. We have a choice, a better choice, and it is about time that we enact real changes in our energy policy by focusing on conservation rather than seeking to drill for a few short months worth of oil in this pristine refuge.

The United States consumes 25 percent of the world's oil but controls only 3 percent of the world's oil reserves. We cannot drill our way out of our dependence on foreign oil but we can choose to harness our technologic genius to do something real about our dependence on oil.

Two-thirds of the oil we consume everyday in the U.S. goes into the gas tanks of our cars, trucks and SUVs. From an energy standpoint, drilling in the Refuge is completely unnecessary. If our cars, trucks and SUVs traveled just 3 miles more per gallon today, we would save more oil than drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would produce at its peak levels of production. But more than that, if we increased fuel economy standards to 40 miles per gallon over 10 years, we would save more oil within 15 years than we would be able to get out of the Arctic Refuge over its entire 40–50 year production life.

The oil fields on the North Slope already annually produce more air pollution and greenhouse gases than the municipality of Washington, D.C. and the Arctic is showing the strains of global warming.

Just this last month, the Bush Interior Department proposed listing the Polar Bear as an "endangered species" because global warming appears to be so drastically affecting its habitat—particularly the summer ice floes needed to hunt—that the bears are drowning far from shore when the floating ice melts. Last week scientists confirmed that a giant ice shelf—the Ayles Ice Shelf—snapped off of its land anchor just 500 miles south of the North Pole in the Canadian Arctic. This is a feature of the Arctic landscape that is thousands of years old. The remaining ice shelves are 90 percent smaller than when they were first discovered in 1906.

Our addiction to oil is real and enduring and still largely untreated. Drilling in the refuge would amount to a declaration that we remain in denial about this addiction, its impact on our planet and our obligation to future generations.

If Congress were to ever turn the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge into an industrial footprint by allowing oil drilling, the impact on