

WHITE PASS SKI AREA
EXPANSION PROJECT

HON. NORMAN D. DICKS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

Mr. DICKS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss an issue that has occurred in my State over the past 23 years.

The White Pass Ski Area is located in the Cascade Mountain Range in the Gifford Pinchot and Wenatchee National Forests. White Pass is renowned as one of the best small ski areas in the Pacific Northwest and offers particular appeal to families. The area, which provides critical tourism revenue to the surrounding rural communities on both sides of the mountain range, is now looking to expand to provide greater opportunities to skiers in the Pacific Northwest.

Over two decades ago, we succeeded in passing through Congress the Washington State Wilderness Act of 1984. This legislation added over 23,000 acres of land to the Goat Rocks Wilderness Area and removed from wilderness designation 800 acres adjacent to the White Pass Ski Area as having "significant potential for ski development" and urging the Secretary of Agriculture to "utilize this potential, in accordance with applicable laws, rules and regulations."

The Gifford Pinchot National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan allocated the 800-acre area that Congress had withdrawn from the Wilderness Area back in 1984 to Developed Recreation in recognition of the intent of Congress. However, the LRMP concurrently inventoried as roadless the same 800-acre area. The conflicting, confusing and uncertain status of the subject lands needs addressing, which is why I rise today.

I can say from first-hand experience that, at the time we passed the aforementioned Washington Wilderness Act of 1984, it was congressional intent to permit expansion of the White Pass Ski Area. I would like to submit for the record a letter signed by the 1984 congressional delegation stating that it was our intent to provide for the expansion of White Pass Ski Area. In a February 3, 2004 letter, the U.S. Department of Agriculture also confirmed this congressional intent, stating: "We agree that the intent of Congress was clearly to allow for ski area development in the Hogback Basin." In addition, Congressman BAIRD, who represents the district where White Pass is located, submitted for the RECORD on January 31, 2007 a statement urging clarification and action on this issue.

The Fiscal Year 2007 Interior Appropriations Bill that passed the House in May of last year included important information clarifying congressional intent to permit expansion of White Pass Ski Area. The language stated:

The Committee notes that the Washington State Wilderness Act of 1984 removed from wilderness designation 800 acres of land adjacent to the White Pass Ski Area in Washington State for potential ski development. The Committee notes that the Gifford Pinchot National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan allocated the 800-acre area as Developed Recreation to allow for ski area expansion, while concurrently inventoried the same land as roadless to reflect its current physical character. The Committee recognizes that it was the intent of Congress to

permit ski area expansion into this 800-acre area and urges the Secretary of Agriculture, once the Environmental Impact Statement for the White Pass Ski Area's Master Development Plan is properly completed, to move forward expeditiously in approving the expansion plans in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Unfortunately, the FY07 Continuing Resolution did not include any report language; therefore the language clarifying congressional intent that passed this body last summer was not included in the CR.

I wanted to bring this issue to the attention of my colleagues and highlight the fact that the House Appropriations Committee was prepared and willing to clarify congressional intent, and that the full House approved that clarification by voting for the fiscal year 2007 Interior Appropriations Bill in May. In keeping with this, I urge the Secretary of Agriculture to move forward expeditiously in approving the expansion plans in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations—once the Environmental Impact Statement is properly completed.

TRIBUTE TO SONOMA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, together with my colleague, Mr. THOMPSON from California, I rise today to honor the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District located in Northern California. On March 3, the agency received the prestigious County Leadership in Conservation Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) and Trust for Public Land (TPL).

This award is given annually to counties that showcase the best practices in innovative conservation work. As one of the first public agencies in the nation funded by a sales tax to protect agriculture, the Open Space District has continued to distinguish itself nationally. It has protected almost 70,000 acres, including farms, greenbelts, natural open spaces, and recreational areas.

The District was formed as a result of public concern over urbanization in Sonoma County as subdivisions, malls and parking lots threatened to overwhelm land the famed botanist Luther Burbank once called "God's chosen spot." Responding to the very real threat of sprawl, farmers, environmentalists and community leaders joined together in 1990 to pass a sales tax to fund preservation and open space acquisition. So successful is the District that the tax was renewed with a 75 percent approval vote in 2006. Today the tax provides approximately \$13 million a year for the District's land conservation and acquisition programs.

The County Open Space Authority is responsible for levying and distributing the funding, while the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors acts as the Board of Directors. The Supervisors appoint a 17-member Open Space Advisory Committee, representing various stakeholders and interest groups, to recommend acquisitions. Manager Andrea MacKenzie works with all of these groups and

other local organizations in identifying and purchasing suitable properties (or conservation easements) and determining the best use for them, from agriculture to resource conservation to public access or recreation.

Madam Speaker, Sonoma County has a beautiful and diverse environment ranging from oak savannah to bay wetlands to coastal redwood forests. Its farmlands are among the richest on the planet and grow grapes for world-class wines, crispy Gravenstein apples and luscious Crane melons and many specialty crops. Its pastures and rangelands support both dairy and meat production. The District with its immense support from the public ensures that our children's children will always have woodland and hillside trails to hike and homegrown food to enjoy.

These open spaces keep Sonoma County's agricultural economy healthy, provide recreation for visitors and residents, and preserve the very character of the county. Mr. THOMPSON and I congratulate the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District upon the receipt of the well-deserved County Leadership in Conservation Award and look forward to continuing to work with the District to preserve Sonoma County's natural beauty and agricultural bounty.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN
CONTRACTING ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 15, 2007

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1362) to reform acquisition practices of the Federal Government:

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1362, which makes several changes to federal acquisition laws to increase transparency and accountability in federal contracting.

Specifically, the bill requires agencies to limit the use of certain types of abuse-prone contracts, and to promote integrity in the acquisition workforce. The bill limits the length of certain noncompetitive contracts and requires large federal agencies to develop plans to minimize the use of noncompetitive contracts and cost-reimbursement type contracts. In addition the bill requires the public disclosure of justification and approval documents required for noncompetitive contracts and requires reports to Congress on certain contract audits. Finally, the bill contains a number of provisions which would improve the acquisition workforce.

The Bush administration has justified the award of lucrative no-bid contracts claiming exigent circumstances. The spending on no-bid contracts has more than doubled under the Bush Administration. The time has come again for us to continue in the tradition of restoring accountability back into Congress. This legislation builds on the progress we have made to return to the basic principles of fiscal responsibility and restore Congress's role as a check on the Executive Branch.

Transparency and integrity is needed in order for accountability to be restored in the

federal contracting process so that taxpayers' money can be protected from waste, fraud, and abuse. The effect of this legislation would change federal acquisition law to require agencies to limit the use of emergency no-bid contracts and to increase transparency and accountability in federal contracting in an effort to protect the taxpayers' money.

An estimated \$10 billion in Iraq reconstruction spending has already been wasted and the waste will continue until legislation such as H.R. 1362 makes it a requirement for agencies to limit the use of these abuse-prone contracts. Congress has held multiple hearings over the abuse that has occurred regarding such waste in federal contracting and now we must act. Waste and fraud occurred not only with Iraq reconstruction contracts but also in connection with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.

Reports of government contractors defrauding the Coalition Provisional Authority of tens of millions of dollars in Iraq reconstruction funds have surfaced and this Administration has done little to try to recover the money. It is time to clean up fraud in Iraq and elsewhere.

I wholeheartedly support H.R. 1362 to change our current federal acquisition laws to require agencies to limit the use of abuse-prone contracts. I applaud this beneficial legislation and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1362.

THE SAFE FACILITIES ACT OF 2007

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, last night I introduced legislation, the "Safe Facilities Act of 2007," H.R. 1574, to promote and protect increased safety measures at chemical security plants. Specifically, my legislation would prohibit any federal law, regulation or agency from preempting any State chemical facility safety stipulation which may be more rigorous than the new federal regulations.

As you know, Madam Speaker, last fall Congress passed the Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007 which granted the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) the authority to draft "interim final regulations" regarding plant security. While these standards are a necessary baseline for nationwide consideration, the federal regulations must represent a floor, not a ceiling, by which States may structure their own security standards. Federal regulations should not be written in such a way to undermine existing State statutes, which in cases like New Jersey are current and robust.

While I agree with some of the implementation provisions outlined in the interim regulations, my legislation repeals the provision allowing the federal law to preempt the state law. It is particularly difficult to find merit in the Department's plan to preempt state standards since the authorizing statute, Public Law 109-295, was intentionally silent on this issue. The very fact that the legislation did not include a

specific preemption should be taken as the signal of Congressional intent to allow states to implement stricter standards if they act to do so. Federal laws should provide a framework for state laws, buttressing and enhancing existing state statutes not eradicating or replacing laws which in some cases may be more protective.

As you are well aware, September 11, 2001 changed the life of every single American—including the life of every resident in New Jersey. Nearly 700 New Jersey residents lost their lives including many from the 4th Congressional District which I represent in central Jersey. Regrettably, the most densely populated state in the Union is also well acquainted with bio-terror attacks including the subsequent anthrax attack at the U.S. Postal facility in Hamilton, also in my Congressional District. With over 100 major chemical facilities in the State of New Jersey, lawmakers, experts in the field of science, and residents alike are keen to the importance of securing New Jersey's vital infrastructure which could potentially be used as a weapon by a terrorist.

Immediately following the attacks in 2001 and in preparation for the "worst case scenarios" in the event of another terrorist attack, New Jersey established the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force to develop the best security practices and encourage each chemical facility in the state to evaluate security threats and plant vulnerabilities as well as the consequences of a chemical release. In 2005, the best practices became mandatory for New Jersey's facilities. All of New Jersey's facilities are now required to prepare a site-specific, risk and vulnerability assessment, emergency incident prevention and response plan and require worker participation in their security assessments. In addition, 43 chemical facilities subject to the Toxic Catastrophe Prevention Act (TCPA) state program are also required to explore the feasibility of inherently safer technologies as part of state security and preparedness plans.

New Jersey is no stranger to danger when it comes to vulnerabilities in a post 9/11 world. We are acutely aware of the terrorist threat and thus we will not be passive in our fight to prevent future catastrophes. The Garden State is the first state in the Nation to implement vigorous plant security practices and continues to research and develop strategies to improve and enhance current standards and regulations. The federal government has no business undermining the efforts of New Jersey, or any State for that matter, in providing the greatest level of protection for our citizens.

TIBET

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to call to the attention of my fellow committee members an important motion passed by the House of Commons of the Parliament of Canada on February 15, 2007 and a motion currently under consideration of the Senate of the Parliament of Canada.

The motions are part of an international initiative by the Canadian Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, under the leadership of Senator Consiglio di Nino of the Parliament of Canada, to encourage legislators from around the world to urge the government of the People's Republic of China to reach a final and lasting agreement with the Dalai Lama over the situation in Tibet. The initiative is an important step in bringing a peace to the Tibetan people within the context of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China.

The following is the text of the motion passed by the House of Commons and of the Parliament of Canada on February 15, 2007:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: Urge the government of the People's Republic of China and the Representatives of Tibet's government in exile, notwithstanding their differences on Tibet's historical relationship with China, to continue their dialogue in a forward-looking manner that will lead to pragmatic solutions that respect the Chinese constitutional framework, the territorial integrity of China and fulfill the aspirations of the Tibetan people for a unified and genuinely autonomous Tibet.

The following is the text of the motion currently under consideration by the Senate of the Parliament of Canada:

That the Senate urge the government of the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama, notwithstanding their differences on Tibet's historical relationship with China, to continue their dialogue in a forward-looking manner that will lead to pragmatic solutions that respect the Chinese constitutional framework, the territorial integrity of China and fulfill the aspirations of the Tibetan people for a unified and genuinely autonomous Tibet.

COMMENDING WALTER KEITH SINGLETON FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

Mr. TANNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a west Tennessean who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor 40 years ago for the ultimate sacrifice he and his family made in service to our country. Sergeant Walter K. Singleton of Shelby County was killed in action in Vietnam on March 24, 1967, at the young age of 22.

Sgt. Singleton was a proud Marine who, when coming under fire from the enemy, gave his own life to protect the lives of his comrades.

The heroism, gallantry and courage Sgt. Singleton demonstrated on the enemy battlefield 40 years ago represents the selfless service that millions of our Nation's finest have given to the United States Armed Forces. The sacrifice he and his family made is what makes this country great.

Madam Speaker, I hope you and our colleagues will join me in honoring Sgt. Walter K. Singleton for his patriotism and recognize the 40th anniversary of the day he received the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravely giving his life in service to his country.