The UN estimates the lives of approximately 800,000 have been affected by the storms of the previous year. These people have no viable country to return to—what is the rationale behind sending an additional 30,000 people back to a country that already has close to a million displaced individuals? This is a Bush policy that needs to be reconsidered—it is uncertain who would support such a policy that threatens an already fragile environment.

The humanitarian thing to do would be to offer these Haitians Temporary Protection Status (TPS) which is consistent with concessions given to other countries given the same circumstances. In the past, we have made this compromise with countries such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras, even as recent as 2008. This is blatantly inconsistent with the treatment given to Haitian immigrants despite the fact that economic and social conditions are worse, in addition to the reality that the country has not overcome the recent floods and hurricanes. Considering the compelling humanitarian reasons against returning Haitians to a homeland that cannot now support them, I must wonder what the real motives behind such a policy are.

It is unfortunate to see the treatment of these Haitians by the United States government given the fact that Haiti has had such a rich, long history with the United States. During the American Revolution about 750 Haitian freemen fought alongside colonial troops against the British in the Siege of Savannah in 1779. This level of sacrifice by a country should not be forgotten, especially during times of need.

The defeat of the French Napoleon Army by the Haitians, albeit indirectly, helped America expand its territories towards the West with the Louisiana Purchase. At the time, Haiti was the producer of 40 percent of the world's sugar, was the most profitable colony the French owned and in fact the wealthiest and most flourishing of the slave colonies in the Caribbean. This was a tremendous loss to the French, and as a result was forced to sell off some of their land. The outcome for the US was significant—the land included in the purchase comprised of around 23% of the territory of the United States today.

The historical relationship and the humanitarian concerns are important facts to consider before deporting this group of Haitian refugees. Also consider that the Haitian economy has become increasingly reliant on the money sent by the Haitian Diaspora living abroad. Haiti's remittances make up one-third of their GDP and no other national group anywhere in the world sends money home in higher proportions. These 30,000 Haitians should be allowed to remain in this country and continue to send remittances to their homeland, while still paying their tax dollars and helping our economy grow.

Madam Speaker, I hope that our government will make the right decision and allow this country, a friend of ours, to rebound from these tragic natural disasters. As an example to the world, we must not let this humanitarian opportunity go unnoticed.

OWYHEE INITIATIVE

HON. MICHAEL K. SIMPSON

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 25, 2009

Mr. SIMPSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Senator CRAPO for his efforts in creating Idaho's newest wilderness areas in the Owyhee region of Southwestern Idaho. The designation of wilderness in Idaho is long overdue, as it has been nearly thirty years since the late Senator Frank Church created the River of No Return Wilderness.

I applaud the Senator for having the patience and perseverance to develop the compromises he has made with numerous ranchers, county officials, sportsman groups and conservation groups. The years of effort he put into creating this legislation are a testament to just how special these lands are. It is assured that Idahoans will be enjoying these unspoiled vistas and areas for generations to come.

There are numerous individuals in Idaho to congratulate for their hard work. I won't name them all, but Fred Grant, Chad Gibson, Brenda Richards and Craig Gherke put a lot of effort into this process. In addition, John Hoehne and Layne Bangerter of Senator CRAPO's staff did tremendous staff work on the ground in Idaho. If they and so many others didn't commit themselves to the Owyhee initiative, there would have been nothing to work with here in D.C.

Finally, I saw first hand here in Washington how this legislation could not have been completed without the efforts of Peter Fischer on Senator CRAPO's staff, David Brooks on Senator BINGAMAN's staff, and Marcia Argust with the Campaign for America's Wilderness. Their commitment and belief in the product developed in Idaho made it possible for this legislation to move forward.

Idaho can be proud of the work that Senator CRAPO, his staff and its stakeholders have done in creating the Owyhee legislation.

THE TELEWORK IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2009

HON. JOHN P. SARBANES

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 25, 2009

Mr. SARBANES. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Telework Improvements Act of 2009. Telework allows workers to perform their duties and responsibilities from home or at another work site removed from their regular place of employment. The Telework Improvements Act encourages a uniform and consistent telework policy across the federal government, while imposing strict oversight and accountability that will ensure the success of this pragmatic yet innovative workforce management policy.

First and foremost, this bill is about good government. According to an estimate by the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service, in the next five years approximately 550,000 federal employees—almost 30 percent of the federal workforce—will leave government, largely through retirement. Broadband and other technological advances have made remote work arrangements widely possible and the government should use telework as a powerful recruitment and retention tool to compete with more highly paid private sector jobs. The flexibility that telework provides will make a career in government more attractive to the next generation of civil servants.

Telework will also help mitigate congestion in high-traffic areas such as the National Capital Region—reducing carbon emissions from vehicles and improving the quality of life for all commuters. I commute from my home in Towson, Maryland to our nation's capital, tracing the length of my district. Each day, I sit in suffocating traffic with thousands of federal employees and other commuters. The gridlock results in lost productivity, less time spent with families, and pollution that poisons our air and alters our climate. If we offer an innovative alternative so that some in the federal workforce can avoid these commutes through telework, not only will we improve their quality of life, we will relieve the overall strain on our regional transportation infrastructure and improve the daily commute for all area workers.

Select agencies within the federal government like the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the Defense Information Systems Agency, and the General Services Administration have shown strong leadership—from agency heads down to individual managers—by putting in place an efficient and effective telework policy. They have demonstrated extraordinary results and are a template for other agencies to follow. But even though telework has been available to federal employees for over a decade, there are no uniform policies in place. Agencies are hampered by a lack of guidance and training for federal employees who wish to telework. Uneven application among managers and supervisors has too often rendered telework policies ineffective. Finally, the absence of uniform data collection and meaningful oversight make the best practices employed by agencies with effective telework programs all but impossible to implement elsewhere in government.

To address these flaws, the Telework Improvements Act of 2009 will: instruct the Office of Personnel Management to develop a uniform, government-wide telework policy for federal employees; ensure that federal employees who wish to telework and are eligible to telework are able to do so for at least 20 percent of the hours they work in a two-week work period; designate a Telework Managing Officer within every agency and department to oversee telework; provide greater access to and opportunities for telework training and education to both employees and supervisors, while providing employees electing to telework with greater protection against discriminatory punitive treatment by supervisors and managers; require the Office of Personnel Management to compile government-wide data on telework; and require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to evaluate agency compliance, produce an annual report to Congress and make that report publicly available on the internet.

In closing, I would like to salute Congressman FRANK WOLF for his vision and tireless advocacy for telework in the federal government. Over the last decade, he has put telework on the map as a management option within the federal workforce and I thank him for his leadership.

I would also like to thank Congressman GERRY CONNOLLY for joining Congressman