

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. STEVE KING**

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 28, 2011*

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 307 I was delayed in leaving a meeting with a constituent off the House floor during this two minute votes series and was unable to cast my vote before the vote was closed. Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE  
NOMINATION OF REBECCA  
WODDER**HON. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 28, 2011*

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my concern regarding the recent nomination of Rebecca Wodder as Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Until recently, Ms. Wodder served as president of American Rivers, an environmental organization that specializes in the removal of dams across the United States. Under the direction of Ms. Wodder, American Rivers removed over 200 dams in 13 states from 1999 to 2010. In total, the organization claims credit for the removal of 150 dams across America. In many cases, the lawsuits that preceded the removal of these dams cost U.S. taxpayers millions of dollars. This clearly demonstrates that Ms. Wodder's agenda hinges on practices that result in the expenditure of vast amounts of federal time and money in exchange for the promotion of an environmental agenda that has shown questionable results.

The Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks oversees and coordinates all policy decisions made by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service. For someone who has spent much of her career battling the very agencies she will control, this is a prime example of the fox guarding the hen house. Indeed, American Rivers touts the fact that they have "secured the planned removal of more than 100 dams on some 55 rivers in the next five years." I doubt very seriously whether Ms. Wodder will conduct an unbiased assessment on the merits of these and other projects during her tenure at the Interior Department.

American Rivers is currently party to seven lawsuits against American taxpayers and the federal government. At a time when Congress is attempting to get our fiscal house in order, we do not need a litigious leader who has brought millions of dollars in lawsuits against our government.

Furthermore, many Americans living along rivers depend on them to support their livelihoods. During this summer alone, flooding has caused insurmountable damage to these communities. If we are going to expend capital on our inland waterways, Congress and the Obama Administration should be focused on maintaining flood control and preserving valuable river infrastructure, not increasing the disparity of funding between fish and wildlife conservation measures and human protection.

The protection of wildlife is a valid concern that should be addressed in a thoughtful manner. However, when efforts to protect wildlife result in irresponsible policy decisions, we must take a stand for the safety of our constituents.

I was proud to join 38 of my colleagues from all corners of this country in sending the following letter to the Senate. In light of not only the country's current financial crisis but also devastating floodwaters that continue to batter our river communities, I urge all of my colleagues in the House and the Senate to carefully consider the nomination of Rebecca Wodder as Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The consequences for millions of Americans could be dire.

Hon. BARBARA BOXER,

Hon. JEFF BINGAMAN,

Hon. JAMES INHOFE,

Hon. LISA MURKOWSKI.

DEAR SENATORS: As you consider President Obama's nomination of Ms. Rebecca Wodder as Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior, we respectfully write to let you know of our serious concerns with her record as the head of American Rivers, a single-purpose interest group focused on litigating against the federal government and removing economically important infrastructure. We seriously question whether she could adequately represent broader and more balanced interests at the federal level, especially at a fragile economic time with national unemployment exceeding nine percent.

The position for which Ms. Wodder has been nominated oversees the management of at least 180 million federal acres and would have a direct influence on current and potential federal regulations impacting private lands, water rights, energy projects and other infrastructure. This is troubling given her past activities at the Wilderness Society and American Rivers, a non-governmental organization with a long record of receiving American taxpayer dollars while actively litigating against the federal government on multiple fronts. Between 1988 and 2011, American Rivers has either sued or been a party to 150 lawsuits against various parties, mostly the federal government. In fact, American Rivers is currently party to seven lawsuits against American taxpayers and the federal government.

One illuminating piece of litigation revolves around American Rivers' long-standing lawsuit against the federal government's operation of four multi-purpose dams in the Pacific Northwest. These dams, located on the lower Snake River in Washington state, provide multiple benefits including emissions-free, renewable hydroelectricity (enough power to serve a city the size of Seattle), navigation to deliver agricultural products to market, recreation and the good-paying jobs associated with these benefits. Writing in the August 25, 2003 edition of *The Dissident Voice*, Ms. Wodder wrote that "Breaching the four dams on the lower Snake River would be the single most effective way to bring back wild salmon." This is a completely unproven statement and the reality is breaching these dams is an extreme action that would have devastating economic impacts across an entire region while not actually assisting fish recovery. Despite broad agreement, including from the Obama Administration, on a biological opinion for Columbia Basin salmon recovery, Ms. Wodder's organization continues an over decade long lawsuit campaign against the federal government in an effort to demolish these dams.

There are numerous examples of how the policies advocated by Ms. Wodder at Amer-

ican Rivers will have serious impacts throughout the country. First, she effectively advocated for federal regulations that caused up to 40 percent unemployment in parts of the San Joaquin Valley, California by diverting farm water under the guise of protecting the Delta smelt, a three-inch fish. Second, she endorsed last Congress' controversial legislation (H.R. 5088 and S. 787) that many argued could allow the EPA to regulate street and gutter water run-off and man-made ditches. This could cause significant job loss throughout rural America and the National Association of Counties, a non-partisan entity composed of locally elected officials, was concerned that this legislation could lead to "more court cases" and federal groundwater regulation. Third, by naming the Susquehanna River as one of "America's most endangered rivers," her organization attempted to stifle the domestic production of affordable natural gas through hydraulic fracturing.

Furthermore, we are also concerned that this appointment may run afoul of President Obama's own goal of ensuring that political appointees would not work on regulations or contracts directly and substantially related to their prior employer. Ms. Wodder has received significant, long-term compensation during her tenure at American Rivers. As previously noted, the organization currently has numerous pending lawsuits against the very agencies over which she would have regulatory authority and for others that directly or indirectly have been involved in litigation with the Interior Department. This creates a very real and serious conflict of interest.

As Members of the House of Representatives, we appreciate the unique role of the Senate in the confirmation process. Nonetheless, the policies advocated by this nominee would be so detrimental to jobs, our economy and the livelihood of rural Americans that we felt compelled to make our views known and ask that you take them into consideration.

Sincerely,

BLAINE LUETKEMEYER.

DROUGHT IN THE HORN OF  
AFRICA**HON. MAXINE WATERS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 28, 2011*

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, the people of the Horn of Africa are facing a devastating crisis. A severe drought has left millions of children, women, and men in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti malnourished. Many are on the verge of starvation. According to the World Food Program, more than 11 million people in the Horn of Africa require food assistance due to the drought.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reports that below-normal spring rains in the eastern Horn of Africa led to below-normal harvests and shortages of water and grazing resources for livestock. Livestock health has deteriorated markedly, and milk production has declined significantly. Food prices throughout the eastern Horn of Africa continued to rise during the month of June, contributing to food insecurity for the population.

The conditions in Somalia are especially severe. According to the Famine Early Warning