

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, July 7, 2016.

Hon. JEFF MILLER,

Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: On June 15, 2016, the Committee on Natural Resources ordered favorably reported as amended H.R. 3839, the Black Hills National Cemetery Boundary Expansion Act, by unanimous consent. The bill was referred primarily to the Committee on Natural Resources, with an additional referral to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

I thank you for allowing the Committee on Veterans' Affairs to be discharged from further consideration of the bill so that it may be scheduled by the Majority Leader. This discharge in no way affects your jurisdiction over the subject matter of the bill, and it will not serve as precedent for future referrals. In addition, should a conference on the bill be necessary, I would support having the Committee on Veterans' Affairs represented on the conference committee. Finally, I would be pleased to include your letter and this response in the bill report filed by the Committee on Natural Resources to memorialize our understanding, as well as in the Congressional Record when the bill is considered by the House.

Thank you for your response and cooperation. I look forward to further opportunities to work with you this Congress.

Sincerely,

ROB BISHOP,

Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM), who is a sponsor of this bill.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3839, the Black Hills National Cemetery Boundary Expansion Act. I want to thank the chairman of the committee and his staff for helping to move this bill through the House and the agencies involved for their constructive input. Their support means so much to me, to our veterans, and to all of their families as well.

Those who have served, and the families that have sacrificed beside them, deserve our Nation's eternal gratitude. Since 1948, the Black Hills National Cemetery has been but one way that this appreciation is shown.

The cemetery currently covers around 100 acres of land and is home to the Korean Veterans War Memorial. Most importantly, its peaceful landscape serves as the final resting place for hundreds of servicemembers and their families.

Chief David Beautiful Bald Eagle is among the brave men and women buried there. Born in a tepee in 1919, Chief Bald Eagle served our country in World War II as a paratrooper and one of the legendary Lakota code talkers. We lost him earlier this summer, but his life continues to be an inspiration to the Lakota people and to those who knew him.

Brigadier General Richard E. Ellsworth is also laid to rest there. This is a man who flew 400 combat missions during World War II and earned numerous medals. He returned to the U.S., where he eventually became wing commander of the Rapid City Air Force Base. In 1953, that base was renamed to Ellsworth Air Force Base in his honor.

We honor the legacy of those veterans and many others at the Black Hills National Cemetery, but the facility will not have the room it needs to continue serving future veterans without expansion. This bill will allow that expansion by transferring around 200 acres of adjacent land near Sturgis, South Dakota, from the Bureau of Land Management's jurisdiction to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

My office has worked with these agencies and stakeholders in crafting the legislation, and all agree that this land transfer is necessary. The transfer of this land will provide the Black Hills National Cemetery with the additional burial space that it needs and assure today's veterans and servicemembers, as well as their families, that we will be able to uphold our commitment and offer this Nation's eternal gratitude for all that they have done.

Again, I thank the committee and the chairman and my colleagues for supporting this bill, and I urge a "yes" vote.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As a fellow Representative of the West, I join my colleagues from Utah and South Dakota in support of this bill. Whenever we need to make an alteration to Federal land, whether it is the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management, it frequently requires an actual bill to go through this entire process—the House, the Senate, and the President's signature. I have had to do that a number of times and worked with our chairman on a number of bills important to my district. Now we have one that is not only of importance to South Dakotans, but important to veterans nationally. This bill provides the Veterans Administration with 200 acres of Federal land that is managed by the BLM to expand the Black Hills National Cemetery.

As we know, national cemeteries are reserved for brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in the military, and it is important that we have space to meet those interment requests. Our veterans have served their country, and they deserve to permanently rest in a cemetery that honors their sacrifice and commitment to the ideals that hold us together as a nation.

It so happens that the BLM land that this bill would transfer abuts the current cemetery. The BLM and the VA determined that only Congress can provide the permanent jurisdiction transfer necessary for this expansion. Again, that is not uncommon to actually bring bills before Congress for land exchanges or border extensions. That is why we are discussing this bipartisan, commonsense bill, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it. Expanding the Black Hills National Cemetery is a noble and worthy cause. It deserves our support.

I want to thank Representative NOEM of South Dakota for bringing this issue forward and for all of her hard work in

guiding this bill through committee and, hopefully, shortly, through the United States Congress.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a great bill. Without this bill, they run out of space. With this bill, we continue to actually help people, which is one of the reasons why Congress exists, to do good things for people.

I urge my colleagues to adopt this measure.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3839, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ZIKA THREAT TO SOUTH FLORIDA

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, today marks the 39th day since local transmission of the Zika virus via mosquitoes was confirmed in my area of south Florida on July 29, 39 days since it was obvious that much more needed to be done to confront the threat that Zika posed to U.S. citizens here at home. And yet here we are with 56 locally acquired cases of Zika in Miami-Dade County, 7 of them having been confirmed just today—today, Mr. Speaker. There are 2,686 travel-related cases across the continental U.S.

Federal funding is needed now to help those born with congenital Zika infections, such as Micaela Mendoza. Every day since her birth in July, Micaela and her parents have waited to learn more about the extent of her complications from Zika because so little is still to be known about the virus.

Mr. Speaker, how many more days will south Florida families have to wait for a comprehensive response package from the Federal Government? We have waited too long. Send in the cavalry.

GLOBAL WARMING IS REAL

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I am dressed in a seersucker suit. Most people from the South would recognize that, and traditionally people from the country and the South and the fashion industry would say you are not supposed to wear seersucker after Labor Day and before Memorial Day.

But this year, according to NASA, is going to be the hottest year on record ever since the 1880s, when we started keeping records. Each of the first 6 months of the year have been the hottest months in history, according to NASA.

Global warming is real, and we are going to be wearing these seersucker suits into October, and we will be starting to wear them in April, probably around the first of April to coincide with April Fool's Day, because for those people who don't think there is global warming, all they have got to do is go out in the weather before Memorial Day or after Labor Day in something other than seersucker and they will realize that global warming is real.

Climate change is with us. The oceans will rise; land will disappear. Miami Beach is too nice.

RECOGNIZING JAMES DAVIS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO PENNSYLVANIA AGRICULTURE

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, in August I was proud to recognize someone from Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District who made a big contribution to the Commonwealth's largest industry—agriculture. James Davis was the recipient of the Huntingdon County Pomona Grange #6 Community Service Award.

Mr. Davis has been a strong advocate for agriculture over the past 50 years. As a child, he attended a one-room schoolhouse before graduating from Juniata Valley High School and later earning a degree in agricultural sciences from Penn State University and a master of arts degree from West Virginia University.

He dedicated his life to agriculture education, teaching in Butler, Lebanon, Fulton, and Franklin Counties. He also taught agriculture, science, math, social studies, and English in Juniata Valley School District, later becoming an elementary principal.

Along with his brother, he has operated the Peaceful Terrain Farm, which has been in the Davis family since 1832.

Jim continues to serve as a volunteer in his community and is an enthusiastic mentor for countless youth across Huntingdon County.

Congratulations, Jim. You have earned it.

ACTION TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

(Mr. TONKO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, during this summer's historically long 53-day recess, I heard from many in New York's capital region about Congress' failure to pass commonsense gun violence prevention measures.

They wonder why nothing will be done after 93 days, the period between Memorial Day and Labor Day, where we witnessed unfathomable horrors like the worst mass shooting in modern American history in Orlando, law enforcement's deadliest day since 9/11 in Dallas, and a gun homicide death toll of 4,100 Americans around the country. This is way beyond unacceptable.

Each new report of a shooting, regardless of its scale, begs the question: What will it take for the House leadership to finally bring legislation to the floor that addresses the root cause of these tragedies?

With more than 90 percent of Americans demanding congressional action to reduce gun violence, I am certain my colleagues on the other side heard similar requests from their constituents last month, imploring all of us to take a stand against the national gun lobby and to fight to make all of our communities safer places in which to live.

I urge my colleagues to listen to these voices and to join House Democrats in debating and ultimately passing legislation that will prevent dangerous individuals from purchasing firearms.

INDIANA BICENTENNIAL TORCH RELAY

(Mr. ROKITA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Indiana Bicentennial Torch Relay, which will kick off in Indiana this Friday. 2016 marks two centuries of statehood for my great State, and this relay will see the bicentennial torch—designed, by the way, by the Fourth District's own Purdue University engineering students—carried through every one of our 92 counties.

Along with other Hoosiers, I will have the honor of carrying the torch on Wednesday, October 12, in Fountain County. I am excited for the chance to be involved in this unique and privileged event. This relay will last for over a month, with the route ending at the statehouse on October 15, just in time for the dedication of Bicentennial Plaza, a brand-new public space for both Hoosiers and visitors to enjoy year round.

I want to thank the Bicentennial Commission and each member's great leadership for all they have done to make our State's bicentennial year memorable for generations to come.

IT IS TIME WE LISTEN AND ACT

(Mr. KENNEDY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, before heading to the airport earlier today, I met with a group of mothers from the

Massachusetts chapter of Moms Demand Action.

Even in a State with some of the strictest gun laws in the country, headlines of lives lost or forever altered by gun violence are commonplace: "Boston shooting gravely injures man"; "Two dead, two injured overnight in Boston shootings"; "11-year-old boy shot in the face in Abington home"—all these from the last 2 weeks alone.

In the time since we have last voted in this Chamber, guns have taken the lives of thousands of Americans in every corner of this country; and in the weeks to come, they will take thousands more.

You cannot tell me we are powerless as men, women, and children carry the wounds of our inaction. You cannot tell me that the answer to this bloodshed is more guns capable of causing greater damage with less regulation; and you cannot tell grieving families that they are just in our thoughts and prayers, but that their memories are just not strong enough to spur action that could prevent another gun from falling into the wrong hands.

Mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, friends and colleagues are crying out for this body to address this Nation's epidemic of gun violence. It is time we listen and act.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF CALEB SCHWAB

(Mr. YODER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart. I would like to honor the memory of Caleb Schwab, who tragically died last month in an accident at a water park in my district. Just 10 years old, Caleb was the amazing son of my good friends Michele and Scott Schwab, whom I have known for years, and Scott and I served together in the Kansas Legislature.

Words cannot express how heartbroken I am for them and their boys in this time of devastation. There may be no greater loss in life than a parent losing a child. Children are supposed to bury their parents, and no parent should ever have to bury their own child.

Caleb will always be remembered for his love of sports, kindness toward others, and the joy he received from his deep love of the Lord. His parents and brothers will always remember the same question that came out of Caleb's mouth every day: "Can I go out and play?"

Caleb, we will love life to the fullest in your memory, and we know you are playing in heaven.

Mr. Speaker, may God bless Scott, Michele, and their family, and may everyone please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.