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I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on this bill, which should be one of the highlights of this congressional session, of any congressional session, as it touches on things that are near and dear to the hearts of the people we represent: clean air, vast open space, environmental protection, investment in the arts, and the public lands that are so meaningful to people.

Mr. Chairman, there are important provisions in this bill that I do support. I appreciate the subcommittee funding for land acquisition in the Columbia River Gorge which will help us honor Federal commitments to communities in Oregon and Washington along a priceless national treasure. But, sadly, overall what should be a positive expression of our values, our hopes, and opportunities instead is a pattern of broken promises to our communities. It does represent a lost opportunity and is a symbol of the inability of those of us in Congress this year and the administration to match priorities with those of our constituents and, most importantly, for the future.

I appreciate the fact that there is dramatic underfunding through the budget allocation in the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, putting them in the hole from the beginning. I appreciate that the funding for land acquisition has been increased over the President's budget. But there is no reason that the billions of dollars set aside in the trust fund for the land and water conservation fund for that express purpose should not be used for those purposes.

Without the funding, communities will lose opportunities to purchase ecologically rich lands and waters, preserving and protecting recreation and conservation and historic values.

Remember the commitment that was made on this floor in the year 2000. I appreciate the leadership that Mr. Dicks exhibited with the committee working with Mr. Young and Mr. Miller in the CARA legislation, which passed overwhelmingly in the House, but a deal was brokered to establish funding levels. It is a point of great embarrassment that that commitment that was made to realize the overwhelming sense of what needs to happen in this body with CARA is being violated with this legislation today.

I hope that we will be able to, before we finish deliberations and move it through this session, go back and revisit it, because that commitment was made in good faith. I appreciate the work of the gentleman from Washington together with Mr. Young and Mr. Miller, Mr. Obey I see here. We should not be violating that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I do hope that we can focus more attention and have a healthy discussion on that in the course of these deliberations.