

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I thank the gentleman for the patience that he and his staff have demonstrated in helping work through some of these issues, because these issues, Mr. Chairman, are complex. I think the American people who have listened to the debate so far this evening may be a little confused. Earlier in the evening I had one of my new colleagues confess that he was confused and in fact last year I confessed that since there were two votes, I actually ended up voting on both sides of this issue. I voted because I was attempting to determine what was in fact in the best interests of the areas that I represent but, most importantly, what would make the most difference in terms of the environment of our forests.

I hope that this debate will spark a serious analysis and real action on the problems related to roads in our national forests. For people who care deeply about the environment and look beyond the rhetoric, it is sometimes hard to know the best way to protect that environment.

In part, this confusion evidenced this evening shows why we should not attempt to legislate or set policy via the appropriations process. It is the blunt instrument that people have referenced. While the passage of this amendment may in fact slow or stop some roadwork, it will not achieve what some advocates claim. It will not stop logging roads, and it is not clear how much, if any, money this will save.

What we need to do is focus on policy solutions that make sense for the environment and the economy. We do need, in fact, additional protections for roadless areas. We do need to use our resources more carefully. We do need to reduce the number of road miles and their impact on our national forests while we adequately maintain roads to avoid degradation of stream and wildlife habitat. We need to take this opportunity to bring the Forest Service, the administration, the industry and environmental advocates together to develop a plan that meets everybody's needs. This vote is a signal for Congress to provide the leadership and guidance to provide a road policy.

Congress needs to provide leadership and guidance through the legislative process. I would like to work with my colleagues involved in this debate to help move that effort forward to create sound road policy in the next year--a policy that improves the environment and saves money--a policy that can be understood--and, importantly, a policy that allows us to monitor our progress toward an environmentally sound National Forest System.