

Mr. Speaker, this conference report is really a mixed bag. There are many provisions I strongly support. There are others I just as strongly oppose. On balance, I believe I must oppose this bill because I am deeply concerned about the impact of some of these provisions on our Nation's public lands.

This is a difficult decision for me, because I am impressed with the work of the conferees. They have agreed to some pretty wise investments that are important to me and my constituents. For example, I was pleased to see that the conferees agreed to fund the National Endowment of the Arts at \$98 million, especially after the bitter disappointment arts advocates suffered during House consideration of this appropriation. An investment in the arts is an investment in our Nation's culture and the livability of our communities. As a strong advocate of the public/private partnership that characterizes arts funding, it is encouraging to see that the conferees have not abdicated their responsibility to our Nation's cultural heritage.

In addition, the conferees included funding for land acquisition in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The Columbia River Gorge is a national treasure--rich in the historical, cultural, and resource legacy of the Nation. Among the countless waterfalls that spill from high hanging valleys is Multnomah Falls, one of the tallest in the United States and the single most visited attraction in the entire National Forest System.

I remain grateful to conferees for providing funds to continue our Nation's commitment to preserving the gorge. The funds provided in the conference report will allow for the purchase of lands critical to the ongoing protection of this geologic, historical, and botanical wonder.

However, in spite of all that is good about this conference report, I will be opposing this legislation. There are simply too many environmental riders that I cannot support, including: Language that effectively guts the 1990 law banning log exports from our National Forests and State-owned lands in the West; delays in funding Land and Water Conservation Fund purchases of the Headwaters and New World Mine; the use of \$32 million in LWCF funds for payoff to Humboldt County, CA and for a road maintenance fund in Montana; language that eliminates any limits on the Forest Service's use of purchaser road credit. Congress needs to develop a comprehensive policy on the construction, reconstruction, maintenance and decommissioning of forest roads. These ongoing attempts to legislate forest policy on the Interior appropriation bill simply exacerbate efforts to develop a policy that makes sense.

Mr. Speaker, I support much of this report, and applaud the work of the conferees in making critical investments in the arts and the preservation of our natural resources. I cannot in good conscience, however, vote for a bill that I believe will, in the end, cause more harm than good

## Speaking on the Interior Appropriations Conference Report

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to our public lands. I urge the conferees to reassess the environmental riders and present to the House a conference report we can all support.