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STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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SPEAKER: Mr. NELSON of Florida; Mr. SALAZAR; Mr. BUNNING; Ms. COLLINS; Mr. FEINGOLD; Mr. BINGAMAN; Mr. LEVIN; Mr. LUGAR; Mr. WARNER; Mr. KENNEDY; Ms. MURKOWSKI; Mr. REID; Mr. DOMENICI; Mr. DODD; Mrs. FEINSTEIN

TEXT: [*1903]

By Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. Webb):

S. 570. A bill to designate additional National Forest System lands in the State of Virginia as **wilderness** or a **wilderness** study area, to designate the Kimberling Creek Potential **Wilderness** Area for eventual incorporation in the [*1914]

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Kimberling Creek **Wilderness**, to establish the Seng Mountain and Bear Creek Scenic Areas, to provide for the development of trail plans for the **wilderness** areas and scenic areas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2007. This bill seeks to add six new **wilderness** areas, expand six existing **wilderness** areas, and create two new national scenic areas in the Jefferson National Forest. Today, Congressman Rick Boucher will join me by introducing companion legislation in the United States House of Representatives.

Throughout my nearly three decades in the United States Senate, I have strived to preserve Virginia's natural resources through the designation of **wilderness** areas and, today, I am proud to say that Virginia boasts just over 100,000 acres of designated **wilderness** lands. However, there is still much work to be done. If enacted, the Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2007 will substantially increase this figure by expanding our opportunities for uninterrupted enjoyment in the forest with the addition of nearly 43,000 acres of new **wilderness and wilderness** study lands and almost 12,000 acres of national scenic areas.

Virginia is blessed with great natural beauty and diversity. From the coves and inlets of the Chesapeake Bay, to the exquisite peaks of the Shenandoah Mountains, residents and visitors alike can enjoy a bountiful array of natural treasures. As demand for development in Virginia continues to increase, it is imperative that Congress act expeditiously to protect these wild lands. Through **wilderness** and national scenic area designations, we can ensure that these areas retain their natural character and influences.

As an avid outdoorsman, I enjoy opportunities for recreation like most Americans. Therefore, I want to stress the many joyful outdoor activities that will be enhanced by the **wilderness**

designation in these areas, including: hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, canoeing, and horseback riding, to name a few. By designating these lands as **wilderness** and scenic areas, we ensure that Virginians will be able to enjoy these activities in an unspoiled playground for generations to come.

I am pleased that my colleague from Virginia, Senator Jim Webb, has agreed to co-sponsor this important legislation, and I urge the rest of my colleagues to join me in support of this bill. I thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2007