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REFERENCE: Vol. 142 No. 45

TITLE: PRESIDIO PROPERTIES ADMINISTRATION ACT

TEXT: [*S3091]

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will now report the pending business.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1296) to provide for the administration of certain Presidio properties at minimal cost to the Federal taxpayer.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Pending:

Murkowski Modified amendment No. 3564, in the nature of a substitute

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, as the chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the committee that brought the Presidio legislation to the floor, I want to make some very brief comments at this time. I think we are all very much aware that minimum-wage legislation has absolutely nothing to do with the parks package that included the Presidio, the Utah **wilderness**, Sterling Forest, and numerous other titles. As a matter of fact, we had some 35 titles in the bill that affected some 26 States.

It is no secret that, unfortunately, the parks package coincides with the national convention of the AFL-CIO, or at least their Washington meeting, and it is unfortunate for this legislation that the timing and the announcement by the group that they were going to raise some \$ 35 million to put into the campaign effort against Republicans who were up for reelection. The announcement that they were clearly endorsing the Clinton administration, provided Members on the other side the opportunity to put the minimum wage, which is one of labor's criteria, on something that might move. Unfortunately, the parks package, the Presidio, all the 35-some odd titles, are affected.

The point is, Mr. President, minimum wage legislation has nothing to do with this package of bills before the Senate. It has really no business being offered or even debated while there is one of the most important environmental and conservation legislative packages before the 104th Congress. Yet, they have seen fit to take advantage of this opportunity. They are well within their rights, but, in the opinion of the Senator from Alaska, this is simply politically motivated and it is political grandstanding. We all know it, even if the media refuses to report it that way.

It is rather interesting to see the media's comments with regard to the bill and the support base concerning the adequacy of **wilderness** in Utah. Not too many people are aware of just how much a million acres of **wilderness** is in size. It is about three times the size of the State of Rhode Island. Two million acres is about half the size of the State

of New Jersey. It is a pretty big hunk of real estate. In any event, in this legislation, there was a provision that would have put 2 million additional acres into a **wilderness** classification in Utah.

There are those who suggest that the legislation prevents the Federal Government and the Congress from making a determination that additional **wilderness** might be created. That is absolutely false, Mr. President. Anyone [*S3094] who studied the legislation, anyone who looked at the bill, and particularly the media, should recognize that Congress can create more **wilderness** any time they see fit, as is evidenced by the creation of 56 million acres of **wilderness** in my State of Alaska.

So, the point I want to make at this time, Mr. President, is, as we look at the status of this bill and the package in the context of its significance, this package of park-related issues constitutes the most significant single environmental package before the Senate in this Congress.

Those who criticize the package process have a responsibility for two things.

One, ask the question why is the package needed? The answer to that question is simple. As these individual bills came before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and were reported out, had their hearings, and so forth, a hold was put on virtually every one of these 50 plus bills now found within the 35 titles of this legislation. The Senator from New Jersey who saw fit to hold up the entire collection of reported bills to negotiate his particular interests relative to the State of New York and the State of New Jersey. That issue was Sterling Forest.

We have no problem with that, but it did force us to package all of the individual bills into a single piece of legislation. Some are now suggesting we take it apart. Yet we all know it will not prevail in the House if one goes and the others do not.

Mr. President this process has been going on for a year. Mr. President, the other interesting thing is that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been expended criticizing this package by unnamed, motivated elitists. They do not have to report where the money comes from. They simply write full-page ads in some of the Nation's major newspapers.

I think that is a bit irresponsible, Mr. President, they are responsible to no one. They are well-financed groups that are single focused.

They are not the people of Utah. They are not the legislature of Utah. They are not the delegation from Utah. They are an elitist group that wants to dictate the terms and conditions under which they can recreate in Utah or any other Western State.

I advise my colleagues that perhaps it is time to put a little **wilderness** in all of our States. We have six States that have no **wilderness**. Is there justification for that?

Mr. President, in conclusion, I urge my colleagues to show some restraint in their enthusiasm to get 5 seconds on the evening news tonight. Let us move forward with the most important conservation measure to come before this body. We have an opportunity to preserve that magnificent Presidio, provide the necessary authority for the Bureau of Land Management to set aside 2 million acres of new **wilderness**, and provide critical protection for other areas.

Mr. President this bill affects almost every single State, let us move forward on this important environmental bill and leave this specific amendment for the Labor Committee.

We need to pass the Presidio bill, Mr. President. The minimum wage has no business even being on this bill. We all know it.

I reserve the balance of my time. How much time is remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska has 7 minutes and 32 seconds remaining.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I yield the floor.