

VISION 2020 NATIONAL PARKS RESTORATION ACT

MURKOWSKI (AND BUMPERS) AMENDMENT NO. 2703

Mr. THOMAS (for Mr. MURKOWSKI, for himself and Mr. BUMPERS) proposed an amendment to the bill (S. 1693) to renew, reform, reinvigorate, and protect the National Park System; as follows:

On page 129 line 22 strike "without appropriation" and insert the following: "subject to appropriation"

NOTICES OF HEARINGS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the public that an oversight hearing has been scheduled before the Full Energy and Natural Resources Committee to consider the issue of independence of Puerto Rico.

The hearing will take place on Tuesday, June 23, 1998, at 9:30 A.M. in room SH-216 of the Hart Senate Office Building.

For further information, please contact James Beirne, counsel at (202) 224-2564 or Betty Nevitt, Staff Assistant at (202) 224-0765.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Subcommittee on Forests and Public Land Management of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will take place Thursday, June 25, 1998 at 2:00 p.m. in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on S. 2146, a bill to provide for the exchange of certain lands within the State of Utah.

Those who wish to submit written statements should write to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510. For further information, please call Amie Brown or Mike Menge (202) 224-6170.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Subcommittee on Water and Power of the full Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will take place on Tuesday, July 14, 1998, at 2:30 P.M. in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on S. 1515, "Dakota Water Resources Act of 1997"; S. 2111, to establish the conditions under which the Bonneville Power Administration and certain Federal agencies may enter into a memorandum of agreement concerning management of the Columbia/Snake River Basin, to direct the Sec-

retary of the Interior to appoint an advisory committee to make recommendations regarding activities under the memorandum of understanding, and for other purposes; and S. 2117, "Perkins County Rural Water System Act of 1997".

Those wishing to testify or who wish to submit written statements should write to the Subcommittee on Water and Power, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510. For further information, please call James Beirne, Counsel at (202) 224-2564, or Betty Nevitt, Staff Assistant at (202) 224-0765.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 11, for purposes of conducting a full committee hearing which is scheduled to begin at 2:00 p.m. The purpose of this oversight hearing is to receive testimony on the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, the Finance Committee requests unanimous consent to conduct a hearing on Thursday, June 11, 1998 beginning at 10:00 a.m. in room 215 Dirksen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, the Finance Committee requests unanimous consent to conduct a hearing on Thursday, June 18, 1998 beginning at 10:00 a.m. in room 215 Dirksen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 11, 1998 at 10:30 and 2:00 p.m. to hold hearings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Subcommittee on Employment and Training, be authorized to meet for a hearing on "Child Labor" during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 11, 1998, at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION, AND REGULATION

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the subcommittee on Energy Research, Development, Production, and Regulation of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet

during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 11, for purposes of conducting a subcommittee hearing which is scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m. The purposes of this oversight hearing is to receive testimony on the federal oil valuation regulations of the Minerals Management Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Immigration, of the Senate Judiciary Committee, be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 11, 1998 at 2:00 p.m. to hold a hearing in room 226, Senate Dirksen Building, on: "Immigration and Naturalization Service reform: The Service side."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

E-RATE

• Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, two years ago the Congress joined together in a bipartisan manner to help schools and libraries across the nation give students and children access to modern technology. The Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996 created a new partnership between the federal government, state governments, school systems, and the private sector to help bring all our classrooms into the 21st century. The bill expanded the universal service program—which has historically given people living in rural areas the chance to purchase affordable phone service—and created a new "e-rate" for schools and libraries. Creating that partnership was the most important act the 104th Congress took for elementary and secondary schools, and we have yet to match that achievement in this Congress. It was one of the most important steps we have taken toward ensuring that all our children will have the opportunity to learn the kinds of skills they will need to compete in the 21st century economy.

Our children need that kind of bipartisan support. When I was growing up, it was possible to graduate from high school and get a job as a police officer, a firefighter, or a clerk, and earn enough to raise and support a family. Mechanics used to train for their work on the job. The nursing profession used to consist of women who apprenticed in hospitals.

Times have changed. Now, if you want to be an airline mechanic, you need four years of college. Nursing is a degree program, and there are specialties of nurses who are highly and scientifically educated. An ad for a "maintenance technician" states the job requires an understanding of "basic principles of electricity, mechanical systems, and fluid power."

Many of our schools, however, are not giving our children the kind of education they will need to compete in this kind of economy. An estimated 60 percent of all new jobs created in the year 2000 will require skills held by only 22 percent of new workers. According to the Wall Street Journal, "Thousands of people are being turned down for factory work by companies that are actively recruiting," because they lack the requisite math, communications, and computer skills.

Given these facts, one would think that on the eve of the implementation of the e-rate we created two years ago, policy makers would be rallying around the new discounts for schools and libraries and celebrating the program's inauguration. Instead, duplicity and political opportunism have combined to cast doubt on the future of the e-rate.

The duplicity began when certain telephone companies decided to add a new line item to customers' phone bills—a "national access charge," or a "universal connectivity fee." When customers call their phone companies asking about this new charge, it is my understanding they are often told it was the FCC who mandated that this new charge appear on their phone bills, or that it was the Congress who levied this new tax on them.

Mr. President, that is disingenuous at best. The FCC did order long distance phone companies to pay into the universal service fund, in part to pay for the new discounts for schools and libraries. The FCC also, however, ordered a reduction in the access charges long distance companies must pay for using local phone networks—fees that can account for 40 or 50 percent of the cost of every long distance call. The reductions in access charges were greater than the new universal service charges. One would think, therefore, that long distance bills would drop as a result. Have they? Have the phone companies passed the savings from the access charge reductions on to their customers?

No. The companies have not passed on all the savings from the access charge reductions, and have instead raised customers' bills in order to generate revenue for the universal service fund. They then blame the FCC or Congress, and customers are understandably confused, concerned, and upset.

The chorus of customer complaints now appears to be rattling the bipartisan coalition that came together two years ago to create the e-rate. Republican leaders have derided the new charge on phone bills as an "illegal FCC tax," or a "Gore tax," trying to pin the phone bill increases on the Vice President.

I am disappointed. We have gone from partnership to partisanship. We have gone from cooperation to confrontation. We have gone from thinking about our children and our future to trying to score political points.

We can do better than that. Thirty thousand applications have poured in

to the FCC this year from schools and libraries seeking to tap into the new e-rate. Those applications represent millions of American children counting on our help to gain the skills they need to remain competitive in the next century. What are we going to tell them if the e-rate crumbles under the weight of partisan politics? How are we going to explain to them why they do not know how to use a computer?

I hope we will not have to do that. I hope we can all come together, with the same bipartisanship and cooperation we shared two years ago, to fix this program, resolve legitimate concerns, and ensure that the e-rate becomes available to schools and libraries across the country.

Members of both parties have criticized the FCC for the way it has implemented the program, and I do not doubt that mistakes have been made. I only hope we can put aside the partisan sniping and figure out a constructive solution to the problem we face. We ought to be proud of what we accomplished two years ago when we created the e-rate. Let us not now trade that accomplishment for short-term political gain.

Mr. President, I ask that an editorial from yesterday's Washington Post on this subject be printed in the record.

The editorial follows:

[Washington Post, Wed., June 10, 1998]

SHOULD WE WIRE SCHOOLS?

Sometime this week the Federal Communications Commission will vote on whether to suspend a small program, passed as part of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, that collects money from long-distance phone companies and uses it to offer discounts on the cost of hooking up schools and libraries to the Internet. The program, known as the "e-rate," has been contentious from the start, but lately, as it prepares to begin actually considering applications for the \$650 million collected so far, it has become the focus of intense pressure.

Four senators with a say over the FCC's own budget sent a letter demanding that it refund the program entirely. Some have hinted that the commission risks having its own budget zeroed out unless it kills the schools and libraries program. Others threaten investigation of what they call a "stealth tax" imposed with questionable legality by an unelected agency or, alternatively, a "Gore tax" designed to advance the vice president's presidential prospects.

Why the sudden fuss over a \$2 billion program that passed all the usual legislative hurdles in orthodox fashion two years ago? The flurry began when several long-distance telephone providers said they would begin adding a "universal connectivity fee" to individual monthly telephone bills to cover the schools and libraries program and other subsidies, such as the generations-old (and widely supported) subsidy for keeping phone service affordable in hard-to-serve rural areas. The appearance of what looks like a new tax on phone bills—even if it only spells out subsidies previously included in the overall bill—unnerves many legislators who support the subsidies in theory. Not everyone realizes that the schools and libraries fund constitutes only a third of the new fee. (The FCC and the companies are still sparring over whether the extra charges were even justified; the commission says the fees were specifically calibrated to balance year-by-

year savings to the companies from another aspect of the 1996 bill, a drop in the access fees long-distance carriers must pay to local ones.)

Much of the debate over the complex telecommunications bill concerned the balance to be struck between deregulating the communications industry—thus opening up the chance for phone companies to make lots more money—and imposing some obligations on them in return. One such obligation was to safeguard equal access, including to new technologies. After endless maneuvering and a veto threat by President Clinton if the bill emerged without them, provisions mandating "access to advanced telecommunications services for schools, health care and libraries," explicitly including "classrooms," were made part of the subsidies for "universal service." Telephone companies understandably balk at any creeping enlargement of the universal service concept, which requires them to offer phone service at average rates even in high-cost, hard-to-wire rural areas—and, inevitably to absorb the cost by charging slightly higher phone rates across the board.

One thrust of deregulation was to make those subsidies more explicit—an advantage for companies, which could compete more openly on basic rates, and also for consumers, who could see where their money was going. But spelling out a long-hidden subsidy also exposes it to political debate. Such debate need not doom the e-rate, which pulls considerable support in opinion polls, any more than it is likely to doom the popular rural subsidies. Nor should it. Squelching it would be the real "stealth" move. ●

SISTER MONICA KOSTIELNEY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS WITH MICHIGAN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and honor a very important woman in the Michigan religious community. Sister Monica Kostielney, R.S.M. is celebrating 25 years with the Michigan Catholic Conference this year. Presently, she serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Conference, however, her list of accomplishments extends far beyond her work in this capacity.

Prior to joining the Catholic Conference, Sister Monica taught elementary and secondary school for thirteen years. She began her career with the Catholic Conference of Michigan as a staff member in 1972. She served as Executive Vice-President for public affairs from 1983 until 1994, and has served as President and CEO since then. For 25 years, in addition to her service to the Michigan Catholic Conference, Sister Monica has advised many on important issues affecting all facets of society. She has given selflessly of her time to many other organizations and charities including, the Midwest Hispanic Catholic Commission, the Michigan Department of Education Legislative Advisory Council, the Governor's Blue Ribbon Welfare Reform Committee and the Board of Directors of St. Lawrence Hospital and Healthcare Services Divisional Board. From 1980 to 1984, Sister Monica co-hosted "Reel to Reel," a weekly Sunday television show produced by the