

SUPPORTING THE INITIATIVES OF CHICAGO WILDERNESS

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(House of Representatives - January 13, 2010)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I wish to take a moment to voice my strong support for a bill offered by the gentleman from Illinois and my delegation colleague, Mr. Quigley. H. Res. 860, supports two key environmental initiatives within Illinois: the Chicago Wilderness and the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

Chicago Wilderness is alliance of public and private organizations dedicated to promoting conservation and strengthening the natural ecosystems of the Chicago region. With over 240 members, the alliance includes government agencies, conservation organizations, scientific organizations, cultural institutions, schools, universities, and business partners. A few such members with whom I have worked closely over the years include: Blacks in Chicago; the Chicago Park District; the Chicago Botanic Gardens; the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Agency; the Chicago Zoological Society; the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District; and the Village of Oak Park.

Chicago Wilderness has four long-term efforts: The Green Infrastructure Vision initiative promotes the creation and maintenance of green, open spaces; the Leave No Child Inside initiative promotes environmental education and experiences for children and youth; the Restoring the Health of Local Nature initiative engages in active restoration and land management to improve the health of natural areas as well as their plants and animals; and the Climate Change initiative involves examining, making recommendations, and taking action to limit the Chicago area's impact on global climate change.

The Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights is a joint resolution passed by the Illinois General Assembly to establish goals for children to experience nature. The Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights states that every child should have opportunities to ``..... discover wilderness--prairies, dunes, forests, savannas, and wetlands; camp under the stars; follow a trail; catch and release fish, frogs, and insects; climb a tree; explore nature in neighborhoods and cities; celebrate heritage; plant a flower; play in the mud or a stream; and learn to swim."

Understanding and interacting with nature are positive ways for children and youth to develop their minds and bodies. Outdoor play encourages independent learning and creativity and develops public awareness about the critical, interdependent relationship humans have with nature. As a child, I remember fondly the time I spent outside with my siblings, exploring my rural community, studying animals, and learning about nature. These experiences contributed to my appreciation

of and commitment to
improving the environment.

I join Mr. QUIGLEY in recognizing the importance of and
supporting these two Illinois environmental initiatives--the Chicago
Wilderness and the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.