

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1011, the Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2007, introduced by my colleague from Virginia's Ninth Congressional District, Congressman *Rick Boucher*. I am proud to have been an original cosponsor of this important conservation legislation in this Congress and in the last Congress and I commend Congressman *Boucher* for all his hard work on this bill over the years.

This bipartisan bill will protect approximately 54,000 acres of the Jefferson National Forest in Virginia through the designation of additional wilderness areas and the creation of new National Scenic Areas. Although mechanized traffic and equipment would be prohibited in much of these areas, recreational activities would be permitted and encouraged throughout these new designations contributing to the local economy of Southwest Virginia. Protecting these additional acres of pristine forest will ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy the natural beauty of Southwest Virginia. We must also be vigilant in protecting environmentally sensitive areas by promoting responsible land use plans, which this bill does.

The bill before us today was reported out of the Natural Resources Committee by voice vote, is endorsed by the U.S. Forest Service, and is supported by Virginia Governor *Tim Kaine*, members from both parties in the Virginia delegation, both of Virginia's Senators, *John Warner* and *Jim Webb*, the Board of Supervisors in Bland County, Craig County, Montgomery County, and Smyth County, and various environmental organizations, including the League of Conservation Voters, the Garden Club of Virginia, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and the Virginia Wilderness Committee.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is vitally important to conservation efforts in the Commonwealth of Virginia and to guaranteeing that future generations of Americans can experience the natural wonder and beauty of Southwest Virginia. I applaud Congressman *Boucher* and his staff for all of their hard work on this bill. I encourage my colleagues to support the legislation and I encourage each of them to experience firsthand the pristine natural beauty of Southwest Virginia.