

Land is expensive, and getting more expensive every day. Land prices are spiraling at the rate of almost 10 percent a year—at an even faster rate in land with recreation potential.

The Department of the Interior estimates that under present funding, the Land and Water Conservation Fund will fall \$2.7 billion short of our requirements for the next ten years. This lack of money will mean delay in acquisition of this badly needed land. In this case, time is money, for delay means the land will be more expensive in the future. To meet our needs as economically as possible, we must have enough funds immediately.

S. 1401 provides these urgently needed funds for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Section 1 of the bill would add to the fund the unearmarked receipts under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, the receipts from the Outer Continental Shelflands Act of 1953 including those funds now held in escrow which may accrue to the United States, and certain revenues from the national forests. It is estimated that these additional sources of revenue would add from two to three hundred million dollars annually to the Fund. These funds would, of course, be subject to the normal appropriations process.

An equally significant aspect of S. 1401 is the provision in section 1 (b) allowing certain federal agencies to contract for the purchase of land in advance of appropriations for the purchase. This power is restricted to \$30,000,000 annually of those funds authorized by Congress. This is an important and badly needed power. Generally, land price escalation is intensified immediately after the federal government has authorized the purchase of lands for a recreation area. The public follows the course of legislation through Congress, and speculation increases concomitantly with the likelihood that the federal government will acquire the land. It is not unusual for prices to increase to the point that the Congress is forced to subsequently raise the authorization ceiling for certain federal projects. The time lapse between authorization and appropriations can be as much as nine months to two years—a lapse that can mean an increase in prices of recreation land of as much as 50 percent.

In my own state of Connecticut, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation is studying the feasibility of establishing a national recreation area in the Connecticut River Valley. As sponsor of this legislation, I am vitally interested in means to accomplish any required land acquisition for this project at the lowest possible price.

In a time when we must carefully scrutinize every dollar of federal expenditures, devices such as the proposed advance contracting authority can be most helpful in minimizing the burden on the taxpayer. The advance authority in S. 1401 is, however, wisely limited to \$30 million—requiring the Department of the Interior to devise its priorities and utilize the authority selectively for the land most likely to increase in cost.

The second section of the proposed bill would allow the Secretary of the Interior to sell or lease back parcels of land previously purchased for recreation areas. Such sales or leases would have restrictions on the use of the land in keeping with the nature of the proposed plans. The authority under this provision would also help to hold down acquisition costs by reimbursing the government through the sale price or rental. For this reason, I believe the thrust of the section is beneficial.

I would like to point out, however, a potential difficulty under this authority. As presently drafted, the Federal government has the power to buy land under condemnation proceedings and then sell it back to the original owner at an inflated price. The government would, of course, retain the profit. The sale or lease back authority is designed to hold down acquisition cost, but it does not necessarily follow that the government should make a profit. I would hope a means could be found by which the government might restrict the use of the land without taking an unnecessary gain by purchase and resale.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to submit a statement on this important piece of legislation. With my previously stated minor reservation, I strongly support S. 1401 and ask that it be favorably considered by this committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cannon of Nevada and Senator Long of Missouri have submitted statements in support of this legislation. Also Senator Mansfield of Montana and Senator Bennett of Utah have written letters indicating support of the measure.