



House Committee on Agriculture

Bob Goodlatte
Chairman

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Statement of Chairman Bob Goodlatte Committee on Agriculture

Business Meeting to consider H.R. 5103, to provide for the conveyance of the former Konnarock Lutheran Girls School September 21, 2006

We have before us now HR 5103, a bill provide for the conveyance of the former Konnarock Lutheran Girls School in Smyth County, Virginia.

The Konnarock property is located in Rep. Boucher's Congressional district, just south of mine. The land and buildings were acquired by the Forest Service in 1967. The facility at that time was not in use - it was last used as a school in 1959.

The Forest Service used the buildings to house fire crews and summer trail crews, as well as the Job Corps operations. By the early 80's, continued deterioration rendered the facility unusable. There has been considerable continued deterioration since that time, and the facility is now in severe disrepair.

Prior to Forest Service acquisition, the facility was owned by the local Lutheran Church. Today's legislation would convey the Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for the Mission in Appalachia, which plans to restore/preserve the historic structures; develop a retreat center; partner with area colleges to use the property as an environmental learning center; and develop, archive, and exhibit the history of the school and the community.

We have in our mark-up materials a letter from the Department of Agriculture expressing concerns about HR 5103 as introduced. I will offer an amendment today that I believe addresses those concerns. The amendment reduces the acreage of the conveyance from 10 acres to not more than six, and requires that the land and buildings be conveyed "as is." The bill requires the Lutheran Coalition to pay the cost of conducting a survey. It is important to note that when the Forest Service acquired the Konnarock School and its grounds, they acquired 680 acres along with them. Today's bill takes the bare minimum necessary to convey this property to an owner who will have an opportunity to invest in the buildings and restore them to their historical significance.

CBO advises us that the small area conveyed and the deterioration of the buildings ensures that the bill will not have a significant impact on spending.

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