

# CENTRE DAILY TIMES

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## THEIRVIEW

### Thompson should rescind his support of anti-wilderness bill

A congressman from California wants to put some of Pennsylvania's wildest forests at greater risk, and he has, unfortunately, been joined by a single Pennsylvania congressman.

U.S. Rep. Kevin McCarthy's hostile bill targets millions of roadless acres of American wildlands, including some in Pennsylvania. The bill, HR 1581 (the Wilderness and Roadless Areas Release Act), should be called the Great Outdoors Giveaway because it would strip protections for 25,000 pristine acres in the Allegheny National Forest.

As someone who has spent countless hours hiking through the Allegheny's backcountry, I find this bill to be an insult to the region.

The Allegheny provide anglers with a great place to fish and families with a great atmosphere for canoeing and outdoor recreation. The region's oak, black cherry, hemlock and white pine forests provide hunters with ideal habitat for deer and other game.

Four Allegheny forest tracts that qualify for wilderness designation under the Wilderness Act of 1964 — Allegheny Front, Clarion River, Cornplanter and Tracy Ridge — could be stripped of protections.

Even if one is not concerned with protecting Pennsylvania's wildest places, you may be interested in protecting its bottom line. In 2006 alone, more than 4 million Pennsylvanians went hunting, fishing or wildlife watching, which generated more than \$4 billion for the state's economy.

This anti-wilderness proposal is also an affront to Pennsylvania's conservation legacy: Rep. John P. Saylor, of Johnstown, was an original sponsor of the Wilderness Act of 1964 that has conserved land throughout the country. He was considered the father of the act in the House of Representatives.

A solitary Pennsylvania congressman has abandoned Saylor's conservation legacy and joined McCarthy's efforts. U.S. Rep. Glenn Thompson, R-Howard Township, is a co-sponsor of the Wilder-

ness and Roadless Areas Release Act.

David J. Saylor, nephew of Rep. Saylor and board member for Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, recently said: "I

know my uncle would have rallied good people from both parties to oppose this blunderbuss 'Release Act.' Were he still in the Congress, I am confident he would have persuaded his colleagues from Pennsylvania and around the country that there is a better and more focused way to address these subjects.

"This unfortunate legislation's radical stripping away of vital protection from our precious remaining wildlands not yet officially designated as Wilderness Areas, as he would have explained, is harsh, unprecedented and bad policy for Pennsylvania and the whole United States."

The position of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness is that we would like to see Thompson — and all co-sponsors — rescind support for this misguided bill. Further, we are asking that McCarthy withdraw HR 1581.

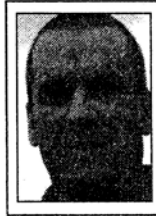
For more information on protecting Pennsylvania's wilderness, log on to [www.pawild.org](http://www.pawild.org).

McCarthy's hometown newspaper, the Bakersfield Californian, recently editorialized against the Great Outdoors Giveaway bill, noting "the rumbling sound you may have noticed coming from the general vicinity of the Sierra Nevada is Teddy Roosevelt rolling over in his grave."

Roosevelt, of course, was the early 20th century two-term Republican president widely considered to be the strongest conservationist president in our history.

In this day and age of widespread Marcellus Shale development, we should all be working to permanently protect our last remnant wild areas, not working to open them up to development.

*Kirk Johnson is executive director for the Warren-based nonprofit Friends of Allegheny Wilderness ([www.pawild.org](http://www.pawild.org)).*



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