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**U.S. Representative**

***John Spratt***

South Carolina ■ 5th District

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**News Release**

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**Spratt Hails Funding for Lands Legacy Initiative**

**WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) hailed House passage today of legislation providing \$1.6 billion for the “Lands Legacy Initiative,” a program to preserve our natural resources, protect our national parks, and create new community recreation areas.**

The funding was approved as part of the conference agreement on H.R. 4578, Interior Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2001.

“This is the largest one-time investment ever for the protection of America’s land and natural resources,” said Spratt, “something I championed in the budget last year and again this year. The bill may be less than what we sought, but it’s still significant, and I was pleased to vote for it.”

In May, the House passed a ground-breaking bipartisan measure, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), dedicating nearly \$3 billion a year from royalties on oil and gas produced on the Outer Continental Shelf. CARA was blocked in the Senate by western senators opposed to the federal government’s acquisition of new lands. The compromise passed by the House today cuts funding from \$3 billion to \$1.6 billion, and allows some of the money appropriated to be used for a long backlog of maintenance needs in our national parks.

Today’s bill creates a new, six-year discretionary fund devoted exclusively to land conservation, preservation, and maintenance. The bill directs \$1.6 billion into the fund this year, and gradually increases this amount until it reaches \$2.4 billion in 2006.

Dubbed the “Lands Legacy Initiative,” the new program will broaden federal efforts in three departments: Interior, Commerce, and Agriculture, to save America's natural resources. The program will grant funds to states and communities to protect wetlands, acquire green spaces, reduce sprawl, and enhance the protection of estuaries, coastal plains, oceans, and fisheries.

“With all our beautiful places from the seashore to the mountains, Lands Legacy should be a boost for South Carolina,” said Spratt. “It will help us create new recreation areas, and protect our coastline, parks, and wildlife habitat.”

Spratt, the Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee, funded the Lands Legacy program in his budget resolution this year. “The Democratic budget resolution I offered this spring included \$1.4 billion for Lands Legacy, as opposed to zero in the Republican budget. When the Interior appropriations bill first came through the House and Senate, it included some funding for the Lands Legacy Initiative, but it was roughly a third of what we sought. I wish that we could have passed CARA and done even more, but this bill is a good compromise and a long step forward.”

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