

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY THOMAS' KEYNOTE SPEECH

Rep. Thomas: Thank you for your welcome. I'm delighted and honored to be here today and to have this opportunity to visit with you and to share with you.

I always like to point out that I did serve 10 years in the Congress, but I left at my own choosing. I was not run out of town. You know, one of the things we say about the United States Congress is that the first two years that you're there, you spend wondering how in the world you got there. And the rest of the time you spend wondering how in the heck all that other crowd got there. But I've always said that I serve as a pretty good example of the fact that almost anyone can get elected to Congress, but there have been a few elections lately that have replaced my position there, I have to tell you.

I want to speak to you a few minutes to just sort of give you my thoughts on these challenging times in which you gather here and in which we go about our agendas today. But before I do that, I want to go back just a minute.

Herb and I were talking yesterday, or the day before yesterday, when I was planning to come down here. He and I both agreed that it's sort of amazing when you go back to think about the environmental movement, how recent it is.

It was not until the last century that the word ecology was used. And much of what happened; the great environmentalist issue began to move things forward. Of course, Teddy Roosevelt had begun his efforts around the turn of the century, when he felt that so much of America's wild area, and its wilderness and wildlife were being lost and being exploited. And John Muir and others came along behind him, Aldo Leopold, and then of course later, in that century, Rachel Carson wrote her book, *Silent Spring*, which really began to make people think, and other books like *Extinction*, by Paul Ehrlich, and books like this that I read, began to have their impact on the psyche.

But it was a long time before we really began to get the environmental movement going. It was not until the latter part, this was in the U.S., of course. It was not until the latter part of the last century that we began to pass laws like the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act - Super-Fund – and these others, that was in response to such tragic...(fire alarm)

Well, I've had to contend with a lot of things, but I think that's the first time I've set off a fire alarm when my remarks begin.

But it was not until we began to see things like major rivers in our country that literally caught fire and burned because of the industrial affluent that had gathered in these waters, that we really got serious about it.

We've found the traces of DDT on the eggshells of the eagles on the Alaskan coast. We traced it all the way back to where the chemical was being used, and the findings gave life to that wonderful metaphor that Aldo Leopold put in the Sand County Almanac. Now

listen closely – he talked about “Atom X,” which was the atom of a limestone fragment that was dislodged by a seed that grew up in the limestone crevice, and Atom X was free. And it washed out down the hillside and grew up in a mountain flower that was munched by a mouse and then deposited by way of a mousing owl down on the plains below where it grew up in the prairie grass, was munched by a buffalo, deposited by a stream where it washed into the belly of a brook trout and then was deposited in the waters off the Alaskan coast by a migrating eagle.

And these kinds of passages began to make people think and to see things differently than we had.

Until that time major efforts were principally those to set aside things in to preserve them. The Great Wilderness Warrior, Teddy Roosevelt led the charge. But in large, the consciousness of the American public, in my opinion, began to be moved by constituencies who had a passion for America’s wildlife. It was the animals themselves – and of course we loved forests and prairies and we did much to change them – but when things like the slaughter of the great buffalo herds and the total demise of the pigeon and then our depletion of many of the herd animals and the plume hunters at the turn of the century began to make their impact, Americans began to wake up. And so, those attitudes began to change, but remember how recently this all occurred.

Let me tell you, it’s also a time where America at this period was rising to the heights of economic might and influencing the world. As is the case with most developing countries, America’s wealth was derived from the utilization, and unfortunately often the exploitation and monetization of its abundant natural resources. Its productive lands and seemingly limitless forest resources, its minerals and its abundant waters. But at this same time, I will always believe that at the heart of that movement, that was beginning to change the politics and consequently the management and utilization of these resources was a significant impact that the degradation and mismanagement of the resources was beginning to have on the communities of wildlife with which the country had been so generously blessed.

Slowly but surely, a land and wildlife ethic was beginning to develop that would play a major role in the protection and enhancing much of the natural environment that exists today. In great part it was the American outdoor community – some hunters, some fishermen, some hikers who began to form a constituency that began to change the course of things. And that’s a major point that I want to touch on today. And that is that any issue, regardless of what it is, must have a constituency.

In Democratic countries, the process will simply not promote a government’s action on many of the concerns, unless there is a constituency that supports the cause, whatever it might be. Democratic governments react to the needs and concerns of the people when they’re expressed through the voices of proactive constituencies.

So, as you move along, you ought to have a crowd with you. There’s an old saying that if you look around and there’s no one with you, you’re just out for a walk.

These are challenging times, and I want to comment a moment or two before I move on. In challenging times of economic difficulty, it's been my experiences that though unfortunate and shortsighted as it may be our concerns and those of governments in particular, immediately turn to what is more pressing and of immediate concern. America is not alone in its financial difficulties that have headlined the news of today. This concern is shaping the political scene of our country and it is causing a major debate on how to get control of the burgeoning debt that many feel is not only threatening America's economic prosperity at home, but its influence in the world arena. This is not limited to the US; there are global concerns of the world economic decisions that are having their impact on agreements on environmental concerns between nations and continents.

In my opinion, it is going to be increasingly difficult to find the same financial support from federal and state governments for environmental programs unless we can demonstrate clearly that they are not only cost-effective, but they literally add monetarily to the economy. Now, in the long term, I have no doubt personally that they do, and as I'm sure most of us gathered here today believe. But those constituencies that I spoke of earlier must feel as strongly as you and I, and it is our job to bring them into the debate and empower their concerns through active involvement.

As much as I believe we should not leave future generations saddled with the debt of our generation, I also believe it is wrong for us to leave them with a diminished asset ledger where the natural resources that we've inherited have been depleted, or diminished, or mismanaged. But the challenge is and it always has been to demonstrate the value of these resources in both a cultural and a monetary sense. Those of us that care about the natural world must be better, and must be much more precise and professional in our efforts in that regard.

Now, I know that I don't have to remind the audience of the issues of terrorism, the global spread of drugs, and the steadily increasing world demand for energy – all of which are reaching proportions that displace so many other concerns, such as those for our natural environment. We are literally in competition with this current world scene.

Indeed we're gathered here today in challenging times, to the causes and to the concerns to which you have all committed yourselves so deeply.

Well, what really is my message for you today? I'm not a trained scientist or biologist, but I don't need to be. You are all specialists in your fields, and you know the issues and the science. I'm sure that if this group right here were tasked with sitting down and drafting a plan for total cooperation on the migratory species of the western hemisphere, that the talent and the expertise is adequate in this room to do just that. But, my friends, policy is not drafted in a vacuum. It is dependent on far-ranging considerations that comprise a process that in the United States Congress is described like this: We compare it to the making of sausage, which as we all know is made up of some rather strange parts of the animal that is being utilized. In the Congress, we say that the making of a law or the setting of a policy is like making the sausage, the end process usually turns out pretty

well, but you might not enjoy watching it being made, or for that matter, you might not want to know what all the ingredients were.

Well let me give you my opinion on some things that we might consider as we come to this effort to reach an agreement on how to best cooperate on the protection of those wonderful species that we share here in the western hemisphere.

First, on environmental debates and issues and to those of us that are trying to carry this out, this is not a card game. It is not poker, where the object is to win the whole game and to take all of the stakes. It is about reaching consensus. It is about coming to the best agreement we can come to, so that we can begin to make progress on our concerns. It is about conflict resolution, where we reach across the bargaining table and we sincerely attempt to understand the concerns and the different needs of the various negotiators and their constituencies. No matter how strongly we believe in our own conviction in this process, we must remember that our choice is most often either to reach a consensus, or to leave the bargaining table without accomplishing anything.

So let us imagine that we're gathered at the table. What is it that we're saying we should do as we begin to make the sausage? The first thing in my opinion is, we put the facts on the table. We start with the science, the empirical data. Each of us must face the empirical facts head on, and either decide to go off on theory and down some cold trail or work on what is established.

The very first environmental issue that I inherited as a freshman member of the Congress was what we would call in our country a "real" grizzly bear. A man-eater. The installation of a tide gate on the Savannah River was suspicion to be the culprit, and I want to try to draw you the clear picture of this. What was happening was that this tide gate was installed to force all of the water from the incoming tide to return to the sea down the main channel of the river. The gate was installed on the back side of an island in the middle of the river that divided it into two channels. You see, by causing all of the flow to come down the front end of the river, the velocity of the flow was increased and it was reviewed as a money-saver because the increased flow scoured the sediment which had to be drained annually in an alluvium river like this. The issue though, and the problem was that by closing the tide gate, more salt water was being forced into the federal wildlife refuge that lay adjacent to the back channel; 25,000 acres of fresh water tidally influenced wetlands, the most productive that we know of, and almost a third of what exists today along the eastern coast. This greatly diminished the value of the wetlands for the migratory water fowl, changing the vegetation from hyacinth and bulrush to less valuable salt water species.

Well, I got all of the stakeholders together; the US Army Corps of Engineers, famous for its work in wetland areas; the Ports Authority, since the river is a major industrial river and port; the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; the historical society, because it's a historical place of great history; and then The Nature Conservancy to represent the public constituency.

We agreed to fund a study at the University of Florida utilizing the French Landsat satellite telemetry and then we put the facts on the table. The study was conclusive, and it showed quadrant by quadrant, 3 ft by 3 ft, the changing biology that was occurring as a result of the operation of the tide gate as it forced more salt water into the refuge. The findings were irrefutable and the tide gate was deactivated.

The Corps of Engineers requested additional funding to handle the sediment problem within the channel based on the fact that they were damaging federal property, and the refuge has today gone back to its highly-productive freshwater influenced biology and the migratory water fowl refuge is secure. What did it? It was the science. It was the irrefutable empirical data that brought the resolution about, and when it can be attained, it is the strongest of all places to start from.

Secondly, let me make an assessment. I will wager you that there might be some issues that might be beyond the point of resolution when we consider the great diversity constituted in this organization known as WHMSI. But I hasten to add to you, there are far more areas where consensus can be reached than those where it is not possible. There's far more to work on that you could reasonably hope to achieve, so don't let the difficult ones side track the entire effort. I think it is far more important to make some progress than no progress at all. Progress breeds additional progress and it becomes a sort of incubator for additional opportunities and progress. The old adage is universal: that success has many allies and failure is an orphan.

There is another apparent risk in the failure to reach consensus. Times and conditions, worldwide and nationally, are constantly changing and I want to give you a classic example. In the late 70s, the oil cartel raised the price of oil so dramatically and reduced production so that America was thrown into a terribly precarious situation. It was the main cause of an economic recession that carried very serious economic and social and geopolitical implications for our country. A debate arose at that time regarding America's need to search for oil in all of the best places at home, and all information pointed to an area called the 10-0-2 area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the northeast corner of Alaska, 19 million acres in total. Of course there are serious wildlife concerns to be considered, but also compelling geological evidence that pointed to the possibility of a major field beneath the surface – a major field that could contain up to 5 or 10 or 15 billion barrels of oil, an incredible amount of oil and a significant economic implication.

I was a new member of the Fish & Wildlife subcommittee on merchant marine and fisheries, and our committee and subcommittee had purview over the federal wildlife refuges. I was sent along with committee chief counsel to give our committee chairman our opinion of what the committee should be recommending, and I spent three summers up there, trekking back and to and reading and learning everything I could. Our chairman had asked me one day, "I understand you like wild places." And I responded to him that I did.

Our conclusion came to this recommendation: We suggested that we put down four test wells under winter conditions when the tundra is frozen as hard as cement and you never

leave your sign. At that time, most of the wildlife has departed, the caribou herd has gone south and the snow geese have departed for the south. We attached very stringent environmental requirements on the wells and stipulated that only the oil companies participating in test well process would have the chance to compete for exploration if it were later approved by Congress.

Now follow me closely on this. The results of the findings from the test wells would have been put before the National Science Foundation and a special panel of experts would review it as well. If the results pointed to a high possibility of a major field, then the review committee would submit their findings to the Congress if the findings augmented the geologic evidence. And then Congress would vote on whether or not to open this limited 2,000 acres out of 19 million for exploration and development. We tied much of the royalties that would be generated to new environmental issues and to other environmental needs in Alaska and set up funds for litigation and damage. The results: both the environmental agencies and the oil companies hated our bill, and it's when I knew we were probably pretty close to being right.

Unfortunately what happened, oil prices declined, the cartel waived on its resolve, and so the debate was never held.

Today, the energy crisis in America has only gotten worse. The economy is more challenging and the cost of oil rises steadily along with the increasingly dangerous geopolitical environment in that part of the world that produces much of the oil, the 7.6 billion barrels a year, the United States utilizes.

The debate never got to a point of whether or not the oil, if it were there, could be safely extracted and the wildlife protected. It was a debate over policy, a standoff, and prejudiced and polarized constituencies – most of whom had never read the 10-0-2 report, didn't know what it said and almost all of whom had never visited ANWAR.

My point to you is this: that the political and economic environment for a more pragmatic approach to the question of whether or not exploration is allowed in the most promising place on the North American continent for a major field has now totally changed. The failure to reach a consensus has left an environment where the economic and political situation could very possibly, in a new debate, and if things worsen, lead to exploitation without strong environmental restriction. And as well, the entire matter might have been settled if the test well results didn't substantiate the geological evidence of a major field, so we opted to doing nothing and times have changed as they will inevitably in the future.

Well, I've covered a lot of ground, and I want to conclude my remarks to you today by leaving you with a list of conclusions that comes from over a quarter of a century of being involved in the policy process in our country, but also what comes from 67 years of my life's experience and observations.

My love for and concern for our natural world is a part of my deepest and most abiding convictions and I share these thoughts with you in the sincere hope that they might be of help to you.

First, share your wonderful storehouse of information freely and openly with your counterparts. You can't get anywhere if you don't do this.

Separate yourself from personal dogma that prevents yourself from understanding your counterpart's concerns or that prevents you from broadening your own capacity to learn, that's what learning is all about. I see brilliant people who never learn anything because they never understand how to step into the debate and put themselves in the other people's shoes. In spite of how cynical the debate becomes, you simply have to have confidence in the fact that empirical information and intellectual discourse can move the debate in the right direction. Given the chance, the facts and honest discourse will lead to solutions.

Look always for consensus. Let the politicians have the debates on the unattainable and build on even small successes and agreements. Agree to revisit the issue, and that's called adaptive management and it works well. Make a start and then come back and review results and work for further progress.

You can call it taking small steps or describe it as you like, but take something away from every issue that you enjoin.

Now I know some part of what I'm saying to you sounds a bit old-fashioned and simplistic or maybe out of date. But I'm very sincere when I tell you, my friends, that I've seen possible agreements of the highest importance sabotaged by obtuse and callous conduct of supposedly intelligent people. Some people come to the bargaining table intent on braying like a jackass, and they do more damage just with their attitude than they do with their obstinacy.

Be judicious with your personal intelligence and your knowledge. Use it to bring out all the information you can possibly gather from your counterparts because it is only through getting everyone to participate that consensus can be reached and progress made.

Intimidation by the person who attempts it and uses it cuts off the flow of spontaneity and it reduces the chance of success. If you intimidate someone, let me assure you, you most likely lost their vote.

Above all, probably the most important thing in all discourse, you must work to build trust. You get nothing from people who mistrust you. I don't care how smart, or how impressive, or how much you know, if your audience or your counterpart mistrusts you, you're just out for a walk.

These are difficult times, but most importantly to this group gathered here today, I believe they are truly critical times to our natural resources and to our environment. We

can no longer look to government for all of the solutions and all of the funding, but we can work with our governments as long as we build constituencies to support and follow us and as long as we bring a trusted source of information of concern to the debate.

There was a time when we had the luxury of just relying on nature's wonderful resiliency and ability to heal herself, so that she could mitigate our mistakes. Today, we do not have the margin for error that we once had. We are no longer just burning up fat and the fluff. We are down to the meat and the bone of our natural resources. And rather than just stand on dogmatic convictions, we must find the areas where we can reach consensus and rely on those agreements to make our case for future progress.

These successes, small as they might be, become models. And let me assure you from one who's been in the policy arena for 30 years, there is nothing more effective than a working, successful model to take to the policy arena.

Well I do surely hope that my comments prove to be of some value to you in the future, it's been a distinct honor to visit with you today.

Richard Huber-Organization of American States It reminds me as a teenager, you sourced the Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold, it made me think I don't know if everyone in this room has read that book, but certainly it's really an excellent book. My question to you, and this might be a bit unfair, the whole global warming debate – you've watched it, you were involved with it, you talk about good empirical evidence, you know the story there, the Wikileaks type of thing about bad empirical evidence, but honestly this is deeply important to everyone in this room. I made a reference to the fact that in a Caribbean island today, let's use St. Lucia as an example, they had the driest droughts this summer and the rainiest rains. Now, obviously a hurricane had something to do with that, but in one year they've had the two extremes which is what they're saying will begin to happen more. It's not happening overnight, over 30 years or over 100. Anyway more on the whole political, global warming debate, the Stern Report, Al Gore. Obviously, something went wrong because most Americans in a recent survey had more disbelief about global warming than they did five years ago, so we obviously blew it as environmentalists on raising consciousness and sort of getting the policies that we hoped would have an impact on global warming. I thought you might like to just comment.

Congressman Thomas: I've watched this debate, of course, as best that I can. My first assumption is that you come to that big table to try to deal with something as monstrous as global warming. I would just have to say to you that all of the stars would have to line up, environment would have to be right, you'd have to have the best empirical data, and it would have to be a total KO of your opponents. That, of course, disturbs me, and I would rather us come to those sorts of agreements quickly. My point to you is that in something as vast and expansive as this is, we're going to have to look for starting points; we're going to have to look for models that we can find. Now, I am not a scientist, I don't know within that great sphere of global warming what that might be, but you are. And so you've got to find, its small steps. The comment that I made a while ago and I truly

believe this, that every time in my life since following policy, I use a little expression. When the economy goes in the tank, the environmental concerns go in the tank with it.

Herb and I even talked about in the recent finding of the Deficit Commission that reported to Congress on what to do about America's fiscal crisis (and we might as well be honest, that's exactly what it is, we're facing a terrible fiscal crisis that incidentally cut across party lines). It shaped this election; it will shape elections in the future. But in that case, they pointed to the fact that they need to find out what is profitable and make cuts. And one of the things that they mentioned was to cut back on expenditures for invasive species. And being a landowner and farmer myself, I see this all the time. And I know it's terribly costly for me. We have to spend tremendous amounts of money on things that it could have more wisely spent elsewhere. So, I just have to tell you, I don't hold a lot of hope in the very near future. Our government and most democratic governments as you know, respond to emergency and catastrophe. If you don't have a building catastrophe, how do you build public sentiment for doing something about it? That's why environmental work is longer, more slowly, education, building constituencies; down all the way into what we refer to as the grassroots that is at the individual level, then I'm in the community.

So, Richard, I don't have an answer for you there. I don't think that it was because the issue wasn't clearly stated or clearly framed. I think that it was all of those external things that I mentioned a while ago that influence policy making. It's never done in a vacuum. As it gets worse, and as the results become more clear and evident, it will be revisited. I can only hope, as I pointed out earlier, that we don't get into the meat and the bones before it's too late.

Democracies seem to careen from one ditch to the other, they can never get into the middle of a rut and proceed with pragmatic results, and that's just as much on human nature as it is on the political process I guess, but I've just watched it too long. We govern. There's good work that goes on, you all are doing extremely tremendous work here, and I don't mean to be cynical about this. I say that the two greatest sins of old age are cynicism and sentimentality, but I guard against it because I'm 67. I'm not cynical, but I'm realistic.

Find some good working models and concentrate on those. The big ones are just going to have to have time to ripen.

John: This was an excellent presentation. I want to acknowledge that it's not only St. Lucia that had problems and winds. We have as well. We have been having (...) a lot of rain and hurricane and storm. Now, what I see, programs like this, most of the time (...) are being left out and concentrate only on one aspect of the environment. But what I'm here to do is to observe. I'm in a position, showing through the years, that the human race is at stranger places with the wildlife. And we destroy the natural habitat like we destroyed the mangroves. They utilize that habitat for their food and their nesting and they leave their natural habitat because the human take over and build hotels and other developments and now the wildlife, they come into the community because they have

nowhere else to go. They come searching for food in the community and they see eating human. We disrupt their natural habitat and some of these things we have changed for now. I think there should be more legislation that deals with zoning and developing countries where we utilize a lot of resources, properly so that we can have what you call a greater impact in our resource distribution so we can do our conservation and we can protect the areas. We need to have more of that so that we can protect the natural habitat of the creatures. They are useful, they are part of the ecology, and when we destroy these things, we can see things like the Avian Influenza because man and wildlife are sharing the same community and we are to be careful. A lot of policymakers they are trying. I think all of us diminish the environment; all of us should take Ministry of Wildlife seriously and see how we can stop (...). I'm very happy to be here and maybe my (...) understanding of this kind of program (...) But I see now how important it is because as we destroy the environment, the ministry resources are depleted because we have to fix it. The natural wildlife are, population decreases but. The time has come where we must take some of these environmental programs because when you let the environment fail, we try to correct it, and sometimes we are reacting rather than being proactive. So kind of these program more help for us (...) Okay, that is my contribution.

Congressman Thomas: Well, I have to tell you that I couldn't hear everything, but I certainly think I understand exactly what you're saying. Let me just make a few brief comments. I might say some things here that some of you disagree with, but again I go back to my thing of constituencies and where you find support for what you're doing. There is much value in the natural wildlife and resource that we have, and it is not exploited when you protect it and develop it until it becomes of economic value to you. The hundreds of thousands of dollars that are spent in Africa, not just on hunting safaris but on photographic safaris, bird watching, "eco-tourism" as it's referred to, is extremely popular. And there's no doubt that there is a far greater monetary value than is being used by countries in different stages of development.

It's true in the United States, where you have some of the truly powerful organizations here who represent sportsmen, like the Wild Turkey Federation, the wild turkey in America is all but gone, and they've been restocked and they're in every state and every county you can imagine today. And that interest was because of the hunters who took an interest and helped raise the money and formed the organization that became their advocates.

The same with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation – vast acreages of those lands very important to those elk because they migrate from higher to lower grounds – that the elk is being reestablished in great parts. Even the wolf has been brought back. There's a controversy around the wolf that is going to have to be debated and we have to figure out how to manage them. The truth in the end is that you know that we're the steward of all of these resources. You and I can go home and do different things, but the animals are out there, and they're going to be there, and we're the ones who determine what their future is going to be.

So, wildlife resource, the group that I'm involved in called the Congressional Sportsmen Foundation is just as adequately concerned with the preservation of the wildlife habitat and the wise management of the wildlife resources, as we are about the rights of the people who hunt and fish because they're compatible.

There is a tremendous value out there that can be utilized without exploitation of the resource, and the truth is that our wildlife is nothing in the world more than the indicators of how we manage our environment and how we manage our resources, and it's like the canary in the coal mine. They tell us whether we're doing it right or not.

I'm going down to Alabama to meet with a group and give a talk. We do a lot of things that are unintentional. I grew up in the south, where the long leaf pine forest comprised about 98 million acres and was still in the second regeneration. At the turn of the century, it was the most diverse forest that we had in America. 90-something species of plants and animals out there, many of them listed today, and protected. There were 98 million acres and there might be 3 million acres of it left today. Now, we didn't go in there intentionally to destroy the wildlife, but the economy drove us to replace all the pulp and paper industry to produce cellulose from the forest. And the long-leaf wasn't able to lend itself to that.

Today, we're in an educational state, and I want whoever's restoring the long-leaf on my land which is not extensive, but a pretty big farm where we are bringing long leaf and I make a model of it so that others can see that there's another model out there to what is converting and changing. All of this is a tremendous educational process, and it's a sharing process, and it's why our credibility and trust is going back to that factor for those of us who endeavor in this process.

I'm a consultant, I'm registered as a lobbyist by law, and I don't lobby. But I can tell you that the first time I walk into a policymaker's arena and sit down and tell him something that's not true, and give him information that is not accurate, it's the end of my relationship with that policymaker.

So our trust, our small models that I've talked about, I think it's so essential. Models are what people see and relate to more than anything else, and if you can show this little progress, it is going to lead to more progress. And we're on the cutting edge here. I meant what I said, I don't think we have the luxury of making a lot of mistakes from here on out. We're down to the meat and the bone of our resources.

I hope I've made something to what you said and I salute you. I think there's nothing more important than understanding our natural resources and leaving that legacy so the next generation has the chance to do the same.

I salute your work here and I wish you the best, thank you again.

Introducer Again: Thank you Congressman Thomas for that very thought provoking presentation.