

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4204

July 5, 2000

Mr. D. Joslin
112 Newcrest Lane
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

Dear Mr. Joslin:

Thank you for contacting me regarding S. 2123, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). I appreciate your input on this important issue.

As you may know, the most recent version of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act was introduced by Senators Frank Murkowski (R-AK) and Mary Landrieu (D-LA) on February 29, 2000. This legislation would create a permanent source of funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund by setting aside a portion of the revenues collected from offshore oil and gas drilling for land acquisition and other conservation initiatives.

I share your concern about the environment, and I believe we must do everything we can to protect and preserve our natural resources for future generations. Since I was elected to the Senate, I have fought for critical funding for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, as well as Shiloh National Military Park and other Tennessee resources. In 1998, I founded the bipartisan Great Smoky Mountains National Park Congressional Caucus to ensure that the Park's needs are accorded sufficient attention by both Congress and the National Park Service.

Some have expressed concern about creating a new off-budget account, outside of the annual budget and appropriations process, to fund the programs included in CARA. The practical effect of this provision would be to place these programs above all other national priorities, including such things as our national defense, schools, and roads. Mandatory spending programs already consume over two-thirds of our entire federal budget, placing tremendous pressure on these other programs. We must carefully consider the impact of adding to that pressure.

S. 2123 has been referred to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for consideration. The House of Representatives recently passed its version of CARA (H.R. 701) by a vote of 315-102. Although I am not a member of the Energy Committee, I assure you that I will have your support for CARA in mind when the full Senate considers this legislation.

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Thank you again for contacting me.

Sincerely,



Fred Thompson
United States Senator

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