

Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs 2008 Resolutions

RES. NO. 21: IN REMEMBRANCE OF JOHN SIEBERLING

RESOLUTION: The FWOC notes with sadness the recent passing of John Sieberling, former Democratic Congressman from Akron, Ohio. John served in Congress (1970-86) with great distinction on many issues, but we will remember him most, and with the most sincere gratitude, for his enormous achievements leading to the creation of new parks and wilderness areas in our country, particularly in the Western States and in Alaska.

John came to Congress in 1970, determined, as he so often said, to secure full protection for the famous and beautiful Cuyahoga Valley near Akron. In order to make this happen most effectively, he immediately joined the House Interior Committee, on which he served with great passion and distinction for the rest of his career. The Cuyahoga Valley is now known as the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

But that victory, an important and lasting achievement in John's own crowded Midwest, turned out to be just the beginning of one of the most remarkable conservation careers ever accomplished by any member of Congress.

Because of his strong interest in all wildlands, so strongly demonstrated in the Cuyahoga effort, Mr. Sieberling was (with the active urging and support of national conservationists) made Chair of the Alaska Subcommittee, a new designation specially created by the Interior Committee leadership to handle the very complex issues surrounding Congress' intent to pass a new law creating new National Parks, Wilderness Areas, Wild Rivers, and Wildlife Refuges, (and enlarging others), in the state of Alaska.

Thanks to John's savvy, his heroic labors in chairing years of seemingly endless hearings on the subject, his eagerness to travel about the state in order to know the places firsthand, and – above all – his unfailing courtesy to opponents, the Congress passed, at the end of 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Act – permanently protecting, in Alaska, over 80 million acres of the wildest and most beautiful parts of the Nation.

But once again, that latest grand achievement was not the end of his services to the nation. During his sixteen years on the Committee, and with John's strong advocacy, that body passed bills adding additional tens of millions of acres of protected Parks and Wilderness to our country's natural legacy in nearly every western state, with special emphasis on Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, New Mexico, and Idaho.

To some it may seem unusual that a Congressman from Ohio would make it his cause to

rescue, and save, so many wild places in the West. But not to the FWOOC, which reminds members that it has actually been a long American tradition -- going way back to the 1880s -- for Congresspersons from the East or Midwest to champion preservation of the public lands of the West -- all too often over the objections of western politicians, and the special interests who supported them. To John Sieberling, the finest of that breed, and whose conservation record can never be matched, the FWOOC is forever grateful.

John, thank you for all you have done for this American Earth. We will miss you.

Submitted by Brock Evans