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PACIFIC ISLANDS DISASTER RELIEF

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[No. 87-22]

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FLOOD CONTROL

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

USE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

S. 1742, H.R. 7269, and related bills

TO AUTHORIZE FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO GUAM, AMERICAN SAMOA, AND THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS IN MAJOR DISASTERS

MAY 9, 1962

Printed for the use of the Committee on Public Works



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PACIFIC ISLANDS DISASTER RELIEF

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 1962

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FLOOD CONTROL,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 10 a.m., in room 1302, New House Office Building, Hon. Clifford Davis (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. DAVIS. The committee will be in order.

We will take up H.R. 7269, by Mr. Buckley, chairman of the House Committee on Public Works, and a similar bill, S. 1742, by Mr. Jackson, a U.S. Senator from the State of Washington.

(H.R. 7269 follows:)

[H.R. 7269, 87th Cong., 1st sess.]

A BILL To authorize Federal assistance to Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in major disasters

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That subsections (b) and (c) of section 2 of the Act entitled "An Act to authorize Federal assistance to States and local governments in major disasters, and for other purposes," approved September 30, 1950 (64 Stat. 1109), as amended, are amended to read as follows:

"(b) 'United States' includes the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

"(c) 'State' means any State in the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands."

SEC. 2. Section 3 of the said Act is amended by inserting in clause (d), after the words "replacements of public facilities of" the words "States and".

(Identical bills were introduced: H.R. 7641 by Mr. Aspinall, H.R. 7642 by Mr. O'Brien of New York, H.R. 7643 by Mr. Saylor, H.R. 7644 by Mr. Westland, and H.R. 7645 by Mr. Kyl.)

Mr. DAVIS. Now we will ask Mr. Taitano, Director of the Office of Territories of the Department of Interior, to speak on this.

This has been introduced by department request by the chairman of the Public Works Committee. It is H.R. 7269. This is to include Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under the Federal Disaster Relief Act.

Have a seat, please, sir.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD F. TAITANO, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF TERRITORIES, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Mr. TAITANO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAVIS. This was requested by the Department of the Interior.

This bill, introduced by Senator Jackson, carrying the number S. 1742, was passed last August 21 by the Senate.

Now, then, it has passed the Senate already, and Interior has been insisting on its passage by the House.

Will you please make a short statement as to the reason for the Interior Department desiring this bill?

Mr. TAITANO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I have a written statement but, as you ask, I will just make a very short verbal statement.

(The statement of Mr. Taitano follows:)

STATEMENT OF RICHARD F. TAITANO, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF TERRITORIES, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, AT A HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, IN CONNECTION WITH H.R. 7641

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be able to appear here today to testify with respect to H.R. 7641, which, if enacted, would extend the provisions of the National Disaster Relief Act to the territories of Guam and American Samoa and to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

S. 1742, which, as it has been noted, has been passed by the Senate, and is identical to H.R. 7641, was initiated by the Department of the Interior on the basis of the existing need for Federal disaster relief in all of the territories of the United States and in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The legislation, which we now seek to amend, extended Federal disaster relief to the several States, Hawaii, Alaska, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Whatever reason may have existed originally for excluding Guam and American Samoa is in my opinion no longer valid, assuming for the moment that validity ever existed. Additionally, in the 12 years since the enactment of the original legislation, our responsibility in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands has increased and been clarified to the extent that Federal disaster relief there is both justified and badly needed. I therefore respectfully ask favorable consideration of this bill by the committee.

We are seeking the extension of Federal disaster relief to the named areas not because we think there may someday be a disaster and we want to be prepared, but rather because in the past few years there have been natural disasters and because Federal disaster relief has been needed and has not been immediately available. As has been pointed out, relief has been furnished through direct appropriations for the relief of the specific area damaged, but this relief is necessarily delayed by the legislative processes which are a part of relief in such form. We know that there have been serious disasters in all three of the named areas, and we know also that the odds are overwhelmingly in favor of further similar disasters. Just as the Caribbean is the spawning ground for the devastating hurricanes that plague the Gulf States and the east coast of the United States each year, an area of the Pacific in the heart of the trust territory is the spawning ground of the typhoons which so frequently wreck havoc among the Pacific islands as they move toward Japan. Guam and areas of the trust territory have been hit before and will almost unquestionably be hit again. When it happens, as we are sure it will, we hope to see Federal disaster relief immediately available to the people of the stricken areas.

From data contained in our files, and on the basis of recent inquiries, the following information is submitted which we believe is indicative of the probability of future natural disasters. During each of the calendar years 1960 and 1961, 14 storms were generated in the Micronesia-Guam area. These storms produced winds of varying velocities as follows:

1960:	<i>Knots</i>	1961:	<i>Knots</i>
1 storm.....	175	2 storms.....	190
Do.....	150	1 storm.....	145
2 storms.....	135	Do.....	135
Do.....	120	2 storms.....	120
Do.....	115	3 storms.....	80
Do.....	105	1 storm.....	75
1 storm.....	80	Do.....	70
2 storms.....	75	3 storms.....	65
1 storm.....	70		

Since a measurement in knots represents a velocity greater than an equal number of miles per hour (a knot equals 6080.2 feet per hour), the potential danger and destructive force in storms of this nature can well be imagined. Fortunately, populated areas in the trust territory, and the territory of Guam, have not been struck frequently. However, areas of the trust territory sustained relatively serious damage from Typhoon Lola in 1957, with such damage estimated at \$284,552, and Typhoon Ophelia in 1958. After the latter, which followed closely after Lola, the government of the trust territory estimated that \$1,425,000 would be required for replacement and rehabilitation. In 1960, another typhoon, also designated Ophelia, struck in the trust territory, and in 1961 a further storm did approximately \$10,000 damage to two populated islands. During the past 6 years 63 typhoons have been officially recorded as having originated or having passed through the trust territory. During that same period 20 tropical storms, not of typhoon intensity, occurred in the area.

Guam, which is immediately adjacent to the trust territory and potentially subject to the foregoing storms, has reported six damage-inflicting typhoons which passed over or close to Guam, one each in 1949, 1953, 1954, and 1957, and two in 1961. Typhoon Lola, in 1957, inflicted damages to civilian, local government, and military property in Guam estimated at over \$5 million.

American Samoa reported hurricane damage in 1959 totaling approximately \$110,000 and hurricane damage in 1961 of approximately \$84,000. In addition, American Samoa reported one instance of tidal wave damage in 1960 of approximately \$15,000.

As noted previously, aid has been given in most instances by various Federal agencies and the military, to the extent that they were able to do so, and the Congress through direct appropriation, and for this we and the people of the territories are thankful, but even so we believe it is most desirable to put disaster relief in Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands on the same basis as the States, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, and therefore we urge the enactment of the legislation now before the committee.

Thank you.

Mr. DAVIS. All right, sir.

Mr. TAITANO. The Department of Interior, as you know, has the Office of Territories which has jurisdiction of offshore territories of the United States.

This includes, in the Caribbean, the Virgin Islands, and in the Pacific we have American Samoa, we have Guam, and we have the trust territories.

Now, the present law covers the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, but it does not include in its coverage our Pacific islands; namely, Samoa and Guam and the trust territories.

What we are asking here is to extend the coverage of the law to these islands so that whenever we have a disaster we can immediately move in and help the people and the governments there.

In my statement on page 2, there is a record for the last 2 calendar years of storms which have originated out in the area, the trust area.

This is the so-called Micronesia-Guam area.

For each year we had a total of 14 typhoons in this area, and we call them "typhoons" rather than "hurricanes," and, as you can see from the tabulation, most of the typhoons are up in the velocities of over 100 knots.

This is during those years. So that, fortunately, however, we have not been having every storm hit the islands which are populated, but when they do hit the islands they do great damage.

In Guam alone, in 1957, the damage from one typhoon was about \$5 million. In the trust territory we have had over \$280,000 in damage. In 1958 the typhoon damage in the trust territories was over \$1 million.

Now, these figures, of course, are very conservative and primarily relate to public facilities.

That summarizes it.

Mr. DAVIS. In other words, under the existing law, the Relief Disaster Act, our Government can go in and give relief under that act in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico——

Mr. TAITANO. That is correct.

Mr. DAVIS (continuing). But you do not have the authority to extend the disaster relief to Guam, American Samoa, and the trust territories?

Mr. TAITANO. That is correct, sir.

Mr. DAVIS. And you have shown that they have had a great number of typhoons with substantial damage, and you want to be enabled to go in and extend disaster relief, as you have under the existing law to these other——

Mr. TAITANO. Yes, sir. That is right, sir.

Mr. DAVIS. Any questions?

Mr. BALDWIN. I have a question, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Taitano, as I understand it—because I remember at the time that it was applicable in my area, when we had a serious flood a few years ago—this Disaster Relief Act would mean that if any public building or public road was damaged the Federal Government will come in and provide certain matching funds for the rebuilding of that road or building it back to its former level.

It would not apply to any damage to any private property.

Is that correct?

Mr. TAITANO. As I understand it, sir, at the present time the law authorizes "with or without compensation." I do not know that it provides for any matching formula.

It does provide that the Federal agencies, after the President has directed that this is a disaster area, the Federal agencies may lend personnel, materials, equipment, and other facilities with or without compensation, depending, I understand, on these titles of the agencies involved, as to how much materials they have and how much money do they they have at the time.

Mr. BALDWIN. Yes; but it is to be lent for the purposes of restoring the public facilities and not private property?

Mr. TAITANO. The law, I understand, sir, authorizes private help to this extent, that, for instance, if the Department of Agriculture has food or the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has medicine, they can provide that for distribution directly or through the American Red Cross, as I understand it.

Mr. BALDWIN. They can also provide loans to business firms if the business firms suffer damages, loans from the Small Business Administration, but basically what I am driving at is there would be no gifts of funds to private individuals who lost a house or something like that——

Mr. TAITANO. No, sir.

Mr. BALDWIN (continuing). Under the terms of the act?

Mr. TAITANO. No, sir; not money. I understand that not money except loans from the Small Business Administration, which can declare an area a disaster area and lend money, but not give it.

Mr. BALDWIN. Right.

Mr. DAVIS. I think you have cleared it up for the record, Mr. Baldwin.

Are there any other questions?

Thank you very, very much for coming up today.

Mr. TAITANO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, sir.

(The following was furnished for insertion:)

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE WAYNE N. ASPINALL, CHAIRMAN, INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, ON H.R. 7641 AND RELATED BILLS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS ON MAY 9, 1962

Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure to be present today to endorse the legislation now before the Committee on Public Works on my own behalf and on behalf of the members of my committee who have introduced identical or very similar legislation, including Congressman O'Brien, chairman of the Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs, and Congressmen Saylor, Westland, and Kyl.

As you are aware, S. 1742, which is identical to H.R. 7641, has already passed the Senate. It is my sincere hope that H.R. 7641 or its Senate counterpart will receive favorable consideration by this committee and will soon be acted on affirmatively by the House of Representatives in order that the extension of disaster relief to the specified territories of the United States and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands proposed in the legislation can become a reality.

Since the United States has accepted the responsibility for the welfare of the Pacific territories of Guam and American Samoa, and under the existing trusteeship agreement with the United Nations has assumed similar responsibilities with respect to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, it seems logical that we should extend to them the protection and assistance already available to the several States and to the Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico through the National Disaster Relief Act. As a practical matter, extension of the National Disaster Relief Act to Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands will represent an offer of real assistance to areas which, more than many other areas already covered, need that assistance in view of their remoteness, the general inability of the local governments to cope with serious natural disasters, either financially or with respect to available material and supplies, and the probability of such serious natural disasters in the form of hurricanes, typhoons, or tidal waves.

I would also bring to the attention of committee members the fact that this proposed legislation does not involve the prospects of additional expenditures since the Congress heretofore has generally seen fit, and rightfully so, to provide assistance to these territories in the case of past disasters. The legislation before you today would merely facilitate making such assistance immediately available to a stricken island or community. While admittedly any assistance is better than none at all, timely assistance is by far the most useful and is, I believe, a very real part of our responsibility to the inhabitants of the Pacific islands.

I understand that Mr. Richard F. Taitano, Director of the Office of Territories, is present today and will testify on this bill and I will therefore not comment with respect to past disasters in the areas proposed for inclusion in the National Disaster Relief Act or the probability of future disasters.

I introduced H.R. 7641 because I believed that there existed a real need for such legislation and because I believed that meeting that need is a responsibility of the Congress which must be discharged. I therefore urge that my colleagues on this committee report favorably on this legislation.

(Whereupon, at 10:45 p.m., the committee proceeded into executive session.)



I thank you very much for your kind letter of the 11th inst. and for the information you have given me regarding the proposed legislation.

The following is a list of the names of the members of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Hawaii, as of the 1st day of January, 1900.

Mr. [Name] is a resident of Honolulu, and was elected to the office of [Position] for the term ending on the 31st day of December, 1900. He is a member of the [Organization].

Mr. [Name] is a resident of [Location], and was elected to the office of [Position] for the term ending on the 31st day of December, 1900. He is a member of the [Organization].

Mr. [Name] is a resident of [Location], and was elected to the office of [Position] for the term ending on the 31st day of December, 1900. He is a member of the [Organization].

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(Whereupon, at 10:45 a.m., the committee proceeded into executive session.)



