

Calendar No. 806

106TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 2090

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 13, 2000

Received; read the first time

SEPTEMBER 14, 2000

Read the second time and placed on the calendar

AN ACT

To direct the Secretary of Commerce to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel to report to the Congress on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanography program.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Exploration of the Seas
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) During the past 100 years, scientists work-
9 ing with marine fossils, both underwater and high in
10 the mountains, have traced the origins of life on
11 Earth to the sea, beginning approximately 3 billion
12 years ago. Today, life on our planet remains depend-
13 ent on the vitality of the sea.

14 (2) More than two-thirds of the Earth’s surface
15 is covered by water, with oceans and inland seas ac-
16 counting for almost 140 million square miles.

17 (3) The United Nations forecasts a worldwide
18 population of 8.9 billion by the year 2050, a 50 per-
19 cent increase from 5.9 billion in 1999. As this trend
20 in population growth continues, increasing demands
21 will be placed on ocean and coastal resources, not
22 only as a result of population growth in coastal re-
23 gions, but also from the need to harvest increasing
24 amounts of marine life as a source of food to satisfy
25 world protein requirements, and from the mining of

1 energy-producing materials from offshore resource
2 deposits.

3 (4) The ocean remains one of the Earth's last
4 unexplored frontiers. It has stirred our imaginations
5 over the millennia, led to the discovery of new lands,
6 immense mineral deposits, and reservoirs of other
7 resources, and produced startling scientific findings.
8 Recognizing the importance of the marine environ-
9 ment, the need for scientific exploration to expand
10 our knowledge of the world's oceans is crucial if we
11 are to ensure that the marine environment will be
12 managed sustainably.

13 (5) The seas possess enormous economic and
14 environmental importance. Some ocean resources,
15 such as fisheries and minerals, are well recognized.
16 Oil use has increased dramatically in recent times,
17 and the sea bed holds large deposits of largely undis-
18 covered reserves. Other ocean resources offer prom-
19 ise for the future. In addition to fossil fuels, the
20 ocean floor contains deposits of gravel, sand, man-
21 ganese crusts and nodules, tin, gold, and diamonds.
22 Marine mineral resources are extensive, yet poorly
23 understood.

24 (6) The oceans also offer rich untapped poten-
25 tial for medications. Marine plants and animals pos-

1 sess inestimable potential in the treatment of human
2 illnesses. Coral reefs, sometimes described as the
3 rain forests of the sea, contain uncommon chemicals
4 that may be used to fight diseases for which sci-
5 entists have not yet found a cure, such as cancer,
6 acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and
7 diabetes. While the number of new chemical com-
8 pounds that can be derived from land based plants
9 and microbial fermentation is limited, scientists have
10 only just begun to explore the sea's vast molecular
11 potential.

12 (7) In spite of the development of new tech-
13 nologies, comparatively little of the ocean has been
14 studied. The leadership role of the United States has
15 been eroded by a gradual decrease in funding sup-
16 port, even while public opinion surveys indicate that
17 ocean exploration is at least as important as space
18 exploration.

19 (8) The National Academy of Sciences has the
20 means by which to study and make determinations
21 regarding the adoption and establishment of a co-
22 ordinated oceanography program for the exploration
23 of the seas, in which the National Oceanic and At-
24 mospheric Administration could participate in a role
25 similar to that of the National Aeronautics and

1 Space Administration with regard to the Inter-
2 national Space Station.

3 **SEC. 3. COORDINATED OCEANOGRAPHIC PROGRAM ADVI-**
4 **SORY PANEL.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the
6 date of the enactment of this Act and subject to the avail-
7 ability of appropriations, the Secretary of Commerce shall
8 contract with the National Academy of Sciences to estab-
9 lish the Coordinated Oceanography Program Advisory
10 Panel (in this Act referred to as the “Panel”), comprised
11 of experts in ocean studies, including individuals with aca-
12 demic experience in oceanography, marine biology, marine
13 geology, ichthyology, and ocean related economics.

14 (b) CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON.—The
15 Panel shall elect a chairperson and a vice-chairperson.

16 (c) TERMINATION.—The Panel shall cease to exist 30
17 days after submitting its final report and recommenda-
18 tions pursuant to section 4.

19 **SEC. 4. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—No later than 18 months after its
21 establishment, the Panel shall report to the Committee on
22 Resources of the House of Representatives and the Com-
23 mittee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the
24 Senate on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated
25 oceanography program. In preparing its report, the Panel

1 shall examine existing oceanographic efforts and the level
2 of coordination or cooperation between and among partici-
3 pating countries and institutions.

4 (b) INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP.—To assist in mak-
5 ing its feasibility determination under subsection (a), the
6 Panel shall convene an international workshop with par-
7 ticipation from interested nations and a broad range of
8 persons representing scientists, engineers, policy makers,
9 regulators, industry, and other interested parties.

10 (c) FINAL REPORT.—The Panel shall include in its
11 final report recommendations for a national oceans explo-
12 ration strategy, which will—

13 (1) define objectives and priorities, and note im-
14 portant scientific, historic, and cultural sites;

15 (2) promote collaboration among research orga-
16 nizations;

17 (3) examine the potential for new ocean explo-
18 ration technologies;

19 (4) describe those areas of study in which na-
20 tional or international oceanographic cooperation is
21 currently being undertaken;

22 (5) identify areas of study in which knowledge
23 of the oceans is inadequate;

1 (6) ensure coordination with the National Oce-
2 anic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Pro-
3 tected Area Center;

4 (7) ensure that newly discovered organisms
5 with medicinal or commercial potential are identified
6 for possible research and development; and

7 (8) identify countries and organizations that
8 would be likely to participate in a coordinated ocean-
9 ography program.

10 (d) IMPLEMENTATION.—If the Panel determines that
11 a coordinated oceanography program is feasible and has
12 significant value for advancing mankind's knowledge of
13 the ocean, the Panel shall include in its final report rec-
14 ommendations for implementing such program, including
15 recommendations regarding—

16 (1) the institutional arrangements, treaties, or
17 laws necessary to implement a coordinated oceanog-
18 raphy program;

19 (2) the methods and incentives needed to secure
20 cooperation and commitments from participating na-
21 tions to ensure that the benefit that each nation that
22 is a party to any international agreement estab-
23 lishing a coordinated oceanography program receives
24 is contingent upon meeting the nation's obligations
25 (financial and otherwise) under such an agreement;

1 (3) the costs associated with establishing a co-
2 ordinated oceanography program;

3 (4) the types of undersea vehicles, ships, ob-
4 serving systems, or other equipment that would be
5 necessary to operate a coordinated oceanography
6 program; and

7 (5) how utilization of aboriginal observational
8 data and other historical information may be best
9 incorporated into a coordinated oceanography pro-
10 gram.

11 **SEC. 5. OBTAINING DATA.**

12 Subject to national security restrictions, the Panel
13 may obtain from any department or agency of the United
14 States information necessary to enable it to carry out this
15 Act. Upon request of the chairperson of the Panel, the
16 head of any department or agency shall furnish that infor-
17 mation at no cost to the Panel.

18 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

19 There are authorized to be appropriated for the pur-
20 poses of carrying out this Act, and to remain available
21 until expended, \$1,500,000.

 Passed the House of Representatives September 12,
2000.

Attest:

JEFF TRANDAHL,

Clerk.

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