

I did have some concerns about provisions affecting deed records so that potential homeowners would know whether or not a property had been polluted and, if so, whether the problem had been remediated. Fortunately, we were able to work this out to everyone's satisfaction in the committee.

I want to thank Chairman SCHAEFER for his assistance in perfecting this legislation. I am very happy to support it today.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 2967 because it reauthorizes the remediation activities of environmental damage created at uranium mill sites. Without this legislation, the current authorization for cleanup will expire on September 30, 1996.

Uranium mill tailings were created as a result of Federal Government activities to secure supplies of uranium for the Manhattan project—a top-secret activity designed to build the world's first nuclear weapon—located in my congressional district in New Mexico. This development led to continued production of nuclear weapons and the use of nuclear energy production for electric generation.

The milling process separates high-grade uranium from low-grade surrounding rock. These high volume sand-like leftovers emit low levels of radioactivity and consequently need to be disposed of properly by the Department of Energy.

The original Uranium Mill Tailings Control Act of 1978 provided for the cleanup of 22 title I sites—abandoned and inactive sites which were used primarily for Federal purposes.

Due to the significant volume of tailings to be remediated and more strict cleanup standards imposed after the 1978 act, more time and additional funds are necessary to complete the Department of Energy's activities.

H.R. 2967 will allow the Department an additional 2 years to safely complete the cleanup process. This is a good piece of legislation which will address public health and environmental concerns in many western States. I urge you to vote in favor of H.R. 2967.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2967, a bill to extend the authorization of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act [UMTRCA] through 1998.

This bill is sound environmental cleanup legislation, and it marks the final chapter of the cold war. The mill tailings date back to the Manhattan project of 1942 and the national security purchases of uranium by the Federal Government from 1947 to 1970. During this period, there were no environmental cleanup standards for mill sites, nor were any standards enacted into law until the 1970's. The United States and the free world benefited from this program; therefore, it is just that the Federal Government pay for its share of cleanup costs.

Of particular note is the environmental reclamation project at Uravan on Colorado's western slope. The mill tailings date back to Madam Curie's radium research at the turn of the century. In 1942, as part of the war effort, the Manhattan Army Engineering District contracted with UMETCO Minerals Corp. for uranium produced at the site.

Today, UMETCO is in the process of restoring the environment to its former natural beauty. This has been a true success story for the Department of Energy, State of Colorado, local government entities, and UMETCO. The

accomplishments of this project clearly demonstrate that the public and private sector can work together to preserve the environment.

In closing, I would also like to point out that the UMTRCA legislation is fiscally responsible. In Colorado, \$100,000,000 will be saved by keeping the Cheney disposal facility near Grand Junction open so that the mill tailings that are uncovered in future road and nearby utility repair work can be disposed of in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is effective in preserving the environment and should be promptly enacted into law.

I commend my good friend from Colorado [Mr. SCHAEFER] on this sound environmental legislation which takes into account the needs of Colorado communities and the budgetary constraints of the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHAEFER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COMBEST). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SCHAEFER] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2967, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHAEFER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2967, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

OVERSEAS CITIZENS VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1996

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3058) to amend the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act to extend the period for receipt of absentee ballots, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3058

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Overseas Citizens Voting Rights Act of 1996".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF PERIOD FOR RECEIPT OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS.

Section 102 of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-1) is amended—

(1) by striking out "and" at the end of paragraph (2);

(2) by striking out the period at the end of paragraph (3) and inserting in lieu thereof "and"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(4) permit absentee ballots to be received at least until the close of polls on election day.".

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF FEDERAL WRITE-IN ABSENTEE BALLOT PROVISIONS TO SPECIAL, PRIMARY, AND RUNOFF ELECTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 103(a) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-2(a)) is amended—

(1) by inserting after "general" the following: "special, primary, and runoff"; and

(2) by striking out "States," and inserting in lieu thereof "State".

(b) SPECIAL RULES.—Section 103(c) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-2(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting after "candidate or" the following: "with respect to a general or special election,"; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by inserting after "candidate or" the following: "with respect to a general election".

(c) USE OF APPROVED STATE ABSENTEE BALLOT IN PLACE OF FEDERAL WRITE-IN ABSENTEE BALLOT.—Section 103(e) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-2(e)) is amended by striking out "a general" and inserting in lieu thereof "an".

(d) CERTAIN STATES EXEMPTED.—Section 103(f) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-2(f)) is amended by striking out "general" each place it appears.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to elections taking place after December 31, 1996.

SEC. 4. USE OF ELECTRONIC RETURN OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 104 of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-3) is amended—

(1) by striking out "and" at the end of paragraph (8);

(2) by striking out the period at the end of paragraph (9) and inserting in lieu thereof "and"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(10) in consultation with the Presidential designee, consider means for providing for expeditious methods for the return of absentee ballots, including return by electronic transmittal, with maximum regard for ballot secrecy, audit procedures, and other considerations relating to the integrity of the election process.".

(b) SECRECY AND VERIFICATION OF ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED BALLOTS.—Section 104 of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-3) is amended—

(1) by striking out "To afford" and inserting in lieu thereof "(a) IN GENERAL.—To afford"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(b) SECRECY AND VERIFICATION OF ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED BALLOTS.—No electronic transmittal or related procedure under subsection (a)(10) that is paid for, in whole or in part, with Federal funds may be carried out in any manner that (1) permits any person other than the voter to view a completed ballot, or (2) otherwise compromises ballot secrecy. At the earliest possible opportunity, the original of each completed ballot that is transmitted electronically shall be submitted in a secrecy envelope to the applicable location in the State involved."

SEC. 5. ELECTRONIC TRANSMITTAL OF BALLOTING MATERIALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C.

1973ff et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new sections:

"SEC. 108. ELECTRONIC TRANSMITTAL OF BALLOTING MATERIALS.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—Each State, in cooperation with the Presidential designee, shall establish a system for electronic transmittal of balloting materials for overseas voters. The system shall provide for—

"(1) electronic transmittal as an alternative method for transmittal of balloting materials to overseas voters;

"(2) use of the format of the official post card form prescribed under section 101 (or the format of any other registration form provided for under State law) for purposes of absentee voter registration application and absentee ballot application, with the condition that a State may require receipt of a form with an original signature before the ballot of the voter is counted;

"(3) furnishing of absentee ballots by electronic transmittal, from locations within the State, as selected by the chief State election official, to overseas voters who request such transmittal; and

"(4) special alternative methods of transmittal of balloting materials for use only when required by an emergency declared by the President or the Congress.

"(b) FUNDING REQUIREMENT.—The requirements of subsection (a) shall apply to a State with respect to an election—

"(1) if there is full payment by the Federal Government of any additional cost incurred by the State after the date of the enactment of this Act for the implementation of such subsection (a), with such costs to be determined by the Presidential designee and the chief State election official, acting jointly; or

"(2) in any case of less than full payment, as described in paragraph (1), if the State, in the manner provided for under the law of the State, agrees to the application of such requirements.

"SEC. 109. NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR APPROVAL OF ELECTRONIC TRANSMITTAL METHOD.

"The Presidential designee may not approve use of any method of electronic transmittal for purposes of this Act, unless, not later than 90 days before the effective date of the approval, the Presidential designee submits to the Congress a detailed report describing the method."

(b) DEFINITION AMENDMENT.—Section 107 of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-6) is amended—

(1) by striking out "and" at the end of paragraph (7);

(2) by striking out the period at the end of paragraph (8) and inserting in lieu thereof "; and"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(9) the term 'electronic transmittal' means, with respect to balloting materials, transmittal by facsimile machine or other electronic method approved by the Presidential designee."

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to elections taking place after December 31, 1996.

SEC. 6. REPORT PROVISION.

Section 101(b)(6) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-(b)(6)) is amended—

(1) by striking out "participation and" and inserting in lieu thereof "participation,"; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: "; and a separate analysis of electronic transmittal of balloting materials".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS] and the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS].

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us amends the Uniform and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act. It was unanimously passed in committee on March 12, 1996.

Currently, 6 million citizens are covered by the provisions of the original act passed in 1986, a decade ago. This includes 1.5 million U.S. military personnel in and out of the United States, their families, and over 3 million U.S. citizens living overseas.

This measure will make it easier for overseas citizens to cast absentee ballots in a timely fashion, and help to guarantee ballot integrity for all those covered in the act by requiring ballot secrecy and the return of the original paper ballots to the State where the ballots are counted. A manager's amendment strengthens the guarantee of ballot secrecy in the bill by providing for ballot confidentiality throughout the federally funded transmission process, not just at the voting location.

I would emphasize, also, that the Federal Government will be paying the full cost of this program, particularly that required to electronically transmit ballot materials. Therefore, this is not an unfunded mandate being imposed on local units of government.

A great many States already provide for electronic transmission of ballot applications and some do for ballots as well. This bill would encourage all States to ensure that all American citizens everywhere throughout the world have speedy access to the voting box.

Mr. Speaker, I urge that we suspend the rules and pass this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. EHLERS, and Chairman THOMAS in cosponsoring H.R. 3058, to amend the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

This is a small, but important, step forward in trying to make it easier for American citizens to register and vote.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program, which administers the law and which operates under the Secretary of Defense, has been very successful over the years in working with the States to facilitate registration and voting by our military personnel, their families, and the several million American citizens who live abroad.

The program has been responsible for a number of innovative ideas in the elections area, including the promotion of electronically transmitted ballot materials which were essential during

the Gulf war, with so many military personnel in a combat area during the election period.

Because of its established organization and lines of authority, the military portion of the voting assistance program has run well and has achieved voting participation rates well in excess of the overall population.

But the several million overseas American civilians are widely dispersed, often isolated, and can be found anywhere around the globe. Many are nowhere near an embassy or consulate but do have access to a fax machine. These amendments, by allowing registration and voting materials to be sent and received electronically while ensuring their security and integrity, will provide a much greater opportunity for those Americans living abroad to participate in our most important democratic responsibility.

This legislation is strongly supported by the Department of Defense and by the various organizations representing citizens abroad. I urge my colleagues to support passage of H.R. 3058.

Mr. Speaker, having no requests for time, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to thank the gentleman from California for his support of this legislation and for his comments. He points out very clearly the need to update this legislation to ensure that every citizen, whether serving in the military or as a civilian overseas, has the opportunity to express their opinion, and voice their opinion at the ballot box. I appreciate the support of the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO].

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. EHLERS] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3058, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sundry messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Edwin Thomas, one of his secretaries.

QUESTION OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

Mr. GUNDERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of personal privilege.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair is aware of the insertion into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and believes the gentleman raises a question of personal privilege.

The gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. GUNDERSON] is recognized for 1 hour.