

the classroom to the public at large through literally hundreds of annual art contests and exhibitions of art work at State fairs, wildlife refuges, museums and educational conferences. From the southern bayous of Louisiana to the prairie potholes of North Dakota to the tidal marshes along the Pacific Coast such public exposure has attracted and informed thousands of people annually who might otherwise remain unenlightened about the need to protect and conserve the wildlife and wetlands we enjoy today.

Mr. Speaker, I do commend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) for his introduction of this legislation. I especially appreciate his support and again the support of our chairman the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) in working with us to expand the eligibility of this program to now include the insular areas as well as the District of Columbia.

This is a noncontroversial bill that deserves the support of this House, and I do strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

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

Before I yield back the balance of my time I would like to just make note that our good friend is back in the reader's chair. Mr. Paul Hayes is back with us today for the first time, and I know that all of my colleagues will want to join with me saying how pleased we are to have him back and that he has recovered from a little bump that he had awhile back, and we are delighted that he is with us today.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), the sponsor and the author of this legislation.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), my good friend the chairman of the subcommittee, and the ranking member of the committee for their leadership, for being able to pass this in the subcommittee, bringing it to the full committee and onto the floor, and today I rise in support of H.R. 2496, the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act. This is a noncontroversial program that increases the capacity for schools, States and other institutions to conduct wildlife conservation and education programs.

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I had the honor of sponsoring the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act back in the 103rd Congress when I was a subcommittee chairman of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. The purpose of the program, then and now, is to provide elementary and secondary school students with educational opportunities in the conservation and management of migratory birds. The program supplements our schools by

offering an educational component to conduct conservation programs.

As economic and population growth continues and increasingly affects our environment and natural resources, we have to work harder to find ways to preserve both our world and our standard of living.

Solutions to this challenge, like any challenge, begin with knowledge and understanding, and that begins with education. This is why so many people have embraced educational methods, such as the Junior Duck Stamp Program. This program teaches grade school students appreciation for environmental science and habitat conservation, while rewarding their hard work and effort with support for continuing education.

This is a great tool to help educate students who have not had the opportunity many of us have had to spend time with nature and to develop appreciation of our resources and their management.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to tell my friends that over 400,000 students are involved in this program; and, again, I would like to thank the chairman and the ranking member, and I ask my friends to support this bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take one moment to congratulate the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) for his great effort in bringing this bill to the floor and for making it possible for us to reauthorize this program. It is certainly, as I said before, a very worthwhile program, and I congratulate the gentleman from Texas for his forethought in bringing it to us.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KOLBE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2496, 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.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

RONGELAP RESETTLEMENT ACT OF 1999

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2970) to prescribe certain terms for the resettlement of the people of Rongelap Atoll due to conditions cre-

ated at Rongelap during United States administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2970

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 "Rongelap Resettlement Act of 1999".

SEC. 2. RONGELAP RESETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

The "Agreement Regarding United States Assistance in the Resettlement of Rongelap Concluded Between the United States Department of the Interior and Rongelap Atoll Local Government", accepted by the Secretary of the Interior on behalf of the President on September 19, 1996, as amended, shall continue in effect: *Provided*, That the authority to make disbursements pursuant to section 3 of such Agreement is extended for a period of 10 years after the existing authority terminates and that all such disbursements are—

(1) subject to the percentum limitation set forth in the Agreement;

(2) used by the Rongelap Atoll local government to manage and support community reunification, recovery, and mobilization for resettlement, and other activities associated with and in support of resettlement for the dislocated populations at Majuro, Ebeye, Mejjatto, and elsewhere in the Marshall Islands; and

(3) subject to the disapproval of the Secretary based upon a determination that a particular use of funds does not effectively contribute to resettlement or address conditions of dislocation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentleman from Guam (Mr. UNDERWOOD) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2970.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, Rongelap Atoll is one of four atolls which were contaminated by high-level radiation from nuclear testing during the time the islands were administered as a trust territory by the United States. The people of Rongelap were first forced to leave their home in 1954. Since that time, they have returned to reside in Rongelap based on incorrect assurances that the islands were safe.

Now, after independent, scientific studies confirmed by the Department of Energy and the National Academy of Science, a federally funded resettlement plan is being implemented with the full involvement and consent of the Rongelap community. In 1996, Congress provided trust funds for the implementation of this plan for the resettlement

of the 2,900 Rongelapese living in various parts of the Marshall Islands. Congress also required the administration to enter into an agreement with the Rongelap community to manage the resettlement process.

H.R. 2970, Mr. Speaker, approves this resettlement agreement, allows the distribution of funds already provided by Congress for this purpose and provides that the Secretary of Interior may disapprove expenditures that do not effectively advance resettlement.

This legislation, introduced by the gentleman from Alaska (Chairman YOUNG) and the ranking Democrat of the Committee on Resources, the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER), creates no cost to the Federal Government and is supported by the Rongelap community and the Marshall Islands. I urge all Members to support the measure.

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

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

(Mr. UNDERWOOD asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to support the passage of H.R. 2970, which provides for the continuance of the 1996 Rongelap Resettlement Agreement between the Department of Interior, the Rongelap Atoll local government and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Without this legislation, the resettlement activities being carried out by Rongelap's local government would be jeopardized and the eventual return of the Rongelap people back to their Atoll could be delayed well into the next millennium.

As you may know, Rongelap, as has been pointed out by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), is one of four atolls of the Marshall Islands which were contaminated due to nuclear testing during the time the islands were administered as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific islands and as a U.N. trusteeship under the control of the United States.

In the post-World War II era, islands that were identified as nuclear test sites by the U.S. were evacuated and their people displaced from their homelands which they had known for centuries. The resulting contamination of their land and surrounding coral reef ecosystems have made it very difficult for their safe return to their islands.

In 1996 Congress authorized the implementation of a plan for the resettlement of the people of Rongelap, which now comprises a population of some 2,900 persons. Congress expressly required the President to establish an agreement to govern the resettlement process as intended by Public Law 104-134. In fulfilling that requirement, the Secretary of the Department of Interior entered into an agreement with the Rongelap Atoll local government for a resettlement program that includes radiological rehabilitation and

reconstruction of the islands, as well as a community recovery and reunification program.

A trust fund established by Public Law 102-154 ensures that the local government is able to carry out the resettlement program. The principle of the trust fund requires that 50 percent of the annual income be dedicated to island rehabilitation. An amount not to exceed 50 percent of the income is made available to Rongelap's local government to manage and administer the resettlement program through their local government. This enables the government to carry out community recovery programs and address the needs of the Rongelap people through government services and support efforts.

This arrangement is set to expire next year unless Congress acts now to extend that authority. If the current arrangement is permitted to terminate, a resettlement administering authority that would essentially duplicate the local government would have to be established and funded in order to organize and mobilize the community for resettlement. This process could take many years to complete and would only serve to delay the return of the Rongelap people, which is our objective and which is their objective, and a legitimate one at that.

The success of the Rongelap local government, however, to carry out resettlement activities, has far exceeded the agreement and expectations of both the Congress and the Department of Interior. In recognition of their success and progress, it would be imprudent to abort the current approach.

This legislation is clearly bipartisan, supported by the Rongelap Atoll local government, cosponsored by the Committee on Resources chairman, the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG), and the committee's ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER). I congratulate both of them for acting swiftly to ensure that the forward progress of the Rongelap government is continued.

I also recognize and congratulate my fellow island brothers. I represent an area that is closest to the Marshall Islands of all the districts represented in the House. I congratulate my fellow islands brothers and sisters for their effective management of the resettlement trust fund and their success in planning and discharging sound public policies to resettle their homelands.

I encourage my colleagues to support the passage of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a statement from His Excellency, Banny deBrum, the ambassador of the Marshall Islands to the United States.

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

To: Hon. Robert Underwood.
From: RMI Embassy.
Subject: House Committee Report.
Date: October 26, 1999.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN UNDERWOOD: The RMI agrees with the findings and recommenda-

tion set forth in House Report 106-404, adopted unanimously by the Resources Committee on October 20, 1999. As documented in Appendix B of the Committee's report, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) strongly supports the request of the Rongelap Atoll Local Government (RALGOV) for ratification by Congress of the resettlement program established by agreement between the Department of the Interior (DOI, RMI and Rongelap). The resettlement program fulfills the policy goals set forth by Congress in Section 118(d) of P.L. 104-134, and since all parties view the policy and the programs a success, Rongelap and the RMI do not want to leave continuation of the program to chance as the years pass, and as priorities at DOI change for reasons that have nothing to do with Rongelap or the resettlement program.

H.R. 2970 carries out the express intention of Congress as stated in P.L. 102-154 (105 Stat. 1009) that the Rongelap Resettlement Trust Fund be used by the local government to carry out a resettlement program based on a self-determination process for the community. Congress required Rongelap to enter into an agreement with the Executive Branch, and a 1996 agreement between DOI and Rongelap, with approval of the RMI, satisfies that requirement.

Under the 1996 DOI agreement, the Rongelapese are empowered to be in control of their own resettlement. This means that the scientist can investigate and recommend ways to mitigate radiological contamination, engineers and construction contractors can carry out radiological rehabilitation projects, and government officials can exercise oversight, but the decisions about resettlement are made by the people.

This is a significant improvement over past resettlement program in which the islanders were relocated again and again without meaningful participation in planning or decision-making. DOI is to be commended for agreeing to a program that gives the Rongelapese the final word on what measures to advance resettlement will be taken. This makes the people who must decide whether to go back to Rongelap or resettle elsewhere the ability to take control of their own destiny after decades of being controlled by federal officials with an agenda having little to do with the future well-being of the community.

H.R. 2970 preserves the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to disapprove of any expenditure which is determined not to be an effective use of funds to address the conditions of dislocation or to advance resettlement. This bill also preserves limits on the use of annual earnings of the resettlement trust fund by the local government, while recognizing the importance of local government operations and resettlement programs to the success of the overall effort. Thus, this bill confirms the policy DOI has adopted under Section 118(d) of P.L. 104-134, and extends the current program for 10 years instead of allowing it to expire in 2000.

If the resettlement program were not ahead of schedule, if the local government were not operating efficiently and effectively to achieve resettlement within the framework of law and policy DOI required under the resettlement agreement it approved in 1996, then we might want to modify or change the ground rules for the program. However, since the Rongelapese have met every requirement imposed by DOI and exceeded DOI's expectations for implementation of the resettlement program, it would be unwise and unfair to change the policy, the program or the ground rules now.

Given the unpredictability of U.S. actions and policies that resulted in exposure of the

Rongelapese to near lethal high level radiation during the U.S. nuclear testing program, given the fact that some of their people were used for epidemiological research and testing not related to medical treatment and without the knowledge or consent of the test subjects, given the fact that they were returned to their island in 1957 and told by the AEC that it was safe, and given the determination by the National Academy of Sciences in 1993 that they should not inhabit that island until it has been made safe through a scientifically monitored program of radiological rehabilitation, I think 10 years of predictability in U.S. policy regarding their radiological clean up of their islands and resettlement of the community if and when their homeland is safe is not too much to ask. DOI has a successful program, and this bill will make sure it continues.

Thank you for your continued support and allow this important opportunity to share the RMI Government's position on H.R. 2970. Sincerely,

BANNY DEBRUM,
Ambassador.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from America Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA).

(Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Guam for yielding me such time to express my support for this legislation. I also want to express my appreciation to the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman SAXTON) for his leadership in managing this bill before the Members of the chamber.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Rongelap Atoll, like those from Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, have been suffering for decades because of the nuclear testing activities of the United States Government earlier.

Through the efforts of this committee, Congress passed legislation in 1996 which is assisting the people of Rongelap in establishing a resettlement plan. From the trust fund established in 1992, 50 percent of the annual income is dedicated to island rehabilitation, reconstruction and resettlement programs. The other half of the trust income is available to continue the resettlement program through the local government. This is working well, and I certainly hope that my colleagues will support the bill.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Rongelap Atoll were victims of the most powerful nuclear explosion ever known to man at that time, the first hydrogen bomb explosion in the Marshall Islands in the Pacific in 1954, a 15 megaton explosion that was approximately 1,000 times more powerful, 1,000 times more power than the atom bombs we dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II.

The people of Rongelap did not even know what had happened, other than the fact that they first observed a terrifying brilliant flash of light over 100 miles away, then the shifting winds that brought them a powder-like substance that they innocently washed themselves with, only to result in severe burns and rashes. The color of the

ocean turned yellow. Severe vomiting and illnesses of all sorts soon followed; and as a result of this wrong our government had committed against the people of Rongelap, the health of these people has never been the same.

Mr. Speaker, the records indicate our government did commit a grave wrong against the people of Rongelap. The U.S. officials responsible for this hydrogen bomb explosion knew, knew, that the winds had shifted at least 3 to 4 hours before the nuclear hydrogen explosion would take place.

Mr. Speaker, our military officials knew that with the shifting winds, the nuclear fallout would be going directly towards the island of Rongelap and all the men, women, and children living in Rongelap were subjected to radioactive contamination. So now our government is making an effort to at least compensate in some fashion the residents of Rongelap Atoll.

Mr. Speaker, no amount of money will ever restore these people back to normal health, but I do submit that I want to thank sincerely the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG), the chairman of the Committee on Resources, and the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER), the ranking member, and thank again the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman SAXTON) for their leadership and efforts which are bringing this legislation forward to, at least with some sense of conscience, make available some kind of assistance to these people that were subjected to this serious nuclear explosion that our government made in 1954.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. SAXTON. 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 New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2970.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERKINS COUNTY RURAL WATER SYSTEM ACT OF 1999

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 970) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance to the Perkins County Rural Water System, Inc., for the construction of water supply facilities in Perkins County, South Dakota, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 970

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 "Perkins County Rural Water System Act of 1999".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

(1) in 1977, the North Dakota State Legislature authorized and directed the State Water Commission to conduct the Southwest Area Water Supply Study, which included water service to a portion of Perkins County, South Dakota;

(2) amendments made by the Garrison Diversion Unit Reformulation Act of 1986 (Public Law 101-294) authorized the Southwest Pipeline project as an eligible project for Federal cost share participation; and

(3) the Perkins County Rural Water System has continued to be recognized by the State of North Dakota, the Southwest Water Authority, the North Dakota Water Commission, the Department of the Interior, and Congress as a component of the Southwest Pipeline Project.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) CORPORATION.—The term "Corporation" means the Perkins County Rural Water System, Inc., a nonprofit corporation established and operated under the laws of the State of South Dakota substantially in accordance with the feasibility study.

(2) FEASIBILITY STUDY.—The term "feasibility study" means the study entitled "Feasibility Study for Rural Water System for Perkins County Rural Water System, Inc.", as amended in March 1995.

(3) PROJECT CONSTRUCTION BUDGET.—The term "project construction budget" means the description of the total amount of funds that are needed for the construction of the water supply system, as described in the feasibility study.

(4) PUMPING AND INCIDENTAL OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.—The term "pumping and incidental operational requirements" means all power requirements that are incidental to the operation of the water supply system by the Corporation.

(5) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation.

(6) WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM.—The term "water supply system" means intake facilities, pumping stations, water treatment facilities, cooling facilities, reservoirs, and pipelines operated by the Perkins County Rural Water System, Inc., to the point of delivery of water to each entity that distributes water at retail to individual users.

SEC. 4. FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make grants to the Corporation for the Federal share of the costs of—

(1) the planning and construction of the water supply system; and

(2) repairs to existing public water distribution systems to ensure conservation of the resources and to make the systems functional under the new water supply system.

(b) LIMITATION ON AVAILABILITY OF CONSTRUCTION FUNDS.—The Secretary shall not obligate funds for the construction of the water supply system until—

(1) the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) are met with respect to the water supply system; and

(2) a final engineering report and a plan for a water conservation program have been prepared and submitted to Congress for a period of not less than 90 days before the commencement of construction of the system.

SEC. 5. MITIGATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE LOSSES.

Mitigation of fish and wildlife losses incurred as a result of the construction and operation of the water supply system shall be on an acre-for-acre basis, based on ecological equivalency, concurrent with project construction, as provided in the feasibility study.

SEC. 6. USE OF PICK-SLOAN POWER.

For operation during the period beginning May 1 and ending October 31 of each year, portions of the water supply system constructed