

cooperative way to craft a plan that authorizes the Secretary to exchange land so that areas that are now with SITLA in the southern part that want to be preserved will be sent over to the reservation.

Areas in the northern part that have mineral resources on them will be given over to SITLA on an acre-by-acre basis. And once the exchange is complete, both the tribe and SITLA will jointly develop oil and gas resources located within the northern portion of Hill Creek and share in that revenue. American taxpayers will also share in the mineral revenue.

So, Mr. Speaker, Congress needs to take note that this model of how you resolve land tenure issues is an extremely effective one. Divisive issues in the past can be resolved through a collaborative process that allows for all points of view to be considered and heard, as was done in this particular bill. In this example, we're able to balance these multiple views and, as a result, we will protect some of our wildest places in Utah and also allow for responsible oil and gas production that will help in funding the education system in Utah.

So I'm hoping to replicate this collaborative model to resolve some of the other longstanding issues that are public land conflicts in my home State of Utah.

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

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

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

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 356 clarifies existing law regarding the Federal Government's authority to permit land exchanges within the boundaries of the Ute Indian Reservation in northeastern Utah and resolve the tribe's split estate problem caused by Federal error over 50 years ago.

The legislation returns the subsurface mineral estate to the Ute Tribe in a portion of its reservation that the tribe considers culturally and environmentally significant and, thus, preserves the area's pristine wilderness from development.

Last Congress, the House passed a virtually identical bill under suspension of the rules by voice vote, and again, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 356.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, the State and the tribe have been trying to get Congress to act on this measure for a number of years. It's a widely popular proposal. It's supported by the State. It's supported by local governments. It's supported by the tribes. It is a bipartisan bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 356.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PILOT PROJECT OFFICES OF FEDERAL PERMIT STREAMLINING PILOT PROJECT

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 767) to amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to modify the Pilot Project offices of the Federal Permit Streamlining Pilot Project, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 767

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

SECTION 1. PILOT PROJECT OFFICES OF FEDERAL PERMIT STREAMLINING PILOT PROJECT.

Section 365 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 15924) is amended by striking subsection (d) and inserting the following:

“(d) PILOT PROJECT OFFICES.—The following Bureau of Land Management Offices shall serve as the Pilot Project offices:

“(1) Rawlins Field Office, Wyoming.

“(2) High Plains District Office, Wyoming.

“(3) Montana/Dakotas State Office, Montana.

“(4) Farmington Field Office, New Mexico.

“(5) Carlsbad Field Office, New Mexico.

“(6) Grand Junction/Glenwood Springs Field Office, Colorado.

“(7) Vernal Field Office, Utah.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) and the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

We are in strong support of this particular piece of legislation, which would be a name change in the Montana Pilot Project office in Billings, Montana, to include the words “Montana/Dakotas State Office.” It's extremely important in this pilot process that we don't actually just limit it only to the area of Montana, especially because the area of North Dakota is so important in the development of these pilot projects.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the

gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER).

Mr. CRAMER. Thanks to my colleague from Utah.

I also want to thank the chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, Mr. HASTINGS, and the ranking member, Mr. MARKEY, and especially thank the chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals, Mr. LAMBORN, and the ranking member, Mr. HOLT. We worked together on this, and I'm very proud of the outcome. It's a rather benign bill that has rather major ramifications, I believe.

I also want to thank the leadership at the Bureau of Land Management for not only doing an excellent job in managing the Federal lands in North Dakota, but their support of this bill and their guidance, frankly, in helping to craft it in a way that meets the objectives.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 established a Federal permit streamlining pilot project to improve the processing of oil and gas applications for drilling on Federal lands. The Montana BLM office in Miles City was included in the pilot project, but what was not known to the drafters of the legislation then was that North and South Dakota are under the direct jurisdiction of that regional office in Miles City. So, without the word “Dakotas” in the Energy Policy Act, North Dakota was excluded from this pilot project.

That, in normal times, may not be all that important. But as it turns out, North Dakota really is the heart of the largest oil play and the most exciting oil play going on on the continent.

So the streamlining process itself, I think, deserves some explanation, because I think what I want to do is to calm the fears of anybody that might think we're looking at cutting corners or expediting regulatory process that deserves the rigor that it is receiving.

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What the streamlining process does is not cut corners, but rather, it streamlines by co-locating all of the various federal agencies that have jurisdiction, like the EPA, like the Bureau of Land Management, perhaps the USDA and USGS. And by co-locating them, you actually not only enjoy the efficiency of everybody working together in the same place, but you actually get some synergy as well, because you have the experts in the same room on the same plot of land at the same time.

This is a bill, as I said, that doesn't cut corners and streamlines, but it also has broad ramifications because I think that North Dakota is the perfect laboratory for a pilot project like this. The reason I say that is because there's high demand for processing and a lot of applications for drilling on very few acres.

North Dakota is blessed to largely be private and State land, not much Federal land. But there are about 2 million Federal acres that BLM has direct

oversight of; that is to say, we have 2 million mineral acres, and there are over 700 permits or applications for permits to drill on that small plot of land.

In North Dakota, the average number of days for getting a permit processed by the State regulatory body is about 20 days. For the Federal lands, it's anywhere from 225 to 300 or more days. That's too much. I certainly don't advocate, nor do I think anybody else could advocate, streamlining this to the point of where it only takes 10 or 20 days to issue a permit on Federal lands. Clearly, there are 325 million owners of those Federal lands. It requires a more robust environmental protection regime. But we can do better than that, and I think we ought to do better than that.

I think the North Dakota experiment is one that people will look back on and say, that's the way to do it, that's the right way to do it. We in North Dakota care a great deal about our land, about our water, and about our air, and we look forward to working closely with the Federal officials who have an equal care in making this work.

I might also just add that this similar bill was passed last year in the Senate. It did not get a hearing in the House. The same, a companion bill, has been introduced again in the Senate this year by Senator HOEVEN and cosponsored by Senator HEITKAMP. It has bipartisan support in the Senate. It has passed the committee over there. It has not gotten to the floor yet.

So, again, I appreciate the leadership that the chair and ranking members have provided on this and urge my colleagues to pass this important bill.

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

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

Mr. SABLÁN. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 767 will broaden the geographic reach of a pilot program created in 2005 to provide additional resources to some BLM field offices to permit oil and gas development and conduct environmental reviews.

The Bureau of Land Management has testified that this pilot program has led to increased oil and gas inspection and enforcement capability as a result of hiring more skilled specialists. The Bureau of Land Management has also stated that the increase in inspections has led to better compliance by the industry and a reduction in major violations due to the increased number of inspectors in the field.

We do not oppose this bill, and I ask support for H.R. 767.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. It's an excellent bill. I urge adoption of it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 767, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

AMENDMENT TO PUBLIC LAW 93-435 WITH RESPECT TO NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 573) to amend Public Law 93-435 with respect to the Northern Mariana Islands, providing parity with Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 573

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

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The first section and section 2 of Public Law 93-435 (48 U.S.C. 1705, 1706) are amended by inserting “the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands,” after “Guam,” each place it appears.

(b) REFERENCES TO DATE OF ENACTMENT.—For the purposes of the amendment made by subsection (a), each reference in Public Law 93-435 to the “date of enactment” shall be considered to be a reference to the date of the enactment of this section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) and the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLÁN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Again, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This bill is a great bill that treats the Northern Marianas the same way as other colonies by expanding their submerged territorial miles. That would be the same as with American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. It is compatible with all other acts. It's a great bill that we passed last year by a very close vote of 397-0.

I urge adoption of this bill again. I hope this time the Senate will be wise enough to pick it up. With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SABLÁN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. SABLÁN. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in support of H.R. 573. The bill conveys to the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas the 3 miles of submerged lands surrounding each of our 14 islands. I want to thank leaders from both sides of the aisle, Chairman DOC HASTINGS and Ranking Member ED MARKEY of the Natural Resources Committee, and my good friend, Dr. JOHN FLEMING, chairman of the Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs Subcommittee, and my good friend, Mr. BISHOP from Utah, for managing today's bill, all for their support of H.R. 573.

The Northern Marianas is the only coastal jurisdiction that does not have ownership of the submerged lands off its coasts. H.R. 573 corrects that irregularity. It provides the same ownership rights over the submerged lands as are provided by Federal law to Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

Today will be the third time that the House will vote to convey these lands. In both the 111th and the 112th Congress, we approved this transfer unanimously. I hope that the House will make the same decision again today.

And I hope that the other body will this time, finally, also agree that the Northern Mariana Islands should have the rights of ownership of our offshore submerged lands and natural resources as other coastal areas of America enjoy.

For thousands of years, the people of the Northern Marianas certainly believed these resources were ours. It was not until a 2005 ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that we were informed that these were not our lands but instead belonged to the Federal Government. We were grateful that there were Members of Congress who quickly responded to our plight, for at the time we had no representation here. Then-Congressman, now-Senator JEFF FLAKE, introduced a bill conveying these lands shortly after the Ninth Circuit ruling.

New Mexico Senator Pete Domenici introduced a companion to the Flake measure. As the first representative from the Northern Mariana Islands, I have continued their work on this issue, as I have said, in the 111th, the 112th, and now in the 113th Congress.

In summary, H.R. 573 costs nothing. Congress has the constitutional authority to enact it. The bill will simply provide parity—the ownership and responsibility for submerged surrounding lands and waters that every other coastal area of our Nation enjoys.

I want to thank all 36 Members who are cosponsors of this bill, and I ask that my colleagues here today support H.R. 573.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, it's a great bill. Let's hope the third time is the charm in the process. I urge support of this bill and yield back the balance of my time.