was executed on December 10, 1986. The Settlement Act was ratified by Congress and signed into law on November 3, 1988.

The Settlement Act is Federal law: the law of the land. It also provided a cost-sharing agreement.

The water districts and the States of Colorado and New Mexico have ''put their money where their mouth is'' and have already lived up to the terms of these agreements:

First, the State of Colorado has:

Committed $30 million to the settlement of the tribes' water rights claims;

Has expended $6 million to construct a domestic pipeline from the Cortez municipal water treatment plant to the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation at Towaoc; and

Has contributed $5 million to the tribal development funds.

Second, the U.S. Congress has appropriated and turned over to the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Indian Tribes $49.5 million as part of their tribal development funds, and

Third, water user organizations have signed repayment contracts with the Bureau of Reclamation.

The construction of the Animas La Plata project is the only missing piece to the successful implementation of the settlement agreement and the Settlement Act. It is time that the U.S. Government kept its commitment to the people.

Historically, this country has chosen to ignore its obligations to our Indian people. Members of the Ute Tribe had been living in a state of poverty that can only be described as obscene. Their only source of drinking water was from ditches dug in the ground. I find it most distressing that the same groups and special interests who are now scrambling to block this project also, in other contexts, hold themselves out as the only real defenders of minority rights in this country. Hogwash.

This project would provide adequate water reserves to not only the Ute Nation, but to people in southwestern Colorado, northern New Mexico, and other downstream users who rely on this water system for a variety of crucial needs which range from endangered species protection to safe drinking water in towns and cities—perhaps even filling swimming pools for some of our critics.

Opponents of the Animas La Plata project have alleged that the Bureau of Reclamation [BUREC], has not adequately analyzed alternative projects. That is not true.

BUREC has performed a thorough analysis of all reasonable alternatives. No new circumstances exist which require reevaluation of the prior alternatives studies.

Exhaustive studies, involving extensive public participation have demonstrated that there is no realistic alternative to the Animas La Plata project.

This public alternatives process involved an advisory team consisting of representatives of all of the entities potentially interested in receiving water from the project and environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and the San Juan Ecological Society.

The advisory team met 11 times in a 2½-year period. In addition, 10 other public meetings were held with specific groups during that same period.

The advisory team evaluated alternatives by comparing critical items for each alternative; alternatives were eliminated until the best overall plan was identified.

Critical items included: impact on wildlife habitat, fisheries, any potential visual degradation, conservation impacts, construction costs, operation costs, water conservation, river flows for rafting and fishery protection, power usage, recreation, impact on national historic monuments, and others.

Over 60 reservoir sites were identified by the team, approximately 20 in the La Plata River drainage and the remainder in the Animas River drainage. The best potential site in the La Plata River drainage is the Southern Ute Reservoir site included in the 1979 Definite Plan Report [DPR]. The Ridges Basin Reservoir site was determined to be the best site in the Animas River drainage from an engineering and environmental perspective.

In both La Plata County, CO, and San Juan County, NM, public elections were held on Reclamation's decision to move forward with the A/LP project.

All of the so-called current objections were raised and discussed in public forums during the course of the election campaigns in those communities, including the following issues: no analysis of alternatives, adverse impact on rafting, no water for the Indians, reduced flows in the Animas River, ability of farmers to pay for water, effect on wetlands, and the impact on trout and elk habitat.

At the end of the process, the general public voted overwhelmingly, on December 8, 1987, in La Plata County, CO, and on April 17, 1990, in San Juan County, NM, to endorse Reclamation's construction of the A/LP project.

In a last ditch effort, two environmental organizations, the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund, again raised ''environmental concerns.'' Additional meetings were held to address those unstated concerns and the groups simply decided not to show up. When asked why, they just responded that they would ''get back to us.''

They never did.

Since then, they have chosen to simply funnel money into opposition campaigns. These groups have no real suggestions to make. They simply believe themselves to be somehow more pure, environmentally, than anyone else.

The only alternative these groups suggest is to ''buy off'' the Indians. Of course, the proposed ''buy off'' would be funded by hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars but the groups do not care about that.

The Animas La Plata project is a good deal for the taxpayers.

The Southern Ute Indians and the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes have rejected the buyout proposals. Just like everyone else in our country, they simply want decent and reliable water supplies—using their own water—for their people.

In exchange, all the people of the area will benefit. Opponents are apparently willing to spend even more tax dollars to ''buy off'' the Indians than it would cost to complete the project.

So, as the Washington Post suggested, there are, indeed, ''politics'' behind the Animas La Plata controversy.

I would suggest, however, the political ''games'' are not being played by project supporters, but rather by a few elite and select high dollar special interest groups—''beltway environmentalists''—and their ensconced cronies in the Department of the Interior and the EPA.

It is time to end the trail of broken treaties and fulfill our commitments. Great nations, like great people, keep their words of honor.

I implore my colleagues in the House to help us keep our word to the people of Colorado and New Mexico.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, it is my intention to speak on two subjects this morning. One is a very timely subject relative to an announcement that we anticipate will be made today by the President with regard to relations between the United States and Vietnam.

I want to commend our President. By moving to establish full diplomatic relations with the Government of Vietnam, the two-decade-long campaign to obtain the fullest possible accounting of our MIA's in Southeast Asia really now enters a new and more positive phase.

I support the President's decision because I continue to believe, and the evidence supports, that increased access to Vietnam leads to increased progress on the accounting issue. Resolving the fate of our MIA's has been and will remain the highest priority of our Government. This Nation owes that to the men and the families of the men who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and for freedom.

In pursuit of that goal, I have personally traveled to Vietnam on three occasions. I held over 40 hours of hearings on that subject as chairman of the Veterans' Committee back in 1986. I think the comparison between the situation in 1986 and today is truly a dramatic one. In 1986, I was appalled to learn that we had no first-hand information

about the fate of POW/MIA's because we had no access to the Vietnamese Government, to its military archives or to its prisons. We could not travel to crash sites. We had no opportunity to interview Vietnamese individuals or officials.

All of this has now changed. American Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF–FA) personnel located in Hanoi now have access to Vietnam's Government, to its military archives, and to its prisons. They now travel freely to crash sites and interview Vietnamese citizens and individuals. The extent of United States access is illustrated by an excavation last month that involved overturning a Vietnamese gravesite.

As a result of these developments, the overall number of MIA's in Vietnam has been reduced to 1,621 through a painstaking identification process. Most of the missing involve men lost over water or in other circumstances where survival was doubtful and where recovery of remains is difficult or unlikely. Significantly, the number of discrepancy cases—the cases of those servicemen where the available information indicated that either the individual survived or could have survived—has been reduced from 196 to 55. The remaining 55 cases have been investigated at least once, and some several times.

Much, if not most, of this progress has come since 1991 when President Bush established an office in Hanoi devoted to resolving the fate of our MIA's. Opening this office ended almost two decades of isolation, a policy which failed to achieve America's goals.

It is an understatement to say that our efforts to resolve the fates of our MIA's from the Vietnam war have constituted the most extensive such accounting in the history of human warfare.

There are over 8,000 remaining MIA's from the Korean war. A large number of those are believed to have perished in North Korea, and we have had little cooperation from the Government of North Korea on that issue. There are over 78,000 remaining MIA's from World War II. These are wars where we were victorious and controlled the battlefield. So I find it ironic that we have already moved to set up liaison offices in North Korea when that Government has not agreed to the joint operation teams that have been used successfully in Vietnam. Nor has North Korea granted access to archives, gravesites, or former POW camps. Vietnam, on the other hand, has worked steadily over the last 4 years to meet the vigorous goal posts laid down by successive United States administrations.

In 1993, opponents of ending our isolationist policy argued that lifting the trade embargo would mean an end to Vietnamese cooperation. This is distinctly not the case. As the Pentagon assessment from the Presidential delegation's recent trip to Vietnam notes, the records offered are ''the most detailed and informative reports'' provided so far by the Government of Vietnam on missing Americans.

During the post-embargo period, the Vietnamese Government cooperated on other issues as well, including resolving millions of dollars of diplomatic property and private claims of Americans who lost property at the end of the war.

While we have made progress, Americans should not be satisfied by any means. But there are limits to the results we can obtain by continuing a policy which, even though modified, remains rooted in the past and is still dominated by the principle of isolation. I think we have reached that limit, Mr. President. It is time to try a policy of full engagement.

Recognizing Vietnam does not mean forgetting our MIA's, by any means. Recognizing Vietnam does not mean that we agree with the policies of the Government of Vietnam. But recognizing Vietnam does help us promote basic American values, such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the marketplace. When Americans go abroad or export their products, we export an idea, a philosophy, and a government. We export the very ideals that Americans went to fight for in Vietnam.

We justify most-favored-nation status for China for many reasons, one of which is that it allows us a means to interact and to communicate with the Chinese in an attempt to bring about change in China. The same application is appropriate for Vietnam.

Moreover, diplomatic relations give us greater latitude to use the carrot and stick approach. Diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations should flourish, but we retain leverage because Vietnam still seeks most-favored-nation status and other trading privileges which the United States controls.

Establishing diplomatic relations should also advance other important U.S. goals. A prosperous, stable, and friendly Vietnam integrated into the international community will serve as an important impediment to Chinese expansionism. Normalization should offer new opportunities for the United States to promote respect for human rights in Vietnam. Finally, competitive United States businesses which have entered the Vietnamese market after the lifting of the trade embargo will have greater success with the full faith and confidence of the United States Government behind them.

Mr. President, let me conclude by saying that I hope this step will continue this country's healing process. I think the time has come to treat Vietnam as a country and not as a war.

PRINCIPLES FOR RISK ASSESSMENT

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I want to talk briefly about the matter that is currently before this body, regulatory reform.

Very briefly, we have been reviewing some of the principles associated with regulatory reform. I would like to talk a little bit about risk assessment this morning and some guidelines for which the applicability of risk assessment should be used, and why it can be very, very helpful as we address the responsibility of determining which policies make sense and which policies are redundant and costly and inefficient.

If we establish principles for risk assessment, some of the bases for evaluation should include the following:

First, the use of sound science and analysis as the basis for conclusions about risk.

Second, to use the appropriate level of detail for any analysis.

Third, to use postulates, or assumptions, only when actual data is not available.

Fourth, to not express risk as a single, high-end estimate that uses the worst-case scenario.

I think we have all heard horror stories about various cases where applications are promoted and promulgated, and over an extended period of time, when much expenditure has taken place in evaluating the prospects for a particular approval, we find that the agency has evaluated under a worst-case basis. If we, in our daily lives, were to make our decisions based on a worst-case scenario, we probably would not get out of bed in the morning. As a consequence, to reach that kind of an evaluation is clearly misleading, in many cases, to the applicant that never would have proceeded with a request for approval from the various agencies if the applicant had assumed that the agency would come down to the worst-case basis.

Oftentimes the agency will follow a particular line to reach a worst-case basis, and after expending a great deal of money and time, they look at another alternative, but only at the conclusion of reaching a worst-case scenario. So there are other opportunities that should be pursued with regard to that.

Further, some of the other principles for risk assessment would require comparing the risk to others that people encounter every day to place it in a perspective. I could speak at some length on that, but I think that is obvious to all of us.

Further, to describe the new or substitute risks that will be created if the risk in question is regulated.

Use independent and external peer review to evaluate risk results.

Finally, to provide appropriate opportunities for public participation.

So what we are talking about here is improved risk assessment, which helps the homeowners, farmer, small business, taxpayers, consumers—all Americans. To conclude, risk reduction equals benefit.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.