

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOODLING). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 960, 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.

CONVEYING CERTAIN LAND TO CITY OF GRANTS PASS, OR.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1198), to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain land to the city of Grants Pass, OR., as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1198

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

SECTION. 1. CONVEYANCE OF BLM LAND TO GRANTS PASS, OREGON.

(a) CONVEYANCE REQUIRED.—The Secretary of the Interior shall promptly convey to the City of Grants Pass, Oregon (in this section referred to as the "City"), without monetary compensation, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the real property described in subsection (b).

(b) PROPERTY DESCRIBED.—(1) IN GENERAL.—The real property referred to in subsection (a) is that parcel of land depicted on the map entitled "Merlin Landfill Map" and dated June 20, 1997, consisting of—

(A) approximately 200 acres of Bureau of Land Management Land on which the City has operated a landfill under lease; and

(B) approximately 120 acres of Bureau of Land Management Land that are adjacent to the land described in subparagraph (A).

(2) DETERMINATION BY SECRETARY.—The Secretary of the Interior may determine more particularly the real property described in paragraph (1).

(c) CONSIDERATION.—As consideration for the conveyance under subsection (a), the Secretary shall require the City to agree to indemnify the Government of the United States for all liability of the Government that arises from the property.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN] and the gentleman from American Samoa [Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah [Mr. HANSEN].

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1198, as amended, is a bill introduced by my colleague, the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. SMITH]. Mr. SMITH has worked hard to develop a bill which successfully resolves an environmentally sensitive issue and will benefit the people of Oregon.

H.R. 1198 directs the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain Federal land currently used as a solid waste landfill facility from the Bureau of Land Man-

agement to the city of Grants Pass, OR. This bill transfers title and all right and interest of the real property to the city of Grants Pass, while indemnifying the Government of the United States for all liability that may arise from the property. A technical amendment provided the title and date of the map in the property description found in section 1(b)(1) of the bill.

This bill is noncontroversial and is supported by the administration and the city of Grants Pass, OR. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1198.

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

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I too would like to commend the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. SMITH], who is also a member of our committee, for his sponsorship of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1198 directs the Secretary of the Interior to convey to the city of Grants Pass, OR, without monetary consideration, approximately 200 acres of public land which the city has operated under lease and 120 acres of adjacent public land to be used as a buffer. In addition, the bill specifies that the city must agree to indemnify the United States from all liability that arises from the property.

In testimony before the Committee on Resources, the administration stated its support of the bill, and I know of no controversy associated with the legislation.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers on this issue, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, before I yield the balance of my time, I would like to say that I would be remiss if I did not offer my commendations to the members of the staff on this side of the aisle for their tremendous work with the Members in getting this piece of legislation successfully passed here on the floor of the House: Mr. Rick Healy, Marie Howard Fabrizio, Jean Flemma, and Ann Owens.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge swift passage for this legislation which would transfer the Merlin Landfill in my district to the city of Grants Pass, OR.

Grants Pass is a small city in southern Oregon and has leased approximately 200 acres of BLM land for the Merlin Landfill since 1968. This lease is due to expire on April 14, 2000, 2 or 3 years short of the landfill's operational lifespan. The BLM has stated that it will not renew this lease.

In 1990, low levels of organic chemicals were identified in groundwater beyond the site boundaries. This contamination was so minimal that if the water was used for public drinking, it would meet all Federal and State standards for safety. Nevertheless, the Superfund law requires that, as public land, the site be listed as a contaminated Federal facility and evaluated for ranking on the national priorities list for subsequent cleanup.

Although the BLM would be responsible for performing this cleanup, Superfund requires that the Bureau recover its costs. As with other Superfund liability disputes, the litigation expenses incurred by both the BLM and the city could quite possibly cost more than the cleanup itself. These circumstances led the BLM to attempt to cancel the Merlin Landfill's lease in 1991. Because a lease termination or a suspension in operation during the cleanup would pose an enormous financial burden on the citizens and businesses of Grants Pass, the city successfully worked with the BLM to address the environmental concerns. These efforts have cost the city several million dollars.

In addition, the city has entered into a consent order with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality obligating it to address the remaining concerns in preparation for the eventual closure of the landfill. However, despite its faithful cooperation in addressing these issues, if the landfill closes when the lease terminates in the year 2000, the city will not have adequate financial resources to fund the remaining compliance activities as well as the Closure and Post-Closure Trust Funds.

After exploring a number of nonlegislative options, the concerned parties came to a consensus agreement that the best and most cost-effective solution to the problem would be for the BLM to transfer the leased land and an additional parcel of 120 acres to the city. In turn, Grants Pass would accept all liability and responsibility for cleaning up the contaminated area.

Most important, however, is that such a transfer would allow operations to continue at the Merlin Landfill for another 2 or 3 years past the lease termination date. This would allow the city to raise enough money to meet its environmental obligations including the Closure and Post-Closure Trust Funds.

This is simple, cost-effective, good government, and it is recognized as such by all parties involved. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Josephine County, the BLM, and the Governor's office have all voiced their support for this legislation. I, too, hope for a speedy passage so that the city of Grants Pass and the BLM have adequate time to prepare and complete this transfer.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. 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 Utah [Mr. HANSEN] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1198, 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. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S.J.Res. 29, H.R. 822, H.R. 951, H.R. 960, and H.R. 1198, the bills just considered.

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

There was no objection.