

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, with time quickly running out in the 109th Congress, the Committee on Resources has amended this bill to package several bills for consideration in the Senate.

Title I is the text of H.R. 6014 authored by Congressman RICHARD POMBO, which aims to protect levees in the highly vulnerable Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in Central California. This bill passed the House in September.

Title II is the text of H.R. 5861, authored by Congressman STEVAN PEARCE, which strengthens and improves the operation of the National Historic Preservation Act. This bill also passed the House in September.

Title III, authored by Senator PETE DOMENICI and Congresswoman DONNA CHRISTENSEN, amends the Organic Act which applies to the U.S. Virgin Islands. The language, as reflected in both H.R. 59 and S. 1829, as passed by the Senate on September 29 of this year, will allow the Virgin Islands to control its property tax system. Currently, all other States and territories have this ability, and for the many residents of this territory it is important that we are able to move this provision forward.

The last title includes the text of H.R. 5978, authored by Congressman ROY BLUNT. That bill authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the suitability and feasibility of including the battlefields and related sites of the First and Second Battles of Newtonia, Missouri, during the Civil War, as part of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield or designating the battlefields and related sites as a separate unit of the National Park System. All of these bills are worthy of our consideration, and I ask for your support.

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

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

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 1829, companion legislation to one I introduced to repeal an outdated 1936 Federal statute which limits the authority of the Virgin Islands government to assess and collect real property taxes in the territory. I will note that the Senate approved this measure as a stand-alone piece of legislation, but certain extraneous matters such as titles 1, 2, and 4 have been added to this bill by the Republican leadership which will require it to be reconsidered by the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, it is crucial that we pass S. 1829, now title III, and have it enacted into law before we adjourn for the year to prevent some of my constituents from facing the very real risk of losing their homes because the Virgin Islands government would not be able to provide them protections from the sky-high property tax bills because of the 1936 statute.

That statute was enacted to address the tax policies of the Danish era in the Virgin Islands. It was generally thought to have been repealed by the enactment of the Revised Organic Act of 1954, which created a comprehensive system within the local government with sufficient legislative powers to resolve local property tax issues without the need of Federal intervention.

S. 1829 and H.R. 59, which I introduced in the House, became necessary because 2 years ago the Third Circuit Federal Court of Appeals revived the 1936 statute, which requires that all real property be taxed at the same rate without regard to classification or use.

This decision, among other things, struck down a local statute capping the amount of any increase in the assessment of residential real property and, therefore, any increase in the property tax owed in any assessment period. It also prevents any exemptions for veterans and other groups who ought to have such a benefit.

If the 1936 law is not now repealed by Congress, it will hinder the exercise of the Virgin Islands government as conferred by the Revised Organic Act to assess, administer, and collect real property taxes in the Virgin Islands. Indeed, the 1936 statute puts at risk longstanding government policies designed to develop the economy, promote social welfare, and protect home ownership in the Virgin Islands. Without the authority to limit such increases by capping such assessments or similar methods commonly used by other jurisdictions, the now revived 1936 statute may have the anomalous result of pricing land and home ownership beyond the reach of many Virgin Islanders. It has long outlived its usefulness and now interferes with the Virgin Islands' ability to perform an essential government function.

The assessment and collection of real property taxes is fundamentally a local government issue with no Federal impact. No other State, territorial or local government is subject to such Federal restrictions.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't point out my deep disappointment of the fact that we are not voting on S. 1829 as a stand-alone bill. By including additional items in the bill, it becomes possible that the repeal of the 1936 statute could not become law before Congress adjourns because of procedural complications in the other body. I hope that is not the case, because it would be extremely lamentable if, because of that result, many of my constituents would receive very high tax bills this coming January and there would be no way that they could afford to pay, and that could in fact mean the loss of their homes. So I am calling on my colleagues, whose bills were added to this otherwise simple but very significant measure, and the leadership to work with me in the remaining day or days of this Congress to save the American dream for their fellow Americans living in the Virgin Is-

lands who have, alongside citizens from all of the other districts, served this country at every level, even to the ultimate sacrifice in every war this country has fought.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1829, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds of those voting having responded in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the Senate bill was amended so as to read: "An Act to repeal certain sections of the Act of May 26, 1936, pertaining to the Virgin Islands, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO TRANSBOUNDARY AQUIFER ASSESSMENT ACT

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 214) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate with the States on the border with Mexico and other appropriate entities in conducting a hydrogeologic characterization, mapping, and modeling program for priority transboundary aquifers, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 214

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 "United States-Mexico Transboundary Aquifer Assessment Act".

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish a United States-Mexico transboundary aquifer assessment program to systematically assess priority transboundary aquifers.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) AQUIFER.—The term "aquifer" means a subsurface water-bearing geologic formation from which significant quantities of water may be extracted.

(2) IBWC.—The term "IBWC" means the International Boundary and Water Commission, an agency of the Department of State.

(3) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term "Indian tribe" means an Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community—

(A) that is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians; and

(B) the reservation of which includes a transboundary aquifer within the exterior boundaries of the reservation.

(4) PARTICIPATING STATE.—The term “Participating State” means each of the States of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

(5) PRIORITY TRANSBOUNDARY AQUIFER.—The term “priority transboundary aquifer” means a transboundary aquifer that has been designated for study and analysis under the program.

(6) PROGRAM.—The term “program” means the United States-Mexico transboundary aquifer assessment program established under section 4(a).

(7) RESERVATION.—The term “reservation” means land that has been set aside or that has been acknowledged as having been set aside by the United States for the use of an Indian tribe, the exterior boundaries of which are more particularly defined in a final tribal treaty, agreement, executive order, Federal statute, secretarial order, or judicial determination.

(8) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Geological Survey.

(9) TRANSBOUNDARY AQUIFER.—The term “transboundary aquifer” means an aquifer that underlies the boundary between a Participating State and Mexico.

(10) TRI-REGIONAL PLANNING GROUP.—The term “Tri-Regional Planning Group” means the binational planning group comprised of—

(A) the Junta Municipal de Agua y Saneamiento de Ciudad Juarez;

(B) the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board; and

(C) the Lower Rio Grande Water Users Organization.

(11) WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH INSTITUTES.—The term “water resources research institutes” means the institutes within the Participating States established under section 104 of the Water Resources Research Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. 10303).

SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation and cooperation with the Participating States, the water resources research institutes, Sandia National Laboratories, and other appropriate entities in the United States and Mexico, and the IBWC, as appropriate, shall carry out the United States-Mexico transboundary aquifer assessment program to characterize, map, and model priority transboundary aquifers along the United States-Mexico border at a level of detail determined to be appropriate for the particular aquifer.

(b) OBJECTIVES.—The objectives of the program are to—

(1) develop and implement an integrated scientific approach to identify and assess priority transboundary aquifers, including—

(A) for purposes of subsection (c)(2), specifying priority transboundary aquifers for further analysis by assessing—

(i) the proximity of a proposed priority transboundary aquifer to areas of high population density;

(ii) the extent to which a proposed priority transboundary aquifer would be used;

(iii) the susceptibility of a proposed priority transboundary aquifer to contamination; and

(iv) any other relevant criteria;

(B) evaluating all available data and publications as part of the development of study plans for each priority transboundary aquifer;

(C) creating a new, or enhancing an existing, geographic information system database

to characterize the spatial and temporal aspects of each priority transboundary aquifer; and

(D) using field studies, including support for and expansion of ongoing monitoring and metering efforts, to develop—

(i) the additional data necessary to adequately define aquifer characteristics; and

(ii) scientifically sound groundwater flow models to assist with State and local water management and administration, including modeling of relevant groundwater and surface water interactions;

(2) consider the expansion or modification of existing agreements, as appropriate, between the United States Geological Survey, the Participating States, the water resources research institutes, and appropriate authorities in the United States and Mexico, to—

(A) conduct joint scientific investigations;

(B) archive and share relevant data; and

(C) carry out any other activities consistent with the program; and

(3) produce scientific products for each priority transboundary aquifer that—

(A) are capable of being broadly distributed; and

(B) provide the scientific information needed by water managers and natural resource agencies on both sides of the United States-Mexico border to effectively accomplish the missions of the managers and agencies.

(c) DESIGNATION OF PRIORITY TRANSBOUNDARY AQUIFERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of the program, the Secretary shall designate as priority transboundary aquifers—

(A) the Hueco Bolson and Mesilla aquifers underlying parts of Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico;

(B) the Santa Cruz River Valley aquifers underlying Arizona and Sonora, Mexico; and

(C) the San Pedro aquifers underlying Arizona and Sonora, Mexico

(2) ADDITIONAL AQUIFERS.—The Secretary may, using the criteria under subsection (b)(1)(A), evaluate and designate additional priority transboundary aquifers which underlie New Mexico or Texas.

(d) COOPERATION WITH MEXICO.—To ensure a comprehensive assessment of priority transboundary aquifers, the Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, work with appropriate Federal agencies and other organizations to develop partnerships with, and receive input from, relevant organizations in Mexico to carry out the program.

(e) GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary may provide grants or enter into cooperative agreements and other agreements with the water resources research institutes and other Participating State entities to carry out the program.

SEC. 5. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM.

(a) COORDINATION WITH STATES, TRIBES, AND OTHER ENTITIES.—The Secretary shall coordinate the activities carried out under the program with—

(1) the appropriate water resource agencies in the Participating States;

(2) any affected Indian tribes;

(3) any other appropriate entities that are conducting monitoring and metering activity with respect to a priority transboundary aquifer; and

(4) the IBWC, as appropriate.

(b) NEW ACTIVITY.—After the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall not initiate any new field studies or analyses under the program before consulting with, and coordinating the activity with, any Participating State water resource agencies that have jurisdiction over the aquifer.

(c) STUDY PLANS; COST ESTIMATES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall work closely with appropriate Participating State water resource agencies, water resources re-

search institutes, and other relevant entities to develop a study plan, timeline, and cost estimate for each priority transboundary aquifer to be studied under the program.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—A study plan developed under paragraph (1) shall, to the maximum extent practicable—

(A) integrate existing data collection and analyses conducted with respect to the priority transboundary aquifer;

(B) if applicable, improve and strengthen existing groundwater flow models developed for the priority transboundary aquifer; and

(C) be consistent with appropriate State guidelines and goals.

SEC. 6. EFFECT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this Act affects—

(1) the jurisdiction or responsibility of a Participating State with respect to managing surface or groundwater resources in the Participating State;

(2) the water rights of any person or entity using water from a transboundary aquifer; or

(3) State water law, or an interstate compact or international treaty governing water.

(b) TREATY.—Nothing in this Act shall delay or alter the implementation or operation of any works constructed, modified, acquired, or used within the territorial limits of the United States relating to the waters governed by the Treaty Between the United States and Mexico Regarding Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande, Treaty Series 994 (59 Stat. 1219).

SEC. 7. REPORTS.

Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, and on completion of the program in fiscal year 2016, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate water resource agency in the Participating States, an interim and final report, respectively, that describes—

(1) any activities carried out under the program;

(2) any conclusions of the Secretary relating to the status of priority transboundary aquifers; and

(3) the level of participation in the program of entities in Mexico.

SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act \$50,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2016.

(b) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—Of the amounts made available under subsection (a), 50 percent shall be made available to the water resources research institutes to provide funding to appropriate entities in the Participating States (including Sandia National Laboratories, State agencies, universities, the Tri-Regional Planning Group, and other relevant organizations) and to implement cooperative agreements entered into with appropriate entities in Mexico to conduct specific authorized activities in furtherance of the program, including the binational collection and exchange of scientific data.

(c) CRITERIA.—Funding provided to an appropriate entity in Mexico pursuant to subsection (b) shall be contingent on that entity providing 50 percent of the necessary resources (including in-kind services) to further assist in carrying out the authorized activity.

SEC. 9. SUNSET OF AUTHORITY.

The authority of the Secretary to carry out any provisions of this Act shall terminate 10 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from

Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DRAKE. 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 the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

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

S. 214, introduced by Senator BINGAMAN and supported by our Arizona colleague Congressman JIM KOLBE, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate on a study on the Mexican border of transboundary aquifers.

As the population in this arid region continues to grow, the importance of water cannot be overstated. This legislation will help provide the scientific foundation necessary for Federal, State, and local officials to address pressing water resource challenges. This includes researching, mapping, and modeling of these aquifers along our shared border. Because these aquifers do not recognize international borders, it is essential that any research involve the cooperation and participation of both countries. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the majority has already explained this bill. I would simply note that we share more than a long border with our neighbors in Mexico. We also share very scarce surface water and groundwater supplies. Rapidly growing cities along the border need to understand these water supplies so that they can make decisions about how best to use them now and to preserve them for the future. We strongly support the adoption of S. 214.

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

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 214, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds of those voting having responded in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MICHIGAN LIGHTHOUSE AND MARITIME HERITAGE ACT

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1346) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of maritime sites in the State of Michigan.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 1346

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 "Michigan Lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) STATE.—The term "State" means the State of Michigan.

SEC. 3. STUDY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with the State, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and other appropriate State and local public agencies and private organizations, shall conduct a special resource study of resources related to the maritime heritage of the State.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the study is to determine—

(1) suitable and feasible options for the long-term protection of significant maritime heritage resources in the State; and

(2) the manner in which the public can best learn about and experience the resources.

(c) REQUIREMENTS.—In conducting the study under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(1) review Federal, State, and local maritime resource inventories and studies to establish the potential for interpretation and preservation of maritime heritage resources in the State;

(2) recommend management alternatives that would be most effective for long-term resource protection and providing for public enjoyment of maritime heritage resources;

(3) address how to assist regional, State, and local partners in increasing public awareness of and access to maritime heritage resources;

(4) identify sources of financial and technical assistance available to communities for the preservation and interpretation of maritime heritage resources; and

(5) identify opportunities for the National Park Service and the State to coordinate the activities of appropriate units of national, State, and local parks and historic sites in furthering the preservation and interpretation of maritime heritage resources.

(d) REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available to carry out the study under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives a report that describes—

(1) the results of the study; and

(2) any findings and recommendations of the Secretary.

SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia.

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GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, S. 1346, introduced by Senator STABENOW, is a companion to H.R. 3532 introduced by our colleague, Mr. CAMP of Michigan. The bill would direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of Michigan's maritime heritage resources to determine suitable and feasible options for their long-term protection. I urge adoption of the bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, our colleagues from the Wolverine State, including our Resources Committee colleague, Mr. KILDEE, and the dean of the House, Representative JOHN DINGELL, have worked diligently to get this measure to the House floor today, and we applaud their efforts.

We have no objection to S. 1346 and look forward to the results of the study authorizing this bill.

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

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP).

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Virginia for yielding me this time, and I thank the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands for her comments on this bipartisan bill.

I rise today in support of S. 1346, and I was proud to introduce a companion bill in the House.

Michigan owes its rich maritime history to more than 3,000 miles of Great Lakes shoreline. As the largest freshwater body in the world, the Great Lakes are home to a thriving shipping industry, a passenger transport system, and thousands of recreational boaters. It is not surprising, then, that Michigan's shores carry more lighthouses than any other State. These lighthouses are important reminders of the State's maritime prominence.

Michigan is also home to several underwater preserves and the country's only freshwater marine sanctuary, the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Thunder Bay contains hundreds of shipwrecks preserved by the icy waters of Lake Huron. Each one provides a unique window into Michigan's maritime history.

In addition, I am proud that my State contains many major maritime museums and a dozen historic ships, including a replica of a wooden schooner