

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1651, the bill just passed.

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

There was no objection.

#### 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.

#### BIKINI RESETTLEMENT AND RELOCATION ACT OF 1999

Mr. SHERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2368) to assist in the resettlement and relocation of the people of Bikini Atoll by amending the terms of the trust fund established during the United States administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2368

*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 "Bikini Resettlement and Relocation Act of 1999".

#### SEC. 2. PARTIAL DISTRIBUTION OF TRUST FUND AMOUNTS.

Three percent of the market value as of June 1, 1999, of the Resettlement Trust Fund for the People of Bikini, established pursuant to Public Law 97-257, shall be made available for immediate ex gratia distribution to the people of Bikini, provided such distribution does not reduce the corpus of the trust fund. The amount of such distribution shall be deducted from any additional ex gratia payments that may be made by the Congress into the Resettlement Trust Fund.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHERWOOD).

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2368, the Bikini Resettlement and Relocation Act of 1999 is an important measure to help the relocation and resettlement of the people of the Bikini Atoll. This community was displaced during the time of United States nuclear testing in the Pacific, and while the U.S. was the administering authority for the islands under the United Nations' Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

In the 1982, Congress established a Resettlement Trust Fund for the benefit of the Bikinians. H.R. 2368 would authorize a one-time 3 percent distribution from the Resettlement Trust Fund for relocation and resettlement assistance primarily for the remaining senior citizens of the Bikini Atoll, 3 percent of \$126 million, or \$3.7 million.

This will not require any appropriation of any funds by the U.S. Congress, and will not diminish the original corpus of the Resettlement Trust Fund of \$110 million.

These funds will provide relocation assistance now to the surviving 90 members of Bikini who were removed from their home island, as it may still take years to complete radiological restoration of the atoll to permit safe habitation.

The bill also responds to the resolution of the Bikini Council requesting this legislative action by Congress. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan measure.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this act would authorize a one-time 3 percent distribution from the resettlement fund for the people of Bikini established by Congress in 1982 for relocation and resettlement assistance primarily for the remaining senior citizens of Bikini Atoll.

The odyssey of the Bikini people is a very sad one, indeed. They were moved off their atoll in March of 1946 by the U.S. Navy to facilitate the U.S. nuclear testing program. They were first moved to Rongerik, an uninhabited atoll some 100 miles east of Bikini. Naval officials stated that Rongerik was bigger and richer than Bikini, but it turned out that the move was ill-conceived and poorly planned.

Contrary to the Navy's assertions, Rongerik's land area is one-quarter of the size of Bikini, and its life-sustaining pandanus and coconut trees were considerably less productive than those of Bikini.

The situation on Rongerik steadily deteriorated over the next 2 years. In July of 1947, a medical officer who visited the atoll reported that the Bikinians were visibly suffering from malnutrition. Several sites for another relocation were explored, but none proved satisfactory.

However, when a Navy physician examined the Bikinians in March of 1948 and found them to be a starving people, emergency measures were called for and the Bikinians were immediately evacuated to the Navy base at Kwajalein Atoll. As early as 1948, as the official Navy history of the Trust Territory notes, "Definite physiological scars were left on the people." The consequences of their two relocations, 2 years on Rongerik and nearly 8 months on Kwajalein, were already abundantly evident.

In less than 3 years, the once self-sufficient people had been transformed into dependent wards of the United States. Their very existence had been threatened, and the little confidence that they had in themselves was diminished.

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The third relocation of the Bikinians occurred in November of 1948 when the community was moved to Kili Island some 400 miles south of Bikini. Although Kili receives more rainfall than Bikini and has richer soils, it is an island, a high island, not an atoll, and it is about one-ninth the land area of Bikini.

It has neither lagoon, sheltered fishing ground, protected anchorage, nor good beaches. Instead, a flat reef shelf forms around the circumference of the island and drops abruptly to great depths. As a result, it is virtually inaccessible by sea from November to May, when tradewinds cause heavy surf to pound the shore.

This drastic change from an atoll existence, with its abundant fish and islands as far as the eye could see, to an isolated island with no lagoon and inaccessible marine resources, took a severe physiological toll on the Bikini people.

Since their arrival there in 1948, the Bikinians have compared Kili to a jail. The elders sorely miss the ability to move about an atoll, engage in fishing expeditions across the lagoon or in the open sea, and sail to other islands. At Bikini, much of men's lives had centered about their sailing canoes, and they spent many hours working together on them. These sailing canoes had to be abandoned on Kili, and the Bikinians have lost virtually all their sailing and fishing skills.

Today, 53 years after their move from Bikini, less than half the "elders" who were moved off originally in 1946 are still alive. The radiological cleanup and resettlement of Bikini is at least a decade away, and will cost at least several hundred million dollars, and the numerous relocations of the people have had severe consequences.

The Bikinians did not desire relocation in 1946, but they believed they had no alternative but to comply with the wishes of the United States.

Much of the Bikinians' culture and society and identity are rooted in their ancestral home: the islands, reefs, and lagoon of Bikini Atoll. The people's identity, the very essence of their perceptions of themselves, is intimately tied to their home atoll.

The system of land rights provided much of the underlying structure for the organization of the community. Short of loss of life itself, the loss of their ancestral homeland represented the worst calamity imaginable for the Bikini people.

The confinement of the Bikini people to Kili has deprived them of most of the activities and pleasures that they enjoy at Bikini Atoll.

The people of Bikini gave the United States everything they had, their land and their home. They demanded nothing in return. They asked only that the United States care for them until their