

EXPLORATION OF THE SEAS ACT

SEPTEMBER 6, 2000.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, from the Committee on Resources,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 2090]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 2090) to direct the Secretary of Commerce to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel to report to the Congress on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanography program, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Exploration of the Seas Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) During the past 100 years, scientists working with marine fossils, both underwater and high in the mountains, have traced the origins of life on Earth to the sea, beginning approximately 3 billion years ago. Today, life on our planet remains dependent on the vitality of the sea.

(2) More than two-thirds of the Earth’s surface is covered by water, with oceans and inland seas accounting for almost 140 million square miles.

(3) The United Nations forecasts a worldwide population of 8.9 billion by the year 2050, a 50 percent increase from 5.9 billion in 1999. As this trend in population growth continues, increasing demands will be placed on ocean and coastal resources, not only as a result of population growth in coastal regions, but also from the need to harvest increasing amounts of marine life as a source of food to satisfy world protein requirements, and from the mining of energy-producing materials from offshore resource deposits.

(4) The ocean remains one of the Earth’s last unexplored frontiers. It has stirred our imaginations over the millennia, led to the discovery of new lands, immense mineral deposits, and reservoirs of other resources, and produced startling scientific findings. Recognizing the importance of the marine environment,

the need for scientific exploration to expand our knowledge of the world's oceans is crucial if we are to ensure that the marine environment will be managed sustainably.

(5) The seas possess enormous economic and environmental importance. Some ocean resources, such as fisheries and minerals, are well recognized. Oil use has increased dramatically in recent times, and the sea bed holds large deposits of largely undiscovered reserves. Other ocean resources offer promise for the future. In addition to fossil fuels, the ocean floor contains deposits of gravel, sand, manganese crusts and nodules, tin, gold, and diamonds. Marine mineral resources are extensive, yet poorly understood.

(6) The oceans also offer rich untapped potential for medications. Marine plants and animals possess inestimable potential in the treatment of human illnesses. Coral reefs, sometimes described as the rain forests of the sea, contain uncommon chemicals that may be used to fight diseases for which scientists have not yet found a cure, such as cancer, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and diabetes. While the number of new chemical compounds that can be derived from land based plants and microbial fermentation is limited, scientists have only just begun to explore the sea's vast molecular potential.

(7) In spite of the development of new technologies, comparatively little of the ocean has been studied. The leadership role of the United States has been eroded by a gradual decrease in funding support, even while public opinion surveys indicate that ocean exploration is at least as important as space exploration.

(8) The National Academy of Sciences has the means by which to study and make determinations regarding the adoption and establishment of a coordinated oceanography program for the exploration of the seas, in which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration could participate in a role similar to that of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration with regard to the International Space Station.

SEC. 3. COORDINATED OCEANOGRAPHIC PROGRAM ADVISORY PANEL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act and subject to the availability of appropriations, the Secretary of Commerce shall contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanography Program Advisory Panel (in this Act referred to as the "Panel"), comprised of experts in ocean studies, including individuals with academic experience in oceanography, marine biology, marine geology, ichthyology, and ocean related economics.

(b) CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON.—The Panel shall elect a chairperson and a vice-chairperson.

(c) TERMINATION.—The Panel shall cease to exist 30 days after submitting its final report and recommendations pursuant to section 4.

SEC. 4. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—No later than 18 months after its establishment, the Panel shall report to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanography program. In preparing its report, the Panel shall examine existing oceanographic efforts and the level of coordination or cooperation between and among participating countries and institutions.

(b) INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP.—To assist in making its feasibility determination under subsection (a), the Panel shall convene an international workshop with participation from interested nations and a broad range of persons representing scientists, engineers, policy makers, regulators, industry, and other interested parties.

(c) FINAL REPORT.—The Panel shall include in its final report recommendations for a national oceans exploration strategy, which will—

- (1) define objectives and priorities, and note important scientific, historic, and cultural sites;
- (2) promote collaboration among research organizations;
- (3) examine the potential for new ocean exploration technologies;
- (4) describe those areas of study in which national or international oceanographic cooperation is currently being undertaken;
- (5) identify areas of study in which knowledge of the oceans is inadequate;
- (6) ensure coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Protected Area Center;
- (7) ensure that newly discovered organisms with medicinal or commercial potential are identified for possible research and development; and
- (8) identify countries and organizations that would be likely to participate in a coordinated oceanography program.

(d) IMPLEMENTATION.—If the Panel determines that a coordinated oceanography program is feasible and has significant value for advancing mankind's knowledge of

the ocean, the Panel shall include in its final report recommendations for implementing such program, including recommendations regarding—

- (1) the institutional arrangements, treaties, or laws necessary to implement a coordinated oceanography program;
- (2) the methods and incentives needed to secure cooperation and commitments from participating nations to ensure that the benefit that each nation that is a party to any international agreement establishing a coordinated oceanography program receives is contingent upon meeting the nation's obligations (financial and otherwise) under such an agreement;
- (3) the costs associated with establishing a coordinated oceanography program;
- (4) the types of undersea vehicles, ships, observing systems, or other equipment that would be necessary to operate a coordinated oceanography program; and
- (5) how utilization of aboriginal observational data and other historical information may be best incorporated into a coordinated oceanography program.

SEC. 5. OBTAINING DATA.

Subject to national security restrictions, the Panel may obtain from any department or agency of the United States information necessary to enable it to carry out this Act. Upon request of the chairperson of the Panel, the head of any department or agency shall furnish that information at no cost to the Panel.

SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated for the purposes of carrying out this Act, and to remain available until expended, \$1,500,000.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of H.R. 2090 is to direct the Secretary of Commerce to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel to report to Congress on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanographic program.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Over the past 15 years, tremendous advances in oceanographic technology have been made and recent technological advances have given us the ability to fully explore the world's oceans. Unfortunately, the United States does not have a comprehensive plan for determining what data needs to be collected, or for integrating that data into an easily usable system. H.R. 2090 establishes a panel to determine whether the U.S. is making the most productive and efficient use of the new oceanographic technologies available to us, and whether the U.S. is making the best investments with our limited resources.

H.R. 2090 establishes the Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel composed of individuals with academic experience in oceanography, marine biology, marine geology, ichthyology, and ocean-related economics. The Panel will submit a report to Congress on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated international oceanographic program. This report will include recommendations for a national oceans exploration strategy. If the Panel determines that a coordinated oceanographic program is feasible and necessary, the report shall include recommendations for establishing such a program.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 2090 was introduced on June 9, 1999, by Congressman Jim Greenwood (R-PA). The bill was referred to the Committee on Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Fish-

eries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans. On October 27, 1999, the Subcommittee held a hearing on the bill. On March 23, 2000, the Subcommittee met to mark up the bill. No amendments were offered and the bill was then ordered favorably reported to the Full Committee by voice vote. On July 26, 2000, the Full Resources Committee met to consider the bill. Congressman Jim Saxton (R-NJ) offered an amendment to expand the list of objectives and priorities to be included in the national oceans exploration strategy, add to the findings the importance of sustainable management of marine resources and add to the implementation section a provision to incorporate aboriginal observational data and historical information. It was adopted by voice vote. The bill as amended was then ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by voice vote.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Short title

The short title of the bill is the “Exploration of the Seas Act”.

Section 2. Findings

The findings express the importance of, and the need to better understand, the world’s ocean.

Section 3. Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel

The Secretary of Commerce will contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel, which will be composed of experts in ocean studies, including individuals with academic experience in oceanography, marine biology, marine geology, ichthyology, and ocean related economics. The Panel will elect a chairperson and a vice-chairperson. The Panel will cease to exist 30 days after submitting its final report and recommendations to Congress under section 4 of the bill.

Section 4. Report and recommendations

No later than 18 months after its establishment, the Panel will report to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanographic program. In preparing the report, the Panel will examine existing oceanographic efforts and the level of coordination or cooperation between and among participating countries and institutions. To aid in determining whether a coordinated oceanographic program is feasible, the Panel will convene an international workshop with participation from interested nations and a broad range of persons representing scientists, engineers, policy makers, regulators, industry, and other interested parties.

The Panel will include in its final report recommendations for a national oceans exploration strategy, which will: define objectives and priorities, and note important scientific, historic and cultural sites; promote collaboration among research organizations; examine the potential for new ocean exploration technologies; describe those areas of study in which national or international oceanographic cooperation is currently being undertaken; identify areas of study in

which knowledge of the oceans is inadequate; ensure coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Protected Area Center; ensure that newly-discovered organisms with medicinal or commercial potential are identified for possible research and development; and identify countries and organizations that would be likely to participate in a coordinated program.

If the Panel determines that a coordinated oceanographic program is feasible and necessary, the report shall include recommendations for establishing such a program, including the institutional arrangements, treaties and laws needed, the methods and incentives needed to secure cooperation and commitments from participating nations, the costs of establishing a coordinated program, the types of capital equipment necessary to support a coordinated program and how utilization of aboriginal observational data and other historical information may be best incorporated into a coordinated oceanographic program.

Section 5. Obtaining data

Subject to national security restrictions, the Panel may obtain, at no cost, the information necessary to carry out this bill from any department or agency of the United States.

Section 6. Authorization of appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated for the purposes of carrying out this bill \$1.5 million, to remain available until expended.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE STATEMENT

The functions of the proposed advisory committee authorized in the bill are not currently being nor could they be performed by one or more agencies, an advisory committee already in existence or by enlarging the mandate of an existing advisory committee.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this bill.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII

1. *Cost of Legislation.*—Clause 3(d)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires an estimate and a comparison by the Committee of the costs which would be incurred in carrying out this bill. However, clause 3(d)(3)(B) of that rule provides that this requirement does not apply when the Committee has included in its report a timely submitted cost estimate of the bill prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office under section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

2. *Congressional Budget Act.*—As required by clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section

308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, this bill does not contain any new budget authority, spending authority, credit authority, or an increase or decrease in revenues or tax expenditures.

3. *Government Reform Oversight Findings.*—Under clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee has received no report of oversight findings and recommendations from the Committee on Government Reform on this bill.

4. *Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate.*—Under clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following cost estimate for this bill from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, August 4, 2000.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
*Chairman, Committee on Resources,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 2090, the Exploration of the Seas Act.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Deborah Reis.

Sincerely,

BARRY B. ANDERSON
(For Dan L. Crippen, Director).

Enclosure.

H.R. 2090—Exploration of the Seas Act

H.R. 2090 would direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish an advisory panel composed of experts in ocean studies. The panel would convene an international workshop of scientists, policy-makers, and other interested parties. Within 18 months of its creation, the panel would report to the Congress on the feasibility and social value of an oceanography program that would be coordinated with other interested nations. The report would include recommendations for a national oceans exploration strategy and suggestions on how to implement the strategy. For these purposes, the bill would authorize the appropriation of \$1.5 million.

Assuming appropriation of the authorized amount, CBO estimates that the Department of Commerce would spend \$1.5 million over the next two years to create the advisory panel, convene the international workshop, and complete the panel's report to the Congress.

The bill would not affect direct spending or receipts; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply. H.R. 2090 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would have no impact on the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Deborah Reis. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC LAW 104-4

This bill contains no unfunded mandates.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

This bill is not intended to preempt any State, local or tribal law.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

If enacted, this bill would make no changes in existing law.

