

Land Bill Goes To House

WASHINGTON—Rep. Antonio B. Won Pat said yesterday that a bill sponsored by him which would give the people of Guam title to all property not being used by the federal government has been reported favorably to the House of Representatives by the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

A second bill, sponsored by Rep. Ron de Lugo of the Virgin Islands and co-sponsored by Won Pat, which would transfer title to unused submerged lands of Guam, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa to the territorial governments, was also approved.

The occasion marked the first time that major legislation affecting the United States territories was handled jointly by the delegates from Guam and the Virgin Islands.

Approval of the bill is a great step forward, Won Pat said. "It means that we are finally receiving a degree of control over our native lands. During this period of vital economic growth, Guam needs every possible inch of land. Passage of this legislation will enable us to obtain a right to property not absolutely needed by the federal government."

Under the provisions of Won Pat's bill, title to all federal property not specifically reserved by the President within the one year after enactment would revert to the people of

Guam. GovGuam would receive authority to collect rents and fees, issue land use permits and take legal action to protect its interest in property conveyed by the bill.

It is estimated 11,000 acres of land on Guam are not being used or occupied beneficially by

the federal government.

Another provision of the bill is the withdrawal of the authority of the President over crimes committed on federally-owned or controlled property on Guam and its transfer to GovGuam.

This provision, which is part

of the Organic Act, has long been considered discriminatory towards the Guamanian people.

Also included is a section prohibiting denial of benefits under the bill to persons on the basis of race, religion, color, sex or national ancestry.

The second bill provides that

Guam would receive title to all submerged lands not being used by the federal government and would give the President 120 days to designate the lands.

Won Pat said copies of the bills are being forwarded to Gov. Camacho and other key government officials.