



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

01
A

MAR 14 1975

Dear Mr. Speaker:

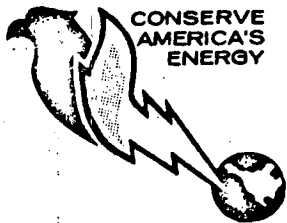
Enclosed is a proposed bill, "To provide an authorization for an ex gratia payment to the people of Bikini Atoll, in the Marshall Islands of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands."

We recommend that the bill be referred to the appropriate Committee for consideration, and strongly urge that it be enacted.

In 1946, in the interest of international security, all the Bikini people were removed from their home atoll to provide the United States with a nuclear test site. The Bikinians were moved three times, and finally settled on Kili, an island with a land area of only one-third of a square mile. Life on Kili was difficult from the very beginning. There was no lagoon in which to fish and no protected anchorage. In addition, a typhoon caused salt water flooding which destroyed crops and polluted the fresh water supply. Food shortages were common occurrences and high waves prevented field trip vessels from picking up copra and bringing foodstuffs ashore. In short, the past 29 years have been physically and psychologically difficult for the displaced Bikinians.

The people of Enewetak Atoll, also located in the Marshall Islands, experienced a parallel situation. They were displaced in 1947 and moved to Ujelang Atoll where they now live. Enewetak was also the site of weapons testing, and there were over 40 nuclear detonations through 1957.

However, there has been one significant difference in the experiences of the two peoples. In July 1969, the United States Government made an ex gratia payment of \$1,020,000 to the people of Enewetak in recognition of the hardships faced, the longstanding removal from their home atoll, and the fact that their ultimate return was not then viewed as possible in the near future. The funds were placed in trust for the people, who since that time have received interest payments. The trust fund will remain available even though the people are now scheduled to return to Enewetak.



13967

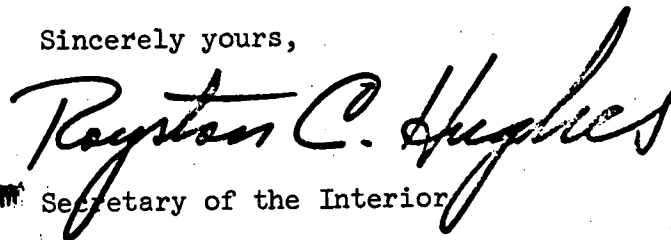
Save Energy and You Serve America!

In April 1974, the people of Bikini petitioned the Department of the Interior and the Department of Defense for an ex gratia payment. Their request was based upon the same logic as that used to make the ex gratia payment to the people of Enewetak. Both Departments feel that 29 years of hardship and suffering are sufficient grounds to justify compensation. Thus, I recommend a payment of \$2,270,000 to be held in trust for the people by a trustee approved by the Bikinians and High Commissioner of the Trust Territory.

We are aware that the people of Bikini Atoll, through the Kili/Bikini Council, have filed a claim with the Micronesian Claims Commission under the provisions of the Micronesian Claims Act of 1971. We believe the rationale for the ex gratia payment recommended in this bill is separate and distinct from the rationale advanced for the claim for damages filed with the Micronesian Claims Commission. Nevertheless, we will work with the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission, and the Micronesian Claim Commission, to avoid possible overlapping of any compensation for any item in the claim filed with them which, when fully developed, may relate to the same incident upon which the draft bill proposes to compensate.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that the presentation of this proposed legislation is consistent with the program of the President.

Sincerely yours,


Secretary of the Interior

Honorable Carl B. Albert
Speaker of the House
of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Enclosure