

*E. M. Wilson*

STATEMENT OF JAMES M. WILSON JR.  
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FOR MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS - November 20, 1973

I am appearing here today to support the request for those supplemental funds for the Trust Territory which are of special political interest to the United States in the context of the Micronesian Status Negotiations.

The United States Government has been engaged for some time in a series of negotiations aimed at ending the U.S. trusteeship in Micronesia and establishing new political relationship between the United States and the peoples of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Of special importance to these negotiations are two programs included on the supplemental request. These are the Micronesian Constitutional Convention and an accelerated land survey program.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Funds in the amount of \$450,000 have been requested to make possible a Micronesian Constitutional Convention. As the committee is aware our 1947 agreement with the United Nations establishing the trusteeship, which was approved by both houses of the U.S. Congress, obligates us to move the people of Micronesia as rapidly as possible towards self-government or independence. The present negotiations aim for a new relationship of free association between the people of Micronesia and the United States under which they would be responsible for their own internal affairs and we would be responsible for their foreign affairs and defense. A new constitution which entered into effect even before the termination of the trusteeship would not only represent a further step towards self-government but provide a practical blueprint for the post-trusteeship period.

We have urged the Micronesians to move promptly in this direction and have told them that with the approval of the Congress of the United States we will assist in the funding of the convention. The establishment of a new Government of Micronesia will be an obvious prerequisite to the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement. It will insure an orderly transition from the present political status to a new government in which the Micronesians will assume full responsibility for their own internal affairs.

We believe strongly that it is in the interests of the United States to promote the formation of a viable new Government of Micronesia. The Congress of Micronesia has assured the United States that it will allocate funds for that portion of a convention's costs not covered by the U.S. grant.

LAND SURVEY PROGRAM

Since December of 1972, the U.S. Government has been working on a response to a Micronesian request that we transfer immediately control

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over public lands in the Trust Territory to local district authorities. Public lands in Micronesia have been held in trust by the United States for the people of Micronesia. We had assumed that their eventual disposition would be determined by the Micronesians themselves when their new government was established at the close of the trusteeship. Now the Micronesians have asked that this process be accelerated.

In response we initiated a priority study here and in Micronesia gathering relevant facts and looking into specific problems. The results were presented to the Secretary of the Interior along with specific recommendations which he approved last month. These call for the early transfer of public lands to the districts if the people of the districts so desire but subject to certain safeguards designed to protect the property interests of individual Micronesians and to meet the continuing needs of the Central Government from now until the trusteeship ends.

Public lands in Micronesia have come from a variety of sources, including the transfer to the Trust Territory Government of title to the bulk of the public lands acquired by the Japanese, German and Spanish colonial governments. Almost 60% of the total land area in the Trust Territory is now considered to be public land. Many of the pre-World War II land records were lost or destroyed; and individual ownership boundaries, some of which are now within the originally composed tracts of public lands, are sometimes very unclear. An extensive program of surveys and adjudication has been necessary. This program, however, has gone extremely slowly because of the limited funds made available over the years. If it is continued at the present rate it is estimated that almost 30 years would be required to complete it. The new U.S. land policy cannot get off to a successful start without a greatly accelerated public land surveying effort.

After consultation with appropriate experts and land survey officers in the Trust Territory the Interior Department had determined that a special land survey program and necessary related adjudication work can be completed in roughly three years at a total cost of \$6 million. In order to get this started at once a minimum appropriation of \$800,000 is requested this fiscal year.

For these reasons we urge favorable actions by the Congress on both of these supplemental requests.

Thank you very much.

