

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 19, 1997.

Hon. JOHN M. BERNAL,
Commissioner, International Boundary and
Water Commission, El Paso, TX.

DEAR COMMISSIONER BERNAL: I am writing to ask your assistance in providing a progress report on the cleanup of the New River pollution and in determining how completion of the improvement project can be expedited.

As you know, the cleanup of the New River is a critical factor to the elimination of the environmental degradation of the Salton Sea and the public health threat which the pollution poses for residents of Imperial County and the border region. Disease outbreaks among birds and fish at the Salton Sea have brought local and national attention to the degradation of the inland sea and the region's ecosystem. Moreover, the mortality toll of fish and wildlife continues to rise, and has served to heighten interests in finding solutions that will result in the elimination of the complex problems besetting the Salton Sea.

Because of the concerns cited above, I respectfully request your assistance in providing a progress and status report on the short term and long-term New River pollution cleanup measures which the IBWC is overseeing. I have been informed that while much progress has been made on the package of 11 so-called "quick fix" projects, that, because of technical and other reasons, the project has taken longer than expected to complete. I would appreciate information on the expected completion date for all of the improvements. Also of interest is the status of the other major work on upgrading of the Mexicali I wastewater treatment plant and construction of the new Mexicali II treatment plant.

Because of the importance of these projects for reducing New River pollution and other serious threats to the environment and public health, I also ask that the IBWC, in conjunction with its Mexico partners, do all that it can to accelerate completion of the improvements and certification by the Border Environment Cooperation Commission.

Thank you for your cooperation. I also please to assist in any way possible so please do not hesitate to contact me in that regard.

With warmest personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senator.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I thank the Chair.

The first letter is to Frank Raines of OMB asking that 2 million additional dollars in fiscal year 1999 be included, and giving the rationale for those inclusions.

I have received a letter dated October 20 indicating—and I thank him very much for that—that OMB is reviewing the request.

I also have a letter dated September 23 to Bruce Babbitt of the Interior, and to John Bernal of the International Boundary and Water Commission. I have received no response to either of these letters.

It is my view that the Department of the Interior should take this off of the back burner and put it on the front burner. And I would respectfully suggest that they utilize the same club-fed methodology that they have used I think with great success in handling California's water problems. This is where the Secretary of the Interior

really takes the responsibility to pull together all of the disparate groups into a kind of working commitment to see that the right thing is done.

My concern is that the die-off could continue for years, and the chemical and agricultural wastes continue to interface.

If you fly above this river you will see where the river leaches out a crystalline substance into the agricultural heartland of the Imperial Valley. You will see where it directly abuts green field row crops. This I think is the potential danger in terms of the future for people working in that area, not only for blisters but also for something potentially much more serious.

So I am hoping that Secretary Babbitt will elevate this into a club-fed effort and that we can really get cracking.

The House Subcommittee on Water and Power also held an oversight hearing in Palm Desert on October 3 of this year, a few weeks ago, helping to focus national and regional attention on the Salton Sea and the need for action. However, as I said, at this time there is no agreement on a plan. And the critical research must be done. But what is clear to me is that it must be expedited. We now have a die-off that has been going on throughout this decade, and is escalating. We now have identified microorganisms which yield typhoid, cholera, and tuberculosis, and other diseases in what is a 350-square-mile body of water which is polluted in a major and very sad way.

So the longer a solution is delayed, Mr. President, the worse the situation will become.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, October 24, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,425,466,348,255.95. (Five trillion, four hundred twenty-five billion, four hundred sixty-six million, three hundred forty-eight thousand, two hundred fifty-five dollars and ninety-five cents).

One year ago, October 24, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,232,047,000,000 (Five trillion, two hundred thirty-two billion, forty-seven million).

Twenty-five years ago, October 24, 1972, the Federal debt stood at \$438,275,000,000 (Four hundred thirty-eight billion, two hundred seventy-five million) which reflects a debt increase of nearly \$5 trillion—\$4,987,191,348,255.95 (Four trillion, nine hundred eighty-seven billion, one hundred ninety-one million, three hundred forty-eight thousand, two hundred fifty-five dollars and ninety-five cents) during the past 25 years.

WYOMING'S POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the action of my State's Governor in proclaiming September 19,

1997, as Wyoming's POW/MIA Recognition Day. I believe such a proclamation to be wholly appropriate in light of the fact that over 2,000 Americans are still missing in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, and over 8,000 on the Korean Peninsula. These men gave their last full measure in causes whose worthiness is rendered more secure with every passing year of historical distance. Though the same can be said of all who sacrificed so, we often forget the sacrifice of those who have no headstones to call to us each memorial day. Hence the importance of efforts such as Governor Geringer's, which remind the Nation of our continuing and unfulfilled responsibility to account for the remains of these men for the sake of their families and our national conscience. I am reminded of something written half a century ago:

The universe is so vast and so ageless that the life of one man can only be justified by the measure of his sacrifice.

That passage was in a young Royal Air Force pilot's last letter to his mother before his death during the Battle of Britain. I commend Governor Geringer for his proclamation and I urge the President to intensify his efforts at retrieving the remains of America's missing in action. In their sacrifice they proved their measure. America owes them this small debt.

There being no objection, the proclamation was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION

Two thousand one hundred sixteen Americans are still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, and their families, friends and fellow veterans still endure uncertainty concerning their fate. Six are listed from Wyoming.

U.S. Government intelligence and other evidence confirm that the Government of Vietnam could unilaterally account for hundreds of missing Americans, including many of the 454 still missing in Laos and the 76 still unaccounted for in Cambodia, by locating and returning identifiable remains and providing archival records to answer other discrepancies.

The President has normalized relations with Vietnam and believed that such action would generate increased unilateral accounting for Americans still missing from the Vietnam War, and such results have not yet been provided by the Government of Vietnam.

Wyoming calls on the President to reinvestigate U.S. efforts to press Vietnam for unilateral actions to locate and return to our nation remains that would account for hundreds of America's POW/MIAs and records to help obtain answers on many more.

For these significant reasons, I, Jim Geringer, Governor of the State of Wyoming, do hereby proclaim September 19, 1997, to be "POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY" in Wyoming, and encourage all citizens to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Wyoming to be affixed this 22nd day of August, 1997.

JIM GERINGER,
Governor.