

title is noncontroversial and simply extends these two acts for an additional 5 years at existing funding levels.

Madam Speaker, I compliment the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) for sponsoring this bill, and urge my colleagues to support this important humanitarian effort.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, as stated by the previous speaker, H.R. 2584 is noncontroversial legislation that would convey a decommissioned research vessel formerly operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to the local government of Utrök Atoll located in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Congress should do whatever we can to help the residents of Utrök Atoll. It is imperative that they receive the critical medical testing and treatment necessary to address the increased rates of thyroid cancer and birth defects that have arisen as a result of the U.S. nuclear testing program we conducted in the Northern Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958.

The conveyance of this former NOAA vessel will allow more convenient and less expensive transportation for these residents who have to make a 265-mile trip to the neighboring islands of Majuro where the medical facilities are located.

I commend the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) for introducing this legislation to help the residents of this very remote atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

This legislation also contains a very important amendment to address a problem regarding serious lapses in procedure affecting past appointments and promotions for NOAA's Uniformed Corps of Officers.

It is important that the chain of command of the NOAA Corps not be disrupted. And while any future repeat of these procedural lapses may not be tolerated, this matter must be addressed expeditiously to prevent any operational or command dysfunction from arising.

I urge all Members to support this legislation.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2584, a bill I introduced to assist our friends from Utrök Atoll as they continue efforts to resettle and rehabilitate their islands as a result of the effects of the United States nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands. I would like to express my gratitude to Chairman RICHARD POMBO and Ranking Member NICK RAHALL of the Resources Committee for their continued support of Pacific Island issues. I would also like to thank my distinguished colleagues and co-sponsors—Congressmen ANIBAL ACEVEDO-VILA (PR), DAN BURTON (IN), JOHN DOOLITTLE (CA), ELTON GALLEGLY (CA), JEFF FLAKE (AZ) and Congresswoman MADELEINE BORDALLO (Guam).

The purpose of this proposed legislation is simply to authorize the Secretary of Commerce to convey a decommissioned, operable NOAA vessel to the Government of Utrök. The vessel would be used to provide support for radiological monitoring, rehabilitation and resettlement of Utrök, an atoll that is part of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

As you know, many of the Marshall Islands atolls were devastated by the effects of the U.S. Nuclear Testing activities during the 1940's and 50's. Utrök was one of four atolls acknowledged by the U.S. Government and suffering unsafe radiological exposure and its residents were forced to evacuate 72 hours after the miscalculated Bravo shot. Two months later, the people of Utrök were assured it was safe to return home. We know now that this was a grave mistake because Utrök residents have since suffered increased radiological illnesses and birth defects. Today, the people of Utrök are seeking to rehabilitate their home island so that it is a safe place to live.

Last year a comprehensive scientific report recommended a potassium fertilizer treatment to accompany the ongoing resettlement process on Utrök, a treatment which would suppress the remaining radioactive Cesium-137 in the soil and prevent its further uptake in the food supply. In addition, the U.S. Department of Energy concluded a MOU with Utrök that committed the DOE to build a Whole body Counting (WBC) facility in order to monitor radioactivity levels in the people of Utrök. This new facility is located about 265 miles away in Majuro and will be used to ensure that the potassium fertilizer regime is effective and the administration of the fertilizer treatment is done properly. However, Utrök residents are responsible for their own transportation to Majuro. Transportation by plane is expensive and available only once per week, and is unreliable, as the Utrök runway is in disrepair and the airline often declines to land. Travel by commercial ships, although less expensive, is infrequent and unfeasible.

One solution to help facilitate transportation between Utrök and Majuro is to transfer a decommissioned NOAA vessel to the Utrök Atoll Local Government. In addition to transport of Utrök residents to the WBC facility, the vessel will be used for moving several tons of potassium fertilizer, transporting equipment and materials for radiological remediation, and transporting USDA food supplies. Because of the Cesium-137 contamination is locally grown food, at least 50% of the diet of Utrök residents must be imported to limit the risk of radiological poisoning.

The Utrök Atoll Local Government also fully supports this measure and adopted a resolution (022-03) on July 4th 2003 stating that the NOAA vessel transfer would be "one of the crucial needs that will fully support our future goals to develop, rehabilitate and resettle the atoll after the aftermath of the 'Bravo' fallout". The Utrök Government also expects the ship to be available for use by other atolls for their respective communities, who will help pay for the ongoing maintenance of the vessel.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that this bill will remind the Congress of our ongoing responsibility to the people of RMI for the mistakes the United States made regarding its nuclear testing activities in the Asia Pacific region. Once again, I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation and I thank my colleagues for their support.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2584, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to provide for the conveyance to the Utrök Atoll local government of a decommissioned National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ship, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills and a concurrent resolution of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 3038. An act to make certain technical and conforming amendments to correct the Health Care Safety Net Amendments of 2002.

H.R. 3140. An act to provide for availability of contact lens prescriptions to patients, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3166. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 57 Old Tappan Road in Tappan, New York, as the "John G. Dow Post Office Building".

H.R. 3185. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 38 Spring Street in Nashua, New Hampshire, as the "Hugh Gregg Post Office Building".

H.R. 3491. An act to establish within the Smithsonian Institution the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and for other purposes.

H. Con. Res. 320. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the importance of motorsports.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a joint resolution of the House of the following title:

H.J. Res. 78. Making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2004, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1152. An act to reauthorize the United States Fire Administration, and for other purposes.

S. 1561. An act to preserve existing judgeships on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

PREDISASTER MITIGATION PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. LATOURETTE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3181) to amend the Robert