

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2090

To direct the Secretary of Commerce to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel to report to the Congress on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanography program.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 9, 1999

Mr. GREENWOOD (for himself, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. FARR of California, Mr. GILCHREST, Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mr. UNDERWOOD, Mrs. MORELLA, Mrs. CAPPs, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. ENGLISH, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. FOLEY, Mr. EHLERS, Mr. FRANKS of New Jersey, Mr. BILBRAY, and Mr. GUTIERREZ) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Resources

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Commerce to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel to report to the Congress on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanography program.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Exploration of the Seas
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) During the past 100 years, scientists work-
4 ing with marine fossils, both underwater and high in
5 the mountains, have traced the origins of life on
6 Earth to the sea, beginning approximately 3 billion
7 years ago. Today, life on our planet remains depend-
8 ent on the vitality of the sea.

9 (2) More than two-thirds of the Earth's surface
10 is covered by water, with oceans and inland seas ac-
11 counting for almost 140 million square miles.

12 (3) The United Nations forecasts a worldwide
13 population of 8.9 billion by the year 2050, a 50 per-
14 cent increase from 5.9 billion in 1999. As this trend
15 in population growth continues, increasing demands
16 will be placed on ocean and coastal resources, not
17 only as a result of population growth in coastal re-
18 gions, but also from the need to harvest increasing
19 amounts of marine life as a source of food to satisfy
20 world protein requirements, and from the mining of
21 energy-producing materials from offshore resource
22 deposits.

23 (4) The ocean remains one of the Earth's last
24 unexplored frontiers. It has stirred our imaginations
25 over the millennia, led to the discovery of new lands,

1 immense mineral deposits, and reservoirs of re-
2 sources, and produced startling scientific findings.

3 (5) The seas possess enormous economic and
4 environmental importance. Some ocean resources,
5 such as fisheries and minerals, are well recognized.
6 Oil use has increased dramatically in recent times,
7 and the sea bed holds large deposits of largely undis-
8 covered reserves. Other ocean resources offer prom-
9 ise for the future. In addition to fossil fuels, the
10 ocean floor contains deposits of gravel, sand, man-
11 ganese crusts and nodules, tin, gold, and diamonds.
12 Marine mineral resources are extensive, yet poorly
13 understood.

14 (6) The oceans also offer rich untapped poten-
15 tial for medications. Marine plants and animals pos-
16 sess inestimable potential in the treatment of human
17 illnesses. Coral reefs, sometimes described as the
18 rain forests of the sea, contain uncommon chemicals
19 that may be used to fight diseases for which sci-
20 entists have not yet found a cure, such as cancer,
21 acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and
22 diabetes. While the number of new chemical com-
23 pounds that can be derived from land based plants
24 and microbial fermentation is limited, scientists have

1 only just begun to explore the sea's vast molecular
2 potential.

3 (7) In spite of the development of new tech-
4 nologies, comparatively little of the ocean has been
5 studied. The leadership role of the United States has
6 been eroded by a gradual decrease in funding sup-
7 port, even while public opinion surveys indicate that
8 ocean exploration is at least as important as space
9 exploration.

10 (8) The National Academy of Sciences has the
11 means by which to study and make determinations
12 regarding the adoption and establishment of a co-
13 ordinated oceanography program for the exploration
14 of the seas, in which the National Oceanic and At-
15 mospheric Administration could participate in a role
16 similar to that of the National Aeronautics and
17 Space Administration with regard to the Inter-
18 national Space Station.

19 **SEC. 3. COORDINATED OCEANOGRAPHIC PROGRAM ADVI-**
20 **SORY PANEL.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the
22 date of enactment of this Act and subject to the avail-
23 ability of appropriations, the Secretary of Commerce shall
24 contract with the National Academy of Sciences to estab-
25 lish the Coordinated Oceanography Program Advisory

1 Panel (in this Act referred to as the “Panel”), comprised
2 of experts in ocean studies, including individuals with aca-
3 demic experience in oceanography, marine biology, marine
4 geology, ichthyology, and ocean related economics.

5 (b) CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON.—The
6 Panel shall elect a chairperson and a vice-chairperson.

7 (c) TERMINATION.—The Panel shall cease to exist 30
8 days after submitting its final report and recommenda-
9 tions pursuant to section 4.

10 **SEC. 4. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—No later than 18 months after its
12 establishment, the Panel shall report to the Committee on
13 Resources of the House of Representatives and the Com-
14 mittee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the
15 Senate on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated
16 oceanography program. In preparing its report, the Panel
17 shall examine existing oceanographic efforts and the level
18 of coordination or cooperation between and among partici-
19 pating countries and institutions.

20 (b) INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP.—To assist in mak-
21 ing its feasibility determination under subsection (a), the
22 Panel shall convene an international workshop with par-
23 ticipation from interested nations and a broad range of
24 persons representing scientists, engineers, policy makers,
25 regulators, industry, and other interested parties.

1 (c) FINAL REPORT.—The Panel shall include in its
2 final report—

3 (1) an identification of countries and organiza-
4 tions that would be likely to participate in a coordi-
5 nated program;

6 (2) a description of those areas of study in
7 which national or international oceanographic co-
8 operation is currently being undertaken; and

9 (3) an identification of areas of study in which
10 knowledge of the oceans is inadequate.

11 (d) IMPLEMENTATION.—If the Panel determines that
12 a coordinated oceanography program is feasible and has
13 significant value towards advancing mankind’s knowledge
14 of the ocean, the Panel shall include in its final report
15 recommendations for implementing such program, includ-
16 ing recommendations regarding—

17 (1) the institutional arrangements, treaties, or
18 laws necessary to implement a coordinated oceanog-
19 raphy program;

20 (2) the methods and incentives needed to secure
21 cooperation and commitments from participating na-
22 tions to ensure that the benefit that each nation that
23 is a party to any international agreement estab-
24 lishing a coordinated oceanography program receives

1 is contingent upon meeting the nation's obligations
2 (financial or otherwise) under such an agreement;

3 (3) the costs associated with establishing a co-
4 ordinated program; and

5 (4) the types of undersea vehicles, ships, ob-
6 serving systems, or other equipment that would be
7 necessary to operate a coordinated program.

8 **SEC. 5. OBTAINING DATA.**

9 Subject to National security restrictions, the Panel
10 may obtain from any department or agency of the United
11 States information necessary to enable it to carry out this
12 Act. Upon request of the chairperson of the Panel, the
13 head of any department or agency shall furnish that infor-
14 mation at no cost to the Panel.

15 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

16 There are authorized to be appropriated for the pur-
17 poses of carrying out this Act, and to be made available
18 until such sums are expended, \$1,500,000.

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