

STATEMENT ON DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL—MOFFETT FEDERAL AIRFIELD, COMPOSITE MAINTENANCE HANGAR

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 1998

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed that the National Security Committee was unable to include funding for the construction of a new composite hangar for the Air National Guard 129th Rescue Wing stationed at Moffett Federal Airfield in California.

I understand the fiscal restraints placed on the Committee, especially in the area of construction and infrastructure. That is why I am urging the Administration to give careful consideration to including the project in the FY 2000 budget currently being developed.

Currently, the hangar and maintenance facilities for the 129th Rescue Wing at MFA are inadequate and unsafe for personnel and aircraft. The existing hangar (Hangar 3), built before World War II, was designed to house dirigibles and is much too large and in need of costly renovations and repairs. A newly constructed Composite Maintenance Hangar would greatly enhance the operational effectiveness and readiness of the California Air National Guard and the 129th Rescue Wing.

NASA was designated as the host agency to accommodate federal assets at Moffett as a result of the 1993 Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommendations. Subsequently, all tenants at Moffett were required to relocate to contiguous areas, using available facilities to house their activities. As a result, there are no aircraft hangar facilities available to house the nearly 200 maintenance personnel performing repairs to the HC-130P and HH-60G aircraft in the Air National Guard area. Hangar and related aircraft maintenance activities are currently being performed in a World War II hangar designed for dirigibles. The hangar is almost seven times the size of what is needed by the Air National Guard, and is located a substantial distance from the identified Air National Guard area. This building is constructed of wood with a metal roof and has no fire protection or state-of-the-art safety features.

The current facility has inefficient and obsolete utility and environmental systems. The building also requires extensive code upgrades to ensure seismic safety, and the alarm systems are inadequate. Because of the age and condition of the existing hangar, critical and substantial operation and maintenance (O&M) funds are being expended annually to keep the hangar marginally useful. A Life Cycle Cost Report done by the Air Force shows that there is a one year payback involved in the construction of this new composite maintenance hangar, and design of the project has been completed.

I urge the administration to include this project in next year's budget, and hope that at this time next year I can thank the Committee for its work in protecting and assisting the members of the Guard that serve California.

HONORING VINCE'S BRIDGE IN PASADENA, TX

HON. KEN BENTSEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 1998

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the site of Vince's Bridge in Pasadena, Texas, as it is rededicated on May 24, 1998, to the memory of the men and women who participated in the struggle for Texas Independence. In addition, this rededication is a tribute to Pasadena's Our Neighborhood Association and its President, Nona Phillips, who not only spearheaded this rededication, but also conducted painstaking historical research in an effort to document the bridge's role in the Battle of San Jacinto.

At the Battle of San Jacinto, Texas Army General Sam Houston made a surprise attack on the Mexican Army near the mouth of the San Jacinto River, defeating the Mexican Army under General Santa Anna. This battle ended the war, and Texas earned its independence from Mexico. According to the research conducted by Nona Phillips and her neighbors, as well as other historians, Vince's Bridge played a critical role in this victory.

General Sam Houston and the meager Texas Army retreated eastward after the fall of the Alamo in the spring of 1836. The troops were increasingly impatient and demoralized by the time they reached Buffalo Bayou, a few miles southeast of present day Houston.

On April 19, the Texans crossed over and marched down the right bank of Buffalo Bayou to within half a mile of its confluence with the San Jacinto River. Here, the Texas Army prepared their defenses on the edge of a grove of trees. Their rear was protected by timber and the bayou, while before them was an open prairie.

The main forces of the Texas Army totaled about 750 men. They faced a force of 1,500 of the Mexican Army, confident because of their recent successes against the Texans.

Early in the morning of April 21, 1836, Sam Houston sent Erasmus "Deaf" Smith, the celebrated Texas scout, along with John Coker, Denmore Reves, John Garner, John Rainwater, Moses Lapham, and Y.P. Alsbury, to destroy Vince's Bridge over which the Mexican Army had passed, thus cutting off their only available escape. The stage set for battle, General Houston gave his long-awaited order to fight, and after only 18 minutes and shouts of "Remember the Alamo," the Texans were victorious. Santa Anna, who was taken prisoner, signed a treaty that granted Texans their independence and ended the war. The battle for Texas was won.

Vince's Bridge was, by most historical accounts, a relatively small wooden bridge spanning one of the many estuaries of Buffalo Bayou. While the San Jacinto Monument, which today is a museum housing artifacts of the battle, attests to the Texan victory, only a small granite marker along Texas 225, a seldom-travelled, two-lane road, denotes the location of Vince's Bridge. The marker, laid in the early 1900s by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, has almost been forgotten, the message nearly illegible from time and salt.

Longtime residents and members of Pasadena's Our Neighborhood Association believe

the site deserves more recognition since the bridge was instrumental in the Texans' victory. So on May 24, 1998 they will rededicate the marker at the site of Vince's Bridge.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Nona Phillips and Our Neighborhood Association for their unrelenting efforts to carry out this project. Over the years, the bridge has maintained its own identity and symbolism. In the Association's words, "it was built with love and hope and dreams. It was destroyed to protect those dreams. It comes back to life at a time when our children are sorely in need of dreams and example." It is fitting that we rededicate the Vince's Bridge marker to the women and men who participated in the struggle for Texas independence and helped the dreams survive.

THE "CALIFORNIA COASTAL ROCKS AND ISLANDS WILDERNESS ACT OF 1998"

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 20, 1998

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the California Coastal Rocks and Islands Wilderness Act of 1998. I am pleased to be able to offer this bill with the support of my colleague, Representative ELTON GALLEGLY.

The purpose of this bill is to recognize the ecological significance of the tens thousands of small rocks, islands and pinnacles off the California coast, by designating them as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. These small islands and rocks provide important resting sites for California sea lions, Steller's sea lions, elephant seals and harbor seals, as well as providing a narrow flight lane in the Pacific Flyway. An estimated 200,000 breeding seabirds of 13 different species use these rocks and islands for feeding, perching, nesting and shelter. Birds that use these areas include three threatened and endangered species: the brown pelican, the least tern and the peregrine falcon.

The Wilderness designation afforded by this act would apply to all rocks, islands and pinnacles off the California coast from the Oregon border to the U.S. Mexico border, which are currently under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This includes nearly all of the federally-owned lands above the mean high tide and within three geographical miles off the coast.

The designation would afford the highest protected status and highlight the ecological importance of all of the small rocks, islands and pinnacles off the California coast, which together comprise approximately 7,000 square acres. Adding these areas would also further the Wilderness Act's goal of including unique, ecologically representative areas to the System.

Rocks and islands which are already patented or reserved for marine navigational aids, National Monuments, or state parks will not be affected by the legislation.

I am pleased to be able to introduce this bill and look forward to its swift passage, so that these unique areas of California's ecosystem can be preserved and protected for generations to come.