

# Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman  
Mark-Up Memorandum

June 13, 2016

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff—Marc Alberts  
Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs (x6-9725)

Mark-Up: H. Res. 169 (Rep. Mark Takai) Acknowledging and honoring brave young men from Hawaii who enabled the United States to establish and maintain jurisdiction in remote equatorial islands as prolonged conflict in the Pacific lead to World War II  
**June 14-15, 2016 - 1324 Longworth House Office Building**

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## **Summary of the Resolution**

The resolution was introduced on March 24, 2015 by Congressman Mark Takai of Hawaii's first district. The resolution honors the Hui Panala'au colonists, young men of native Hawaiian decent, and others who helped secure and maintain U.S. jurisdiction over the equatorial islands in the Pacific Ocean during the period prior to and months immediately following the Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval fleet at Pearl Harbor, HI.

## **Cosponsors**

Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI-2)  
Congresswoman Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen (R-AS)

## **Background**

In the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, Rep. Colleen Hanabusa introduced a similar resolution on August 4, 2011 that was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources. The resolution received no further consideration in any hearings or mark-ups during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. No similar resolution was introduced during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. Concerns have been raised by Congressman Takai that the U.S. Government has never formally acknowledged or thanked the men or their families for their sacrifices through service in the equatorial islands colonization program. With only one remaining member of the original Hui Panala'au colonists still living, Congressman Takai is imploring the Committee to approve his resolution before the end of the legislative session.

## **Analysis of H. Res. 169**

The resolution goes into some detail outlining the story of the native Hawaiians who colonized the remote islands of Howland, Baker, Jarvis, Canton and Enderbury in order to maintain

U.S. presence in the region. Below is a brief outline of the periods of the colonization program touching on the key points addressed in the resolution.

## **Prior to U.S. engagement in World War II**

The United States first began establishing its presence in the Equatorial Pacific during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through guano<sup>1</sup> mining<sup>2</sup> conducted by private American companies under the Guano Islands Act<sup>3</sup>. After several decades, guano resources became depleted leading to the diminishing presence of American companies on the equatorial Pacific islands leaving them vulnerable to development and claim by other world nations, especially the regional rival, Imperial Japan. The United States still maintained a desire for military and commercial air routes between Australia and California, air routes that would be facilitated by the use of the islands of Howland, Baker and Jarvis. In 1935, the Department of Commerce developed a clandestine colonization plan with the objective of placing U.S. citizens on the remote islands in order for the United States to lay claim to them. The colonization program called for non-active military personnel in order to avoid conflicting with international law regarding colonization by military.

In March of 1935, the U.S. government enlisted the help of native Hawaiians, graduates of the Kamehameha School for Boys, as well as furloughed Army personnel to establish the remote colonies necessary to lay claim to these islands in the equatorial Pacific. The native Hawaiian men were all skilled fishermen, expert swimmers and boatmen, and were willing to undertake the requested mission with discipline and optimism making them the ideal candidates for the colonization program. By June 1935, the furloughed army personnel had been ordered off the islands and replaced by more graduates of the Kamehameha School, leaving only the native Hawaiian volunteers to maintain U.S. presence on the three remote islands. Daily tasks of the colonists included recording weather conditions, cultivating plants, maintaining daily activities logs, recording local fish and fauna, and collecting biological specimens for museum research.

After a year-long occupation of the islands by these men, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 7368, proclaiming that the islands of Howland, Baker and Jarvis were officially under the jurisdiction of the United States. Jurisdiction over the administration of these remote islands was granted to the Department of the Interior with an emphasis on weather data and radio communication prioritized as the primary objectives of the colonists. In 1938, the U.S. colonized the islands of Canton and Enderbury with the objectives of furthering commercial aviation interest and expanded the colonization program to include these two islands as well.

## **During U.S. engagement in World War II**

By 1940, the Navy acknowledged a desire to maintain these remote islands for strategic military positions against the threat of the Imperial Japanese fleet. On December 8, 1941, Howland Island was attacked by a fleet of Japanese bombers, killing Hawaiian colonists Joseph Keliihanani and Richard Whaley. The other islands were also subsequently attacked by

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<sup>1</sup> Guano is the excrement of seabirds, cave-dwelling bats, pinnipeds or birds in general.

<sup>2</sup> Guano is a highly effective fertilizer due to its high concentration of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium.

<sup>3</sup> [48 U.S.C. 1411 et seq.](#)

Japanese submarine and aircraft fleets, although fortunately resulting in no further casualties to American colonists on the islands. Unaware of the attacks on the remote islands of Howland, Baker, and Jarvis by the Japanese and distracted by the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navy did not rescue the remaining colonists until the beginning of February 1942. The colonization project lasted a total duration of 7 years in which time over 130 men volunteered for the project, a significant majority of them being native Hawaiians. In July 1943, a military base was established on Baker Island and played a substantial role in the Tarawa-Makin operation, a significant U.S. offensive against the Japanese fleet in the Pacific theatre.

## **Post World War II**

In 1956, the participants of the colonization project established an organization to preserve the fellowship of their group, naming it “Hui Panala’au.” In 1974, the islands of Howland, Baker and Jarvis were designated as National Wildlife Refuges and are now part of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. The islands of Canton and Enderbury became part of the Republic of Kiribati.

## **Be it Resolved**

There are six main points of the resolution listed as its conclusion, including: (1) acknowledging the accomplishments and commending the service of the Hui Panala'au colonists; (2) acknowledging the local, national, and international significance of the 7-year colonization project, which resulted in the United States extending sovereignty into the Equatorial Pacific; (3) recognizing the dedication to the United States and self-reliance demonstrated by the young men, the majority of whom were Native Hawaiian, who left their homes and families in Hawaii to participate in the Equatorial Pacific colonization project; (4) extending condolences on behalf of the United States to the families of Carl Kahalewai, Joseph Keliihananui, and Richard Whaley for the loss of their loved ones in the service of the United States; (5) honoring the young men whose actions, sacrifices, and valor helped secure and maintain the jurisdiction of the United States over equatorial islands in the Pacific Ocean during the years leading up to and the months immediately following the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the entry of the United States into World War II; and (6) extending to all of the colonists, and to the families of these exceptional young men, the deep appreciation of the people of the United States.

### **Cost**

CBO cost estimate is \$0

### **Administration Position**

None.

### **Anticipated Amendments**

None.

### **Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)**

No effect on current law.