

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 30, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I return herewith, without my approval, H.R. 10626, a bill that directs the Secretary of the Interior to convey all phosphate interests of the United States in approximately 40 acres in Polk County, Florida to John Carter and Martha B. Carter upon payment of administrative costs and the fair market value of the phosphate interests.

Present law provides that phosphate interests of the United States shall be disposed of under a leasing system. The Congress and the Executive Branch have developed an alternative policy of selling phosphate and other mineral interests when the surface is not owned by the United States and when at least one of two criteria is met. The criteria are that the mineral interests have no value or that they interfere with development of the surface that is more beneficial than mineral development. This policy is carried out through private legislation on a case-by-case basis, and it is solely for the benefit and convenience of surface owners.

The instant case meets neither of the two criteria. The land is prospectively valuable for phosphates, and we know of no proposed use of the surface with which the mineral interest would interfere. The land is presently being used for grazing cattle.

At least six private bills have been enacted to convey reserved mineral interests in the 93rd Congress, and every one of them has met one of the criteria. There are presently several private bills still pending before this Congress. Also pending is the Administration's proposed "National Resource Lands Management Act", and a similar Senate-passed proposal, S. 424, which would give the Secretary of the Interior general authority to convey mineral interests to surface owners when one of the criteria is met. It is therefore clear that enactment into law of H.R. 10626 would conflict with established policy and would confuse our action on similar proposals in the future.

For these reasons I feel that the approval of H.R. 10626 would not be desirable.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
September 30, 1974

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