

OCTOBER 2, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

The President has signed H.R. 9460 - Virgin Islands and Guam Constitutions. This bill provides for the establishment of a constitution for the Virgin Islands and for Guam. Both the Virgin Islands and Guam are organized under law as unincorporated territories of the United States. They are administered by the Department of the Interior under separate Organic Acts adopted by the Congress in 1931 (Virgin Islands) and 1950 (Guam).

H.R. 9460 will authorize the citizens of the Virgin Islands and Guam to organize territorial governments under constitutions drafted by their own elected representatives. The bill requires that such constitutions: (1) recognize, and be consistent with, the sovereignty of the United States over the Virgin Islands and Guam, as well as all other provisions of the U.S. Constitution, treaties, and laws of the United States applicable to them; (2) provide for a republican form of government, consisting of executive, legislative, and judicial branches; (3) contain a bill of rights; and, (4) provide for the establishment of a system of local courts.

The President has signed S. 507 - National Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. This bill provides for the management, protection, and development of the national resource lands.

S. 507 will provide for inventorying public lands, land use planning, management under principles of multiple use and sustained yield, retention of public lands in Federal ownership unless the public interest would be served by disposal, land acquisition and disposal under certain guidelines consistent with land use plans, payment of fair market value for any lands sold, public involvement in various BLM decisions, coordination with State and local planning, law enforcement, wilderness area identification and review, recordation of mining claims, granting of rights-of-way under a comprehensive environmentally sound system, establishing a working capital fund for the management of the public lands, and repeal of a number of outmoded disposal and right-of-way statutes.

The bill will authorize appropriations of (1) \$20 million for withdrawal reviews, (2) \$3 million for the working capital fund, and (3) \$40 million for the development and management of the California Desert Conservation Area. The bill will also authorize such sums as may be necessary for carrying out the Act, and in this regard, the Secretary will be required every four years to seek an appropriation reauthorization for all BLM programs effective for fiscal year 1979.

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