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COLUMBIA SPACE SHUTTLE MEMORIAL STUDY ACT

APRIL 10, 2008.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. BINGAMAN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 807]

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, to which was referred the Act (H.R. 807) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the feasibility and suitability of establishing a memorial to the space shuttle *Columbia* in the State of Texas and for its inclusion as a unit of the National Park System, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the Act do pass.

PURPOSE

The purpose of H.R. 807 is to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the feasibility and suitability of establishing a memorial to the space shuttle *Columbia* in the State of Texas and for its inclusion as a unit of the National Park System.

BACKGROUND AND NEED

The space shuttle *Columbia* (STS-107) mission lifted off on January 16, 2003, for a 17-day science mission featuring numerous microgravity experiments. Upon reentering the atmosphere on February 1, 2003, the *Columbia* suffered a catastrophic failure while flying over Texas, only 15 minutes before the scheduled landing at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The cause of the explosion was later determined to have been caused by a breach that occurred during launch, when falling foam from the external fuel tank struck the reinforced carbon panels on the underside of the left wing. The *Columbia*'s explosion killed its seven crew members, Rick D. Husband, William C. McCool, David Brown, Laurel Blair

Salton Clark, Michael P. Anderson, Ilan Ramon, and Kalpana Chawla.

H.R. 807 would direct the Secretary to conduct a study to determine the feasibility and suitability of establishing a memorial as a unit of the National Park System to the space shuttle *Columbia* on land in the State of Texas. The study would cover at least three sites on which large debris from the *Columbia* was removed.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

H.R. 807, sponsored by Representative Gohmert, passed the House of Representatives by voice vote on March 5, 2007. The Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing on H.R. 807 on September 11, 2007. (S. Hrg. 110–213.) During the 109th Congress, the Committee reported a similar bill (S. 242; Rpt. 109–145) and the Senate passed the bill by unanimous consent on November 16, 2005 although no further action was taken in the House. At its business meeting on January 30, 2008, the Committee ordered H.R. 807 favorably reported, without amendment.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in open business session on January 30, 2008, by a voice vote of a quorum present, recommends that the Senate pass H.R. 807.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1 contains the short title, the “Columbia Space Shuttle Memorial Study Act.”

Section 2 provides the definitions of “Memorial” and “Secretary.”

Section 3(a) directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the suitability and feasibility of establishing a memorial honoring the space shuttle *Columbia*. The study is to be completed within three years after the date funds are made available.

Subsection (b) provides a description of the parcels of lands in four areas within the State of Texas, on which debris from the shuttle was recovered, as possible sites for the memorial.

Subsection (c) provides that the Secretary may recommend to Congress additional sites in the State of Texas for establishment of memorials related to the Columbia Space Shuttle.

COST AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

The following estimate of costs of this measure has been provided by the Congressional Budget Office:

H.R. 807—Columbia Space Shuttle Memorial Study Act

H.R. 807 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of establishing a memorial to the *Columbia* space shuttle in Texas and incorporating that memorial into the National Park System. Based on information provided by the National Park Service and assuming the availability of appropriated funds, CBO estimates that carrying out the proposed study would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2008–2011 period. Enacting H.R. 807 would not affect direct spending or revenues.

H.R. 807 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Deborah Reis and Daniel Hoople. This estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

REGULATORY IMPACT EVALUATION

In compliance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee makes the following evaluation of the regulatory impact which would be incurred in carrying out H.R. 807. The bill is not a regulatory measure in the sense of imposing Government-established standards or significant economic responsibilities on private individuals and businesses.

No personal information would be collected in administering the program. Therefore, there would be no impact on personal privacy.

Little, if any, additional paperwork would result from the enactment of H.R. 807, as ordered reported.

CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

H.R. 807, as reported, does not contain any congressionally directed spending items, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The testimony provided by the National Park Service at the September 11, 2007 subcommittee hearing on H.R. 807 follows:

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 807, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the feasibility and suitability of establishing a memorial to the space shuttle *Columbia* in the State of Texas and for its inclusion as a unit of the National Park System.

The Department supports enactment of H.R. 807. The Department testified on April 28, 2005, that we could not support S. 242, a similar bill in the 109th Congress that would have designated the areas covered in this bill as units of the National Park System. At that time we recommended to the subcommittee that the bill be amended to authorize the Secretary to study the sites to determine if they are suitable and feasible as additions to the National Park System.

We appreciate that H.R. 807 would authorize such a study. A study would provide the opportunity to consult with other agencies and organizations, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), to determine what other commemorative efforts have been undertaken to memorialize the space shuttle *Columbia* as well as taking into account the wishes and desires of the

crew's families regarding how they would like their loved ones remembered. A study also would look at a variety of alternatives that could include National Park Service (NPS) management or could focus on administering the site through State or local governments or private organizations.

Studies of this type typically take approximately three years to complete after funds are made available and cost between \$300,000 and \$500,000. Also, priority should be given to the 37 previously authorized studies for potential units of the National Park System, potential new National Heritage Areas, and potential additions to the National Trails System and National Wild and Scenic River System that have not yet been transmitted to the Congress.

H.R. 807 would direct the Secretary to study areas in the Texas cities of Nacogdoches, Hemphill, Lufkin and San Augustine. Large amounts of debris from the *Columbia* were found on the parcels specified in the bill, a combination of public and private land, and the Lufkin civic center served as NASA's command center for retrieval efforts. As a part of the study, the Secretary is also authorized to recommend additional sites in Texas for establishment of memorials to *Columbia*.

Columbia, the first space shuttle to orbit the earth, was NASA's oldest shuttle. On the morning of February 1, 2003, after a three-week mission devoted to scientific and medical experiments, the *Columbia* began its return to earth. As re-entry into the earth's atmosphere continued over the Pacific, problems were noticed by NASA, contact with the shuttle was lost, and it began to break apart. Debris from the shuttle was observed from California to Louisiana; however, the remains of the seven astronauts and the most significant parts of the shuttle were found in several communities across Texas. Soon after the crash, an independent accident investigation board was established and the first volume of the board's findings was issued in August 2003, identifying the factors that led to the shuttle disaster and making recommendations for future actions.

Many memorials and remembrances have been established in honor of *Columbia*'s crew, including a memorial at Arlington Cemetery and on Devon Island in the Canadian High Arctic. Asteroids have been named for members of the crew, as has a highway in Washington and an elementary school in California. On May 12, 2004, NASA dedicated its new "Altix" supercomputer to the memory of Kalpana "KC" Chawla, flight engineer and mission specialist on the *Columbia*.

An NPS suitability and feasibility study would determine how, or if, this proposal would complement or add to those already established memorials.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee notes that no changes in existing law are made by the bill H.R. 807, as ordered reported.

