

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET,
Washington, D.C., April 2, 1971.

Hon. HENRY M. JACKSON,
Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This is in response to your request for our comments on S. 991, a bill to continue the saline water conversion program conducted by the Department of the Interior.

The Office of Management and Budget supports the basic aims of S. 991. We believe, however, that these aims could better be attained through enactment of the proposed "Saline Water Conversion Act of 1971," which was transmitted to the Congress by Interior on April 1, 1971. Accordingly, we urge that the Committee give prompt and favorable consideration to Interior's proposed bill, enactment of which would be consistent with the Administration's objective.

Sincerely,

WILFRED H. ROMMEL,
Assistant Director for Legislative Reference.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D.C., April 1, 1971.

Hon. HENRY M. JACKSON,
Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This responds to your March 1, 1971, request for the views of this Department concerning S. 991, a bill "To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to continue a program of research, development, and demonstration of processes for the conversion of saline and other chemically contaminated water for beneficial use and for the treatment of saline and other chemically contaminated waste water to maintain or improve the quality of natural waters, and for other purposes".

We support the general objectives of the bill, but recommend the enactment instead of the Administration's proposed "Saline Water Conversion Act of 1971", which we forwarded to the President of the Senate under cover of a letter dated April 1, 1971.

S. 991 would continue the present saline water conversion program of the Office of Saline Water (OSW) for an additional 5 years beyond the June 30, 1972, expiration date of its current authority, with an additional 3 years to complete projects in progress and to integrate desalting functions into other water resource programs of the Department of the Interior. In addition, S. 991 would provide for preliminary work on prototype desalting plants for full-scale use of desalting technology.

A memorandum reviewing the main differences between the Administration's proposal and S. 991 on a section-by-section basis is enclosed, and our comments herein are limited to the more significant differences.

Present authority to dispose of property acquired in the course of the desalting program is very limited. Broader authority to acquire and dispose of equipment and facilities is desirable and is provided for in section 4(e) of the Administration's proposal.

Both S. 991 and the Administration proposal recognize that prototype plant construction is the next major phase of the saline water conversion program. We believe the Administration proposal provides more satisfactorily for this development through its provision (section 5), that some other entity participate with OSW in construction and operation of such plants and that the Federal contribution not exceed 50 percent (and not extend past the first 3 years of operation) if the other participant is a non-Federal agency. This recognizes that OSW's function is to carry out research and development of desalting processes rather than to supply water on a continuing basis. A significant financial interest on the part of some other entity would assure support for, and the feasibility of, such a plant and encourage better utilization of the facility. Establishing the 50 percent limit at the present time would clarify the basis for entering the prototype phase and limit the parameters of negotiation with participating agencies.

Throughout the life of the desalting program OSW has submitted periodic reports to the President and the Congress. It is considered desirable to continue