

Legislative History

In his 1950 budget message, President Truman recommended legislation to authorize government research in economical methods of converting sea water. Several bills were introduced in response, but none passed. Finally, in 1952 Congress passed a bill sponsored by the late Senator Clair Engle (then representative) of California, authorizing a \$2 million, five-year program to develop low-cost desalting.

Under the Act, the Secretary of the Interior created the Office of Saline Water (OSW) to conduct research and award contracts for technical development and feasibility studies of new or improved processes for low-cost desalting of sea or brackish waters. Most of the OSW appropriations, which now range from \$25-\$30 million yearly, are used for contracts with private companies, research organization, universities, and other Federal agencies including the Atomic Energy Commission which also has had additional limited funds for work in connection with the role of nuclear energy for the large-scale desalting of sea water as well as other process applications such as the energy center concept.