Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES-STANDARDIZATION

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS

Senate Report No. 205, May 26, 1947

The Senate Committee on Public Lands, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1262) to provide a central authority for standardizing geographic names for the purpose of eliminating duplication in standardizing such names among the Federal departments, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and with the recommendation that it do pass.

The original United States Board on Geographic Names was created by Executive order of President Benjamin Harrison, to give official authority to a spontaneously organized interdepartmental committee, with the object of bringing about "uniform usage in regard to geographic nomenclature and orthography, * * * throughout the executive departments of the Government" and deciding "all unsettled questions concerning geographic names which arise in the departments." At that early date, it had become apparent that confusion arising from incorrect or contradictory names for places and natural features was costly to the Government and to the country at large, and that central authority was required to decide upon names and their forms which would be official for the use of the Government.

Two Executive orders of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 enlarged the duties of the Board, changed its name to the United States Geographic Board and granted it additional advisory powers with respect to map preparation. These latter powers were subsequently transferred by Executive order of President Woodrow Wilson in 1919, to the Board of Surveys and Maps.

Until 1920 all expenses of the Board under the requirements of the various Executive orders had been met by the represented bureaus. This unbusinesslike financing imposed real handicaps upon the work. In recent years the desirability of obtaining permanent legislative authorization for the geographic-names work has been suggested by the Appropriations Committees of both House and Senate, and the enactment of S. 1262 would provide the requisite statutory basis for the continuance of a program which the Congress has considered worthy of support for more than 25 years, and would eliminate the possibility of a point of order being made and sustained against a future appropriation item for this activity.

Further detailed information regarding this matter is carried in the favorable report of the Interior Department to the Chairman of the Senate Public Lands Committee which report is hereinbelow set forth in full and made a part of this report:

Tab D

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

Department of the Interior,
Washington, May 23, 1947.

Hon. Hugh Butler,
Chairman, Public Lands Committee, United States Senate.

My Dear Senator Butler: Reference is made to your request for a report on S. 1262, a bill to provide a central authority for standardizing geographic names for the purpose of eliminating duplication in standardizing such names among the Federal Departments, and for other purposes. I strongly recommend that S. 1262 be enacted.

The bill would authorize:

1. Performance of functions necessary for the national security and defense, and for orderly and efficient conduct of Government business;

2. Centralization of authority and operations;

3. Elimination of duplication of personnel and expense;

4. Continuation of services that have been rendered for more than 50 years.

The bill is identical with H. R. 1555 as amended and reported out by unanimous favorable vote by the House Public Lands Committee. The bill before amendment had been given unanimous approval by the Advisory Committee of the present Board on Geographical Names and by all the Federal agencies represented on the committee. It is believed that the amendments, incorporated in S. 1262, will be acceptable to all concerned.

More than half a century ago, in 1890, the original United States Board on Geographic Names was created by Executive order of President Benjamin Harrison, to give official authority to a spontaneously organized interdepartmental committee, with the object of bringing about "uniform usage in regard to geographic nomenclature and orthography. * * * throughout the executive departments of the Government" and deciding "all unsettled questions concerning geographic names which arise in the departments." It had become apparent at that early date that confusion arising from incorrect or contradictory names for places and natural features was costly to the Government and to the country at large, and that a central authority was required to decide upon names and their forms which would be official for the use of the Government. Different names or spellings for the same places were being used on maps issued by different agencies, or in publications of a single agency, and in some instances even on the same page of a publication. In other cases where the name was not in doubt its application varied greatly. One agency, for instance, might apply a name to the whole course of a river, while an-

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

other agency applied that name only to a branch of the same river. In such cases references to the feature by name were ambiguous and would require a clarification which only an impartial central agency would be able to provide from data in its possession or secured for the purpose. Persons and business firms in communities where the post office name or railway station name or both are not the same as the community name have experienced annoying and expensive difficulties and delays in the delivery of mail and freight.

Two Executive orders of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 enlarged the duties of the Board, changed its name to United States Geographic Board and granted it additional advisory powers with respect to map preparation. These latter powers were subsequently transferred by Executive order of President Woodrow Wilson in 1919, to the Board of Surveys and Maps. In 1934 President Franklin D. Roosevelt by Executive order abolished the United States Geographic Board and transferred its powers, duties, records, and personnel to the Department of the Interior. The Secretary of the Interior established a Division of Geographic Names and an Advisory Committee on Geographic Names and provided by departmental order in 1935 that these two units, together, should constitute the United States Board on Geographical Names. In 1944 the Secretary of the Interior provided by departmental order that the United States Board on Geographical Names should be composed of a Division of Geography and an advisory committee, and clarified the duties and relations of these two units.

Until 1920 all expenses of the Board under the requirements of the Executive orders had been met by the represented bureaus. This unbusiness like financing imposed real handicaps upon the work. The first specific appropriation for the Board was made for 1920 for the publishing of decisions. Beginning with 1927 the appropriation also covered salaries and other expenses. Appropriations then were made continuously to the United States Geographic Board until the transfer of its functions to the Department of the Interior. Thereafter funds for the performance of these functions were provided in the annual appropriations for the Department of the Interior through 1947, with the exception of 1 year in which the work was financed entirely from War Department appropriations. In 1943 the Corps of Engineers of the War Department offered to provide through transfer the funds necessary to reorganize and staff the agency immediately on the expanded scale requisite to meet military and naval needs. This was done, and other transfers have since been made to meet like needs.

In recent years the desirability of obtaining permanent legislative authorization for the geographic-names work has been suggested by the Appropriations Committees of both Houses. The uncertainty as to the legal authorization for the work is also illustrated by the action taken on the appropriation items. For 1946 a request was made for an appropria-

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

tion for the Division of Geography to enable it to render aid to civilian agencies requiring information and decisions on disputed names, the War Department having indicated its willingness to continue to finance the heavy program required directly by war activities. In its report the House Appropriations Committee stated that it was "impressed with the importance of the work and the efficiency with which it is being performed," but took the position that the War Department should continue to provide the funds until after the cessation of hostilities. The Senate restored the item, and the conference committee agreed on a small appropriation for the maintenance of basic records and files and for work on problems of agencies other than the War and Navy Departments. When the 1947 appropriation request was submitted the House Appropriations Committee granted a very modest sum for like purposes but this item was made the subject of a point of order on the floor of the House and stricken from the bill on the ground that the activity was not authorized by substantive legislation. The Senate again restored the item, and the amount originally granted was agreed to in the conference committee, resulting in an appropriation that can be considered only as a token that the functions are essential in peacetime as well as in wartime.

The enactment of S. 1262 would provide the requisite statutory basis for the continuance of a program which the Congress has considered worthy of support for more than 25 years, and would eliminate the possibility of a point of order being made and sustained against a future appropriation item for this activity. How much or how little might be made available for the geographic-names work in any given year would be determined annually by the Congress, in accordance with its judgment as to the current needs for such work and over-all budgetary resources. The functions provided for are essentially the same as those now being discharged. Its provisions would codify, in statutory form, the duties which the Division of Geography, as the designated agent of the Secretary of the Interior, and the Advisory Committee have been performing. Section 2 of the bill establishes a Board on Geographic Names to replace the present Advisory Committee with increased duties and powers. The membership of this Board would consist of representatives of certain Federal agencies named or designated in the bill together with such representatives from other Federal agencies as the Secretary, upon the advice of the Board, from time to time determined to be desirable.

Enactment of this legislation would not invalidate decisions, directions, and policies now in effect, since these would be affirmed under the new authority. It should also be pointed out that there are circumstances under which the use of the standard geographical names determined under existing procedures, as confirmed by the bill, would be inappropriate, such as in certain historical materials, documents requiring use of official titles of countries instead of the names by which they are ordinarily designated, or facsimile reproductions of non-Government material. It may also be impracticable under some conditions for materials printed in the

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

field by the armed forces in wartime, to employ only standard names. The provisions of the proposed legislation are sufficiently flexible to permit such exceptions to be determined administratively rather than being permanently fixed by statute.

Because of the urgency of your request it has not been possible to clear this report through the Bureau of the Budget. Therefore, no commitment can be made concerning the relationship of the foregoing views to the program of the President.

Sincerely yours,

OSCAR L. CHAPMAN,
Under Secretary of the Interior.

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

6-7730

MAR 16 1955

Dr. Meredith F. Burrill
Executive Secretary
U.S. Board on Geographic Names
Department of the Interior
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Dr. Burrill:

Reference is made to your letter of 25 January 1955 in which you request that the Central Intelligence Agency authorize the Board on Geographic Names to arrange with the Superintendent of Documents for the printing of additional copies of NIS Gazetteers for public sale as printed or reprinted by CIA, with the provision that public sale copies will have covers and title pages prepared by, and bearing the name of, the BGN and containing no reference to the CIA or NIS, and with the further provision that the expenses of such public sale will be met from funds other than those of, or transferred by, the Central Intelligence Agency.

The NIS Coordinator, Captain K. A. Knowles, has recommended the approval of this plan in view of its benefit to the Government and since there are no longer any security considerations involved. This Agency therefore approves your request and authorizes the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to proceed accordingly.

It is requested that this Agency be kept informed through the NIS Coordinator of progress made in the implementation of the plan, and that prior approval of this Agency be obtained for any changes which might be found necessary in carrying out this project.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Robert Amory, Jr.
Deputy Director/Intelligence

Tab E

STAT

CRS:D/B:KAKnowles:jf
Distribution:
O&1 - Addressee
1 - DD/I
2 - AD/RR
1 - Admin Files
1 - D/E Files
1 - C/LO Files

Approved For Release 2009/04/10 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000100110005-4