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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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INTERIOR FAVORS BILL PROVIDING FOR RELOCATION OF INDIAN VILLAGE IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA DISPLACED BY RESERVOIR CONSTRUCTION

The Department of the Interior has voiced its support of Federal legislation providing for relocation and reestablishment of the Papago Indian village of Sil Murk, in southern Arizona, which will be displaced by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' construction of Painted Rock Dam and Reservoir.

The village site comprises some 40 acres of land, with an additional 7.2 acres in use as a cemetery. Sil Murk lies just outside the established boundaries of the Gila Bend Indian Reservation and has been occupied by members of the Papago Indian Tribe for over 100 years. It now sustains about 20 families.

In reporting favorably on pending legislation, the Department recommended that the bill provide for relocation and reestablishment of the village by the Department of the Interior, with project funds provided by the Department of the Army.

Under provisions of the bill, relocation and reestablishment would be handled in a manner assuring to the extent feasible that the economic, social, religious and community life of the Indians will be restored to a condition not less advantageous than that which they previously enjoyed. The action to be taken would include providing a suitable replacement site, relocating or protecting the cemetery, and establishing on the new site a church building, living quarters for the Indians, water wells, a water distribution system, sewerage facilities, roads, and such other buildings, facilities and structures as may be necessary.

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