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Statement of Senator Mansfield - Safeguard System

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Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D. Montana)

The installation of the SAFEGUARD System in the states of Montana and North Dakota was a decision made by Department of Defense officials without consultation with the people of these two states. The most recent decision to suspend construction of the SAFEGUARD in Montana was, also, a decision made by the Department of Defense alone. The motives behind this action were commendable and we are all desirous of promoting world peace. I do, however, believe that the Administration has a responsibility to ease the tremendous economic impact which is created by discontinuing work on a project of this magnitude.

My primary concern is the Montanan who had hoped to find employment on the various projects associated with this Defense effort. We have received assurances that municipal school and road projects now underway will be completed and turned over to local authorities. In my estimation, the easiest and most immediate way for the Administration to assist the people of Montana in adjusting to this economic situation is through the release of federal funds for projects which are justified and ready for construction. I do not believe that more Defense projects are necessarily the answer. There are others which will make a longer lasting and more stable contribution to our economy.

The first and most obvious federal input of funds into the state can come from the Interstate Highway Program. Montana has used all of the federal funds available to it and I believe they are now prepared to let some nineteen

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million dollars worth of highway contracts if federal funds were available. The Congressional Delegation has asked that the Department of Transportation redistribute funds unobligated during this final month of the 1972 Fiscal Year. Also, the Office of Management and Budget has frozen highway funds which could be released.

Secondly, there are several large public work projects in the state which are ready to go and, after a year or so of active planning, could be placed under immediate construction. Senator Metcalf and I have been pressing the Administration and the Corps of Army Engineers to proceed with the construction of the Libby Reregulating Dam. This project is justified and I now understand that the desirability of installing a power generator at this smaller dam has generated additional support because of the power shortages which are predicted in the northwest. Preconstruction planning will require \$1,300,000 and the total project over the next eight or nine years will cost approximately \$73,700,000. These are preliminary figures but it is a project which must be built and I see no reason why it cannot be started now.

In northcentral Montana, we have a Reclamation project which is needed and enthusiastically supported - the Marias-Milk Unit. This is a large irrigation project which will contribute to the future economic stability in a section of Montana which is dependent on agriculture. In addition, the project will provide water for municipal and industrial use and fish and wildlife management. The reports have been submitted from the field and, if the Department of Interior would give it a strong recommendation, I am confident

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that the Congress would support it with construction funds.

In the Great Falls area, I have received some recommendations and comments about flood control projects at Great Falls and proposals on the Sun River. Unfortunately, these cannot proceed until local opposition has been satisfied.

The items I have mentioned, if funded and placed under construction, would be of tremendous benefit. We also have several smaller projects which will give local employment opportunities. The construction of the addition to the Soldiers Home at Columbia Falls is now ready to be placed under contract. This facility has been financed cooperatively by the State of Montana and the Veterans Administration.