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Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting a copy of a draft of a joint resolution "to postpone the opening of the Uncompahgre Indian Reservation in the State of Utah," with a copy of a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

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UNCOMPAHGRE INDIAN RESERVATION, UTAH.

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

A COPY OF A DRAFT OF A JOINT RESOLUTION "TO POSTPONE THE OPENING OF THE UNCOMPAHGRE INDIAN RESERVATION IN THE STATE OF UTAH," WITH A COPY OF A COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.

MARCH 7, 1898.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, March 5, 1898.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a communication of 4th instant from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, together with a draft of a joint resolution "To postpone the opening of the Uncompahgre Indian Reservation in the State of Utah."

This joint resolution is prepared in order to secure a postponement of the date of opening these lands on April 1, 1898, fixed by the act of June 7, 1897, in case the Indian appropriation act, now pending, which contains a provision adopted by the Senate extending the opening of these lands six months from April 1, 1898, does not become a law prior to April 1, 1898.

I have heretofore urged the postponement of the opening of this reservation for one year from the 1st of April, 1898, but if it is not deemed expedient or desirable to postpone the opening for so long a time I consider it of the highest importance that the time be extended for at least six months, as proposed in this joint resolution, as it will be impossible to complete the allotments to the Uncompahgres in a shorter time, if, indeed, it can be done within that time.

Very respectfully,

C. N. BLISS, *Secretary.*

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, March 4, 1898.

SIR: Under date of January 7, 1898, this office submitted to the Department the draft of a joint resolution "To postpone the opening of the Uncompahgre Indian Reservation in the State of Utah."

In submitting this draft the Commissioner quoted from a report of the Uncompahgre Commission, dated December 22, 1897, as follows:

Although the weather was extremely cold, and snow fell within a few days thereafter, and has continued falling at short intervals until it is at present from 8 to 12 inches deep, the commission has continued its work right along from day to day.

Since December 1 the thermometer has rarely registered above zero, and frequently has been as low as 10° below and even down to 36° below zero.

The result of the field work is that we have made allotments for a number of the leading Indians, having allotted in all 3,320 acres.

The allotments thus far have been made in the Duchesne Valley, upon the Uintah Reservation.

We have attempted allotments upon the Uncompahgre Reservation, the commission having visited the White and Green River valleys for that purpose, but found it utterly impossible at this time, for the reason that 8 to 12 inches of snow covers monuments of surveys and the character of the land.

From reliable information the commission found the same conditions to exist all over said reservation.

The Indians are generally so ignorant and unconcerned regarding the allotments that they either will not or can not give any information on the subject.

The distance from proper shelter to Indian settlements over this reservation varies from 10 to 60 miles, the majority of the settlements being between 40 to 60 miles, and with the thermometer registering from zero to 36° below zero it will be seen that camping out, even if the commission was provided with a camping outfit, would be dangerous to the health of the commission and party.

He stated that from this report he was satisfied that no allotments could be made on the Uncompahgre Reservation before the 1st of April next (on which day all the unallotted lands, except those containing gilsonite, etc., are, under the act of June 7, 1897, 30 Stats., p. 62, to be opened to settlement), and that it therefore seemed to be imperative that the opening should be postponed for a sufficient time to permit allotments to be made to the Indians residing on the reservation who wish to remain.

I do not find in the Record any reference to the joint resolution, but the Indian appropriation bill as passed by the Senate contains an amendment (No. 50) extending the time for opening this reservation six months from April 1, 1898.

The necessity for this extension still exists, as the chairman of the commission, in a communication dated February 25, 1898, states that the snow is from 18 to 25 inches deep. He expresses the opinion that the allotment on the Uncompahgre Reservation can be completed by October 1.

While it is probable that the Senate amendment will be concurred in by the House, it is unlikely that the Indian appropriation bill will become a law before the 1st of April. (The earliest date during the last twenty years on which an Indian appropriation bill passed at the long session has received the approval of the President is May 11, the act of 1880 having been approved on that date.)

Should the act not be approved until after the 1st of April the amendment, even if retained, would not be effective to prevent the opening on that date, while serious complications might result from the lands being open to entry for a limited time.

To prevent any complication of this kind, and to secure beyond doubt the postponement of the date of opening, I have the honor to suggest

that the matter be presented to the Indian committees of the two Houses of Congress, with recommendation for the early passage of a joint resolution of the same effect as Senate amendment No. 50.

I submit a draft (in duplicate) of such joint resolution.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. C. TONNER,
Acting Commissioner.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

JOINT RESOLUTION to postpone the opening of the Uncompahgre Indian Reservation in the State of Utah.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the time fixed by the Indian appropriation act approved June seventh, eighteen hundred and ninety-seven, for opening to location and entry under all land laws of the United States the lands of the Uncompahgre Indian Reservation in Utah, under the limitations and exceptions as therein provided, be, and the same is hereby, extended six months from the first day of April, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight.

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