

**Testimony by Dr. Robert D. Ballard**  
**Given June 5th, 2007 before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans regarding H.R. 1834 - To Authorize the National Ocean Exploration Program and the National Undersea Research Program**

It is indeed an honor to be here today to speak in regards to House Resolution 1834 and I want to thank the Subcommittee and Staff for the opportunity to offer this testimony.

200 years ago our country was fortunate to have one of its greatest Presidents leading our young Nation into an uncharted future. That leader was, of course, President Thomas Jefferson, a remarkable leader— diplomat, President, farmer, and most importantly, a scholar.

During this month of the Oceans, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is celebrating its 200th Anniversary thanks to President Jefferson who had the foresight to create the Survey of the Coast to map the uncharted waters off our shores. But that was just one of the steps this bold President took, for he had a grand vision for our Nation.

When Napoleon offered to sell France's Louisiana Territory for \$15 million to settle his war debt with England, President Jefferson did not hesitate. He accepted; many historians say that this bold action was the greatest achievement of his presidency. By purchasing the Louisiana territory, he doubled the size of our country, adding 800,00 square miles of land. But this was just the start: Jefferson then took steps to explore this uncharted landmass.

In a confidential letter he sent to his friends in the Senate and House on January 18th, 1803 Jefferson laid out his plan to fund a "voyage of discovery" and obtained the funds needed, in his own words - "for the purpose of extending the **external commerce** - **External Commerce** - of the United States" in such a way as to "prevent the obstructions which interested individuals might otherwise previously prepare in its way". And so we see Jefferson, moving boldly by providing funds for the Lewis and Clark expedition that began in June of 1803—today, it's a national legend—two hundred years ago it was politics. Why fund this when the country has so many other priorities?

The Lewis and Clark Expedition, of course, was followed by the development of the vast resources in that vast territory. Because they explored, we were able to develop Anaconda's mining operations in Montana; Chevron's development of oil and gas fields in Wyoming; and open the prairies to allow them to become the farms and ranches that today feed America and the world.

Now consider the contribution that the States that were part of the Louisiana Purchase contribute each year to our Nation's economic wealth. We're talking Arkansas, Missouri,

Iowa, Oklahoma, my home state of Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota and parts of North and South Dakota, New Mexico, Texas, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Louisiana.

On March 10th, 1983 another bold President took a similar step. On that day, President Ronald Reagan declared a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone or EEZ for the United States and once again, doubled our country's territory, only all of it is beneath the sea.

I am here to endorse **H.R. 1834** and urge swift passage. Nearly 25 years after President Reagan's Proclamation 5030, it is time to mount a modern day Lewis and Clark Expedition of the EEZ.

The reason should be obvious. Do we really think that the economic wealth of our Nation - its hidden resources - are limited to that half of America that lies above the surface of the sea? It's absurd to think so. The recent discovery of vast oil and gas reserves in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico clearly point to the potential awaiting us. But private industry does not mount Lewis and Clark Expeditions, countries do.

A vast portion of the Unknown America lies beneath the sea that surrounds the territorial trust islands of the Western Pacific. Submerged landmasses that many believe contain rich deposits of silver, gold, titanium, zirconium, platinum, nickel, copper, cobalt—the list goes on—as well as undiscovered biological resources and cultural treasures.

Today, many Americans fear the rise of China and India with their growing economies and, indeed these countries do bear watching. I prefer to operate on the basis of **confidence** not **fear**. Neither China nor India are ocean explorers. America, on the other hand—however insufficient our efforts might be—is still the global leader in the oceans. That is unlikely to last.

We must now build on our strength in ocean exploration before other nations take advantage of our inaction. If Jefferson were alive today, he would make ocean exploration a major pillar of his presidency. He would see it as an important step that must be taken to allow the oceans to offer us their resources to enrich our economy. Remember why he financed the Lewis and Clark Expedition - **"for the purpose of extending the external commerce of the United States."**

I bet Jefferson would not limit our Ocean Exploration to our own EEZ, but would form partnerships with third world nations to explore their EEZs to pave future economic partnerships to help manage newly discovered resources to benefit their countries and ours.

Next year, the OKEANOS EXPLORER, American's first ship of exploration, comes on line and begins exploring the unknown America. Unwisely, this fledgling program has been grossly under funded.

To put this into perspective, consider that NASA's annual budget to explore the uncharted heavens would support NOAA's present Ocean Exploration program for 1,639 years-- 1,639 years.

I love the heavens above us and hope to go there some day but our destiny is here on Planet Earth or should I say Ocean Earth, where there is so much work that still has to be done. Ask yourselves: What would President Jefferson think if he knew that today we have better maps of Mars than the 50% of our country that lies beneath the sea.

I want to celebrate the bold steps Jefferson took 200 years ago and encourage the bold steps this Subcommittee is seeking to take with the enactment of HR 1834. When I go to sleep tonight, I'll pray that Congress will echo what Jefferson did 200 years ago and pass H.R. 1834, along with funding levels for FY '08 that are consistent with the subcommittee is now considering.

Thank you.

Thank you Congressman Kennedy for that question. The Bill under sections 103 and 105 make reference to the need of other agencies within the Federal Government that should be involved in this program.

I think the language needs to be strengthened, particularly section 103 to specifically state the need of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Geological Survey to work with NOAA on its exploration missions.

The Navy has tremendous surveying ships capable of going where NOAA's new ship of the exploration, the OKEANOS EXPLORER can not go, particularly the high latitudes of the major oceans of the world.

The U.S. Geological Survey has tremendous expertise in surveying the land surface of earth, in making geologic maps that other Federal agencies use to guide them in the wise management of America's territories both above and below water.

The U.S.G.S.'s maps are also used by private industry in their efforts to discover the vast resources that can enrich our Nation's economy.