CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — Extensions of Remarks

HON. PAT WILLIAMS
OF MONTANA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, March 23, 1989

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution to establish a national policy on the use of permanent papers for publications and records of enduring value. Joining me as original cosponsors are Mr. ANUNZIO, Mr. YATES, Mr. WALGREN, Mr. OWENS, and Mrs. BOOBSY.

It is now widely recognized that we face a crisis in preserving our historic, cultural, and scientific record, not only in this country but world wide. The acidic papers on which most publications and records have been printed for more than 100 years have been and are self-destructing. It will cost hundreds of millions of dollars from Federal, State, and local governments and private institutions to salvage what can still be saved of deteriorating books and other materials through the processes of decodification or by microfilming. The Congress has already appropriated more than $100 million for a salvage operation in the Library of Congress, Federal libraries and archives, and research libraries. Much more will be required.

Fortunately, we do not have to face this problem into the indefinite future. The root cause has been determined—acid paper—and it is now possible to produce nonacid papers which will last several hundred years. More than 30 paper mills in this country are already doing so at costs comparable to those for acidic papers. Most university presses and many private publishers are using nonacid papers, but the majority of books and scientific and professional journals are still printed on acid papers. Even those publishers who use nonacid papers are not generally indicating that fact in the publications themselves. Thus librarians and archivists often do not know what they are receiving.

The purpose of this resolution, therefore, is to make a national policy declaration. The resolution would establish a national policy that all books, other publications, and Federal documents of enduring value be printed on permanent papers, that is, nonacidic alkaline papers, that Federal agencies would use only nonacid papers for publications of enduring value; that Federal agencies require use of permanent paper for publications of enduring value; that Federal agencies require use of archival quality papers for permanent papers for publications of enduring value; that Federal agencies voluntarily comply with national standards, and indicate this fact in the publications themselves and in bibliographic listings; that reliable statistics be produced on current and needed replacement of permanent papers; and that the State Department make known this national policy to foreign governments and international agencies. The problem is world wide, and our libraries and research institutions must acquire much scientific, historical, and cultural literature from abroad.

In order to monitor progress, the resolution directs the Librarian of Congress and the heads of the National Library of Medicine, the National Agricultural Library, and the Archivist of the United States to report annually to the Congress on the effect of the resolution.