

The Newlands Resolution and Annexation

On April 25, 1898, the United States declared war on Spain following the sinking of the battleship Maine in Havana, Cuba, on February 15, 1898. The Spanish-American War saw conflict in both the Caribbean and Pacific Ocean, where Spain controlled the Philippine Islands. On July 6, 1898, the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution called the Newlands Resolution (named after its proponent Nevada representative Francis Newlands) to annex Hawai'i for use as a military base. The following day, July 7, 1898, President McKinley signed the Newlands Resolution into law.

Under the Newlands Resolution the self-declared Republic of Hawai'i ceded sovereignty over the Hawaiian Islands to the United States. As well, it ceded 1,800,000 acres of crown, government and public lands of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, without the consent of, or compensation to, the Native Hawaiian people or their sovereign government. These lands would come to be known as the 'ceded lands'. The revenue or proceeds from the lands were to be used – except for the civil, military, or naval purposes of the United States or the use of the local government – "solely for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands for educational and other public purposes."

Through the Newlands Resolution, Congress ratified the cession, annexed Hawai'i as part of the United States and vested title to the Kingdom's lands in the United States. The Newlands Resolution also specified that treaties existing between Hawai'i and foreign nations were to immediately cease and be replaced by United States treaties with such nations.

Reproduced below is a copy of the Newlands Resolution of July 7, 1898.

[No. 55.] JOINT RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR ANNEXING THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS TO THE UNITED STATES.

Whereas the Government of the Republic of Hawai'i having, in due form, signified its consent, in the manner provided by its constitution, to cede absolutely and without reserve to the United States of America all rights of sovereignty of whatsoever kind in and over the Hawaiian Islands and their dependencies, and also to cede and transfer to the United States the absolute fee and ownership of all public, Government, or Crown lands, public buildings or edifices, ports, harbors, military equipment, and all other public property of every kind and description belonging to the Government of the Hawaiian Islands, together with every right and appurtenance thereunto appertaining; Therefore *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled*, That said cession is accepted, ratified, and confirmed, and that the said Hawaiian Islands and their dependencies be, and they are hereby, annexed as a part of the territory of the United States and are subject to the sovereign dominion thereof, and that all and singular the property and rights hereinbefore mentioned are vested in the United States of America.

The existing laws of the United States relative to public lands shall not apply to such lands in the Hawaiian Islands; but the Congress of the United States shall enact special laws for their management and disposition: *Provided*, That all revenue from or proceeds of the same, except as regards such part thereof as may be used or occupied for the civil, military, or naval purposes of the United States, or may be assigned for the use of the local government, shall be used solely for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands for educational and other public purposes.

Until Congress shall provide for the government of such islands all the civil, judicial, and military powers exercised by the officers of the existing government in said islands shall be vested in such person or persons and shall be exercised in such manner as the President of the United States shall direct; and the President shall have the power to remove said officers and fill the vacancies so occasioned.

The existing treaties of the Hawaiian Islands with foreign nations shall forthwith cease and determine, being replaced by such treaties as may exist, or as may be hereafter concluded, between the United States and such foreign nations. The municipal legislation of the Hawaiian Islands, not enacted for the fulfillment of the treaties so extinguished, and not inconsistent with this joint resolution nor contrary to the Constitution of the United States nor to any existing treaty of the United States, shall remain in force until the Congress of the United States shall otherwise determine.

Until legislation shall be enacted extending the United States customs laws and regulations to the Hawaiian Islands the existing customs relations of the Hawaiian Islands with the United States and other countries shall remain unchanged.

The public debt of the Republic of Hawai'i, lawfully existing at the date of the passage of this joint resolution, including the amounts due to depositors in the Hawaiian Postal Savings Bank, is hereby assumed by the Government of the United States; but the liability of the United States in this regard shall in no case exceed four million dollars. So long, however, as the existing Government and the present commercial relations of the Hawaiian Islands are continued as hereinbefore provided said Government shall continue to pay the interest on said debt. There shall be no further immigration of Chinese into the Hawaiian Islands, except upon such conditions as are now or may hereafter be allowed by the laws of the United States; no Chinese, by reason of anything herein contained, shall be allowed to enter the United States from the Hawaiian Islands.

The President shall appoint five commissioners, at least two of whom shall be residents of the Hawaiian Islands, who shall, as soon as reasonably practicable, recommend to Congress such legislation concerning the Hawaiian Islands as they shall deem necessary or proper.

SEC. 2. That the commissioners hereinbefore provided for shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

SEC. 3. That the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary; is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, and to be immediately available, to be expended at the discretion of the President of the United States of America, for the purpose of carrying this joint resolution into effect.

SEREXO E. PAYNE, *Speaker of the House of Representatives Pro Tempore*.
GARRETT A. HOBART, *Vice-President of the United States and President of the Senate*.
Approved July 7th, 1898.
WILLIAM MCKINLEY.