

**Testimony of Michael A. Caldwell,  
Associate Director, Park Planning, Facilities and Lands  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on National Parks**

**December 9, 2025**

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on the following legislation: H.R. 249, to redesignate certain facilities at Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park in honor of Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr.; S. 290, Making National Parks Safer Act; S. 446, to prohibit Big Cypress National Preserve from being designated as wilderness or as a component of the National Wilderness System; S. 573, to designate a mountain in the State of Alaska as Denali; S. 601, to remove restrictions from a parcel of land in Paducah, Kentucky; S. 730, African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Educational Center Study Act; S. 791, Justice Thurgood Marshall National Historic Site Establishment Act of 2025; S. 858, Hershel Woody Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act; S. 1088, WWII Women's Memorial Location Act; S. 1131, Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act; S. 1135, to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Bonneville Shoreline Trail; S. 1280, Down East Remembrance Act; S. 1353, to extend the authority for modifications to the Second Division Memorial in the District of Columbia; S. 1377, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Wild Horses Protection Act; S. 1518, Strengthening America's Turning Point Act; S. 1777, Joshua Tree National Park Expansion Act; S. 1870, Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act; S. 1926, Reducing Waste in National Parks Act; S. 2270, Myakka Wild and Scenic River Act of 2025; S. 2308, PATRIOT Parks Act; S. 2369, Francis G. Newlands Memorial Removal Act; S. 2385, Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History Act; S. 2546, to provide for an extension of the legislative authority of the National Emergency Medical Services Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs; and S. 2708, Appalachian Trail Centennial Act; S. 2970, to authorize the use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) in certain areas of the Capitol Reef National Park.

**H.R. 249, to redesignate certain facilities at Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park in honor of Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr.**

H.R. 249 would redesignate the Great Falls Scenic Overlook Trail Bridge and Overlook Park at Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park as the "Bill Pascrell, Jr. Scenic Overlook Trail Bridge" and "Bill Pascrell, Jr. Overlook Park" respectively.

The NPS generally discourages the naming of park features except when there is a compelling justification and at least five years have elapsed since the death of the person. Accordingly, the Department does not support H.R. 249.

### **S. 290, Making National Parks Safer Act**

The Department supports S. 290. S. 290 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to upgrade 911 service infrastructure in units of the National Park System for better connectivity and interoperability using common standards and modern communication technologies and formats. NG911 systems are designed to transmit and receive bandwidth-intensive data—for example, video and images—that can enhance situational awareness and lead to better-informed response decisions. The systems use geospatial data to locate callers. Upgrading legacy systems could help save lives and equip the National Park Service (NPS) to better protect our nation’s natural and cultural resources.

The legislation directs the Department to complete an assessment of the implementation status of NG911 at existing NPS emergency communication centers and to estimate the cost to purchase, operate and maintain NG911 throughout the system. Subsequent to the assessment, S. 290 directs the Department to develop a plan to install NG911 at identified locations.

The NPS has 41 recognized dispatch centers that provide law enforcement and emergency services communications across more than 125 NPS sites and mutual aid agencies. In addition, numerous parks receive dispatch services through agreements with federal, state, or other local partners. The assessment would focus on these existing 41 dispatch centers, although the plan may reflect a future state of consolidation to best meet mission requirements. In addition, each state has its own laws that establish the framework for 911 services and NG911. These statutes outline the responsibilities of state agencies, local governments, and public safety entities in providing and managing 911 services including NG911. Each of these entities has the power to decide what solutions, technologies, and vendors it will use to achieve NG911, which will make interoperability more difficult to achieve. State jurisdiction regarding 911 and their respective NG911 implementation plans will impact the feasibility of upgrading all NPS systems.

It is worth acknowledging that transitioning to NG911 is a resource-intensive effort, requiring significant investment in infrastructure, software, and training, and it may take multiple years for implementation. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee to create a path for NPS to obtain the resources necessary to meet this initiative’s goals.

**S. 446, To prohibit Big Cypress National Preserve from being designated as wilderness or as a component of the National Wilderness System**

S. 446 would prohibit a wilderness designation within the Big Cypress National Preserve (Preserve). Under the Wilderness Act, only Congress has the authority to designate wilderness areas. Accordingly, the Department does not oppose the bill.

The law designating the Preserve as a unit of the National Park System ensured the protection of natural and cultural assets in the Big Cypress Swamp while simultaneously providing a number of different public land uses, including hunting, fishing, off-road vehicle use, private camp ownership, and traditional use and occupancy rights for Native American Tribes. The NPS remains committed to working with stakeholders, local and state officials, and Tribes—the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians and the Seminole Tribe of Florida—on all issues of concern within the Preserve.

**S. 573, to designate a mountain in the State of Alaska as Denali**

S. 573 would rename Mount McKinley, located within Denali National Park and Preserve, as Denali.

On his first day in office, President Trump issued Executive Order 14172 to restore names that honor American greatness to our national treasures, including natural wonders. The Executive Order directed the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to reinstate the name “Mount McKinley” to America’s highest peak, which it officially held for 118 years, from 1897 to 2015. Accordingly, the Administration strongly opposes S. 573.

On February 14, 2025, Secretary Burgum issued Secretary’s Order 3424, which directed the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to immediately take all actions necessary to update the Geographic Names Information System to rename Denali to Mount McKinley. Importantly, the national park surrounding Mount McKinley retains the name Denali National Park and Preserve, honoring the land and heritage of Alaska while ensuring that America’s highest summit continues to bear the name of a great American President.

President William McKinley, the 25th President of the United States, deserves to be remembered for his steadfast leadership. He heroically led our Nation to victory in the Spanish-American War, ushered in a new era of American strength abroad, and presided over rapid economic growth and prosperity at home. President McKinley championed tariffs to protect U.S. workers, boost domestic production, and drive the industrial expansion that propelled America onto the world stage. He was tragically assassinated in an attack that cut short a presidency defined by patriotism and prosperity, but his name should continue to inspire future generations. For these reasons, the Administration strongly urges Congress to reject S. 573 and preserve the name Mount McKinley.

**S. 601, to remove restrictions from a parcel of land in Paducah, Kentucky**

S. 601 would direct the Secretary to undertake action to remove deed restrictions from a land parcel transferred to the City of Paducah, Kentucky, through the National Park Service's Federal Lands to Parks program. Through this public-benefit conveyance program, the National Park Service partners with the U.S. General Services Administration to transfer surplus Federal real property to state and local governments for public parks and recreation use while saving taxpayer dollars by reducing the Federal inventory of unneeded Federal land and facilities.

Removing these restrictions would allow the City to sell or repurpose the land for purposes other than public recreation. The Department supports S.601 and looks forward to working with the bill sponsor to meet the community's needs.

**S. 730, African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Educational Center Act**

S. 730 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of establishing a museum and educational center at the African Burial Ground National Monument, to be known as the "African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Educational Center" (museum). The bill provides that the museum would serve as a permanent living memorial to the enslaved who are buried at the African Burial Ground and to other enslaved Africans and African Americans. S. 730 also directs the Secretary to submit a report to Congress on the results of the study.

The site encompassed by the existing monument is among the oldest and is the largest known urban burial site of enslaved and free Africans in the United States. It is one of the most significant archeological discoveries in the 20th century, with an estimated 15,000 burials. The monument provides the opportunity to study, contemplate, and discuss the history and contributions of Africans in the building of the Americas.

The Department recognizes the importance of the African Burial Ground and the significance of the historical record and events that it marks. However, we do not support S. 730, as the National Park Service is focusing its resources on addressing other critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog. The existing African Burial Ground National Monument marks the significance of the relevant events and provides ample opportunity to interpret the history and themes described in S. 730.

**S. 791, Justice Thurgood Marshall National Historic Site Establishment Act of 2025**

The Department recognizes the importance of Thurgood Marshall as a preeminent figure of national significance, however, we do not support S. 791, as the National Park Service (NPS) is focusing its resources on addressing other critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

S. 791 would establish the elementary school attended by Thurgood Marshall, commonly known as Public School (P.S.) 103, as a national historic site and would provide for the administration of the national historic site as an affiliated area of the National Park System. The national historic site would not be owned or managed by the NPS, but it would be required to be managed in accordance with any law generally applicable to units of the National Park System. The Secretary would be authorized to provide technical assistance and enter into agreements with the management entity, The Beloved Community Service Corporation, to provide financial assistance for marketing, marking, interpreting, and preserving the national historic site.

The 2019 John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (P.L. 116-9) directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of P.S. 103. The special resource study findings were transmitted to Congress in January 2023. The study found that P.S. 103 possesses national significance for its association with Thurgood Marshall and that it meets the suitability criteria as it exemplifies an important aspect of American history not adequately represented and protected elsewhere. However, the site did not meet the criterion for feasibility as an NPS unit, due to the proposed future sale and operational plans for the renovated building.

We recognize that the January 2023 study report discusses the potential for an NPS affiliated area designation, which does not authorize the site as an NPS unit but would permit the NPS to provide technical and financial assistance. However, the NPS is focusing its resources on addressing other critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

#### **S. 858, Hershel Woody Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act**

S. 858 would authorize the National Medal of Honor Monument to be established in the Reserve, the central cross-axis of the National Mall, as described by the Commemorative Works Act (40 USC 89 et seq.) (CWA). The Department strongly supports honoring the extraordinary acts of our nation's Medal of Honor recipients, and we look forward to supporting the building of the proposed monument in a place of national honor and prominence.

#### **S. 1088, World War II Women's Memorial Location Act**

S. 1088 would authorize the establishment of a memorial to commemorate the commitment and service of the women who worked on the home front during World War II in Area I or within the Reserve, the central cross-axis of the National Mall, as described by the Commemorative Works Act (40 USC 89 et seq.) (CWA). The Department supports establishing a commemorative work to honor the service and sacrifice of these American women.

On May 12, 2025, the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (Commission) reviewed S. 1088 and its companion bill, H.R. 2290. In the Commission's letter regarding S. 1088 and H.R. 2290 to the chairs of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Natural Resources Committee, the Commission recommended that Congress decline to authorize locating the memorial on the National Mall at this time and for the memorial sponsor to work with the

National Park Service (NPS) to develop a site selection study, as required by the CWA, to determine a proper location for the memorial. The Department concurs with the Commission's recommendations, and the NPS is committed to working with the memorial sponsor to develop a site selection study.

**S. 1131, Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act**

S. 1131 would redesignate Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park as Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and authorize the establishment of Ocmulgee Mounds National Preserve, subject to the acquisition of sufficient land to constitute a manageable park unit. The two components would collectively be designated as a single NPS unit called "Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve." The Department does not support S. 1131 as the bill would increase the federal estate and the NPS is focusing its resources on addressing other critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

**S.1135, to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Bonneville Shoreline Trail**

S. 1135 would direct the National Park Service to conduct a feasibility study for the designation of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail (BST) under the National Trails System Act (NTSA).

Most of the federal estate comprising the BST, including several existing and proposed trail segments, cross or border lands already managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). That agency has, in many cases, already engaged in planning, design, maintenance, and management considerations for those segments. Given this existing on-the-ground involvement and the NTSA's requirement for feasibility studies to assess factors such as resource impacts, land ownership, user safety, and long-term management, the USFS is better suited to lead the study. A USFS directed study would ensure that the agency with existing jurisdiction and institutional knowledge of the relevant lands evaluates the Trail's viability and long-term stewardship in concert with stakeholders. Accordingly, the Department recommends the bill be amended to remove NPS as the agency responsible for conducting the feasibility study.

**S. 1280, Down East Remembrance Act**

S. 1280 would codify the exact latitudes and longitudes of six creeks located within or near Cape Lookout National Seashore (Seashore) and renames them after eight individuals who lost their lives in a plane crash near Drum Inlet, off the coast of North Carolina and near the Seashore on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. These six creeks are located within or near the Seashore. The tragedy came as devastating news to the citizens of Carteret County, North Carolina, where all eight victims resided. This close-knit eastern North Carolina community has struggled to come to terms with the sudden loss of life, especially for young people on the brink of adulthood. The Department does not oppose S. 1280.

### **S. 1353, to extend the authority for modifications to the Second Division Memorial in the District of Columbia**

S. 1353 would reauthorize the authority granted in Public Law 115-91 for the Second Indianhead Division Association, Inc., Scholarship and Memorials Foundation (Foundation) to place additional commemorative elements or engravings on the raised platform or stonework of the existing Second Division Memorial located in President's Park in Washington, DC, until September 30, 2032. The Department supports S. 1353.

The Second Division Memorial was dedicated on July 18, 1936, to honor Second Division soldiers who lost their lives in World War I. On August 15, 1957, Congress authorized an addition to the memorial to honor the Second Division soldiers lost in World War II and the Korean War, which was completed in 1962. On December 12, 2017, Congress authorized a modification to the memorial to allow for recognition of soldiers who lost their lives while serving in Korea on the Demilitarized Zone from 1965-1991, Iraq from 2003-2010, and Afghanistan from 2009-2013. This authority expired on December 12, 2024.

On May 12, 2025, the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (Commission) reviewed S. 1353. In the Commission's letter regarding S. 1353 to the chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, it unanimously supported the bill's authorization extension. Since the passage of P.L. 115-91, the memorial modification design plan has been approved by the National Capital Planning Commission and Commission of Fine Arts. The modification is consistent with the previous approach to the memorial's expansion and does not alter the existing memorial fabric. Additionally, the memorial is located in a grassy lawn without a paved connection to the surrounding sidewalk network. The modification plan would remedy this and greatly improve the accessibility of the memorial.

### **S. 1377, Theodore Roosevelt National Park Wild Horses Protection Act**

The Department supports S. 1377. The bill amends the 1947 Act (61 Stat. 54, 9 chapter 41; 16 U.S.C. 245) that established Theodore Roosevelt National Park. It requires the Secretary to maintain a genetically diverse herd of horses in the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park with a population of at least 150 horses. The bill also requires the Secretary to develop a cost-effective plan for managing the horses that ensures the Park's natural resources are not adversely affected. The Secretary is restricted from removing any horses from the park unless that removal is carried out in accordance with a plan to maintain a genetically diverse herd, in the case of an emergency, or to protect public health and safety. Finally, the bill requires the Secretary to annually monitor, assess, and make available to the public, findings regarding horse population, structure, and health in the park.

The Department is committed to maintaining a healthy, genetically viable horse population in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The park manages a herd descended from abandoned local stock confined to the South Unit of the park in the late 1950s, when a perimeter fence was installed

to contain reintroduced Plains Bison. Since that time, the herd has thrived and grown to approximately 200 horses in 2025.

Because the park is fenced, the populations of bison and horses must be managed for the health of the species that share the space. A variety of study strategies enable park staff to collect data and use a science-based process to determine how best to balance these resources. This valuable information will inform management decisions and practices (such as the one identified in the bill) to maintain a healthy, genetically viable herd in balance with other mammals and available natural resources.

#### **S. 1518, Strengthening America's Turning Point Act**

S. 1518 would redesignate the Saratoga National Historical Park as the “Saratoga National Battlefield Park (Park). The Park recently completed a \$6.6 million Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) project in preparation for the 250th anniversary commemorations by replacing waysides and pathways. The Park is working closely with the County and Commission, planning multiple events up to and throughout 2027, which is the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga (September 19, 1777 and October 7, 1777) and the British Army Surrender (October 17, 1777).

Because Saratoga National Historical Park meets the standards, under our general criteria for designation, as either a National Historical Park or a National Battlefield Park, the Department does not object to this redesignation. We note that changing all of the signs, displays, printed materials, and waysides, including new waysides installed last year as part of a GAOA project, would be phased as these resources are replaced over time. All of these changes are extensive, require additional resources, and could not be completed before the 250th anniversaries to be celebrated in 2027. The National Park Service will continue to work to increase public awareness and understanding of the role Saratoga played in the founding of this country.

#### **S. 1777, Joshua Tree National Park Expansion Act**

S. 1777 would modify the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park to include approximately 20,149 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land adjacent to the park. Incorporating these additional lands into the park would require new and sustained funding to ensure proper management, visitor services, and protection of natural and cultural resources. The NPS must prioritize its resources on critical existing needs, such as addressing deferred maintenance and other projects vital to the continued preservation, accessibility, and enjoyment of lands that it currently manages. Therefore, the Department does not support the bill.

In 2016, the National Park Service, in cooperation with the BLM, conducted a study of the proposed expansion area and found that the lands were suitable for inclusion in Joshua Tree National Park. The land proposed for the boundary expansion was part of Joshua Tree National Monument when it was initially designated but was later removed due to presence of patented mining claims containing substantial deposits of iron ore. The Department notes there are hundreds



of current mining and mill site claims, as well as an active mining plan in the proposed expansion area.

#### **S. 1870, Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act**

S. 1870 would expand the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains NRA to include the area known as the Rim of the Valley Corridor, the mountainous areas that surround the San Fernando, Simi, and Conejo Valleys northwest of Los Angeles. The proposed Rim of the Valley Unit would be administered as part of the Santa Monica Mountains NRA, and an updated management plan for the park would be required within three years of enactment. Provisions in the bill ensure that the inclusion of the Rim of the Valley lands in the Santa Monica Mountains NRA would not interfere with specified existing uses. The NPS owns a relatively small proportion of land within the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains NRA and operates through a collaborative partnership-based management model with other entities.

The NPS is prioritizing resources on critical existing needs, such as addressing deferred maintenance and other projects vital to the continued preservation, accessibility, and enjoyment of existing parks. Therefore, we do not support S. 1870.

#### **S. 1926, Reducing Waste in National Parks Act**

S. 1926 would require the Director of the National Park Service to establish a mandatory program to reduce disposable plastic products, potentially eliminating the sale and distribution of these items in units of the National Park System.

On May 20, 2025, Secretary Burgum issued Secretary's Order 3430 (SO 3430), rescinding Secretary's Order 3407 (SO 3407) issued during the previous Administration. SO 3407 had established a Department-wide policy to phase out single-use plastic products and packaging. Implementation of the rescinded SO 3407 had presented operational and logistical challenges across a range of Departmental functions, including visitor services, field operations, and procurement. It had imposed mandates that restricted locally appropriate solutions and did not adequately account for cost, performance, or safety considerations.

SO 3430 is consistent with Executive Order 14208, issued by President Trump in February 2025, which directs Executive departments and agencies to repeal or revise any policies that limit the availability of plastic products without a compelling scientific or statutory basis. It underscores the importance of agency discretion, operational flexibility, and product performance in procurement and public service delivery. Under SO 3430, Department bureaus, including the National Park Service, may continue voluntary efforts to reduce plastic waste tailored to local conditions. The Department believes such voluntary, flexible efforts are more effective than the rigid, one-size-fits-all mandates proposed in S.1926. For these reasons, the Department does not support S. 1926.

### **S. 2270, Myakka Wild and Scenic River Act of 2025**

S. 2270 designates segments of the Myakka River – totaling approximately 34 miles – as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The bill would provide that the comprehensive management plan developed by the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council (Council) satisfies the requirements under section 3(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It would require the Secretary to coordinate the wild and scenic river administration responsibilities with the Council and authorize entering into cooperative agreements with state and local partners and stakeholders. The bill would confirm that the river would not become a unit of the National Park System, allow for land acquisition from willing sellers or via donation and require the Secretary to select a National Park Service (NPS) representative to the Council.

A 1984 Congressionally authorized NPS Wild and Scenic Rivers study determined that 37 miles of the Myakka River were eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Only a portion of the river, managed by the State of Florida, was found suitable because the remainder was surrounded by private land. Consequently, supporters of protecting the Myakka's wild and scenic values successfully pursued non-federal methods of protection and management of those lands.

The Department recognizes the long-standing work of state and local partners to protect the Myakka River's values. However, currently, the NPS must prioritize limited resources on critical existing needs, such as addressing deferred maintenance and other projects vital to the continued preservation, accessibility, and enjoyment of existing parks.

### **S. 2308, PATRIOT Parks Act**

The Department supports S. 2308, which codifies President Donald J. Trump's July 3, 2025, Executive Order 14314, Making America Beautiful Again by Improving Our National Parks. In the Executive Order, President Trump announced the Administration's policy to preserve national parks, refuges and public lands for American families in future generations by increasing entry fees for foreign tourists, improving affordability for United States residents, and expanding opportunities to enjoy America's splendid national treasures. The Order directed the Department to raise entry and pass fees to federal lands for nonresidents. Last year, an estimated 22 million international visitors contributed to the record 331 million visits across the National Park System contributing to the deferred maintenance needs of federal roads, buildings, utilities, and other facilities. Addressing these repairs is crucial for preserving the beauty and accessibility of our parks for future generations.

Consistent with the executive order, the Department on November 25, 2025, announced a series of administrative updates to the America the Beautiful Pass program. These changes include a new pricing structure for international visitors, digital delivery of passes, updated patriotic fee-free days for U.S. residents, and expanded coverage to include two motorcycles per pass. These actions are

designed to modernize the program, improve operational efficiency, and ensure that international visitors contribute more directly to the stewardship of our national parks.

We look forward to working with the Committee to align S. 2308 with the Department's implementation of Executive Order 14314.

### **S. 2369, Francis G. Newlands Memorial Removal Act**

Executive Order 14253, "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History," issued by President Donald J. Trump on March 27, 2025, establishes a clear policy for federal memorials, statues, and markers. It directs the Department to preserve and, when necessary, restore memorials that may have been removed or altered in recent years for reasons rooted in partisan ideology or efforts to minimize the significance of historical figures.

S. 2369 would require the Secretary of the Interior to make several modifications to the memorial fountain located in Chevy Chase Circle. Specifically, the bill calls for the removal of a brass [bronze] plaque bearing the name "Senator Francis G. Newlands"; a stone at the south end of the fountain bearing the name "Francis Griffith Newlands" and the related inscription; and the name "Newlands Memorial Fountain" carved into the upper face of the memorial fountain's coping stones. In addition, the bill requires the Secretary to offer the removed items to the descendants of Francis Newlands. If the descendants do not claim the items within 60 days, the removed items would become part of the National Park Service museum collection for Rock Creek Park.

Francis Newlands, the founder of Chevy Chase, Maryland, represented Nevada in the U.S. Congress from 1893 to 1917, first in the U.S. House of Representatives and later in the U.S. Senate. The Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902, which created the Bureau of Reclamation and led to the creation of dams and irrigation projects in the American West, was named for him. The removal of this memorial inscription conflicts with the Administration's stated policy to protect historic memorials from alteration for ideological reasons. For this reason, the Department does not support S. 2369.

### **S. 2385, Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History Act**

The Department supports S. 2385, which would codify President Trump's Executive Order 14253, "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History" (EO 14253). The bill, following EO 14253, sets the policy of restoring Federal sites dedicated to history to solemn and uplifting monuments that remind Americans of our extraordinary heritage, consistent progress toward becoming a more perfect Union, and unmatched record of advancing liberty, prosperity, and human flourishing. The bill effectuates these policies with respect to the Smithsonian Institution and its museums and centers. It directs the Secretary of the Interior to improve the infrastructure of Independence National Historical Park by July 4, 2026. It also directs the Secretary to review public monuments, memorials, statues, markers, or similar properties within the Department's jurisdiction and to restore Federal sites dedicated to history, including parks and museums, in accordance with policy.

The Department is committed to this Administration’s policy and, on May 20, 2025, Secretary Burgum issued Secretary’s Order 3431 (SO 3431), which directed each of the Department’s land management bureaus to take all actions necessary to implement EO 14253. The bureaus are implementing SO 3431, including review and identification of public monuments, memorials, statues, markers, and plaques that have been removed or altered since the beginning of 2020, and of public-facing content that inappropriately disparages Americans or emphasizes matters unrelated to the beauty, abundance, or grandeur of natural features. The public-facing content includes exhibits, waysides, films, publications, signs, retail items, and any media projects that are in development. Each bureau has posted signage (with a QR code that links to the bureau’s website for collecting entries) at its sites to ensure awareness and allow for public input on the state of the property, its management, and its alignment with EO 14253 and SO 3431.

With respect to Independence National Historical Park, where the Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4, 1776, the NPS has initiated the Independence Square Improvement Project. This project will address preservation needs at Independence Hall, Congress Hall, Old City Hall, and other historic buildings and features. Improvements include the construction of accessible ramps, the rehabilitation of interior and exterior finishes (including masonry, wood, plaster, metals, and monument restoration), and interior painting to preserve historic integrity. This project ensures historical narratives reflect the richness of American history, addresses deferred maintenance, and improves infrastructure. Completion is targeted to align with America250 commemorative events.

The Department defers to other entities for their views on relevant provisions of S. 2385.

**S. 2546, to provide for an extension of the legislative authority of the National Emergency Medical Services Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs**

S. 2546 extends the legislative authority of the National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Memorial Foundation (Foundation) to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs until November 3, 2032. The Department supports S. 2546.

The Foundation received its initial seven- year authority from Congress to establish a commemorative work that honors the commitment and sacrifice of EMS professionals in 2018. In the ensuing seven years, the Foundation has made significant progress in navigating the complex site selection process and advancing the preliminary design concepts. However, additional time is needed to bring this worthwhile national tribute to completion.

The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (Commission) reviewed S. 2546 and its companion bill, H.R. 2196 and affirmed that extending the authority of the National EMS Memorial Foundation is essential to ensure the successful establishment of a memorial that will

stand as an enduring tribute to the dedication and sacrifice of the men and women who respond in moments of greatest need.

The Department agrees with the Commission's recommendation. EMS professionals serve on the front lines of emergencies, often at great personal risk, providing lifesaving care in times of crisis. Extending this legislative authority will give the Foundation the certainty it needs to complete its mission and ensure that our Nation properly recognizes the dedication and sacrifice of these public servants.

### **S. 2708, Appalachian Trail Centennial Act**

S. 2708 would establish the Appalachian Trail Conservancy as the first Designated Operational Partner for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and provides an opportunity and criteria for additional national trails partners to become Designated Operational Partners for other national scenic and national historic trails.

The bill would authorize a Designated Operational Partner to request that the Secretary (or Secretary of Agriculture with respect to trails administered by the Secretary of Agriculture) and the U.S. Attorney consider violations of property rights held by the federal government and make a determination on appropriate action within a prescribed time frame. It would also require a Designated Operational Partner to periodically develop and submit to the Secretary and the heads of any other appropriate Federal land management agencies a proposed priority list for land and resource protection for the applicable covered trail. The Secretary must then prioritize the use of funds for land identified for Federal protection in the list, except when the Secretary has determined otherwise for a specific priority and, in that case, the Secretary must provide a written justification to the Designated Operational Partner. Other provisions in S. 2708 include requirements and authorities related to cooperative agreements, volunteer services, comprehensive plans, visitation assessments, economic impact assessments, trail planning, appropriations, and a Federal Advisory Committee Act exemption.

America's national scenic and historic trails form a network of well over 50,000 miles that protects and links together many of America's most significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Both types of trails are planned and administered under the authorities of the National Trails System Act (NTSA, 16 U.S.C. 1241-1251) and serve as the backbone of the National Trails System.

S. 2708 would grant unique authorities to a single Designated Operational Partner, which could limit the Secretary's authority and diminish opportunities for other cooperative management partners. This exclusivity could conflict with existing agreements or other opportunities to enter into agreements to achieve local trail objectives. In addition, it is unclear what unintended consequences may arise for federal land managing agencies, Tribes, state and local governments, private landowners, or others with land management jurisdiction for trail management and

operations if a Secretary identifies a single, trail-wide operational partnering organization. We also have significant concerns with the provisions in the bill addressing investigation and enforcement of alleged violations of Federal property rights violations and delegating Federal land acquisition prioritization to Designated Operational Partners.

The Department values the role that our numerous non-profit and other partners play in helping to build and maintain the National Trails System and shares the goal of enhancing public-private partnerships. However, for the reasons discussed above, we do not support S. 2708. We would be happy to discuss our concerns further with the bill sponsor and the Subcommittee.

**S. 2970, to authorize the use of off-highway vehicles in certain areas of the Capitol Reef National Park, Utah**

This legislation would require the National Park Service (NPS) to allow street legal OHVs on the portions of Burr Trail Road, Cathedral Road, Hartnet Road, Highway 24, Notom Bullfrog Road, Polk Creek Road, Oil Ranch Road, and Baker Ranch Road that are located within the boundaries of Capitol Reef National Park (Capitol Reef). In addition, it mandates use of the State's definition of an OHV.

The Department supports the goals of the legislation to enhance and improve recreational opportunities at Capitol Reef and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee on technical amendments. The park reviews its OHV use policy annually, and the NPS is ready to provide input on the areas of Capitol Reef that are most suitable for OHV use, considering impacts to visitor safety, park resources, and visitor experiences.

Capitol Reef, located in south-central Utah, is known for its stunning scenery, geology, and history. Visitors to the park enjoy a variety of recreational opportunities and cultural and historical experiences, including viewing vast redrock cliffs and petroglyphs, hiking, backcountry camping, scenic driving, and picking fruit in historic pioneer orchards.

This legislation also applies the State definition of an OHV to use in Capitol Reef National Park. At present, an OHV is defined by Utah Criminal and Traffic Code, Section 41-22-2, as All-terrain type I and All-terrain type II vehicles. This definition includes any vehicle currently registered as a street-legal all-terrain vehicle (ATV) or utility terrain vehicle (UTV), or is eligible for a state ATV/UTV registration sticker. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee on amendments that would enable the NPS to respond to changes in motor vehicle technology or use trends and patterns.

Chairman Daines, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions from members of the committee.