



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members
From: House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Staff
Date: Monday, April 7, 2025
Subject: Markup of 9 bills

The Committee on Natural Resources will hold a markup on **Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.** in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building. The bills to be considered include: H.R. 276 (Rep. Greene); H.R. 677 (Rep. Hageman); H.R. 845 (Rep. Boebert); H.R. 900 (Rep. Soto); H.R. 972 (Rep. Titus); H.R. 1043 (Rep. Gosar); H.R. 1098 (Rep. Scholten); H.R. 1665 (Rep. Cammack); and H.R. 1681 (Rep. Evans of CO).

Member offices are requested to notify Madeline Kelley (Madeline.Kelley@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 8, 2024, to confirm their Member's attendance at the mark-up.

I. KEY MESSAGES & TOPLINE ACTIONS

- Bills expected to move by regular order: H.R. 276 (Rep. Greene), "*Gulf of America Act of 2025*" and H.R. 845 (Rep. Boebert), "*Pet and Livestock Protection Act of 2025*".
- Please note that H.R. 276 and H.R. 845 will have an amendment in the nature of a substitute (ANS). Members should ensure that amendments are drafted to the ANS.
- Bills expected to move by unanimous consent: H.R. 677 (Rep. Hageman), "*Expedited Appeals Review Act*" or the "*EARA*"; H.R. 900 (Rep. Soto), "*Sinkhole Mapping Act of 2025*"; H.R. 972 (Rep. Titus), "*Sloan Canyon Conservation and Lateral Pipeline Act*"; H.R. 1043 (Rep. Gosar), "*La Paz County Solar Energy and Job Creation Act*"; H.R. 1098 (Rep. Scholten), To reauthorize the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act of 1994; H.R. 1665 (Rep. Cammack), "*Deploying Infrastructure with Greater Internet Transactions And Legacy Applications Act*" or the "*DIGITAL Applications Act*"; and H.R. 1681 (Rep. Evans of CO), "*Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act*".

II. EXPECTED LEGISLATION

H.R. 276 (Rep. Greene), “*Gulf of America Act of 2025*”

H.R. 276, codifies actions taken by President Trump through Executive Order (E.O.) 14172, Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness, signed on January 20, 2025.¹ The bill would permanently rename the area formerly known as the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America. Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#) and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

An ANS will be offered at the markup to name this bill the “*Gulf of America Act*.”

Staff contact: Thomas Shipman (Thomas.Shipman@mail.house.gov) and Annick Miller (Annick.Miller@mail.house.gov)

H.R. 677 (Rep. Hageman), “*Expedited Appeals Review Act*”

The Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) is an appellate review board within the Department of the Interior (DOI) that is responsible for resolving disputes involving public lands and natural resources under DOI’s jurisdiction. IBLA has authority delegated by the Secretary of the Interior to issue final determinations on decisions made by the different bureaus within DOI. Appeals involving grazing, mining, energy development, royalty disbursement and management, timber harvesting, wildfire management, land exchanges, rights of way, and trespass are decided by the IBLA.² The IBLA was created through regulation and is comprised of administrative judges who report to a Chief Administrative Judge.

The Expedited Appeals Review Act (EARA) addresses long-standing inefficiencies in the IBLA’s appeals process. The sheer volume of cases, combined with a process structured to favor agency deference, often leads to prolonged delays and rulings favoring the respective bureaus. The result is that many stakeholders, from energy developers to land users, find themselves entangled in a years-long appeals process that lacks timely resolution and clarity.

As the board oversees a diverse array of complex land, environmental, and resource-related cases, decisions are frequently subjected to rigorous, multi-layered review. This lengthy examination process often includes consultation with subject-matter experts and iterative exchanges between the IBLA and the bureau issuing the original decision. Consequently, IBLA has over 650 pending appeals dating back to 2014.³

The IBLA’s deference to the original bureau decision is significant. The board upholds agency determinations in a vast majority of cases, reflecting a deeply ingrained institutional bias towards

¹ Executive Order 14172, The White House, January 2025, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-202500139/pdf/DCPD-202500139.pdf>

² U.S. Department of the Interior, About the Interior Board of Land Appeals, <https://www.doi.gov/oha/about-interior-board-land-appeals>.

³ U.S. Department of the Interior, IBLA 2024 Pending Appeals, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-03/february-2025-pending-appeals.pdf>.

the initial judgment. According to the IBLA Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023,⁴ the IBLA ruled in favor of the respective bureaus roughly 90% of the time. Moreover, IBLA's decisions are based upon bureau-curated administrative records with limited opportunities for appellants to supplement or challenge the record. Much of the record is withheld from the appellant for "deliberative process" purposes, thereby shielding the agency's decision-making process from attack. These process realities can disincentivize stakeholders from pursuing appeals, as the outcome is often predictably aligned with the agency's stance. H.R. 677 seeks to mitigate these issues by creating an alternative path for appellants seeking expedited reviews. The bill allows stakeholders to request an accelerated decision on their appeal and forces IBLA to issue a decision within six months of such a request. If this deadline is not met, the agency decision will automatically become eligible for de novo judicial review outside of DOI. This new pathway aims to alleviate the backlog in administrative court by providing a more efficient and predictable recourse for those facing extended delays on appeals.

An ANS will be offered by Representative Hageman to address concerns expressed by the Department of the Interior during the legislative hearing, clarifying that the EARA would overrule any existing legislative conflicts or standards.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff Contact: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov)

H.R. 845 (Rep. Boebert), "*Pet and Livestock Protection Act of 2025*"

This bill would require the Department of the Interior to reissue the final rule entitled "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Removing the Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*) From the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife" and published on November 3, 2020 (85 Fed. Reg. 69778). The bill would also prohibit the rule from being subject to judicial review.

In 2020, the Trump administration finalized a rule that delisted the gray wolf, except for the Mexican wolf, and returned management to each of the lower 48 states.⁵

Defenders of Wildlife, WildEarth Guardians, and other environmental groups challenged the 2020 rule, and in February 2022, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California vacated it.⁶ The court found that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) had failed to show that gray wolf populations could be sustained outside of the core populations in the western Great Lakes and northern Rocky Mountains.⁷ This ruling reinstated Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for the gray wolf in the lower 48 states, except for the congressionally delisted

⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, IBLA Annual Report Fiscal Year 2023, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/ibla-annual-report-fiscal-year2023>.

⁵ 85 Fed. Reg. 69,778 (Nov. 3, 2020).

⁶ "U.S. District Court Vacates Gray Wolf Delisting Rule." Erin H. Ward. Congressional Research Service. [LSB10697](https://www.congress.gov/legislation/116/10697) ([congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov))

⁷ U.S. District Court Northern District of California. *Defenders of Wildlife, Et. Al. v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Et Al.* February 10, 2022.

Northern Rockies Ecosystem.⁸ The Biden administration’s Department of Justice appealed the ruling and continued to submit legal filings in support of the 2020 rule as late as September 2024.⁹

In the 118th Congress, the House of Representatives passed legislation identical to H.R. 845, the “Trust the Science Act,” by a vote of 209-205, with four Democrats voting in support of the legislation.¹⁰ Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#) and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

An ANS will be offered at the markup to name this bill the “*Pet and Livestock Protection Act*.”

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H.R. 900 (Rep. Soto), “*Sinkhole Mapping Act of 2025*”

H.R. 900 is a bipartisan bill that directs the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to examine the short and long-term causes of sinkholes and map areas at greater risk of sinkhole formation. Sinkholes are a dangerous natural hazard, created when a ground depression lacks external surface drainage and the rock below the subsurface is dissolved by groundwater.¹¹ While rock in the subsurface gradually dissolves creating an underground cavern, the surface can stay intact for a time, until the underground cavern gets to be too large and cannot support the surface leading to a collapse.¹² Over the past 15 years, damage from sinkholes have cost an average of \$300 million annually in the United States.¹³ However, there is currently no national database of sinkhole damage costs, so the true expense may be higher than the \$300 million annual estimate.¹⁴

H.R. 900 directs USGS to establish a program to study the causes of sinkholes, including storms and droughts. The bill also requires USGS to develop maps of higher-risk areas and revise them as needed every five years. These provisions could reduce the risk to the public and help land-use planners make development decisions. H.R. 900 currently has 7 cosponsors, including two Republicans: Reps. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA). Previous versions of this bill passed the Committee on Natural Resources by Unanimous Consent in the 116th, 117th, and 118th Congresses.

⁸ “Judge restores gray wolf protections.” Michael Doyle. E&E News. February 10 2022. [Judge restores gray wolf protections - E&E News \(eenews.net\)](#)

⁹ Federal Appellants’ Opening Brief. *Defenders of Wildlife, et al., v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife, et al., and State of Utah, et al.* September 13, 2024. https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/chairman_westerman_ftr_--_9th_cir_court_defenders_v_usfws_--_wolves.pdf

¹⁰ H.R. 764, “Trust the Science Act.” [H.R. 764 – 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Trust the Science Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)

¹¹ U.S. Geological Survey, Geology, What is a Sinkhole, <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/what-sinkhole>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ U.S. Geological Survey, Geology, Frequently Asked Questions, <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/how-much-does-sinkhole-damage-cost-each-year-united-states>.

¹⁴ U.S. Geological Survey, Geology, Frequently Asked Questions, <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/how-much-does-sinkhole-damage-cost-each-year-united-states>.

An ANS will be offered at the markup to clarify that the program established by the bill shall be subject to appropriations.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff Contact: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov)

H.R. 972 (Rep. Titus), “*Sloan Canyon Conservation and Lateral Pipeline Act*”

In recent decades, southern Nevada has experienced a rapid increase in population, which shows no signs of decelerating. Currently, 40 percent of the region’s drinking water is delivered through a single pipeline known as the South Valley Lateral, which was constructed in the 1990s.¹⁵ In response to the recent influx of residents to the region and a marked increase in water demand, the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) engaged in years of study and coordinated with local stakeholders to ensure reliable water sources are accessible to all residents and visitors in the Las Vegas Valley.

As a result of that study and coordination, SNWA is proposing to construct a new water pipeline to meet the demands of reliable drinking water for current and future residents. A new water pipeline would help maintain water deliveries if the South Valley Lateral suffered an outage or required repairs.¹⁶ The preferred southern route would be constructed in less-developed areas of the region, including a portion running underneath the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA). The preferred route through the NCA, when compared to a northern alternative route, would save taxpayers an estimated \$200 million and minimize disturbances to residents.

The NCA is one of 19 national conservation areas managed for conservation and restoration and provides for multiple uses, including mining, oil and gas leasing, and grazing.¹⁷ The Sloan Canyon NCA currently encompasses 48,438 acres surrounding the cities of Las Vegas and Henderson, Nevada.¹⁸

H.R. 972, the “Sloan Canyon Conservation and Lateral Pipeline Act,” contains two major provisions. First, the bill grants authority to the SNWA for the construction of a water pipeline project under the Sloan Canyon NCA. Second, the bill increases the size of the Sloan Canyon NCA area by over 9,000 acres to 57,728 total acres. The bill allows for the use of gravel, sand, and minerals obtained from tunneling for parking lots and other infrastructure in the NCA. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) currently administers the additional acres; thus, the legislation would not add to the federal estate.

¹⁵ Southern Nevada Water Authority, “Horizon Lateral”, <https://www.snwa.com/infrastructure-improvements/horizon-lateral/index.html>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Bureau of Land Management, “Monuments, Conservation Areas and Similar Designations”, <https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/monuments-ncas>.

¹⁸ Bureau of Land Management, “Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area”, <https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/nevada/sloan-canyon-ncas#:~:text=In%20November%202002%2C%20Congress%20designated,and%20the%20City%20of%20Henderson>.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#) and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

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H.R. 1043 (Rep. Gosar), “La Paz County Solar Energy and Job Creation Act”

Approximately 95 percent of the land in La Paz County, Arizona, is under federal, state, or Tribal management, with only five percent of the land available for private ownership.¹⁹ The BLM is the largest single land manager in this rural county, controlling roughly 58 percent of the total land mass.²⁰ The county’s economy is primarily dependent on tourism and agriculture.²¹ Like many other Western communities with large federal land footprints, La Paz County faces significant challenges in meeting the economic needs of its residents.

In an effort to economically diversify and create additional employment opportunities, the County worked with Representative Gosar (R-AZ-09) to pursue a legislative conveyance of 5,935 acres of BLM land for the development of a large-scale solar farm. That legislation, the “La Paz County Land Conveyance Act,” was signed into law in 2019 as part of the “John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act.”²² After the bill’s passage, La Paz County executed development grants with 174 Power Global, a renewable energy company, and the solar project is currently underway.²³ The project, one of the largest in the United States, is expected to produce 1,000 megawatts of solar power, as well as hundreds of megawatts of battery storage.²⁴

H.R. 1043 seeks to build on the success of this project by conveying an additional 3,400 acres of BLM land adjacent to the initial project site. This acreage was part of Representative Gosar’s initial legislation but was ultimately removed in the final version of the bill that became law. In the waning days of the Biden Administration, the BLM authorized a 30-year right-of-way grant for the Jove Solar Project in La Paz County, Arizona.²⁵ This move is opposed by the County and undercuts the bipartisan conveyance effort being led by Congressman Gosar. The County continues to believe the legislative conveyance authorized by H.R. 1043 will provide important economic benefits and much-needed revenues to support its residents.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#) and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

¹⁹ Arizona Commerce Authority, “County Profile for La Paz County”, <https://www.azcommerce.com/a/profiles/ViewProfile/8/La+Paz+County/#::~:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Bureau%20of%20Land,owned%20privately%20or%20by%20corporations>.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Information provided by the Office of Congressman Gosar and available on the Committee’s website; [https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/The La Paz County Solar Energy and Job Creation Act - One Page.pdf](https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/The%20La%20Paz%20County%20Solar%20Energy%20and%20Job%20Creation%20Act%20-%20One%20Page.pdf).

²² Public Law 116-9.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ 90 FR 4777, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/16/2025-01042/notice-of-availability-of-the-record-of-decision-for-the-jove-solar-project-la-paz-county-arizona>

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H.R. 1098 (Rep. Scholten), To reauthorize the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act of 1994.

H.R. 1098 would reauthorize funding for the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program through 2031. This program encourages children to learn about conservation practices and provides an opportunity for increased participation in outdoor activities. Like the Federal Duck Stamp Contest, Junior Duck Stamp participants create waterfowl themed art for a competition. The winning artwork of the competition is then turned into collectible stamps that are sold for \$5 and proceeds from those sales are used to educate and engage our nation's youth in wildlife and wetland conservation, along with outdoor recreation.²⁶

As written, H.R. 1098 increases the authorization of appropriations for the program funding from \$350,000 to \$550,000. An amendment will be offered to strike the increase in the authorization of appropriations.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#) and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

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²⁶ “Junior Duck Stamp.” 2024 *National Junior Duck Stamp Contest*. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service <https://www.fws.gov/program/junior-duck-stamp/junior-duck-stamp-contest-information>

H.R. 1665 (Rep. Cammack), “*DIGITAL Applications Act*”

An affordable and reliable connection to high-speed internet, or broadband, is vital to many aspects of modern life.²⁷ From online education to telemedicine and e-commerce, essential activities, experiences, and interactions increasingly occur online.²⁸ For large segments of the population, however, the transition into the digital world remains elusive.²⁹ Broadband access requires the support of various technologies, including cable, telephone wire, fiber, satellite, and mobile and fixed wireless transmitters.³⁰ And to reach rural and tribal areas, much of this infrastructure must be installed on federal land.³¹ But broadband providers face burdensome permitting requirements and application processes imposed by federal, state, and local governments.³² As a result, rural and tribal areas “tend to lag behind urban and suburban areas in broadband deployment and the speed of service offered,”³³ resulting in the widely lamented “digital divide.”³⁴

The Department of the Interior (DOI), through the BLM, and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) process the most applications and communications use authorizations to install communications facilities on federal property compared to other federal agencies.³⁵ Communications use authorizations are requests for easements, rights-of-way, leases, or other authorizations “to locate or modify a transmitting device, support structure, or other communications facility” on public lands.³⁶ Before they can construct or operate the necessary facilities on federal land, broadband providers must typically participate in a pre-application meeting, complete the Standard Form 299 application materials, and undergo extensive review periods.³⁷ These lengthy wait times add uncertainty and costs and likely dissuade many providers from even applying in the first place.

H.R. 1665 seeks to ameliorate these challenges by advancing broadband deployment in rural and tribal areas. Specifically, the bill would require DOI and USFS to establish online portals for processing Form 299s for communications use authorizations. The legislation also requires DOI and USFS to notify the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) within three business days of establishing their respective portals.³⁸ After that, the NTIA must create links to those portals from its own website.³⁹ Together, these provisions create an online,

²⁷ Colby Leigh Rachfal, “The Digital Divide: What Is It, Where Is It, and Federal Assistance Programs,” Congressional Research Service, March 9, 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46613>.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ “Special Uses—Communications Uses,” U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/special-uses/communications-uses>. Streamlining Federal Siting Working Group Final Report, FCC Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee, January 24, 2018, <https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/bdac-federalsiting-01232018.pdf>.

³² Streamlining Federal Siting Working Group Final Report, FCC Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee, January 24, 2018, <https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/bdac-federalsiting-01232018.pdf>.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ “Broadband Deployment: Agencies Should Take Steps to Better Meet Deadline for Processing Permits,” U.S. Government Accountability Office, April 10, 2024, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-106157#>.

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ Communications Sites,” U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, <https://www.blm.gov/programs/lands-and-reealty/communication-sites>.

³⁸ H.R. 1665, 119th Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1665/text>.

³⁹ *Id.*

“one-stop-shop” for applicants to apply for communications use authorizations from federal land managers.⁴⁰ In the process, the bill promises to bring transparency and accountability to an important application system. This bipartisan legislation is sponsored by Representative Kat Cammack (R-FL-03) and co-sponsored by Representative Doris Matsui (D-CA-07).

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#) and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contact: Aniela Butler (Aniela@mail.house.gov) and Jason Blore (Jason.Blore@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 1681 (Rep. Evans of Colorado), “*Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act*”

BLM and USFS process the majority of applications and communications use authorizations to install communications facilities on federal property.⁴¹ Although these agencies face a statutory requirement to grant or deny these applications within 270 days, this deadline is often missed.⁴² The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently reported that roughly half of the communications use applications submitted to BLM and USFS from fiscal years 2018 to 2022 either exceeded the 270-day deadline or lacked data sufficient to reveal whether the deadline had been met.⁴³ As a result, broadband developers report that fiber deployment in rural areas takes an average of five to ten years to complete.⁴⁴ Without lowering these obstacles, the “digital divide” and its detrimental consequences will persist.

H.R. 1681 is another Republican-led solution that would fast-track broadband deployment on federal lands.⁴⁵ The legislation would require the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information (Assistant Secretary), in their capacity as head of NTIA, to create an interagency “strike force” that would assist BLM and USFS in reviewing requests for communications use authorizations. Crucially, the bill would require the two agencies, at each organizational unit, to prioritize their review of such requests. The five-member strike force would consist of the Assistant Secretary, the heads of BLM and USFS, and a designee of each the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior, respectively. Once established, the strike force would periodically convene to ensure BLM and USFS are prioritizing the review of requests for communications use authorizations, establish “objective and reasonable” goals for those reviews, and hold the agencies accountable for meeting such goals. H.R. 1681 is co-led by Representative Angie Craig (D-MN-02).

⁴⁰ “Reps. Cammack, Matsui Introduce H.R. 3299, Bipartisan DIGITAL Applications Act To Close Digital Divide,” The Office of Congresswoman Kat Cammack, May 16, 2023, <https://cammack.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-cammack-matsui-introduce-hr-3299-bipartisan-digital-applications-act>.

⁴¹ “Broadband Deployment: Agencies Should Take Steps to Better Meet Deadline for Processing Permits,” U.S. Government Accountability Office, April 10, 2024, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-106157#>.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ Linda Hardesty, “Whoa – the fiber permitting process could crush digital divide dreams,” Fierce Network, December 9, 2021, <https://www.fierce-network.com/broadband/whoa-fiber-permitting-process-could-crush-digital-divide-dreams>.

⁴⁵ “E&C Advances Seven Bills to Close the Digital Divide and Improve American Leadership in Wireless Communications,” U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, May 24, 2023, <https://energycommerce.house.gov/posts/e-and-c-advances-seven-bills-to-close-the-digital-divide-and-improve-american-leadership-in-wireless-communications>.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#) and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

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III. CBO SCORES

None available.

IV. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)

[H.R. 972](#)

[H.R. 1098](#)