

**Statement for the Record  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
Legislative Hearing**

**on**

**H.R. 642, Myakka Wild and Scenic River Act of 2025**

**H.R. 5470, Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act**

**H.R. 6788, Montana Sportsmen Conservation Act**

**H.R. 9269, Renewing the African American Civil Rights Network Act**

**H.R. 9600, Common Sense 250 Act of 2026**

**H.R. 9779, Hands Off Our Boca Chica Beach Act of 2026**

**H.R. 10128, a bill to codify Secretary's Order 3434 of the Department of the Interior**

**S. 675, Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act**

**September 2, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record on H.R. 642, the Myakka Wild and Scenic River Act of 2025; H.R. 5470, the Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act; H.R. 6788, the Montana Sportsmen Conservation Act; H.R. 9269, the Renewing the African American Civil Rights Network Act; H.R. 9600, the Common Sense 250 Act of 2026; H.R. 9779, the Hands Off Our Boca Chica Beach Act of 2026; H.R. 10128, a bill to codify Secretary's Order 3434 of the Department of the Interior; and S. 675, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act.

**H.R. 642, Myakka Wild and Scenic River Act of 2025**

H.R. 642 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 of the Interior (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 of the Interior (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.

### **H.R. 5470, Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act**

H.R. 5470 would designate the full historic alignment of Route 66, from Chicago to Santa Monica, as a national historic trail managed by the National Park Service, with land acquisition limited to no more than a quarter mile on either side of the route. Route 66 has long symbolized American mobility, innovation, and opportunity, drawing visitors from around the world and supporting rural communities along its 2,400-mile path. The NPS currently manages the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, established by Congress in 1999 and reauthorized in 2009 to recognize Route 66's contributions to American history. Because national historic trail status is a logical extension of the existing Route 66 program and would not require additional federal funding or resources, the Department supports H.R. 5470.

### **H.R. 6788, Montana Sportsmen Conservation Act**

H.R. 6788 would release nearly 104,000 acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Forest Service (USFS) from designation as Wilderness Study Areas (WSA). Under the bill, 22,960 acres of BLM-managed WSAs would be released from management under section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), and 81,000 acres of lands managed by the USFS would be released from management under section 3(a) of the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977. The Department of the Interior (Department) supports the bill, and as a matter of policy supports Congressional action to resolve wilderness designation and WSA release issues on public lands across the West.

FLPMA provides direction on the retention and management of lands administered by the BLM. Section 603 of FLPMA directed the BLM to first identify areas with wilderness characteristics – this step was completed in 1980. The second step of the process was to study each of the WSAs and make a recommendation to the President on their suitability or non-suitability for preservation as wilderness – this step concluded in 1991. The President was then directed to send wilderness recommendations to Congress within two years of receiving the Secretary of the Interior's recommendation.

The President's 1992 and 1993 wilderness recommendations to Congress are now over 30 years old; and many WSAs are still pending Congressional action. Today, these WSAs are managed by the BLM so as not to impair their suitability for designation as wilderness. The Hoodoo Mountain and Wales Creek WSAs were not recommended for wilderness designation in the 1991 recommendation to the President.

H.R. 6788 directs the release of the Hoodoos Mountains and Wales Creek WSAs and directs the BLM to manage these lands in accordance with the applicable land management plans upon release. The Missoula Resource Management Plan directs that upon release the Hoodoo Mountain WSA, nearly 11,400 acres would be managed as part of the adjacent Hoodoos

Backcountry Area (BCA). As a BCA, the lands would be used for dispersed wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, such as hunting and wildlife-viewing, and to restore and enhance wildlife habitat for big game-species. Leasable and mineral materials could be considered on a more case-by-case basis, active forest management practices could be used to address forest health issues, and the use of heavy equipment to suppress wildland fire would be appropriate under more circumstances. Upon release of the Wales Creek WSA, nearly 6,000 acres would be managed as part of the Wales BCA, which would be managed similarly to the Hoodoos Mountains BCA, and the remaining approximately 5,600 acres would be managed as the Wales Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

The Department does not find that wilderness is the best mechanism for managing the resources on these lands. The Missoula Resource Management Plan provides for resource protection, recreation, development, vegetation management, wildland fire, and resource development upon release of the WSAs. H.R. 6788 supports the Administration's recreation, timber production, and energy dominance goals while providing greater flexibility to manage public lands under the principle of multiple use and the Department supports the bill.

#### **H.R. 9269, Renewing the African American Civil Rights Network Act**

H.R. 9269 would extend the authorization of the African American Civil Rights Network Act for an additional ten years. Originally enacted in 2018, this legislation established the African American Civil Rights Network (Network), which is administered by the NPS. The Network provides official recognition for the people, places, and events involved in the modern struggle for African American civil rights. Between 2018 and the end of 2024, the NPS conducted continuous reviews of applications for Network eligibility, announcing new additions at intervals of several months. The Network operated on a non-competitive basis, whereby all properties, facilities, and programs meeting established criteria were included. Pursuant to legislative requirements, the authority for the Network concluded in January 2025, seven years after its initial enactment. The Department recognizes the role the Network played in commemorating and honoring the history of the civil rights movement and the sacrifices made by those who fought for its cause. While the Department is focusing its limited resources on other urgent needs, such as reducing the backlog of deferred maintenance within our national parks, the Department defers to Congress on H.R. 9269.

#### **H.R. 9600, Common Sense 250 Act of 2026**

H.R. 9600 authorizes the establishment of the Thomas Paine Memorial in Area I of the Nation's Capital, as defined by the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. § 89 *et seq.*). Congress authorized establishment of the memorial in Area II with the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117-328).

The Department recognizes Thomas Paine for his contributions to the founding of the United States. Thomas Paine was an American patriot and a voice of the American Revolution whose writings helped advance the cause of American independence, liberty, and self-government. The Commemorative Works Act provides that the Secretary, after consultation with the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission, may recommend that Congress authorize the

establishment of a memorial in Area I if the subject is of preeminent historical and lasting significance to the United States. On September 4, 2024, the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission reviewed the memorial sponsor's documentation and concluded by consensus that it supported Area I eligibility, and transmitted its support for Area I to the Secretary.

#### **H.R. 9779, Hands Off Our Boca Chica Beach Act of 2026**

H.R. 9779 would codify the name of Boca Chica Beach in Cameron County, Texas, and any reference to the beach in law, map, regulation, document, paper or other record of the United States. The bill would also require the Domestic Names Committee of the United States Board of Geographic Names (BGN) to notify Members of Congress on a geographic name proposal affecting the areas they represent when soliciting input in accordance with the 2016 policy known as the *U.S. Board on Geographic Names Principles, Policies, and Procedures Domestic Geographic Names*.

The BGN is a federal body established in 1947 by Public Law 8-242 to maintain uniform geographic name usage throughout the federal government. The U.S. Geological Survey is a BGN member and provides staff support. The BGN's primary role is to resolve name discrepancies and promulgate all official names. The BGN coordinates with affected state authorities and designated advisors regarding the official state opinion on geographic name proposals. Any views provided by elected officials, including Members of Congress, are welcome as part of the BGN's review process consistent with the *U.S. Board on Geographic Names Principles, Policies, and Procedures*.

The Department does not support H.R. 9779 as written. The existing BGN process is transparent as it allows for public review and input on the maintenance and promulgation of geographic name usage. Increased coordination with Congress and stakeholders could be accomplished under the existing process without an act of Congress. In addition, the BGN retains the discretion to update its existing policies; however, the bill appears to prohibit future updates to the 2016 policy.

#### **H.R. 10128, a bill to codify Secretary's Order 3434 of the Department of the Interior**

H.R. 10128 would codify Secretary's Order 3434, *Strengthening Coordination with Gateway Communities*, which establishes the Department's policy to enhance coordination and strengthen partnerships with gateway communities. Gateway communities are defined as cities, towns, Tribes, or unincorporated areas that are geographically adjacent to, or serve as the primary access point to, a unit of the National Park System (System). These communities often provide critical infrastructure and services for System unit operations and visitors, including lodging, food services, emergency response, transportation, and recreation-related amenities. Although diverse in size and governance, gateway communities share a mutual stake in the success, sustainability, and management of nearby federal lands. Their proximity makes them highly sensitive to federal land management decisions, including those affecting visitor access, resource protection, infrastructure development, fire mitigation, and tourism.

In many cases, gateway communities also serve as stewards of the lands and cultural and historical resources surrounding a System unit and contribute to the visitor experience through education, interpretation, and local initiatives. Despite their central role, engagement with these communities has been inconsistent across System units and often lacks a formal structure for input or participation in planning and decision-making processes.

The Department strongly supports H.R. 10128, as it would codify an existing policy that recognizes the vital role gateway communities play in visitor management, conservation outcomes, and the economic vitality surrounding public lands, strengthening and formalizing engagement with gateway communities, to support balanced, sustainable use of public lands while reinforcing the importance of local voices in federal land management. Community input is vital to successful planning, conflict resolution, and long-term partnerships that benefit both the American public and the protected landscapes they cherish.

### **S. 675, Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act**

The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota, opened its doors to the public on our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, July 4, 2026. Located at the entrance to Theodore Roosevelt National Park, the Library is a privately funded project operated by the non-profit Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation. President Trump and Secretary Burgum attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the library, reflecting on Roosevelt's legacy as a Rough Rider, a Medal of Honor recipient and the United States' 26<sup>th</sup> President, and on his vigor, patriotism, and sense of national pride. Theodore Roosevelt's leadership launched the American conservation movement and the National Park System as it is known today.

The Department has collaborated with the Library to loan artifacts and interpretive materials from national park collections. This collaboration enriches visitors' understanding of Theodore Roosevelt's life and legacy, presenting his story by utilizing authentic artifacts and experiential educational opportunities.

S. 675 would authorize the Secretary to enter into agreements with the Foundation to loan historic, educational, artistic, natural, and other museum artifacts from agencies under the Secretary's jurisdiction to the Foundation. Under the bill, loaned artifacts would be required to be provided without payment and subject to conditions set by the Secretary to ensure preservation and public exhibition. It would also authorize the Secretary to award grant funding to the Foundation for educational programming and materials, as appropriated in advance by Congress and with a non-federal match.