

Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of the Interior
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Legislative Hearing on Multiple Bills
September 16, 2026

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, 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. 1031, the Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historical Park Establishment Act; H.R. 2323, the Big Bend National Park Boundary Adjustment Act; H.R. 7495, to authorize the establishment of memorials honoring Wisconsin infantry officers and enlisted men who fought in the Battle of Antietam and the Second Battle of Bull Run; H.R. 8276, the Quindaro Townsite National Historic Landmark Act; H.R. 9104, the Rock Creek National Park Act of 2026; H.R. 9148, the Scipio Jones House Assessment Act; S. 1051, the Historic Greenwood District—Black Wall Street National Monument Establishment Act; and S. 1377, the Theodore Roosevelt National Park Wild Horses Protection Act.

H.R. 1031, the Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historical Park Establishment Act

H.R. 1031 would authorize the establishment of the Fort Ontario Refugee Shelter National Historical Park as a unit of the National Park System to preserve and interpret the site's resources associated with the 982 refugees from World War II housed at the Fort from August 1944 to February 1946. The bill provides for the unit to be established once the Secretary of the Interior determines that sufficient land or interests in land have been acquired to constitute a manageable park unit. The bill would also require that within 30 days of the Secretary's determination of the park's proposed boundaries, a notice of the establishment of the National Historical Park be published in the Federal Register. The bill also includes provisions consistent with standard legislation for establishing new park units, including those relating to agreements, land acquisition, and development of a management plan.

The Department recognizes the historical significance of Fort Ontario and the role it has played in our nation's history. However, the Department does not support H.R. 1031 as it would require the expansion of National Park Service sites and programs at a time when the NPS is focusing its resources on addressing current critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog in the national parks.

H.R. 2323, Big Bend National Park Boundary Adjustment Act

H.R. 2323 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire lands or interests within an approximately 6,100-acre area along the western boundary of Big Bend National Park through donation, purchase from willing sellers, or exchange. After acquisition, the boundary of the park would be revised to include the acquired lands.

Big Bend National Park was established by Congress in 1935 to preserve and protect the largest and most representative area of the Chihuahuan Desert in the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The park's diverse habitats from the lowlands of the Rio Grande up to the high Chisos Mountains support an extraordinary range of biological resources. The park, which currently encompasses over 800,000 acres, also includes rich geological diversity, with remarkable paleontological resources spanning 130 million years.

The approximately 6,100-acre area that would be authorized for inclusion in the park by H.R. 2323 is known as the Terlingua Creek/Rattlesnake Mountain area. Over half of this land has been purchased by the Big Bend Conservancy, the park's philanthropic partner.

The Department does not support H.R. 2323, as the NPS is focusing its resources on addressing critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog in the national parks. Under these circumstances, we believe it would be unwise to expand the park's boundaries, which would require additional resources for the park to manage successfully.

H.R. 7495, to authorize the establishment of memorials honoring Wisconsin infantry officers and enlisted men who fought in the Battle of Antietam and the Second Battle of Bull Run

H.R. 7495 would authorize the establishment of memorials to the Wisconsin regiments who fought in the Battle of Antietam and the Second Battle of Bull Run during the American Civil War. The bill would authorize the establishment of the memorials at a suitable location approved by the Secretary of the Interior within the boundaries of Antietam National Battlefield and Manassas National Battlefield Park, respectively. It would require the Secretary to select the persons responsible for establishing each of the memorials and to approve the size, design, and inscriptions of the memorials. While federal funds would be prohibited for the design, acquisition, site selection, or installation of the memorials, the bill would require the NPS to assume maintenance responsibility of the memorials once they are installed.

The Battle of Antietam and the Second Battle of Manassas stand among the Civil War's bloodiest conflicts. The Department recognizes the courage and sacrifice shown by members of the Wisconsin regiments, many of whom gave their lives. Today, the fields where these units fought are carefully preserved and the NPS is focused on minimizing impacts to these sensitive historic landscapes.

We recommend that the legislation identify a sponsor or sponsors who would be responsible for establishing the memorial, and contributing to the memorials' long-term maintenance and upkeep

in perpetuity, so that these commemorative features, if established, would continue to honor those they are meant to recognize with the care and attention they deserve.

H.R. 8276, the Quindaro Townsite National Historic Landmark Act

H.R. 8276 would designate the Quindaro Townsite in Wyandotte County, Kansas, as a National Historic Landmark; it would authorize the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the State and the city of Kansas City, to enter into cooperative agreements and offer technical and financial assistance for the purposes of protecting historic resources and providing educational and interpretive facilities and programs at the proposed Landmark.

The Quindaro Townsite may possess national significance as a rare example of a multicultural Free State port that operated along the Missouri River during the mid-nineteenth century. Community members advocated for cultural self-determination during the turbulent period known as “Bleeding Kansas,” when conflict over the expansion of slavery in new territories shaped national politics and society.

Based on this history, the Quindaro Townsite is currently progressing through the administrative review process for potential designation as a National Historic Landmark and is awaiting final review by the National Park System Advisory Board. National Historic Landmark designations have historically been established through this long-standing and rigorous administrative process. This process ensures meaningful local engagement, scholarly analysis, and thorough evaluation of whether properties meet the criteria for designation, including exceptional national significance and historical authenticity. Maintaining this process is essential to preserving the integrity of the National Historic Landmark program and ensuring that properties satisfy required merit-based standards.

The Department recommends that the Subcommittee and bill sponsor allow National Historic Landmark designation to be determined through the current administrative process.

H.R. 9104, the Rock Creek National Park Act of 2026

H.R. 9104 would redesignate Rock Creek Park as Rock Creek National Park. The bill would not adjust the boundaries of the park or modify how it is managed.

Rock Creek Park was one of the earliest federally designated park landscapes in the country. Since its establishment in 1890, the park has provided residents and visitors with an accessible natural refuge in the heart of Washington, DC. Its location within an urban center makes it a valued place where people can enjoy forested trails, natural scenery, historic features, and a variety of recreational opportunities. The park’s founding purpose was to preserve its natural and cultural features for public enjoyment, and its role as an urban green space continues to be central to its significance today.

The Department defers to Congress on H.R. 9104. The redesignation is limited to the park's name and does not change its boundaries or management.

H.R. 9148, the Scipio Jones House Assessment Act

H.R. 9148 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Scipio A. Jones House in Little Rock, Arkansas to assess the site's national significance; evaluate its suitability and feasibility for designation as a National Historic Landmark or as an Affiliated Area of the National Park System; and consider whether it should be incorporated into the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site. The bill would also require the Department to submit the study to Congress within three years after funds are first made available.

The Scipio Jones House is a 1928 Craftsman-style residence on Cross Street in Little Rock that was the home of Scipio Africanus Jones, a renowned African American attorney. Jones, born in slavery in 1863, began practicing law in 1889. He is best known for defending twelve African American men who were convicted after the 1919 Elaine Massacre and securing their release. Jones was also a prominent figure in Little Rock's Black community, active in business and Republican Party politics. His home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 28, 1999.

The Department recognizes Scipio Jones's civil rights legacy and the value of preserving his historic home. However, the NPS is currently focusing resources on addressing the critical needs of parks in its existing portfolio, including reducing the deferred maintenance and repair backlog. Therefore, we do not support H.R. 9148.

S. 1051, the Historic Greenwood District—Black Wall Street National Monument Establishment Act

S. 1051 would establish the Historic Greenwood District—Black Wall Street National Monument as a unit of the National Park System to preserve, protect, and interpret resources associated with the Historic Greenwood District, Black Wall Street, and the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 and their roles in the history of the State of Oklahoma and the United States. S. 1051 would also establish an advisory commission to advise the Secretary with respect to the management and development of the National Monument. The bill includes authorities for land acquisition and administration that are commonly included in legislation establishing a new unit of the National Park System.

The Department recognizes the importance of memorializing the tragic events that took place in Historic Greenwood in 1921. However, we do not support S. 1051 as it would require the expansion of NPS sites and programs at a time when the agency is focusing its resources on

addressing current critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog in the national parks.

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

The Department supports S. 1377. The bill amends the 1947 Act (61 Stat. 54, 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 those identified in the bill) to maintain a healthy, genetically viable herd in balance with other mammals and available natural resources.