

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

June 11, 2025

Chairman Hurd, Ranking Member Leger Fernández, and Members of the Subcommittee, the Department of the Interior (Department) is pleased to provide this statement for the record on H.R. 411, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Land Claim Settlement Act of 2025, and H.R. 2916, to authorize, ratify, and confirm the Agreement of Settlement and Compromise to Resolve the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim in the State of New York, and for other purposes.

H.R. 411, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Land Claim Settlement Act of 2025

H.R. 411 would settle the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community's claims to certain lands within the exterior boundaries of the L'Anse Indian Reservation in Michigan. The bill authorizes the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to provide monetary compensation to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (Community) for certain lands while extinguishing any claims by the Community to those lands to provide title certainty to current owners. The bill's findings and purpose sections provide details on the Community's claims and process by which the lands were transferred.

As referenced in the findings section of H.R. 411, the Community was dispossessed of lands reserved in the 1842 Treaty of La Pointe and 1854 Treaty of La Pointe that were subsequently conveyed to the State of Michigan under the Swamp Land Act of 1850 and the Canal Land Act of 1852. The Community lost 2,743 acres of land under the Swamp Land Act and between 1,333.25 to 2,720 acres of land under the Canal Land Act.

H.R. 411 authorizes the appropriation of \$33.9 million to the Secretary to transfer to the Community as compensation for the loss of the lands under the Swamp Land Act of 1850 and the Canal Land Act of 1852. The funds may be used by the Community for any lawful purpose including governmental services, economic development, natural resources protection, and land acquisition, but restricts the funds from being used to acquire land for gaming purposes.

The bill reflects the Bureau of Indian Affairs, understanding that the Community does not wish to reassert authority over the lands. H.R. 411 specifies that when the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community receives the monetary compensation, all claims by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community to the lands lost under the Swamp Land Act of 1850 and the Canal Land Act of 1852 are extinguished and the title of current owners of those lands are cleared of all preexisting rights held by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community or any of its members.

The Department notes the bill would increase federal spending; however, we have not identified any additional impediments to implementation of the bill as introduced. We look forward to working with Subcommittee and the sponsor to ensure the bill aligns with the Administration's priorities and commitment to fiscal responsibility.

H.R. 2916, to authorize, ratify, and confirm the Agreement of Settlement and Compromise to Resolve the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim in the State of New York, and for other purposes

H.R. 2916 would authorize, ratify, and confirm the Agreement of Settlement and Compromise to Resolve the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim in the State of New York (Settlement Agreement) entered into by the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, the State of New York, the Counties of Franklin and Saint Lawrence, New York, the Towns of Fort Covington and Bombay, New York, and the New York Power Authority. The bill would also authorize, ratify, and confirm any transfer of land, right-of-way, or easement that is the subject of claims in the *Canadian Saint Regis Band of Mohawk Indians v. New York et al.* (82–CV–783); *the Canadian Saint Regis Band of Mohawk Indians v. New York et al.* (82–CV–1114); and *the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, by the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council and the People of the Longhouse at Akwesasne, by Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs v. The State of New York, et al.* (89–CV–829). H.R. 2916 would also classify lands owned or subsequently acquired by the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe within an area defined in the Settlement Agreement as Indian country as defined at 18 U.S.C. 1151(a).

If enacted, H.R. 2916 would resolve the Akwesasne Land Claim. We believe any settlement should be responsible with taxpayer dollars and serve the national interest.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record.