

Testimony before U.S. House of Representatives
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs

H.R. 8674 (Rep. Begich), “Geese House Site Conveyance Act”
September 17, 2026
10:30 am Eastern

Testimony on behalf of Doyon, Limited
Submitted by SarahE. Obed, Vice President, External Affairs

My name is Sarah Obed, and I am an Athabascan shareholder and a Tribal member from the village of Minto, serving as the Senior Vice President, External Affairs of Doyon, Limited. On behalf of the Doyon, Limited Board of Directors, our over 20,700 shareholders, and employees, this testimony is a statement of support for the H.R. 8674 Geese House Site Conveyance Act.

Doyon is one of the thirteen Native regional corporations established by Congress under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971. Doyon’s mission is to promote the economic and social well-being of our present and future shareholders, to strengthen our Native way of life, and to protect and enhance our land and resources.

Doyon is the regional corporation for Interior Alaska, and is the largest private landowner in Alaska, with a land entitlement under ANCSA of more than 12 million acres. Our lands extend from the Brooks Range on the north to the Alaska Range on the south. The Alaska-Canada border forms the eastern border and the western portion almost reaches the Norton Sound.

Our lands include the area covering the original ANCSA 14(h)8 land selections near Lake Minchumina that include what is known as the Geese House or Duck House site. H.R. 8674 would complete a long-pending ANCSA conveyance by directing the Secretary of the Interior to convey the historic Geese House site lands selected by Doyon in 1978, subject to certain restrictions on alienation and use and development consistent with ensuring the protection of this important cultural site under Doyon’s ownership and management. As such, Doyon, Limited is a strong supporter of the introduction and passage of this legislation authorizing the conveyance back to the indigenous people of Alaska’s Interior.

Doyon extends a statement of gratitude to the National Park Service. Over the past several years, Doyon and the National Park Service have worked together to engage in Tribal consultation with Athabascan Tribes across Alaska’s Interior relating to the future of the Geese House Site, Tribes who have expressed their support for what we are doing. Two years ago, together with Denali National Park and Preserve leadership, we traveled to the site, and just last week, I went to the opening of the Denali Park Road Pretty Rocks Bridge, to witness the opening of that engineering marvel, and individual rangers approached and spoke to me of their support for the conveyance of the historic, cultural, and sacred site. Their words and actions of support have been meaningful, and without them – we would not have been able to advance this bill. During my trip to Denali to visit the Park Road bridge, I learned that Denali Park was one of the few parks that you could not tell from Space where the boundary ended – unlike many other Parks across the Nation, where the NPS boundary means a clear difference in the ecology of the lands around them. Imagine that! And I felt

pride knowing that it was Doyon lands, along with other federal lands, that lay along those boundaries.

Doyon extends a statement of thanks, Anaa Basee', to each of the Tribes and Village Corporations that have passed resolutions and expressed support for this bill's passage. We also pray for its passage. As my cousin David Engles, a known Kenaga' language culture bearer and historian has noted, "Sis, the place you visited, is a place of deep and sacred significance to our people." To this day, I'm not even sure how he knew I went out there when he said that to me.

Hank Ketzler Sr. of Nenana, whose family helped raise my grandfather Walter Titus of Minto, along with Al Starr Sr., of Tanana, were Elder representatives of Doyon who last visited the site in 1982, in a trip coordinated together between Doyon and the National Park Service. These were the last Doyon representatives able to reach the site until 2024 when a delegation of us from Doyon traveled, again with the National Park Service.

Back then, in the eighties, the Doyon, Limited Board of Directors funded studies to gather information on Native historic and cemetery sites in the Doyon region in order to ensure that those places important to the people of the Doyon Region that were not located on village or regional lands receive appropriate recognition and protection. Geese House fell into that category. It was identified by Alfred Starr, Sr. of Nenana. Geese House played an important part in the Native oral tradition of the Upper Kantishna Region in the past and is still of considerable interest and importance to the Native residents of Nenana, Tanana, and Lake Minchumina today.

ANCSA authorized the selection of the lands at the Geese House site, and in 1978, Doyon selected those lands as an important historical site, but the lands were never conveyed to Doyon. Although the lands were not originally part of Denali National Park and Preserve, the lands were added to the Preserve area of the expanded Park by ANILCA in late 1980, where they now comprise part of the northwestern corner of the Preserve area, immediately adjacent to other lands conveyed to Doyon under ANCSA in July 2002.

This bill, when passed, would convey these important lands to Doyon, to the benefit of our over 20,700 Alaska Native shareholders. The lands would count against Doyon's land entitlement, which remains incomplete, now over 50 years since the passage of ANCSA. Although Doyon has received most of the lands it is entitled to under ANCSA, more than 50 years after ANCSA's enactment, hundreds of thousands of acres of Doyon's congressionally promised land entitlement remain unconveyed, including complex selections that now require congressional action to resolve. By passing H.R. 8674, Congress can help fulfill this longstanding ANCSA promise and return these ancestral lands—selected by our Elders nearly 50 years ago—to Doyon's care for future generations.