

*SCIP Legislative Hearing on H.R. 6032, H.R. 6964, Discussion Draft
ANS to H.R. 7581, H.R. 8115, H.R. 8286, H.R. 8380, and H.R. 8387*

9.14.22

ACTING RANKING MEMBER OBERNOLTE

OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you, Madam Chair.

We have a lengthy hearing agenda today, so I will keep my remarks brief.

The first bill, H.R. 6032 would place approximately 1,031 acres of culturally significant federal land located in Siskiyou and Humboldt Counties, California, into trust for the Karuk tribe.

Our second bill, H.R. 6964 would amend current law to authorize the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation to lease its trust land for a period of up to 99 years. Under the Long-Term Leasing Act, most tribes can only lease their trust lands for a period of 50 years. According to the tribe, it is interested in developing American supply chain infrastructure, and the financing required for a suitable project requires a lease agreement term of at least 86 years. Congress has amended the Long-Term Leasing Act over 50 times to permit tribes greater leasing authority.

Third, the Draft ANS to H.R. 7581, would place approximately 1,229 acres of U.S. Forest Service land in the Yurok Experimental Forest and Six Rivers National Forest into trust for the Yurok tribe to be managed for conservation and research purposes. I understand that provisions contained in the bill as introduced, which were opposed by seven tribes in California, have been removed in the ANS. I look forward to a discussion to ensure that the remaining text of the bill does not continue to be problematic to any affected stakeholders.

Fourth, H.R. 8115, would amend current law to add Indian tribes to the list of entities eligible to lease or purchase public lands from the Department of the Interior pursuant to the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. H.R. 8115 would continue the recognition of tribal sovereignty and self-determination by adding Indian tribes to the list of eligible entities to purchase or lease federal lands pursuant to the R&PP.

Fifth, H.R. 8286 would place approximately 1,082 acres of National Park Service land into trust Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. This land is a replacement for land lost after the tribe saw its land flooded due to the Elwha and Glines dams on the Elwha River.

Sixth, H.R. 8380 would settle purported claims by the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation relating to the Shab-eh-nay Band Reservation in northern Illinois, place 130 acres of land into restricted fee status for the tribe and authorize appropriations of \$10 million for partial payment to settle the land claim.

Legislation like H.R. 8380 is relatively uncommon due to the finality of the Indian Claims Commission Act on historic land claims prior to 1946. The committee should exercise great care with this bill's consideration due to broader implications of ancient land claims and that of the expansion gaming, especially when a tribe's current reservation is 500 miles away.

Lastly, H.R. 8387 would authorize tribal law enforcement officers acting under a certain contracts or compacts, to be considered federal law enforcement officers to enforce federal law and the bill would also treat tribal law enforcement officers federal law enforcement officers for purposes of certain other federal laws, including for benefits applicable to federal law enforcement officers for injury and death, retirement, and pension benefits. Under current law, Special Law Enforcement Commission agreements are required for tribal law enforcement officers to enforce federal criminal laws in Indian country. For Indian tribes in some regions of the country, obtaining SLEC agreements and renewing those agreements has proven administratively difficult and some tribal officers are unable to respond in certain instances. In addition, Tribal law enforcement officers are currently not eligible for certain federal benefit programs for injury and death, retirement, and pension benefits.

H.R. 8387 would make amendments to current law to authorize tribal law enforcement officers to enforce federal criminal laws in Indian country and extend federal law enforcement benefits to tribal law enforcement officers.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony. Thank you, I yield back.