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A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL BISON LEGACY ACT

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2908) to adopt the bison as the national mammal of the United States, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2908

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "National Bison Legacy Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) bison are considered a historical symbol of the United States;

(2) bison were integrally linked with the economic and spiritual lives of many Indian tribes through trade and sacred ceremonies;

(3) there are more than 60 Indian tribes participating in the Intertribal Buffalo Council;

(4) numerous members of Indian tribes are involved in bison restoration on tribal land;

(5) members of Indian tribes have a combined herd on more than 1,000,000 acres of tribal land;

(6) the Intertribal Buffalo Council is a tribal organization incorporated pursuant to section 17 of the Act of June 18, 1934 (commonly known as the "Indian Reorganization Act") (25 U.S.C. 477);

(7) bison can play an important role in improving the types of grasses found in landscapes to the benefit of grasslands;

(8) a small group of ranchers helped save bison from extinction in the late 1800s by gathering the remnants of the decimated herds;

(9) bison hold significant economic value for private producers and rural communities;

(10) according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture of the Department of Agriculture, as of 2012, 162,110 head of bison were under the stewardship of private producers, creating jobs and providing a sustainable and healthy meat source contributing to the food security of the United States;

(11) on December 8, 1905, William Hornaday, Theodore Roosevelt, and others formed the American Bison Society in response to the near extinction of bison in the United States;

(12) on October 11, 1907, the American Bison Society sent 15 captive-bred bison from the New York Zoological Park, now known as the "Bronx Zoo", to the first wildlife refuge in the United States, which was known as the "Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge", resulting in the first successful reintroduction of a mammal species on the brink of extinction back into the natural habitat of the species;

(13) in 2005, the American Bison Society was reestablished, bringing together bison ranchers, managers from Indian tribes, Federal and State agencies, conservation organizations, and natural and social scientists from the United States, Canada, and Mexico to create a vision for the North American bison in the 21st century;

(14) there are bison herds in National Wildlife Refuges and National Parks;

(15) there are bison in State-managed herds across 11 States;

(16) there is a growing effort to celebrate and officially recognize the historical, cultural, and economic significance of the North American bison to the heritage of the United States;

(17) a bison is portrayed on 2 State flags;

(18) the bison has been adopted by 3 States as the official mammal or animal of those States;

(19) a bison has been depicted on the official seal of the Department of the Interior since 1912;

(20) the buffalo nickel played an important role in modernizing the currency of the United States;

(21) several sports teams have the bison as a mascot, which highlights the iconic significance of bison in the United States;

(22) in the 2nd session of the 113th Congress, 22 Senators led a successful effort to enact a resolution to designate November 1, 2014, as the third annual National Bison Day; and

(23) members of Indian tribes, bison producers, conservationists, sportsmen, educators, and other public and private partners have participated in the annual National Bison Day celebration at several events across the United States and are committed to continuing this tradition annually on the first Saturday of November.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT AND ADOPTION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BISON AS THE NATIONAL MAMMAL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The mammal commonly known as the "North American bison" is adopted as the national mammal of the United States.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act or the adoption of the North American bison as the national mammal of the United States shall be construed or used as a reason to alter, change, modify, or otherwise affect any plan, policy, management decision, regulation, or other action by the Federal Government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) and the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to have the primary sponsor of this bill, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY), speak first.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I thank the chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, Mr. CHAFFETZ.

Today I rise in support of the National Bison Legacy Act. This bill will adopt the North American bison as the national mammal of the United States.

I also want to thank my colleague from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) for her cosponsorship of this legislation.

□ 1730

The bison are dear to me because they have a historical and spiritual link to the United States Colored Troops who were first organized in 1863 to 1866 as the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the four all-Black infantry regiments.

Despite facing relentless racism and woefully inadequate military supplies, nicknamed the Buffalo Soldiers because of their tireless marching and dogged trail skills, they had earned the

name of the rugged and revered buffalo. By way of reference, my great-great-grandfather and his brother were members of the Buffalo Soldiers after coming out of slavery.

The North American bison is a unifying symbol in the United States. Once numbering in the tens of millions, bison were nearly extinguished by the 1880s, with the travesty borne most by Native Americans whose fate was intertwined with the buffalo.

In 1905, visionary ranchers, tribes, industrialists, sport hunters, and conservationists joined President Theodore Roosevelt in a monumental effort to reverse the American bison's demise. Now over 60 tribes are working to restore bison to over 1 million acres of Native American lands. Bison production on private ranches is in its strongest economic condition in more than a decade.

The National Bison Legacy Act enjoys broad bipartisan support in both Chambers of Congress, as well as support from a coalition of over 60 organizations, including Native American tribes, ranchers, and government agencies. The list keeps growing. I look forward to working with all of you to make this bill become law and honor a great American icon, the bison.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time and ask unanimous consent that the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) control the remainder of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM).

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, today I support the National Bison Legacy Act because it is a very important bill to the tribes in my State and also to the heritage of South Dakota and the United States. It is a bill that I helped Representative CLAY of Missouri introduce, and I thank him for all of his hard work on the legislation. It has been a long process, but we are finally here today to get it across the House floor.

I am thrilled to sponsor this bill with my colleagues, to raise up an enduring symbol of our Nation's Native American heritage, the American frontier, and the resilience that has long distinguished America from others around the globe.

The Tatanka is important both physically and spiritually in Native American culture. These animals offered food, shelter, tools, and clothing. Native Americans could make soap from the fat and homes from their hides. Every piece was used, which is why bison were, and continue to be, a symbol of survival and a cultural example of how to live in a healthy and productive manner. This bill recognizes that.

There are also lessons to be learned about resilience from these animals.

Bison roamed across most of North America before nearly being wiped from existence. Through the efforts of tribes, ranchers, conservationists, and others, the species has survived and can once again be lifted as a literal and cultural example of productivity from which each of us can learn.

I am proud that my family has raised bison as well. They are majestic animals that represent the Plains that we are so proud of and that I am so honored to represent today.

I want to thank the chairman and his staff for bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote “yes.”

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers at this time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In conclusion, let me just say one of the most majestic animals on the face of the planet is the American bison. You go to see it and you just sit in awe and you think of the rich history and the role that it has played in our Nation. It serves as a symbol on two of our State flags, and it is the seal of the Department of the Interior.

I just want to say that I hope all Americans—especially the youth—get a chance to see one of the bison out in the wild. It was close to extinction, but it was brought back. There are hundreds of thousands of them now. Whether you go to South Dakota or up to Yellowstone, Montana, there are places where you can really see these bison out. It really is an amazing sight. I think it is appropriate that we move this bill today.

I want to thank Mr. CLAY of Missouri and, in particular, Mrs. NOEM of South Dakota for her recognizing the importance of this issue. I also want to thank Mrs. LUMMIS of Wyoming. She offered an important amendment that made an adjustment to the bill. I think this is a smart thing for the Congress to do, and I urge its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2908, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES CENTENNIAL COMMISSION ACT

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2615) to establish the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2615

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission Act”.

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT.

There is established a commission to be known as the “Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission” (in this Act referred to as the “Commission”).

SEC. 3. DUTIES OF COMMISSION.

The Commission shall—

(1) plan, develop, and carry out such activities as the Commission determines to be appropriate to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Virgin Islands of the United States becoming an unincorporated territory of the United States;

(2) provide advice and assistance to Federal, State, and local governmental agencies, as well as civic groups to carry out activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Virgin Islands of the United States becoming an unincorporated territory of the United States; and

(3) submit to the President and Congress the reports required pursuant to section 7.

SEC. 4. MEMBERSHIP.

(a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission shall be composed of 8 members as follows:

(1) The Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Insular Affairs or a designee of the Assistant Secretary.

(2) One member appointed by the Governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States or a designee of the Governor.

(3) Two Members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(4) One Member of the House of Representatives appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives.

(5) Two Members of the Senate appointed by the majority leader of the Senate.

(6) One Member of the Senate appointed by the minority leader of the Senate.

(b) TERMS.—Each member of the Commission shall be appointed for the life of the Commission.

(c) DEADLINE FOR APPOINTMENT.—All members of the Commission shall be appointed not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) VACANCIES.—A vacancy on the Commission shall—

(1) not affect the powers of the Commission; and

(2) be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made.

(e) RATES OF PAY.—Members shall not receive compensation for the performance of duties on behalf of the Commission.

(f) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Each member of the Commission shall be reimbursed for travel and per diem in lieu of subsistence expenses during the performance of duties of the Commission while away from home or regular place of business of the member, in accordance with applicable provisions under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code.

(g) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum to conduct business, but two or more members may hold hearings.

(h) CHAIRPERSON.—The chairperson of the Commission shall be selected by a majority vote of the members of the Commission.

SEC. 5. DIRECTOR AND STAFF OF COMMISSION.

(a) DIRECTOR AND STAFF.—The Commission shall appoint an executive director and such other additional personnel as are necessary to enable the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.

(b) APPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN CIVIL SERVICE LAWS.—The executive director and staff of the

Commission may be appointed without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and may be paid without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the executive director and other staff may not exceed the rate payable for level III of the Executive Schedule under section 5314 of such title.

(c) DETAIL OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.—Upon request of the Commission, the Secretary of the Interior or the Archivist of the United States may detail, on a reimbursable basis, any of the personnel of the Department of the Interior or the National Archives and Records Administration, respectively to the Commission to assist the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.

(d) EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.—The Commission may procure such temporary and intermittent services from experts and consultants as are necessary to enable the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.

(e) VOLUNTEER AND UNCOMPENSATED SERVICES.—Notwithstanding section 1342 of title 31, United States Code, the Commission may accept and use voluntary and uncompensated services as the Commission determines necessary.

SEC. 6. POWERS OF COMMISSION.

(a) HEARINGS.—The Commission may, for the purpose of carrying out this Act, hold hearings, sit and act at times and places, take testimony, and receive evidence as the Commission considers appropriate.

(b) MAILS.—The Commission may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as other Federal agencies.

(c) OBTAINING OFFICIAL DATA.—The Commission may secure directly from any Federal agency information necessary to enable the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission. Upon request of the chairperson of the Commission, the head of that Federal agency shall furnish that information to the Commission.

(d) GIFTS, BEQUESTS, DEVICES.—The Commission may solicit, accept, use, and dispose of gifts, bequests, or devises of money, services, or property, both real and personal, for the purpose of aiding or facilitating the work of the Commission.

(e) AVAILABLE SPACE.—Upon the request of the Commission, the Administrator of General Services shall make available to the Commission, at a normal rental rate for Federal agencies, such assistance and facilities as may be necessary for the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.

(f) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—The Commission may enter into contracts with and compensate the Federal Government, State and local governments, private entities, or individuals to enable the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.

SEC. 7. REPORTS.

(a) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than January 31 of each year, and annually thereafter until the final report is submitted pursuant to subsection (b), the Commission shall submit to the President and the Congress a report on—

(1) the activities of the Commission; and

(2) the revenue and expenditures of the Commission, including a list of each gift, bequest, or devise to the Commission with a value of more than \$250, including the identity of the donor of each gift, bequest, or devise.

(b) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than January 31, 2018, the Commission shall submit a final report to the President and the Congress containing—

(1) a summary of the activities of the Commission; and

(2) a final accounting of funds received and expended by the Commission.

SEC. 8. ANNUAL AUDIT.

The Inspector General of the Department of the Interior—