

MEMBER DAY HEARING

OVERSIGHT HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Serial No. 119-23

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CONTENTS

	Page
Hearing Memo	v
Hearing held on Wednesday, May 14, 2025	1
Statement of Members:	
Westerman, Hon. Bruce, a Representative in Congress from the State of Arkansas	1
Huffman, Hon. Jared, a Representative in Congress from the State of California	2
Mann, Hon. Tracey, a Representative in Congress from the State of Kansas	4
Prepared statement of	
Gosar, Hon. Paul, a Representative in Congress from the State of Arizona	7
Prepared statement of	8
Nehls, Hon. Troy, a Representative in Congress from the State of Texas ..	12
Prepared statement of	13
Downing, Hon. Troy, a Representative in Congress from the State of Montana	13
Prepared statement of	15
Scott, Hon. Austin, a Representative in Congress from the State of Georgia	16
Prepared statement of	17
Moylan, Hon. James, a Delegate in Congress from the Territory of Guam ..	19
Prepared statement of	20
Additional Materials Submitted for the Record:	
Submissions for the Record by Representative Gosar (Support for H.R. 34)	
AMAC Action, Letter	9
ALG Supports LASSO Act, Letter	10
DEPA, Letter	11
H.R. 34 LASSO Act	21
Submissions for the Record by Representative Soto	
Soto, Hon. Darren, Statement for the Record	23



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members
From: House Committee on Natural Resources Staff
Date: Friday, May 9, 2025
Subject: Committee on Natural Resources Member Day Hearing

The Committee on Natural Resources will hold a Member Day hearing on **Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 10:15 a.m. EDT in 1324 Longworth House Office Building.**

Members who wish to appear before the Committee are asked to notify Sophia Varnasidis, Director of Legislative Operations, sophia@mail.house.gov, by 5 p.m. Monday, May 12, 2025.

Members are requested to submit their statements to Sophia Varnasidis, sophia@mail.house.gov by 12 p.m., Tuesday, May 13, 2025.

I. KEY MESSAGE

- Members are encouraged to testify on issues within the Committee's jurisdiction, including specific legislation or topics of importance to them and their constituents.

II. WITNESSES

- *Members of Congress to be announced.*

III. BACKGROUND

House Rules require each standing committee (except for the Committee on Ethics) to hold a Member Day hearing during the first session of the 119th Congress to hear testimony from Members, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner on proposed legislation within the committee's jurisdiction.

Members are invited to testify on specific Committee-referred legislation, issues within the Committee's jurisdiction, or topics of importance to them and their constituents. The invitation to testify is extended to both Members who serve on the Committee on Natural Resources as well as those who do not.

The hearing will begin with opening statements by the Chair and Ranking Member. Then, Members will be recognized for five minutes to testify on proposed legislation and other priorities that fall within the Committee's jurisdiction. Testifying members should also be prepared to answer questions from Committee members.

Members will be grouped into panels of four, based on their availability. Committee staff will be in contact with Member offices to discuss time slots for each panel in advance of the hearing.

Please note that the length of the hearing will be dictated by the number of Members who wish to testify.

For your reference, the Hearing Notice published by the Committee is copied below.

May 7, 2025

☆☆☆ Hearing Notice ☆☆☆

MEMORANDUM

To: All Members and Committee Staff
Committee on Natural Resources

From: The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Chairman

Subject: Member Day Hearing – Wednesday, May 14, 2025

On **Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 10:15 a.m.**, in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building, the Committee on Natural Resources will hold a Member Day hearing. Members are invited to testify on issues within the Committee's jurisdiction, including specific legislation or topics of importance to them and their constituents.

Members who wish to appear before the Committee are asked to notify Sophia Varnasidis, Director of Legislative Operations, at sophia@mail.house.gov by 5:00 p.m. Monday, May 12.

Members are requested to submit their statements to Sophia Varnasidis, Director of Legislative Operations, at sophia@mail.house.gov by 12:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 13.

Please contact the Committee with questions at (202) 225-2761.

MEMBER DAY HEARING

Wednesday, May 14, 2025
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:19 a.m., Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Bruce Westerman [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Westerman, Gosar, Stauber, Hageman, Begich; Huffman and Elfreth.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee on Natural Resources will come to order.

We are meeting today to hold the Committee's Member Day hearing in compliance with House rules. We look forward to hearing from Members of Congress regarding legislation within the Committee's jurisdiction.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare recess at any time.

Under Committee rule 4(f), any oral opening statements at hearings are limited to the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

The CHAIRMAN. Again, good morning to everyone, and thank you for joining us today for our Member Day hearing.

These hearings present an opportunity for Members who don't sit on our Committee, as well as some who do, to testify on behalf of legislation and to raise awareness of issues within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Natural Resources.

Natural resources issues have a profound impact on every American, whether they happen to live in the stretches of rural Arkansas contained in my district, on a ranch under the big sky of Montana, or amidst the mountains and forests of the northeast. Suburbanites and city residents are also significantly affected by the contours of natural resource policy.

Today we will be privileged to hear from our colleagues on issues that are important to their communities and to learn about their proposed solutions. But today isn't the starting point for much of this work. Rather, it is a continuation of the process of expansive, district-centric engagement that our Committee has been carrying out.

Just last week we advanced a historic budget reconciliation title that generates more than \$18.5 billion in new revenues and savings for the American people by unleashing our Nation's abundant natural resources. The legislation was months in the

making, and represents Committee Republicans' commitment to make common-sense, science-based and economically sound decisions concerning our public resources.

By reinstating onshore oil and gas lease sales, increasing timber harvesting on Federal lands, and rescinding misguided slush funds, the Committee Republicans are delivering on our commitment to get our Nation's fiscal house in order and make our Nation energy dominant today and far into the future.

House Republicans have also championed legislation this Congress on issues like permitting reform. America's permitting process is broken, and it is far past time to push back against the special interest groups who have weaponized the process to block projects. We have the opportunity to solve some of the most pressing issues facing our communities by streamlining permitting for crucial infrastructure projects and eliminating bureaucratic red tape that holds back the responsible development of our domestic energy and mineral resources, along with infrastructure and many other projects that get bogged down in the red tape of permitting. Without tackling this reform, we cannot usher in a golden age of American energy, we cannot reduce wildfire risk nor complete almost any large-scale projects across our great Nation.

One of the important solutions to reducing regulatory hurdles in the United States is the ESA Amendments Act of 2025, which makes critical updates to the Endangered Species Act. As has been noted in this Committee, since its inception the ESA only succeeded in recovering about 3 percent of listed species. If a football team only made first downs on 3 percent of its possessions, it would be foolish to blindly continue running the same play while expecting a different result. The same is true with the ESA. The Federal Government continues to run the same failing play, expecting to finally win the game of sensibly protecting our endangered species.

The ESA Amendments Act of 2025 incentivizes the recovery of listed species, promotes species conservation on public and private lands, codifies clear definitions, and streamlines the ESA permitting process. This new playbook will help us run plays that actually achieve the Act's original goal, and that is to ensure that species are recovered and then remove them from the list.

These are just a few of the priorities we have been advancing this Congress, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues today on legislative initiatives important to them and their constituents.

Thank you again for taking the time to join us.

The CHAIRMAN. I yield back and recognize the Ranking Member for any opening statement he may have.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. JARED HUFFMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. HUFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and colleagues.

Our Committee has one of the broadest and most consequential mandates in this Congress. At our best we develop and enact legislation and do oversight that safeguards the conservation and sustainable use of America's natural and historic resources, from energy and minerals to rangeland, fisheries, and forests. We

strengthen the health and resilience of Federal lands and waters, along with the communities that depend on them. We protect and restore our country's most irreplaceable and unique places and wildlife, and we improve the lives of Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and American citizens living in the U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico.

But we are not at our best right now. And Mr. Chairman, I have a different view of what happened in this Committee last week. Jamming through the most extreme, environmentally destructive bill in our country's history as part of a broader package to give tax cuts and sweetheart deals to some of the largest and wealthiest corporations and richest billionaires in the world, and doing that while refusing to adopt or even debate more than 120 Democrat amendments.

That was a spectacle. That was not a deliberative process. And I am told that your colleagues in other committees this week have changed course, and are participating in debates which, you know, I think perhaps highlights and underscores just how untenable and disappointing it was the way Republicans comported themselves in that markup here in our Committee. I have never seen anything like it, and I hope we never see anything like it again.

Committee Democrats will continue to fight that legislation and press Republicans to help us hold this President and his billionaire pals accountable.

I hope that now the Committee can also find some time to identify things across the aisle that perhaps we can work together on. Today's hearing would be a good place to try to do that. Hearing testimony from Members across the House about issues that matter to them and their constituents will perhaps be a refreshing reminder about why this institution exists, why we are all here, to represent the people, not just the oligarchs.

Some priorities from my perspective include restoring and managing our forests to balance timber production with the protection of wildlife, clean air, clean water, and reduce the likelihood of catastrophic fires. I hope we can all agree on that. Developing rational water policy that makes the most of the supplies that we have, develops innovative approaches to enhancing supply, and supports both agriculture and municipalities while protecting the environment and recognizing the reality of the climate crisis. Rebuilding and maintaining healthy fish stocks and fresh water and ocean ecosystems that support them. We need to do this to benefit fishing communities and the public at large. And then working hand in hand with Indian Country to honor our trust responsibilities and improve management of ancestral homelands, including through legislation like the tribal co-management bill that I am introducing along with several of my Democratic colleagues, but which unfortunately was left off the agenda for next week's hearing on the subject.

This also includes my Nor Rel Muk recognition bill. I hope to have a hearing on that in this Congress. It simply grants Federal recognition to the Nor Rel Muk Tribe, allowing them to be eligible for the services and benefits from the Federal Government that they deserve.

And additionally, my colleagues, Representative Leger Fernández and Representative Stansbury, they have a tribal water rights settlement bill, which would resolve decades of conflict and enhance water supply reliability for numerous Western communities.

All these are priorities that share a common thread: how we meet the challenge of climate change. Our Committee has a critical role to play in the clean energy transition, not just so the United States can play our part in reducing carbon pollution, but so that we can reap the benefits of clean energy manufacturing and jobs. The people we represent are having to adapt their behaviors and expectations in a rapidly warming world, and this Committee has a responsibility to acknowledge that and to help.

Some of my priorities may resonate with you, some may not. That is the nature of a diverse committee representing diverse constituencies from across the country. That can be a strength, not a weakness. I hope each of us comes to today's hearing prepared to listen. And by doing that and focusing on solving problems, we can help Congress regain some of the respect that it has lost from Americans, make our country stronger, safer, fairer, and more prosperous now and for generations to come.

So thanks to the members who are testifying today, I look forward to hearing your insights.

Mr. HUFFMAN. And I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back. We will now move to hear testimony from members. Each member will have 5 minutes to provide their testimony. Their entire written testimony will be entered into the record.

Members are allowed to ask questions to other members and can engage in dialog. We do ask that members keep the dialog and questions brief, and within the 5-minute time frame.

We've grouped members into panels to accommodate their availability. I will now recognize my colleague, the gentleman from Kansas, Mr. Mann.

You are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. TRACEY MANN, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF KANSAS**

Mr. MANN. Well, thank you, Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I represent the big 1st district of Kansas, which is 60 primarily rural counties in central and western Kansas. The big 1st backbone is agriculture, home to more 60,000 farms, feed yards, and ranches. Our producers are working tirelessly every day to keep us all fed while dealing with the burdens of inflation, drought, and market fluctuations. The last thing they need is the Federal Government handcuffing them with senseless red tape and threatening their livelihoods.

The designation of the lesser prairie chicken as threatened in places like Kansas is yet another example of these unacceptable D.C. bureaucratic regulations. Kansas producers have voluntarily conserved more than 40,000 acres of habitat for the lesser prairie chicken through both private investment and conservation

programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture—again, voluntarily, 40,000 acres.

One Kansas rancher told me that he spotted a lesser prairie chicken in one of his pastures where his cattle were grazing. He had to move all of the cattle from not only that pasture, but also the other pastures adjacent to it by that afternoon just because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife recorded that bird. Imagine having to upend your livelihood for something like that in your own life.

The population of the lesser prairie chicken rises and falls with rainfall, not the normal activity of farmers and ranchers. Historic droughts in the Great Plains have affected the lesser prairie chicken population and the wheat harvest, which has been devastatingly small in the last few years. Big government does not need to step in and force farmers and ranchers to upend their operations for the sake of this bird, whose population is predicted to bounce back on its own with additional rainfall as it did in 2016 after a drought just 3 years before.

I fully support any efforts of the Committee to stand up for producers' rights to private property and self-determination, and look forward to seeing this burdensome regulation overturned.

I would also like to take some time this morning to discuss Haskell Indian Nations University, located in my district in Lawrence, Kansas. Established in 1884 by Federal legislation aimed to fulfill the United States' treaty and trust obligations to provide a high-quality education for American Indians, Haskell is the only tribal university in the world with an entirely Indigenous population. It is a one-of-a-kind historic and invaluable institution. However, let me be clear. When it comes to Haskell, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Education has dropped the ball. Years of mismanagement, lack of oversight, and cycles of misconduct have all compounded, and Congress needs to conduct serious oversight. The students and faculty at Haskell deserve a safe learning and working environment.

I was encouraged and appreciated this Committee's oversight efforts of 118th Congress, and hope to see that continue in this Congress. I, along with Senator Jerry Moran from Kansas, are planning to introduce the Haskell Indian Nations University Improvement Act, which would federally charter Haskell and separate it from the governance of the BIE. The Federal Government has sadly done a disservice to this school, and one way to make this right is to put the education of Haskell students back in the hands of Indian Country.

While the Federal Government will still be obligated to provide necessary funds to the school, governance would be transferred to qualified tribal leaders from across the country. This legislation would open the door for opportunities that Haskell is currently not eligible for, and the ability to expand educational programs and provide native students with a safe and better learning environment. I encourage all my colleagues to support this legislation when it is introduced.

As the Committee continues its work on legislation and oversight surrounding the Endangered Species Act and Haskell Indian Nations University, I ask that you ensure my comments today are

taken into consideration, and I would appreciate your time and listening for what I have to say and for allowing me to testify.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on these timely and important issues, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mann follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. TRACEY MANN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM THE STATE OF KANSAS

Thank you, Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I represent the Big First District of Kansas, 60 primarily rural counties in central and western Kansas. The Big First's backbone is agriculture; it is home to more than 60,000 farms and is made up of farmers, ranchers, feed lot managers, nutritionists, ethanol producers, ag lenders, and agribusiness owners who feed, fuel, and clothe the world.

Our producers are working tirelessly, every day, to keep us all fed while dealing with the burdens of inflation, drought, and market fluctuations. The last thing they need is the federal government handcuffing them with senseless red tape that threaten their livelihoods.

The designation of the lesser prairie-chicken as "threatened" in places like Kansas is yet another of these unacceptable DC bureaucrat regulations.

Kansas producers have voluntarily conserved more than 40,000 acres of habitat for the lesser prairie chicken through both private investments and conservation programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

One Kansas rancher told me that he spotted a lesser prairie chicken on one of his pastures where his cattle were grazing. He had to move all the cattle from not only that pasture, but also the other pastures adjacent to it, just because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife recorded that bird. Imagine having to upend your livelihood for something like that, in your own life.

The population of the lesser prairie-chicken rises and falls with rainfall, not the normal activity of farmers and ranchers. Historic droughts in the Great Plains have affected the lesser prairie-chicken population and the wheat harvest, which has been devastatingly small in the past years.

Big government doesn't need to step in and force farmers and ranchers to upend their operations for the sake of this bird whose population is predicted to bounce back on its own with rainfall, as it did by 2016 after a drought just three years before.

I fully support any efforts of the Committee to stand up for producers' rights to private property and self-determination, and look forward to seeing this burdensome regulation overturned.

I would also like to take some time today to discuss Haskell Indian Nation's University, located in my district in Lawrence, Kansas.

Established in 1884 by federal legislation aimed to fulfil the United States' treaty and trust obligations to provide a high-quality education to American Indians, Haskell is the only Tribal university in the world with an entirely indigenous population. It is a one-of-a-kind, historic and invaluable institution. However, and let me be clear—when it comes to Haskell, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Education have dropped the ball. Years of mismanagement, lack of oversight, and cycles of misconduct have all compounded, and Congress needs to conduct serious oversight.

The students and faculty at Haskell deserve a safe learning and working environment. I was encouraged by the Committee's oversight efforts in the 118th Congress, and hope to see that continued this Congress.

I, along with Sen. Jerry Moran, are planning on introducing the Haskell Indian Nations University Improvement Act, which would federally charter Haskell and separate them from the governance of the BIE. The Federal government has sadly done a disservice to this school, and one way to make this right is to put the education of Haskell's students back in the hands of Indian country. While the Federal government will still be obligated to provide necessary funds to the school, governance would be transferred to qualified Tribal leaders from across the country. This legislation would open the door for opportunities that Haskell is currently not eligible for, the ability to expand educational programs, and provide Native students with a safe learning environment.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation when it is introduced.

As the Committee continues to work on legislation and oversight surrounding the Endangered Species Act and Haskell Indian Nations University, I ask that you ensure my comments today are taken into consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on these timely and important issues, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Representative Mann, and you bring forth some issues that are very important to the Committee, and especially the Haskell issue. I believe there is broad bipartisan support to delve into that more and try to rectify that situation.

You told the common story with the prairie chicken in Kansas, but it is other species that have been weaponized in other places across the country, and that is why I think it is important that we get an ESA that works for animals, one that not only keeps them from going extinct, but helps them to recover as the enabling legislation says. So I appreciate you bringing those issues forward.

Does any other member have a question for Representative Mann?

Again, thank you for your testimony. I now recognize the gentleman from Arizona.

Dr. Gosar, you have 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. PAUL GOSAR, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA**

Dr. GOSAR. I thank Chairman Westerman and the Committee for hosting this Members Day hearing.

This Committee has heard me talk about the importance of my bill, H.R. 34, the Land and Social Security Optimization Act, also known as the LASSO Act. This legislation deposits 10 percent of revenue generated by certain public lands like the land under the Outer Continental Shelf into the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund.

This trust fund pays Social Security benefits to retired workers, their spouses, their children, and survivors of deceased insured workers. It is expected to be depleted by 2033, threatening the hard-earned Social Security benefits of retired Americans.

My two page common-sense bill strengthens Social Security by reinforcing the OASI Trust Fund with public lands revenue. The more we use the public lands, the more money is deposited in Social Security. What a concept.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the LASSO Act would increase the amount credited to the trust fund by roughly \$15 billion, or from the time of 2025 to 2035, or 10 years. By depositing revenue in Social Security, the LASSO Act creates a tangible benefit for the American people through the enhanced utilization of public lands. From the everyday American's perspective, this bill encourages revenue-generating activities like offshore and onshore energy development, livestock grazing, and timber harvesting. From a Beltway politician's perspective, it disincentivizes abuse of the Antiquities Act or actions such as the previous Administration's Biden withdrawal of more than 625 million acres of Federal waters from future oil and gas leasing.

Bottom line, this bill ensures the future of Social Security while promoting the multiple use doctrine of our public lands. It puts the

future of Social Security into the hands of Americans. What a concept. That is where it belongs.

This bill has received the endorsement of the 60-Plus associations, American Stewards of Liberty, Americans for Limited Government, Arizona Rock Products Association, Association of Mature American Citizens, and Domestic Energy Producers Alliance.

I also thank the 13 members who have already co-sponsored, including Representatives Boebert and Fulcher who sit on this Committee.

I extend my personal invitation to every member of this Committee to sign on to my important legislation, including any of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Here is your opportunity to stop lamenting about the future of Social Security, and work with me to secure that program.

Once again, I thank Chairman Westerman and the Committee for the opportunity for testifying. I look forward to the LASSO Act receiving a markup as soon as we can to reinforce Social Security while also promoting the multiple use of the America's public lands.

I welcome questions from any members on the Committee that they may have.

And with that I will yield back to the Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Gosar follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. PAUL GOSAR, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

I thank Chairman Westerman and the committee for hosting this member day hearing. This Committee has heard me talk about the importance of my bill H.R. 34, the Land and Social Security Optimization Act, also known as the LASSO Act. This legislation deposits 10 percent of revenue generated by certain public lands, like land on the outer continental shelf, into the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund. This Trust Fund pays Social Security benefits to retired workers, their spouses, their children, and survivors of deceased insured workers. It is expected to be depleted by 2033, threatening the hard-earned Social Security benefits of retired Americans.

My two-page, common sense bill strengthens Social Security by reinforcing the OASI Trust Fund with public lands revenue. The more we use public lands, the more money we deposit into Social Security. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the LASSO Act would increase the amount credited to the Trust Fund by roughly \$15 billion over the 2025 to 2035 period. By depositing revenue into Social Security, the LASSO Act creates a tangible benefit for the American People through the enhanced utilization of public lands. From the everyday Americans' perspective, this bill encourages revenue generating activities like onshore and offshore energy development, livestock grazing, and timber harvesting. From a beltway politicians' perspective, it disincentivizes abuse of the Antiquities Act or actions such as Biden's withdrawal of more than 625 million acres of federal waters from future oil and gas leasing. Bottom line, this bill ensures the future of Social Security while promoting the multiple-use doctrine of our public lands. It puts the future of Social Security into the hands of the American people.

This bill has received the endorsement of 60 Plus Association, American Stewards of Liberty, Americans for Limited Government, Arizona Rock Products Association, Association of Mature American Citizens, and the Domestic Energy Producers' Alliance. I also thank the 13 members who have already cosponsored, including Representatives Boebert and Fulcher who sit on this committee. I extend my personal invitation to every other member of this committee to sign on to my important legislation, including my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Here's your opportunity to stop lamenting about the future of Social Security and work with me to secure the program.

Once again, I thank Chairman Westerman and the committee for this opportunity to testify and I look forward to the LASSO Act receiving a mark-up so we can

reinforce Social Security while also promoting the multiple use of America's public land. I welcome questions that any members of the committee may have. I request unanimous consent to insert into the record statements of support for the LASSO Act.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Gosar.
Does any member have questions for Dr. Gosar on the LASSO ACT?

Dr. GOSAR. If there are no questions, I would like to submit for the record number of entities that are supporting this legislation for the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, so ordered.
[The material submitted for the record by Dr. Gosar follows:]

**AMAC Action
Leesburg, Florida**

February 14, 2025

Hon. Paul Gosar
9th Congressional District of Arizona
House Natural Resources Committee
Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Gosar:

On behalf of AMAC Action—the advocacy affiliate of AMAC with over 2 million members nationwide, we are pleased to express our strong support for H.R. 34, the Land and Social Security Optimization (LASSO) Act. For far too long, Social Security's solvency has been under threat, causing uncertainty for seniors who rely on the benefits they earned over a lifetime of hard work.

The LASSO Act takes a bold and innovative approach to strengthening the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) Trust Fund by dedicating 10 percent of the revenue generated from public lands to the fund. This bill will not only reinforce the OASI Trust Fund and help protect benefits for retired workers, their spouses, children, and survivors of insured workers, but it will also encourage responsible resource development on public lands by generating revenue from energy production, livestock grazing, and timber harvesting. By directing public land revenues back into Social Security, this legislation reconnects American taxpayers with the lands they collectively own, allowing them to directly benefit from the nation's natural resources.

Additionally, the LASSO Act aligns with President Donald J. Trump's Sovereign Wealth Fund Executive Order by establishing a clear legislative framework for using the nation's natural resource assets to support Social Security. Our nation's seniors deserve solutions that ensure Social Security remains solvent for generations to come. H.R. 34 represents a practical and forward-thinking approach to stabilizing the program, protecting seniors, and promoting economic growth.

We thank you for your leadership on this important issue and stand ready to help advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

ANDREW J. MANGIONE JR.,
Senior Vice President

**ALG Supports LASSO Act By U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar To Shore Up
Social Security**

March 28, 2025

Fairfax, Va.—Americans for Limited Government Executive Director Robert Romano today issued the following statement in support of H.R. 34 by U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar that will take revenues from lands under Interior Department jurisdiction to shore up the Social Security trust fund:

“Americans for Limited Government strongly supports the efforts by U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar in H.R. 34 to shore up the Social Security trust funds with revenues generated from lands under the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior.

With the Social Security trust funds due to run out in less than a decade, Congressman Gosar’s legislation is timely and essential, and I urge immediate consideration by House leadership. This works very well with President Donald Trump’s plans establishing a long overdue sovereign wealth fund for the U.S. that can also be used to help save Social Security and Medicare and maybe even help to balance the budget just by getting a better rate of return for taxpayers. For too long, elected representatives have overlooked the need to shore up the trust funds and so I thank Congressman Gosar and President Trump for their leadership and bold ideas to keep America’s promise to seniors.”

Attachments:

President Trump’s Tariffs And Sovereign Wealth Fund Can Restore American Economic Primacy, Cut Inflation, By Robert Romano, March 27, 2025 at <https://dailytorch.com/2025/03/president-trumps-tariffs-and-sovereign-wealth-fund-can-restore-american-economic-primacy-cut-inflation/>

For media availability contact Americans for Limited Government at media@limit.gov.org.

DEPA
Domestic Energy Producers Alliance

May 5, 2025

Contact: Jerry Simmons
Phone: 405-669-6646
EMAIL: INFO@DEPAUSA.ORG

**DOMESTIC ENERGY PRODUCERS' ALLIANCE ENDORSES H.R. 34, THE
 LASSO ACT, TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY AND UNLOCK
 AMERICA'S ENERGY POTENTIAL**

TULSA, OK—The Domestic Energy Producers' Alliance (DEPA) proudly announces its full support for H.R. 34, the *Land and Social Security Optimization (LASSO) Act*, introduced by Congressman Paul Gosar. This forward-looking legislation offers a commonsense solution to two urgent national priorities:

1. ensuring the solvency of Social Security and
2. expanding responsible energy development on America's federal lands.

The LASSO Act requires that **10 percent of all revenue generated from lands managed by the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service—including submerged lands on the Outer Continental Shelf—be deposited directly into the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) Trust Fund**. This trust fund is the primary Social Security fund that pays benefits to retired workers and their families.

"This is exactly the type of smart, pro-growth policy our country needs," said DEPA President and CEO Jerry Simmons. "The LASSO Act harnesses the economic potential of our public lands to help secure the future of Social Security. By linking domestic resource development to retirement security, this bill creates powerful incentives to support American energy production and ensure our seniors get the benefits they've earned."

FUNDING SOCIAL SECURITY THROUGH AMERICAN RESOURCES

Without action, the OASI Trust Fund faces an estimated depletion by 2033, at which point the government would only be able to pay out **approximately 77%** of scheduled benefits. **The FY 2023 shortfall alone was \$70.4 billion.**

Under H.R. 34, public lands—including onshore and offshore oil and gas operations, mineral development, timber harvesting, and grazing—would contribute directly to closing that gap. In fact, if the bill had been enacted in FY 2023, **at least \$2 billion** could have been deposited into the trust fund from existing royalties and receipts.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the LASSO Act is projected to **add \$15 billion to the OASI Trust Fund over the next decade**, bolstering the retirement benefits of millions of Americans without raising taxes or cutting benefits.

REDIRECTING ROYALTIES FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

Currently, most royalties and revenues from federal land development are deposited into the U.S. Treasury's general fund, where they are spent without any specific connection to public programs. The LASSO Act reimagines this model by **directing a portion of these funds to serve a tangible, high-priority public purpose: safeguarding Social Security.**

This bill not only supports retirees—it also promotes American energy independence and economic development. As energy producers face increasing regulatory burdens and politically motivated land withdrawals, H.R. 34 provides a strong counterbalance by rewarding productive use of federal lands.

A CLEAR PATH FORWARD

The LASSO Act disincentivizes excessive federal land withdrawals—such as the Biden administration's removal of **625 million acres of federal waters from future oil and gas leasing**—and instead champions policies that generate revenue, energy, and jobs.

"We believe in the power of responsible resource development to improve lives," Simmons added. "From the oil fields of Texas to the offshore platforms in the Gulf, America's energy producers stand ready to deliver value to the American people—not just through reliable energy, but through direct contributions to critical programs like Social Security."

DEPA urges Congress to act swiftly on H.R. 34 to preserve Social Security, promote energy security, and restore balance to the management of our public lands.

About DEPA

DEPA is a nationwide collaboration of 39 coalition associations—from California to West Virginia, Texas to Montana—representing individuals and companies engaged in domestic onshore oil and natural gas exploration and production. DEPA is a non-partisan association seeking common ground, and in common sense solutions to the challenges facing American oil and natural gas production.

Dr. GOSAR. I thank you so very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Gosar.

I now recognize the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Nehls, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. TROY NEHLS, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS**

Mr. NEHLS. Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for having me here. I come before you during Police Week—thank you, Pete, for your service in law enforcement, as well—to speak in support of my bill, H.R. 309, the National Law Enforcement Officers Remembrance, Support, and Community Outreach Act which has been referred to this Committee.

To the 13 members of the Committee who have co-sponsored this legislation, I want to thank you for that.

Congress created both the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund and the National Law Enforcement Museum to honor and support the law enforcement community and educate the public, educate the public about the vital importance of law enforcement in the democratic society.

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund is the only national law enforcement organization created by Congress, and both the memorial and the museum were built with private dollars. Unlike other museums created by Congress, the Law Enforcement Museum receives zero Federal dollars for its programing. The lifesaving and educational programs of the National Law Enforcement Museum are just as critical to the Nation as other museums that receive Federal support from the Department of the Interior.

My bill would provide that support by establishing a formal program within the Department of the Interior to support and enhance the community outreach, public education, and officer safety and wellness programs of the National Law Enforcement Museum through grants to the Officer's Memorial Fund.

These programs will memorialize and honor law enforcement, compile data on law enforcement fatalities and injuries, increase public understanding of and support for law enforcement, enhance and improve law enforcement officer safety and wellness, and bring law enforcement closer to the communities they serve.

I look forward to working with this Committee on a path forward on this important legislation, and I yield back. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nehls follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. TROY E. NEHLS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for having me here today.

I come before you during Police Week to speak in support of my bill H.R. 309, the National Law Enforcement Officers Remembrance, Support and Community Outreach Act, which has been referred to this committee. To the 13 members of the committee who have cosponsored this legislation, I thank you for your support.

Congress created both the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund and the National Law Enforcement Museum to honor and support the law enforcement community and educate the public about the vital importance of law enforcement in a democratic society.

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund is the only national law enforcement organization created by Congress, and both the Memorial and the Museum were built with private dollars.

Unlike other museums created by Congress, the National Law Enforcement Museum receives zero federal dollars for its programming. The life-saving and educational programs of the National Law Enforcement Museum are just as crucial to the nation as other museums that receive federal support from the Department of Interior.

My bill would provide that support by establishing a formal program within the Department of Interior to support and enhance the community outreach, public education and officer safety and wellness programs of the National Law Enforcement Museum through grants to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund.

These programs would memorialize and honor law enforcement, compile data on law enforcement fatalities and injuries, increase public understanding of and support for law enforcement, enhance and improve law enforcement officer safety and wellness, and bring law enforcement closer to the communities they serve.

I look forward to working with the committee on a path forward on this important legislation and yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Representative Nehls, and thank you for your dedication to law enforcement, and especially this week as we recognize law enforcement officers from across the country and all different agencies. We really appreciate your efforts on that.

Are there any other questions for Representative Nehls?

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Chair?

I would like to echo what you just said.

Congressman Nehls, thank you for your support for law enforcement and your professional law enforcement. We really appreciate it.

And I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back. Is there any further discussion?

I now recognize the gentleman from Montana.

Mr. Downing, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. TROY DOWNING, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MONTANA

Mr. DOWNING. Thank you, Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and members of this Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am grateful for the opportunity to advocate for my district and the people of Montana, and I am here to discuss two critical pieces of legislation: H.R. 725, the Crow Revenue Act, and H.R. 931. Both are essential for keeping coal mining alive in Montana.

The Bull Mountains Mine in Musselshell County is the State's only underground coal mine. It provides high-paying jobs for hundreds of Montanans, but Washington's regulatory environment, combined with malicious litigation and judicial activism, has pushed Signal Peak to the brink. Its challenges with permitting, limited access to Federal coal, regulatory uncertainty threaten the mine's future.

Now, if this mine closes, the impact will be devastating for families and towns like Roundup, and the ripple effects will spread throughout Musselshell and Yellowstone County. And when I visited this mine I spoke with the workers who expressed deep concern about the mine's future. Permitting delays and Federal restrictions have made it harder to maintain operations. And this is not just about energy policy. It is about protecting paychecks and ensuring that Montana families can keep working in good-paying jobs.

If Signal Peak shuts down, it will have serious consequences for both rural and urban communities across the region. That is why I introduced H.R. 931 and H.R. 725. These two pieces of legislation are designed to address these challenges directly and ensure the future of coal mining in Montana.

H.R. 931, scheduled for a hearing later this month, offers a short-term solution to keep Signal Peak operating by reopening specific Federal tracts of land for mining that the Biden administration undid. And this bill provides the mine with enough coal to continue operations for another year. This will prevent layoffs and provide workers with stability while we work toward a more permanent solution.

H.R. 725, the Crow Revenue Act, is the long-term fix that will allow that mine to continue for years to come. This bill facilitates a critical land exchange that unlocks access to additional federally owned coal reserves, ensuring Signal Peak's future. Without H.R. 725, the mine will run out of mineable coal. But with this bill we can keep the mine running and support good-paying jobs in Montana.

More importantly, H.R. 725 also addresses the Crow Tribe's need for a revenue stream. You know, prior to the closure of the Absaloka mine, the Tribe had a revenue sharing agreement with the operation. But with its shutdown, the Tribe no longer receives coal revenue. This bill ensures the Tribe will regain access to these vital funds by securing a share of the proceeds from the coal mined at Signal Peak. Restoring this revenue will help fund essential services, education, and infrastructure for the Tribe. It creates new opportunities for economic development and self-sufficiency.

Now, this bill is a critical step in rebuilding the Tribe's economic foundation which has been undermined by the loss of coal revenue since the closure. H.R. 725 provides the Crow Tribe with the resources it needs to grow and thrive, and it ensures that the mine continues to provide jobs for Montana workers.

Together, H.R. 931 and H.R. 725 offer a comprehensive solution to the challenges facing the Signal Peak mine, its workers, and the Crow Tribe. H.R. 931 ensures immediate relief for the mine, while H.R. 725 provides long-term stability and access to critical coal reserves.

This is a Montana solution with Montana support. The Crow Tribe, the State of Montana, the leaders from both chambers of Congress all back these efforts, recognizing the importance of these bills to our economy and our communities.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to support both H.R. 931 and H.R. 725. These bills are not just about coal. They are about jobs, economic stability, and securing a brighter future for the people of Montana. They are about keeping Montana families employed and ensuring the Crow Tribe has the resources it needs to prosper. By passing these bills we can preserve our workforce, promote energy independence, and ensure that our rural communities continue to thrive.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Huffman, and members of the Committee for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you to get these bills across the finish line, and I yield.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Downing follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. TROY DOWNING, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MONTANA

Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and Members of the Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am grateful for the chance to advocate for my district and the people of Eastern Montana. I'm here to discuss two critical pieces of legislation: H.R. 725, the Crow Revenue Act, and H.R. 931, both essential for keeping coal mining alive in Montana.

The Bull Mountains Mine in Musselshell County is the state's only underground coal mine, providing good-paying jobs for hundreds of Montanans. However, Washington's regulatory environment, combined with malicious litigation and judicial activism, has pushed Signal Peak to the brink. Challenges with permitting, limited access to federal coal, and regulatory uncertainty threaten the mine's future. If the mine closes, the impact will be devastating for families in towns like Round-up, and the ripple effects will spread throughout Musselshell County.

When I visited the mine, I spoke with workers who expressed deep concern about the mine's future. Permitting delays and a lack of access to coal have made it harder to maintain operations. This is not just about energy policy, it's about protecting paychecks and ensuring that Montana families can keep working in good-paying jobs. If Signal Peak shuts down, it will have serious consequences for rural communities across the region.

That's why I introduced H.R. 931 and H.R. 725. These two pieces of legislation are designed to address these challenges directly and ensure the future of coal mining in Montana.

H.R. 931, scheduled for a hearing later this month, offers a short-term solution to keep Signal Peak operating. By opening up specific federal tracts of land for mining, this bill provides the mine with enough coal to continue operations for another year. This will prevent layoffs and provide workers with stability while we work toward a more permanent solution.

H.R. 725, the Crow Revenue Act, is the long-term fix that will allow the mine to continue for years to come. This bill facilitates a critical land exchange that unlocks access to additional federally owned coal reserves, ensuring Signal Peak's future. Without H.R. 725, the mine will run out of minable coal, but with this bill, we can keep the mine running and support good-paying jobs in Montana.

More importantly, H.R. 725 also addresses the Crow Tribe's need for a revenue stream. Prior to the closure of the Absaloka mine, the Tribe had a revenue-sharing agreement with the operation, but with its shutdown, the Tribe no longer receives coal revenue. This bill ensures the Tribe will regain access to these vital funds by securing a share of the proceeds from coal mined at Signal Peak. Restoring this revenue will help fund essential services, education, and infrastructure for the Tribe, creating new opportunities for economic development and self-sufficiency.

This bill is a critical step in rebuilding the Tribe's economic foundation, which has been undermined by the loss of coal revenue since Absaloka's closure. H.R. 725 provides the Crow Tribe with the resources it needs to grow and thrive, and it ensures that the mine continues to provide jobs for Montana workers.

Together, H.R. 931 and H.R. 725 offer a comprehensive solution to the challenges facing Signal Peak Mine, its workers, and the Crow Tribe. H.R. 931 ensures immediate relief for the mine, while H.R. 725 provides long-term stability and access to critical coal reserves. This is a Montana solution with Montana support. The Crow Tribe, the state of Montana, and leaders from both chambers of Congress all back these efforts, recognizing the importance of these bills to our economy and our communities.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to support both H.R. 931 and H.R. 725. These bills are not just about coal. They are about jobs, economic stability, and securing a brighter future for the people of Montana. They are about keeping Montana families employed and ensuring the Crow Tribe has the resources it needs to prosper. By passing these bills, we can preserve our workforce, promote energy independence, and ensure that our rural communities continue to thrive.

Thank you, Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and Members of the Committee, for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you to get these bills across the finish line.

Mr. STAUBER [presiding]. I thank the gentleman from Montana, Mr. Downing.

And we are waiting for another speaker, so I am going to suspend for just a few minutes until Mr. Moylan gets in.

[Pause.]

Mr. STAUBER. OK. While we are waiting for Mr. Moylan we are going to reconvene now because Mr. Scott, the gentleman from Georgia, has arrived.

Mr. Scott, you have 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. AUSTIN SCOTT, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA**

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will try to be quick as most people—I am in markups right now, so I appreciate your indulgence in letting me slip in the nick of time.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee, thanking you for allowing me the time to discuss my bill, H.R. 2345, which would redesignate Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Park in Macon, Georgia as the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve. This will be the first national park in Georgia. It is a bipartisan initiative going back to 1934.

Congressman Bishop and I, along with Senators Saxby Chambliss, and Johnny Isakson first authored the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Boundary Revision Act in 2014. It was later passed in 2019, and formally enacted in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which expanded park boundaries, authorized a special resource study that was completed in 2023, and changed its name to the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park.

As an avid sportsman, I want you to know I have worked with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to protect and expand hunting and fishing access within the preserved boundary. The language prioritizes public hunting and fishing access while protecting States' rights and regulations and private property rights for Middle Georgians, and I would not have supported the legislation had it not done those things.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I would also like to highlight the positive national security implications of the proposed boundary expansion to include land near or adjacent

to Robins Air Force Base, which would preserve installation, operational areas, and land use compatibility for military maneuvers.

Georgia is composed of roughly 38 million acres. About 5.25 percent of it is in the Federal registry, much of which constitutes land in Georgia's critical military installations, of which we have nine. This establishment of a national preserve will only increase the Federal land inventory of Georgia by about 0.018 percent. And again, the majority of our land, at least significant portions of it, are in our military installations.

Assuming all land within the proposed boundary's acreage is able to be acquired from willing sellers, land will only be acquired through purchase from willing sellers, donations, or land exchange. There will be no eminent domain authorized in this legislation.

Last Congress I worked closely with Chairman Tiffany and his staff to address Committee concerns regarding Federal land and management of the park and preserve. The 119th version of this bill incorporates that Committee feedback, with a significantly smaller proposed boundary for the preserve and removal of tribal co-management language. This redesignation and relatively small addition to the Federal register has the potential to have a significant economic impact for the Middle Georgia region.

I understand and acknowledge the very real challenges in States with high acreage of Federal land, but in the State of Georgia, this is not a concern. Middle Georgians' concerns lie in the potential commercial development of pristine hunting and fishing lands, the threats to national security and regional economic viability associated with not protecting the encroachment zone of Robins Air Force Base, and the loss of the irreplaceable Muscogee Creek cultural resources and sacred sites.

The Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act would create a historic opportunity to protect important natural and cultural resources, protect hunting and fishing for generations to come, and bring economic opportunities to Middle Georgia through the creation of Georgia's first national park.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of this bill, and I look forward to our continued work together.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Scott follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. AUSTIN SCOTT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of Committee.

Thank you for allowing me the time to discuss my bill H.R. 2345 which would redesignate Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park in Macon as the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve, the first National Park in Georgia, a bipartisan initiative going back to 1934.

Congressman Bishop and I, along with then Senators Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson, first authored the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Boundary Revision Act in 2014. It was later passed in 2019 and formally enacted in the John D. Dingell, J.R. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which expanded park boundaries, authorized a special resource study that was completed in 2023, and changed its name to the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park.

As an avid sportsman, I worked with Georgia Department of Natural resources to protect and expand hunting and fishing access within the preserve boundary. The language prioritizes public hunting and fishing access, while protecting states' rights in regulation and private property rights of middle Georgians.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I would also like to highlight the positive national security implications of the proposed boundary expansion to include land near or adjacent to Robins Air Force Base, which would preserve installation operational areas and land use compatibility for military maneuvers.

Georgia is composed of roughly 38 million acres, about 5.25% of it is in the federal registry, much of which constitutes land in Georgia's critical military bases. This establishment of a national preserve will only increase the federal land inventory of Georgia by about 0.018%, assuming all land within the proposed boundary's acreage is able to be acquired from willing sellers (not immediate and not realistic). Land will only be acquired through purchase from willing sellers, donation, or land exchange, no imminent domain is authorized.

Last Congress, I worked closely with Chairman Tiffany and his staff to address committee concerns regarding federal land and management of the park and preserve. The 119th version of this bill incorporates that committee feedback with a significantly smaller proposed boundary for the preserve and removal of tribal co-management language.

This redesignation and relatively small addition to the federal register has the potential to have a significant economic impact for the middle Georgia region. I understand and acknowledge the very real challenges in states with high acreage of federal land, but this is not a concern that middle Georgians have. Middle Georgians' concerns lie in the potential commercial development of pristine hunting and fishing lands, the threats to national security and regional economic viability associated with not protecting the encroachment zone of Robins Air Force Base, and the loss of the irreplaceable Muscogee (Creek) cultural resources and sacred sites.

The Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act would create a historic opportunity to protect important natural and cultural resources, protect hunting and fishing for generations to come, and bring economic opportunities to Middle Georgia through the creation of Georgia's first National Park.

I appreciate the committee's consideration of this bill and I look forward to our continued work together.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Thank you, Representative Scott, and thank you for your advocacy on behalf of your constituents. And I know this is an issue that you have discussed with me and that we are trying to work with you on the Committee to go through the appropriate process on the lands that you are trying to get designated.

Does any other member have a question for Representative Scott?

Representative Elfreth, you are recognized.

Ms. ELFRETH. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Scott. I don't mean to put you on the spot. I am genuinely curious how many other States do not have a national park. And maybe it is a better question for staff, and I am happy to take that offline, but—

Mr. SCOTT. Ma'am, I honestly do not know. I know in the State of Georgia this would be the first and therefore the only one that we currently have. And as you know, there are a lot of citizens who every year pick a national park to go to, and that is the nature of the increase in tourism that we are—

Ms. ELFRETH. I look forward to working with you on this.

Mr. SCOTT [continuing]. Seeking. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. ELFRETH. Thank you.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Any further questions for Representative Scott?

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Chair?

The CHAIRMAN. Representative Stauber, you are—

Mr. STAUBER. Representative Scott, thanks for bringing this up. This is a good piece of legislation, and you——

Mr. SCOTT. Thanks.

Mr. STAUBER [continuing]. Are doing great work on it. And I look forward to working with you on it.

And I yield back.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you very much.

Mr. STAUBER. Any further questions?

Thank you, Representative Scott. We will now recognize Representative Moylan for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. JAMES MOYLAN, A DELEGATE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE TERRITORY OF GUAM**

Mr. MOYLAN. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and thank you for hosting this year's Member Day. And as the Committee considers legislative priorities for this Congress, I would like to encourage you to examine Guam's unique relationship with the Federal Government and ways to increase communication and consultation between our governments.

Any change in political status must first come from the people of Guam via a plebiscite. But there do exist opportunities to enhance communication. This year I plan to introduce legislation that would enhance dialog between Guam and the Federal Government.

Given the military buildup and the Pacific pivot, it is critical that Guam is given a seat at the table in such discussions.

I also want to emphasize again the need to pass the Guam Excess Land Return Act, one of the first bills I introduced in Congress and will be reintroducing again later this month. This bill empowers private landowners by authorizing the return of excess Federal lands in Guam to be transferred to the original landowners or their heirs. Given that nearly one-third of our island is currently owned by the Federal Government, returning our lands is critical to my constituents.

And finally, I respectfully urge the Committee to look at the Endangered Species Act and to make common-sense reforms around management, listing, and delisting. The ESA is designed to promote conservation and protect species at risk of extinction. Fundamentally, this is a good idea and we should work to conserve our lands, species, and water. However, issues with Federal overreach and at times making it nearly impossible for the public to participate has shown us that there exists room for improvement.

So I encourage the Committee to look towards greater involvement of the State and territory authorities, innovative partnerships, and carve-outs and exceptions for cultural practices. This is especially prominent in the Pacific Islands, where Native American Pacific Islanders lack recognition in laws like the ESA.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for this opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moylan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. JAMES MOYLAN, A DELEGATE IN CONGRESS
FROM THE TERRITORY OF GUAM

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, thank you for hosting this year's Member Day. As the Committee considers legislative priorities for this Congress, I would like to encourage you to examine Guam's unique relationship with the federal government and ways to increase communications and consultations between our governments. Any change in political status must first come from the People of Guam via plebiscite, but there do exist opportunities to enhance communication. This year, I plan on introducing legislation that would enhance dialogue between Guam and the federal government. Given the military build-up and the "Pacific Pivot", it is critical that Guam is given a seat at the table in such decisions.

I also want to emphasize again the need to pass the Guam Excess Land Return Act, one of the first bills I introduced in Congress and will be reintroducing again later this month. This bill empowers private landowners by authorizing the return of excess Fed Lands in Guam to be transferred to the original landowners or their heirs. Given that nearly one-third of our island is currently owned by the federal government, returning our lands is critical to my constituents.

Finally, I respectfully urge the Committee to look at the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to make commonsense reforms around management, listing, and delisting. The ESA is designed to promote conservation and protect species at risk of extinction. Fundamentally, this is a good idea and we should work to conserve our lands, species, and waters. However, issues with federal overreach and, at times, making it nearly impossible for the public to participate have showed us that there exists room for improvement.

I encourage the committee to look toward greater involvement of State and Territorial authorities, innovative partnerships, and carveouts and exemptions for cultural practices. This is especially prominent in the Pacific Islands, where native American pacific islanders lack recognition in laws like the ESA. [An especially egregious example of this is the proposed rule to list 10 species of giant clam, or *hima* in CHamoru, neglect and endanger traditional arts. If finalized, the rule would essentially prohibit the continuation of a carving practice older than the United States itself. Older even than Columbus's discovery of the New World. Despite unanimous concern about this from all three territorial governments and all three Members of Congress, NOAA neither rescinded the rule nor held additional in-person public hearings. Instead, local agencies did the work to make sure the people's voice was heard. Incidents like there are easily avoidable, but we must work to ensure that proper barriers and guardrails to regulatory overreach exist.]

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Representative Moylan, and thank you for your dedication to representing your constituents and the many issues that are in the South Pacific, and particularly Guam. And we look forward to working with you on solving those issues.

Is there any other questions of Representative Moylan?

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Chair?

The CHAIRMAN. Pete.

Mr. STAUBER. Representative Moylan, thanks for bringing this up. You brought up the ESA. That is something that we really need to work on in a bipartisan fashion, because only 3 percent of the species ever get off that list. And we really need to celebrate the ESA working, rather than making it a political football. So I appreciate your comments, and thanks for being here.

The CHAIRMAN. Are there any other questions?

Thank you. Thank you again, Representative Moylan.

This will conclude our Member Day hearing. We thank all colleagues for being here to discuss the important matters that come before this Committee. Members that were unable to make it can have their testimony entered into the record, as well.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:54 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

[ADDITIONAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD]

Submissions for the Record by Rep. Gosar

1

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION**H. R. 34**To deposit portions of revenue generated from public lands into the Social
Security Trust Fund.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 3, 2025

Mr. GOSAR introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILLTo deposit portions of revenue generated from public lands
into the Social Security Trust Fund.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Land And Social Secu-
5 rity Optimization Act” or “LASSO Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. PUBLIC LAND REVENUE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY**
7 **TRUST FUND.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other law,
9 each fiscal year, 10 percent of amounts collected by the

1 Department of the Interior and the Department of Agri-
 2 culture from the revenue generated by covered public
 3 lands during the preceding fiscal year shall be deposited
 4 into the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Trust Fund estab-
 5 lished under section 201(a) of the Social Security Act (42
 6 U.S.C. 401(a)).

7 (b) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act
 8 shall be construed as—

9 (1) authorizing the Secretary of the Interior or
 10 the Secretary of Agriculture to raise the price of any
 11 of the activities through which revenue is generated
 12 on covered public lands; or

13 (2) reducing amounts made available to States,
 14 Indian Tribes, territories, or local governments from
 15 revenue generated by covered public lands.

16 (c) COVERED PUBLIC LANDS DEFINED.—In this
 17 Act, the term “covered public lands” means any land
 18 under the administrative jurisdiction—

19 (1) of the Department of the Interior, including
 20 submerged lands on the Outer Continental Shelf (as
 21 such term is defined in section 2 of the Outer Conti-
 22 nental Shelf Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1331); or

23 (2) the Forest Service.

○

Submissions for the Record by Rep. Soto

Statement for the Record

Darren Soto

Representative in Congress from the State of Florida

Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, thank you for allowing me to testify before the Committee about my priorities for Member Day. As a proud Floridian and the first Congressional Member from Florida of Puerto Rican ancestry it is my responsibility to highlight the issues that are impacting my state, my district, and my constituents.

My priorities in this Congress are H.R. 2580, *Kissimmee Wild and Scenic River Study Act*; H.R. 900, *Sinkhole Mapping Act of 2025*; and H.R. 704, *Manatee Stamp Act*.

H.R. 2580 Kissimmee Wild and Scenic River Study Act

H.R. 2580, *Kissimmee Wild and Scenic River Study Act*, would direct the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and designate a restored segment of the Kissimmee River as a Recreational River.

The Kissimmee River was a naturally winding waterway, but after hurricanes caused widespread flooding in the region in the 1940s, Congress authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to straighten and shorten the river to control its flow, practically reducing it to a drainage ditch. This historically misguided project, carried out in the 1960s, dried out tens of thousands of acres of wetlands, and decimated habitat for birds and other wildlife. It also sped up the flow of the river, sharply diminishing its natural capacity to absorb nitrogen and phosphorus nutrient pollution before it emptied into Lake Okeechobee and the Florida Everglades.

In 1968, Congress created the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to “preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.” If passed, the Kissimmee River Wild and Scenic River Act will ensure that restored segments of the river are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

The Kissimmee River Restoration Project was a partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District to help wildlife species return to the river after efforts to prevent flooding destroyed habitats. The project was completed in 2021 and restored more than 40 square miles of the river floodplain ecosystem, 20,000 acres of wetlands, and 44 miles of the historic river channel. It was the largest river restoration in the world and cost nearly \$1 billion to complete.

During the 117th Congress, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (page #1141) included parts of the Kissimmee River Wild and Scenic River Act to direct the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to complete a study of the Kissimmee River within three years to make it part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This legislation will keep up the pressure to ensure timely designation.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation. I look forward to working with you as H.R. 2580 moves forward in the committee process.

H.R. 900 Sinkhole Mapping Act

H.R. 900, *Sinkhole Mapping Act of 2025*, would improve our understanding of sinkholes.

Sinkholes are caused by erosion, and they appear suddenly and have devastating consequences. The dangers of sinkholes are real and they occur in every state and territory. The cost of sinkhole damage to property over the last 15 years cost, on average, at least \$300 million per year. While rare, sinkholes can be deadly. Around 11 pm on the evening of February 28, 2013, Jeff Bush, a man from central Florida, was asleep in his bedroom when a large sinkhole opened directly under his house, swallowing him and his entire bedroom.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) currently studies sinkholes, and the Sinkhole Mapping Act of 2018 would build on existing research activities that are making advances in understanding the geologic and hydrologic controls in sinkhole-prone landscapes, known as karsts. To better inform and support rapid response to sinkhole formation and effective mitigation measures, the bill would direct the USGS to focus on the short—and long-term mechanisms that trigger sinkholes, including extreme storm events, prolonged droughts leading to shifts in water management practices, as well as ongoing aquifer depletion, and other major changes in water use. The bill would also direct the Director of the USGS to estab-

lish and maintain a public website that displays maps that depict zones that are at greater risk of sinkhole formation and other relevant information critical for use by community planners and emergency managers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation. I look forward to seeing H.R. 900 on the Floor as a suspension.

H.R. 704 Manatee Stamp Act

H.R. 704, *Manatee Stamp Act*, would improve our protection efforts for manatees.

Last year, over 550 manatees died in Florida. This is alarming and should prompt us to take action to protect them from experiencing further tragedies. We must do everything in our power to protect these precious mammals.

The bill would require the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to issue a manatee semipostal stamp that will generate proceeds for the FWS to continue their efforts to protect manatees and manatee habitats. With unusual mortality events in the last five years—which caused us to lose thousands of manatees in Florida—it is critical to take every possible approach to help these mammals thrive and survive. We were thrilled to see the USPS launch the ‘Save Manatees’ stamp in 2024, which helped save the cost of design, but our bill is still necessary to help proceeds go toward conservation efforts.

Let’s protect these precious mammals. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation. I look forward to working with you as H.R. 704 moves forward in the committee process.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Huffman, I look forward to working with you to advance my priorities in this bill and I welcome any questions you may have. Thank you and I yield back.

