

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4454

To establish a process for the Board on Geographic Names to review and revise offensive names of Federal land units, to create an advisory committee to recommend Federal land unit names to be reviewed by the Board, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 16, 2021

Mr. GREEN of Texas (for himself, Ms. ESCOBAR, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Ms. NORTON, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. SOTO, Mr. EVANS, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CARSON, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. BUSH, Ms. BASS, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. LIEU, Mr. POCAN, Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Mr. KAHELE, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, and Mr. ESPAILLAT) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To establish a process for the Board on Geographic Names to review and revise offensive names of Federal land units, to create an advisory committee to recommend Federal land unit names to be reviewed by the Board, and for other purposes.

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

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Reconciliation in Place
3 Names Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds that—

6 (1) the United States contains geographic fea-
7 tures named—

8 (A) with derogatory terms that include ra-
9 cial and sexual slurs and stereotypes targeting
10 Native Americans, African Americans, and oth-
11 ers;

12 (B) in honor of individuals who—

13 (i) held racially repugnant views;

14 (ii) committed atrocities against Na-
15 tive Americans; or

16 (iii) supported or effectuated discrimi-
17 natory policies; and

18 (C) to recognize individuals who carried
19 out injustices against racial minorities;

20 (2) place names that include racial or sexual
21 slurs, or honor individuals who held racially repug-
22 nant views, committed atrocities against Native
23 Americans, or carried out injustices against racial
24 minorities—

25 (A) perpetuate prejudice;

26 (B) disparage racial minorities; and

1 (C) honor individuals who committed or
2 supported atrocities;

3 (3) no geographic feature in the United States
4 should have a name that—

5 (A) perpetuates prejudice;

6 (B) disparages racial minorities; or

7 (C) honors individuals who committed or
8 supported atrocities against racial minorities;

9 (4) place names in the United States should—

10 (A) be equitable and just;

11 (B) honor the cultural diversity of the
12 United States; and

13 (C) advance dignity for all people in the
14 United States;

15 (5) the Board on Geographic Names is respon-
16 sible for naming geographic features in the United
17 States;

18 (6) the policies of the Board on Geographic
19 Names—

20 (A) authorize changing the names of geo-
21 graphic features determined to be offensive; and

22 (B) prohibit the use of terms considered to
23 be derogatory or offensive in geographic place
24 names;

1 (7) the renaming process of the Board on Geo-
2 graphic Names—

3 (A) is time consuming;

4 (B) lacks transparency and public involve-
5 ment; and

6 (C) fails to address the scope and breadth
7 of inappropriate place names;

8 (8) the extent of inappropriate or offensive
9 place names in the United States requires a system-
10 atic, public process in which offensive and inappro-
11 priate place names are reviewed and replaced; and

12 (9) the process described in paragraph (8) of-
13 fers an opportunity for reconciliation for—

14 (A) people of the United States who suffer
15 from prejudice and racial violence; and

16 (B) all people of the United States in
17 whose name the acts were committed.

18 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

19 In this Act:

20 (1) BOARD.—The term “Board” means the
21 Board on Geographic Names established by section
22 2 of the Act of July 25, 1947 (43 U.S.C. 364a).

23 (2) COMMITTEE.—The term “Committee”
24 means the Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in
25 Place Names established by section 4(a).

1 (3) FEDERAL LAND UNIT.—The term “Federal
2 land unit” includes—

3 (A) National Forest System land;

4 (B) a unit of the National Park System;

5 (C) a component of the National Wilder-
6 ness Preservation System;

7 (D) any part of the National Landscape
8 Conservation System; and

9 (E) a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge
10 System.

11 (4) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”
12 has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the
13 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance
14 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

15 (5) OFFENSIVE PLACE NAME.—The term “of-
16 fensive place name” means a domestic geographic
17 place name or Federal land unit that—

18 (A) recognizes an individual who—

19 (i)(I) held racially repugnant views;

20 (II) committed atrocities against Na-
21 tive Americans; or

22 (III) supported or effectuated dis-
23 criminatory policies; or

24 (ii) carried out other injustices
25 against racial minorities;

1 (B) contains a racial or sexual slur;

2 (C) perpetuates racial, ethnic, or gender-
3 based stereotypes; or

4 (D) is derogatory or otherwise offensive.

5 (6) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term “Tribal
6 organization” has the meaning given the term in
7 section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Edu-
8 cation Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

9 (7) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
10 the Secretary of the Interior.

11 **SEC. 4. ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**

12 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after
13 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall es-
14 tablish an advisory committee, to be known as the “Advi-
15 sory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names”.

16 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Committee is to
17 advise the Board with respect to renaming geographic fea-
18 tures with offensive place names.

19 (c) MEMBERSHIP.—The Committee shall be com-
20 posed of 17 members, to be appointed by the Secretary,
21 of whom, to the extent practicable—

22 (1) 4 members shall be members of an Indian
23 Tribe;

24 (2) 1 member shall represent a Tribal organiza-
25 tion;

1 (3) 1 member shall represent a Native Hawai-
2 ian organization;

3 (4) 4 members shall have a background in civil
4 rights or race relations;

5 (5) 4 members shall have expertise in—

6 (A) anthropology;

7 (B) cultural studies, ethnic studies, or in-
8 digenous studies;

9 (C) geography; or

10 (D) history; and

11 (6) 3 members shall represent the general pub-
12 lic.

13 (d) CONSULTATION WITH INDIAN TRIBES.—The
14 Secretary shall engage in consultation with Indian Tribes
15 regarding the selection of the members described in sub-
16 section (c) (1), (2), and (4) before those appointments are
17 made.

18 (e) DUTIES.—The Committee shall—

19 (1) establish a process to solicit and review pro-
20 posals to rename geographic features and Federal
21 land units with offensive place names;

22 (2) solicit proposals to rename geographic fea-
23 tures and Federal land units with offensive place
24 names from—

25 (A) Indian Tribes;

1 (B) appropriate State and local govern-
2 ments; and

3 (C) members of the public;

4 (3) provide an opportunity for public comment
5 on name change proposals;

6 (4) make recommendations to the Board to re-
7 name geographic features with offensive place
8 names, including proposed new names; and

9 (5) make recommendations to Congress to re-
10 name Federal land units with offensive place names,
11 including proposed new names.

12 (f) COMPENSATION.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—Members of the Committee
14 shall serve without compensation.

15 (2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Members of the Com-
16 mittee shall be allowed travel expenses, including per
17 diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for
18 an employee of an agency under subchapter I of
19 chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while
20 away from the home or regular place of business of
21 the member in the performance of the duties of the
22 Committee.

23 (g) STAFF.—The Secretary shall provide the Com-
24 mittee with any staff members and technical assistance
25 that the Secretary, after consultation with the Committee,

1 determines to be appropriate to enable the Committee to
2 carry out the duties of the Committee.

3 (h) RULES.—The Committee may adopt such rules
4 as may be necessary.

5 (i) APPLICABLE LAW.—The Committee shall be sub-
6 ject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C.
7 App.).

8 (j) DURATION.—

9 (1) TIMELINE.—To the extent practicable, not
10 later than 5 years after the date on which the Com-
11 mittee is established, the Committee shall fulfill the
12 duties of the Committee, including the completion of
13 the recommendations required under paragraphs (4)
14 and (5) of subsection (e).

15 (2) TERMINATION.—The Committee shall ter-
16minate on the date that is 1 year after the date on
17 which the Board has approved or rejected each Com-
18 mittee recommendation submitted to the Board
19 under subsection (e)(4).

20 **SEC. 5. BOARD REVIEW.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the
22 date on which the Board receives a recommendation under
23 section 4(e)(4), the Board shall accept or reject the rec-
24 ommendation.

1 (b) PROCESS.—The Board shall approve a rec-
2 ommendation of the Committee submitted under section
3 4(e)(4) unless the Board determines that—

4 (1) there is a compelling reason and substantial
5 public interest in rejecting the recommendation; or

6 (2) approving the recommendation would violate
7 Federal law.

8 (c) RENAMING.—If the Board accepts a recommenda-
9 tion by the Committee to rename a geographic feature,
10 the Board shall rename the geographic feature.

11 (d) EFFECT.—A Board policy that prevents the
12 Board from considering a name change due to pending
13 legislation shall not apply to Board action on Committee
14 recommendations.

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