

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8455

To create a process by which the Board on Geographic Names shall 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

SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

Ms. HAALAND (for herself, Mr. GREEN of Texas, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. GALLEG0, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Mr. EVANS, Ms. LEE of California, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, and Ms. JAYAPAL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To create a process by which the Board on Geographic Names shall 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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Reconciliation in Place
5 Names Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) BOARD.—The term “Board” means the
4 Board on Geographic Names established by the Act
5 entitled “An Act to provide a central authority for
6 standardizing geographic names for the purpose of
7 eliminating duplication in standardizing such names
8 among the Federal departments, and for other pur-
9 poses”, approved July 25, 1947.

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

13 (3) FEDERAL LAND UNIT.—The term “Federal
14 land unit” includes National Forests System lands,
15 units of the National Park System, units of the Na-
16 tional Wilderness Preservation System, National
17 Conservation Lands, and units of the National Wild-
18 life Refuge System.

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

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

(6) OFFENSIVE PLACE NAME.—The term “offensive place name” means a domestic geographic place name or Federal land unit that—

(A) recognizes an individual who—

(i) held racially repugnant views, committed atrocities against Native Americans, or supported or effectuated discriminatory policies; or

(ii) carried out other injustices against racial minorities;

(B) contains a racial or sexual slur;

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

(D) is derogatory or otherwise offensive.

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

SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the United States contains geographic features named—

(A) with derogatory terms that include racial and sexual slurs and stereotypes targeting Native Americans, African Americans, and others;

1 (B) in honor of individuals who held ra-
2 cially repugnant views, committed atrocities
3 against Native Americans, or supported or ef-
4 fectuated discriminatory policies; and

5 (C) to recognize individuals who carried
6 out injustices against racial minorities;

7 (2) place names that include racial or sexual
8 slurs, or honor individuals who held racially repug-
9 nant views, committed atrocities against Native
10 Americans, or carried out injustices against racial
11 minorities perpetuate prejudice, disparage racial mi-
12 norities, and honor those who committed or sup-
13 ported atrocities;

14 (3) no geographic feature in the United States
15 should have a name which disparages racial minori-
16 ties, perpetuates prejudice or honors those who com-
17 mitted or supported atrocities against racial minori-
18 ties;

19 (4) American place names should be equitable
20 and just, honor America's cultural diversity, and ad-
21 vance dignity for all Americans;

22 (5) the Board on Geographic Names is respon-
23 sible for naming geographic features in the United
24 States and Board policies authorize changing the
25 names of geographic features determined to be of-

1 fensive, and prohibit the use of terms deemed derog-
2 atory or offensive in geographic place names;

3 (6) the current Board renaming process is time-
4 consuming, lacks transparency and public involve-
5 ment, and fails to address the scope and breadth of
6 inappropriate place names;

7 (7) the extent of inappropriate or offensive
8 American place names requires a systematic, public
9 process in which offensive and inappropriate place
10 names are reviewed and replaced; and

11 (8) such a process offers an opportunity for rec-
12 onciliation for the Americans who suffer from preju-
13 dice and racial violence and for all Americans in
14 whose name these acts were committed.

15 **SEC. 4. ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**

16 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after
17 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall
18 establish an advisory committee to be known as the “Advi-
19 sory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names”.

20 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Committee is to
21 advise the Board regarding renaming geographic features
22 with offensive place names.

23 (c) MEMBERSHIP.—The Committee shall include 16
24 members to be appointed by the Secretary of whom, to
25 the extent practicable—

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

2 (2) 1 shall represent a Tribal organization;

3 (3) 4 shall have backgrounds in civil rights or
4 race relations;

5 (4) 4 shall have expertise in anthropology, cul-
6 tural studies, geography, or history; and

7 (5) 3 shall represent the general public.

8 (d) DUTIES.—The Committee shall—

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

12 (2) solicit proposals to rename geographic fea-
13 tures and Federal land units with offensive place
14 names from—

15 (A) Indian Tribes;

16 (B) appropriate State and local govern-
17 ments; and

18 (C) members of the public;

19 (3) provide opportunity for public comment on
20 name change proposals;

21 (4) make recommendations to the Board to re-
22 name geographic features with offensive place
23 names, including proposed new names; and

1 (5) make recommendations to Congress to re-
2 name Federal land units with offensive place names,
3 including proposed new names.

4 (e) COMPENSATION.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—Members of the Committee
6 shall serve without compensation.

7 (2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Members of the Com-
8 mittee shall be allowed travel expenses, including per
9 diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for
10 an employee of an agency under subchapter I of
11 chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while
12 away from the home or regular place of business of
13 the member in the performance of the duties of the
14 Committee.

15 (f) STAFF.—The Secretary shall provide the Com-
16 mittee with any staff members and technical assistance
17 that the Secretary, after consultation with the Committee,
18 determines to be appropriate to enable the Commission to
19 carry out the duties of the Committee.

20 (g) RULES.—The Committee may adopt such rules
21 as may be necessary.

22 (h) APPLICABLE LAW.—The Committee shall be sub-
23 ject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C.
24 App.).

25 (i) DURATION.—

1 (1) **TIMELINE.**—To the extent practicable, the
2 Committee shall fulfill its duties, including the com-
3 pletion of the recommendations required by sub-
4 sections (d)(4) and (d)(5), within 5 years of the date
5 upon which the Committee is established.

6 (2) **TERMINATION.**—The Committee shall ter-
7 minate on the date that is 1 year from the date on
8 which the Board has approved or rejected each Com-
9 mittee recommendation.

10 **SEC. 5. BOARD REVIEW.**

11 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Board shall accept or reject
12 a recommendation by the Committee to rename a geo-
13 graphic feature under section 4(d)(4) within three years
14 of the date in which the Board receives the recommenda-
15 tion.

16 (b) **PROCESS.**—The Board shall approve a rec-
17 ommendation of the Committee submitted under section
18 4(d)(4) unless the Board determines that—

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

21 (2) approving the recommendation would violate
22 Federal law.

23 (c) **RENAMING.**—If the Board accepts a recommenda-
24 tion by the Committee to rename a geographic feature,
25 the Board shall rename the geographic feature.

1 (d) EFFECT.—A Board policy that prevents the
2 Board from considering a name change due to pending
3 legislation shall not apply to Board action on Committee
4 recommendations.

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