

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2400

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 SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 20, 2021

Ms. WARREN (for herself, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. WYDEN, and Ms. SMITH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and 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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds that—

3 (1) the United States contains geographic fea-
4 tures named—

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

9 (B) in honor of individuals who—

10 (i) held racially repugnant views;

11 (ii) committed atrocities against Na-
12 tive Americans; or

13 (iii) supported or effectuated discrimi-
14 natory policies; and

15 (C) to recognize individuals who carried
16 out injustices against racial minorities;

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

22 (A) perpetuate prejudice;

23 (B) disparage racial minorities; and

24 (C) honor individuals who committed or
25 supported atrocities;

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

3 (A) perpetuates prejudice;

4 (B) disparages racial minorities; or

5 (C) honors individuals who committed or
6 supported atrocities against racial minorities;

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

8 (A) be equitable and just;

9 (B) honor the cultural diversity of the
10 United States; and

11 (C) advance dignity for all people in the
12 United States;

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

16 (6) the policies of the Board on Geographic
17 Names—

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

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

23 (7) the renaming process of the Board on Geo-
24 graphic Names—

25 (A) is time consuming;

1 (B) lacks transparency and public involve-
 2 ment; and

3 (C) fails to address the scope and breadth
 4 of inappropriate place names;

5 (8) the extent of inappropriate or offensive
 6 place names in the United States requires a system-
 7 atic, public process in which offensive and inappro-
 8 priate place names are reviewed and replaced; and
 9 (9) the process described in paragraph (8) of-
 10 fers an opportunity for reconciliation for—

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

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

15 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

16 In this Act:

17 (1) BOARD.—The term “Board” means the
 18 Board on Geographic Names established by section
 19 2 of the Act of July 25, 1947 (43 U.S.C. 364a).

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

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

25 (A) National Forest System land;

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

2 (C) a component of the National Wilder-
3 ness Preservation System;

4 (D) any part of the National Landscape
5 Conservation System; and

6 (E) a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge
7 System.

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

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

15 (A) recognizes an individual who—

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

17 (II) committed atrocities against Na-
18 tive Americans; or

19 (III) supported or effectuated dis-
20 criminatory policies; or

21 (ii) carried out other injustices
22 against racial minorities;

23 (B) contains a racial or sexual slur;

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

1 (D) is derogatory or otherwise offensive.

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

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

8 **SEC. 4. ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**

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

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

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

19 (1) 4 members shall be members of an Indian
20 Tribe;

21 (2) 1 member shall represent a Tribal organiza-
22 tion;

23 (3) 1 member shall represent a Native Hawai-
24 ian organization;

1 (4) 4 members shall have a background in civil
2 rights or race relations;

3 (5) 4 members shall have expertise in—

4 (A) anthropology;

5 (B) cultural studies, ethnic studies, or in-
6 digenous studies;

7 (C) geography; or

8 (D) history; and

9 (6) 3 members shall represent the general pub-
10 lic.

11 (d) CONSULTATION WITH INDIAN TRIBES.—Before
12 making an appointment under paragraph (1), (2), or (4)
13 of subsection (c), the Secretary shall consult with Indian
14 Tribes regarding the appointment.

15 (e) DUTIES.—The Committee shall—

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

19 (2) solicit proposals to rename geographic fea-
20 tures and Federal land units with offensive place
21 names from—

22 (A) Indian Tribes;

23 (B) appropriate State and local govern-
24 ments; and

25 (C) members of the public;

1 (3) provide an opportunity for public comment
2 on name change proposals;

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

6 (5) make recommendations to Congress to re-
7 name Federal land units with offensive place names,
8 including proposed new names.

9 (f) COMPENSATION.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Members of the Committee
11 shall serve without compensation.

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

20 (g) STAFF.—The Secretary shall provide the Com-
21 mittee with any staff members and technical assistance
22 that the Secretary, after consultation with the Committee,
23 determines to be appropriate to enable the Committee to
24 carry out the duties of the Committee.

1 (h) RULES.—The Committee may adopt such rules
2 as may be necessary.

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

6 (j) DURATION.—

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

13 (2) TERMINATION.—The Committee shall ter-
14minate on the date that is 1 year after the date on
15 which the Board has approved or rejected each Com-
16 mittee recommendation submitted to the Board
17 under subsection (e)(4).

18 **SEC. 5. BOARD REVIEW.**

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

23 (b) PROCESS.—The Board shall approve a rec-
24 ommendation of the Committee submitted under section
25 4(e)(4) unless the Board determines that—

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

3 (2) approving the recommendation would violate
4 Federal law.

5 (c) RENAMING.—If the Board accepts a recommenda-
6 tion by the Committee to rename a geographic feature,
7 the Board shall rename the geographic feature.

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

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