

And I know that your defeat hurt him as much as it does all of us.

But you will be remembered here, and you will inspire others. A new generation will follow, and they will say: We are keeping up the Casey name. We are standing up for what BOB CASEY stood for: family, faith, and fairness.

Thanks, BOB, for being a great friend and a great Senator.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Minnesota.

#### AMENDING THE THYE-BLATNIK ACT

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, northern Minnesota is home to some of the most beautiful and valuable forestlands in the Nation.

As a Minnesota Senator, my job is to make sure that northern Minnesota communities are treated fairly when it comes to taxes, and that is what this bill is about that I am here to speak about today. It is a very particular Minnesota issue that doesn't affect any other State, but it is extremely important to us.

For decades, the bipartisan Thye-Blatnik Act has ensured that Lake County, Cook County, and St. Louis County in Minnesota receive a vital source of revenue in exchange for hosting Federal wilderness lands. Thye-Blatnik is unique from other similar laws around the country in that the Federal Government makes payments to counties depending on appraisals that are conducted every 10 years by the U.S. Forest Service. And for decades, everything has worked just great.

But then, in 2018, because of unusual circumstances, the regular appraisal led to almost a 50-percent cut in the Thye-Blatnik payments to the counties, and this created a big hardship for the residents in these small-population rural counties that do not have a big tax base because so much of their land is tied up in national forestland and wilderness areas.

Many of my colleagues on this floor represent counties like this and understand the challenges of providing essential services like road maintenance and public safety in these communities. So without the action in my bill today, communities in northern Minnesota would face a serious budget crunch.

Since 2018, I went to work with Senator KLOBUCHAR and Republican Congressman PETE STAUBER, from Minnesota's Eighth District, to figure out how to fix the problem. We worked with the Biden administration and the Trump administration to find a fix. And while everyone agrees that the problem needs to be fixed, no one can figure out how to do this administratively. That is why we need this bill. It is a technical fix that will go a long way toward helping rural Minnesota counties.

This bill would make sure that future Thye-Blatnik payments don't go down

because of the vagaries of appraisals that no one has any control over. It is a simple bill. It is not controversial. It is bipartisan. And, as I said, it doesn't affect any other State or county in the country. But, of course, to these three counties in Minnesota, it is a real lifeline.

Without action, this vital source of revenue, which supports services like emergency management and road maintenance, will decrease. So I am asking for Congress to get this done.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 5595, which was introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5595) to amend the act of June 22, 1948.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. SMITH. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 5595) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 5595

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

#### SECTION 1. APPRAISALS.

Section 5 of the Act of June 22, 1948 (commonly known as the "Thye-Blatnik Act") (62 Stat. 570, chapter 593; 16 U.S.C. 577g), is amended by striking "of the fair appraised value of such" and inserting "of the highest fair appraised value, including historical fair appraised values, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with this section, of such".

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, I now rise in support of my friend Patrice Kunesh, who was nominated to serve as Chair of the National Indian Gaming Commission.

Patrice is a descendant of the Standing Rock Lakota and is currently commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans at the Department of Health and Human Services and a distinguished and highly qualified public servant. Her current role at the Administration for Native Americans is just the latest role in her lifetime of service to Indian Country.

In addition to Federal service at the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Justice, and the Minneapolis Federal Reserve, she has worked for the Native American Rights Fund, in-house for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, and in academia.

The last time she was nominated for a Senate-concerned position, she received strong bipartisan support.

Madam President, I have been hearing from Tribal leaders in Minnesota

and around the country about the importance of confirming Patrice Kunesh to be the NIGC Chair. To them, her confirmation isn't a partisan issue, nor should it be; it is about securing strong leadership at a body created to advance Tribe sovereignty and economic self-determination.

NIGC is responsible for regulating Tribal gaming, and it has been without a Chair since February. Patrice is eminently qualified, she is experienced, and she is ready to serve Indian Country.

So therefore, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that, as in executive session, the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar 841, Patrice H. Kunesh, of Minnesota, to be Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission for the term of three years; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Wyoming.

#### THE CALENDAR

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 595, S. 3123; Calendar No. 644, S. 5125; Calendar No. 306, S. 2018; Calendar No. 649, H.R. 5443; Calendar No. 304, S. 961; and Calendar No. 613, S. 4209.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bills en bloc.

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendments, where applicable, be considered and agreed to; that the bills be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

#### MODERNIZING ACCESS TO OUR PUBLIC WATERS ACT

A bill (S. 3123) to provide for the standardization, consolidation, and publication of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of Federal waterways among Federal land and water management agencies, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Modernizing Access to Our Public Waters Act".*

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

*In this Act:*

(1) **FEDERAL FISHING RESTRICTION.**—The term “Federal fishing restriction” means a defined area in which all or certain fishing activities are temporarily or permanently prohibited or restricted by a Federal land or water management agency.

(2) **FEDERAL LAND OR WATER MANAGEMENT AGENCY.**—The term “Federal land or water management agency” means—

- (A) the Bureau of Reclamation;
- (B) the National Park Service;
- (C) the Bureau of Land Management;
- (D) the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and
- (E) the Forest Service.

(3) **FEDERAL WATERWAY.**—The term “Federal waterway” means waters managed by a Federal land or water management agency.

(4) **FEDERAL WATERWAY RESTRICTION.**—The term “Federal waterway restriction” means a restriction on the access or use of a Federal waterway applied under applicable law by 1 or more of the Secretaries.

(5) **SECRETARIES.**—The term “Secretaries” means—

- (A) the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service; and
- (B) the Secretary of the Interior.

(6) **SECRETARY CONCERNED.**—The term “Secretary concerned” means—

- (A) the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, with respect to Federal waterways under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture; or
- (B) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to Federal waterways under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior.

**SEC. 3. INTERAGENCY DATA STANDARDIZATION.**

Not later than 30 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretaries, in consultation with the Federal Geographic Data Committee, shall jointly develop and adopt interagency standards to ensure compatibility and interoperability among applicable Federal databases with respect to the collection and dissemination of geospatial data relating to public outdoor recreational use of Federal waterways and Federal fishing restrictions.

#### **SEC. 4. DATA CONSOLIDATION AND PUBLICATION.**

(a) **FEDERAL WATERWAY RESTRICTIONS.**—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned, to the maximum extent practicable, shall digitize and make publicly available online, as applicable, geographic information system data that includes, with respect to Federal waterway restrictions—

- (1) status information with respect to the conditions under which Federal waterways are open or closed to entry or watercraft, including watercraft inspection or decontamination requirements;

- (2) the dates on which Federal waterways are seasonally closed to entry or watercraft;

- (3) the areas of Federal waterways with restrictions on motorized propulsion, horsepower, or gasoline fuel;

- (4) the areas of Federal waterways with anchoring restrictions, no wake zones, or vessel speed restrictions;

- (5) Federal waterway restrictions on the direction of travel, including upstream or downstream travel; and

- (6) the uses, including by watercraft, that are restricted on each area of a Federal waterway, including the permissibility of—

- (A) canoes and other paddlecraft;
- (B) rafts and driftboats;
- (C) motorboats;
- (D) personal watercraft;
- (E) airboats;
- (F) amphibious aircraft;
- (G) hovercraft;
- (H) oversnow vehicles and other motorized vehicles on frozen bodies of water;
- (I) swimming; and
- (J) other applicable recreational activities, as determined to be appropriate by the Secretary concerned.

(b) **FEDERAL WATERWAY ACCESS AND NAVIGATION INFORMATION.**—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned, to the maximum extent practicable, shall digitize and make publicly available online, as applicable, geographic information system data that includes, with respect to Federal waterway access and navigation information—

- (1)(A) the location of boat ramps, portages, and designated fishing access sites under the authority of the Secretary concerned; and
- (B) the identification of the dates on which the facilities and sites identified under subparagraph (A) are open or closed, as applicable; and

- (2) available bathymetric information and depth charts.

(c) **FEDERAL FISHING RESTRICTIONS.**—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned, to the maximum extent practicable, shall digitize and make publicly available online geographic information system data that describes, with respect to Federal fishing restrictions—

- (1) the location and geographic boundaries of Federal fishing restrictions on recreational and commercial fishing, including—

- (A) full or partial closures;
- (B) no-take zones; and

- (C) Federal fishing restrictions within or surrounding marine protected areas;

- (2) Federal fishing restrictions on the use of specific types of equipment or bait, such as restrictions on the use of barbed hooks or live bait; and

- (3) Federal requirements with respect to catch and release.

(d) **PUBLIC COMMENT.**—The Secretaries shall develop a process to allow members of the public to submit questions or comments regarding the information described in subsections (a) and (b).

(e) **UPDATES.**—The Secretary concerned, to the maximum extent practicable, shall update—

- (1) the data described in subsections (a) and (b) not less frequently than annually; and

- (2) the data described in subsection (c) in real time as changes go into effect.

(f) **EXCLUSION.**—This section shall not apply to irrigation canals and flowage easements.

(g) **DISCLOSURE.**—Any geographic information system data made publicly available under this section shall not disclose information regarding the nature, location, character, or ownership of historic, paleontological, or archaeological resources, consistent with applicable law.

#### **SEC. 5. COOPERATION AND COORDINATION.**

(a) **COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND THIRD-PARTY PROVIDERS.**—For purposes of carrying out this Act, the Secretary concerned may—

- (1) coordinate and partner with non-Federal agencies and private sector and nonprofit partners, including—

- (A) State natural resource agencies;
- (B) technology companies;

- (C) geospatial data companies; and

- (D) experts in data science, analytics, and operations research; and

- (2) enter into an agreement with a third party to carry out any provision of this Act.

(b) **UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.**—The Secretaries shall work with the Director of the United States Geological Survey to collect, aggregate, digitize, standardize, and publish data on behalf of the Secretaries to meet the requirements of this Act.

(c) **REQUIREMENT.**—With respect to data developed and distributed under this Act, the Secretaries shall—

- (1) develop the data in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and Tribal laws (including regulations); and

- (2) include a notice that any geospatial data are subject to applicable Federal, State, and Tribal laws (including regulations).

(d) **EXISTING EFFORTS.**—To the extent practicable, the Secretary concerned shall use or incorporate existing applicable data, maps, and resources in carrying out this Act, including

data, maps, and resources developed and published under—

- (1) the Modernizing Access to Our Public Land Act (16 U.S.C. 6851 et seq.);

- (2) section 103 of division DD of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (43 U.S.C. 776); or

- (3) other applicable law.

#### **SEC. 6. REPORTS.**

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act and annually thereafter through March 30, 2033, the Secretaries shall submit a report that describes the progress made by the Secretaries with respect to meeting the requirements of this Act to—

- (1) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate;

- (2) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate;

- (3) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives;

- (4) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives; and

- (5) the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives.

#### **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

There are authorized to be appropriated—

- (1) to the Secretary of the Interior to carry out this Act—

- (A) \$3,000,000 for fiscal year 2025; and

- (B) \$6,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029; and

- (2) to the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out this Act—

- (A) \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 2025; and

- (B) \$4,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.

#### **SEC. 8. EFFECT.**

Nothing in this Act—

- (1) modifies or alters the definition of the term “navigable waters” under Federal law;

- (2) affects the jurisdiction or authority of State or Federal agencies to regulate navigable waters;

- (3) modifies or alters the authority or jurisdiction of Federal or State agencies to manage fisheries; or

- (4) expands or restricts access to Federal waterways.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 3123), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

### **LAND MANAGER HOUSING AND WORKFORCE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2024**

A bill (S. 5125) to provide for certain improvements to the housing and workforce programs of Federal land management agencies, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

#### **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Land Manager Housing and Workforce Improvement Act of 2024”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

#### **TITLE I—EXPANDING AUTHORITY**

Sec. 101. Prioritizing National Park Service workforce housing.

Sec. 102. Authorizing the National Park Service to address workforce housing off-park.