

Madam Speaker, I support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ANSARI. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in support of Representative BEGICH's H.R. 42, the Alaska Native Settlement Trust Eligibility Act.

Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971 to address land claims in the State of Alaska. Per an agreement, Alaska Native corporations were established, and the Federal Government transferred to them 44 million acres and \$962.5 million in compensation funds.

However, when an individual receives a distribution from an Alaska Native settlement trust, part of this law requires that the Federal Government include that distribution when determining the person's eligibility for various governmental programs such as for housing and supplemental income and nutritional assistance.

H.R. 42 would amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to exclude from that calculation any such distributions provided to aged, blind, or disabled Alaska Natives.

These are critical services that support the livelihoods of some of the most vulnerable Alaska Natives. Over the years, the failure to address this issue has often forced Alaska Natives to choose between receiving the settlement trust fund benefits they are entitled to or qualifying for need-based Federal benefits. H.R. 42 would solve this problem, which is great news.

I will remind my colleagues, though, that this bill of course, doesn't remove the risk that this administration will try to illegally freeze or pause anyone's Federal benefits. Moreover, this bill will be of small comfort if Republicans make good on their promises to cut need-based Federal programs to pay for their billionaire tax breaks. These aren't hypotheticals. The House Republican Study Committee's budget proposal last fall called for cutting SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, by about 22 percent, for example.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, but I also urge them to oppose the lawlessness we have been seeing in the administration and to oppose cuts to programs that help the most vulnerable people in our communities. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH), who is the lead sponsor of this bill.

Mr. BEGICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 42, the Alaska Native Settlement Trust Eligibility Act. This legislation makes a simple but necessary fix to Federal law, ensuring that certain benefits distributed through Alaska Native corporation settlement trusts do not unreasonably disqualify vulnerable Alaskans from receiving assistance.

For decades, Alaska Native corporations have provided vital support to

their shareholders, including through settlement trusts, an essential tool Congress authorized in 1988 to deliver benefits in a structured, perpetual way. However, due to an oversight in the law, payments from these trusts are counted as income when determining eligibility for Federal programs like Supplemental Security Income, SNAP, and housing assistance.

That means visually impaired and disabled Alaska Natives and elders are forced to make an impossible choice: accept the benefits from their settlement trusts or maintain their access to critical assistance.

By ensuring that these benefits are not counted as income, H.R. 42 aligns settlement trust distributions with other Alaska Native benefits already excluded from eligibility calculations. It upholds the original intent of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and protects the most vulnerable in need in our Alaska Native communities.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan, commonsense legislation. Let's ensure that no one has to choose between their critical assistance and their well-being.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ANSARI. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, again, this legislation would ensure that amounts distributed or benefits provided from Alaska Native corporation settlement trusts to Alaska Natives who are blind, disabled, or elders aged 65 and older, or their descendants, are excluded when determining eligibility for means-tested Federal benefits.

Again, Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. BEGICH for his work on an important issue for Alaska Natives, I urge the adoption of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 42.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ALASKA NATIVE VILLAGE MUNICIPAL LANDS RESTORATION ACT OF 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 43) to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to provide that Village Corporations shall not be required to convey land in trust to the State of Alaska for the estab-

lishment of Municipal Corporations, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 43

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. REVERSION OF CERTAIN LAND CONVEYED IN TRUST TO THE STATE OF ALASKA.

Section 14(c) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1613(c)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (5) as subparagraphs (A) through (E), respectively, and indenting appropriately;

(2) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) (as so redesignated), by striking "(c) Each patent" and inserting the following:

"(c) CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN LAND BY VILLAGE CORPORATION.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—Each patent";

(3) in paragraph (1) (as so designated), in the undesignated matter following subparagraph (E) (as so redesignated), in the first sentence—

(A) by striking "section 14(c) of this Act" and inserting "this subsection"; and

(B) by striking "There is authorized" and inserting the following:

"(2) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized";

(4) in paragraph (2)(A) (as so redesignated), in the second sentence, by striking "The Secretary" and inserting the following:

"(B) FORM OF FUNDING.—The Secretary"; and

(5) in paragraph (1) (as so designated)—

(A) in each of subparagraphs (A) and (B) (as so redesignated)—

(i) by striking "the" the first place it appears and inserting "The"; and

(ii) by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting a period;

(B) in subparagraph (D) (as so redesignated), by striking "the" the first place it appears and inserting "The";

(C) by striking "existed as of" in subparagraph (D) (as so redesignated) and all that follows through "for" in subparagraph (E) (as so redesignated) and inserting the following: "existed as of December 18, 1971.

"(E) For"; and

(D) in subparagraph (C) (as so redesignated)—

(i) by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting a period;

(ii) by striking "in trust: *Provided, however,* That the word" and all that follows through "sentence," and inserting the following: "in trust.

"(II) DEFINITION OF SALE.—For purposes of subclause (I), the term 'sale'";

(iii) by striking "one thousand two hundred and eighty acres: *Provided further,* That any net" and inserting the following: "1,280 acres.

"(iii) NET REVENUES.—

"(I) IN GENERAL.—Any net";

(iv) by striking "community needs: *Provided,* That the" and inserting the following: "community needs.

"(ii) MINIMUM ACREAGE.—The";

(v) by striking "(C) the Village Corporation" and inserting the following:

"(C) CONVEYANCE TO MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OR THE STATE IN TRUST.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—The Village Corporation"; and

(vi) by adding at the end the following:

"(iv) CASES IN WHICH CONVEYANCE SHALL NOT BE REQUIRED.—

“(I) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this subparagraph, if a Village Corporation, prior to the date of enactment of the Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2025, conveyed to the State in trust all or a portion of the acreage of land required to be conveyed under this subparagraph for the establishment of a Municipal Corporation in the future, and a Municipal Corporation has not been established as of that date of enactment, on formal resolution by the Village Corporation and the residents of the Native village requesting dissolution of the trust, the trust shall be dissolved and title to the land shall revert to the Village Corporation, subject to subclause (III).

“(II) ADDITIONAL LAND.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this subparagraph, as of the date of enactment of the Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2025, a Village Corporation shall not be required to convey any additional land in trust under this subparagraph for the establishment of a Municipal Corporation in the future.

“(III) REQUIREMENTS.—In accordance with subsection (g)—

“(aa) the reversion of land to a Village Corporation pursuant to subclause (I) shall be subject to—

“(AA) valid existing rights created by the applicable trust; and

“(BB) any existing easements, rights-of-way necessary for public roadway access, or rights-of-way for access of holders of valid existing rights; and

“(bb) the Village Corporation shall assume the obligations of the applicable trust with respect to any lease or other use agreement applicable to the land on reversion of the land to the Village Corporation pursuant to subclause (I).”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. ANSARI) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous material on H.R. 43, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 43, the Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2025, would amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA, and to return lands back to Alaska Native Village Corporations that are currently held in trust by the State of Alaska for future municipalities.

ANCSA was enacted to settle aboriginal land claims of Alaska Natives, and in doing so Alaska Native corporations were created to receive land and disburse payments to Alaska Natives.

ANCSA required Alaska Native Village Corporations that received land to convey some land to an existing municipality. If no municipality existed, the land was conveyed to the State of

Alaska to be held in trust for a future municipality.

Over the past 53 years, only eight Village Corporations have seen a municipality created, with the most recent municipality created in 1995. This leaves 11,500 acres throughout 83 villages unable to be developed because it must be held in trust by Alaska in perpetuity for the unlikely creation of a municipality.

H.R. 43 would end this requirement for Village Corporations to reconvey lands for a potential municipality and return land already conveyed under this provision to Village Corporations. If returned, Village Corporations anticipate developing this land for housing, community buildings, and other economic development projects.

There is widespread support for H.R. 43 within the State of Alaska.

The Alaska State Senate unanimously passed S.J. Res. 13 on May 9, 2024, which encouraged the enactment of Federal legislation to return the reconveyed lands to Alaska Native Village Corporations. Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy is also supportive of the legislative fix that H.R. 43 would provide.

Again, Madam Speaker, I thank the sponsor of this legislation, Mr. BEGICH, for his work to introduce this bill on the first day of the 119th Congress so that we could bring it to the floor quickly. I appreciate his diligence and swift work on behalf of Alaska, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ANSARI. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of Representative BEGICH's H.R. 43, the Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2025.

Under current law, when an Alaska Native Village Corporation receives land pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, then the Village Corporation must convey certain lands to its municipal government. If none exists, then the law requires them to convey the land to the State of Alaska to be held in trust for when a municipality is established in the future.

The problem is that in many remote Alaska Native communities, it is unlikely that a municipal government will ever be formed, which means the land being held in trust won't ever be used for its intended purpose.

In fact, since the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971, 101 Village Corporations have had lands held in trust by the State but only 8 of those villages have incorporated into a municipality, and none have done so since 1995.

This bill would remove the requirement that Alaska Native Village Corporations convey land in trust to the State of Alaska for the hypothetical establishment of Municipal Corporations, and it would allow the Village Corporations to have the State of Alaska reconvey such lands back to them.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, which will

allow communities themselves to make decisions about how best to utilize their own lands. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH), who is the lead sponsor of the bill.

Mr. BEGICH. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 43, the Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act. This bill corrects a decades-old oversight in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to ensure Alaska Native communities can fully use their own land.

In 1971, ANCSA granted fee simple land ownership to Alaska Natives, resolving historic land claims and enabling statehood land entitlements. However, section 14(c)(3) required Native Village Corporations to transfer land to the State of Alaska to be held in trust for future municipalities. More than 50 years later, only 8 of 101 affected villages have incorporated, leaving 11,500 acres in 83 villages frozen in bureaucratic limbo.

H.R. 43 eliminates this outdated requirement and returns these lands to Village Corporations, allowing for housing, economic development, and community expansion. This bill restores self-determination, ensuring Alaska Natives, not government bureaucracy, decide how to use their own land.

This legislation has broad support, as was mentioned, including from the Alaska Governor and State Legislature, and was unanimously passed by the Senate in the last Congress. I urge my colleagues to support this common-sense fix and allow these lands to be used by their owners to support their own communities.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ANSARI. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, again, this legislation would amend ANCSA to return the land in question to impacted Alaska Native Village Corporations and eliminate the unnecessary land conveyance requirement in the statute.

I thank Mr. BEGICH for his leadership and working on this important issue for his constituents in Alaska.

Madam Speaker, I urge adoption of H.R. 43, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 43.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE HISTORIC LANDS REACQUISITION ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 226) to take certain Federal lands in Tennessee into trust for the benefit of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 226

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Eastern Band of Cherokee Historic Lands Reacquisition Act”.

SEC. 2. LAND TAKEN INTO TRUST FOR THE EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS.

(a) LANDS INTO TRUST.—Subject to such rights of record as may be vested in third parties to rights-of-way or other easements or rights-of-record for roads, utilities, or other purposes, the following Federal lands managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority and located on or above the 820-foot (MSL) contour elevation in Monroe County, Tennessee, on the shores of Tellico Reservoir, are declared to be held in trust by the United States for the use and benefit of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians:

(1) SEQUOYAH MUSEUM PROPERTY.—Approximately 46.0 acres of land generally depicted as “Sequoyah Museum”, “Parcel 1”, and “Parcel 2” on the map titled “Eastern Band of Cherokee Historic Lands Reacquisition Map 1” and dated April 30, 2015.

(2) SUPPORT PROPERTY.—Approximately 11.9 acres of land generally depicted as “Support Parcel” on the map titled “Eastern Band of Cherokee Historic Lands Reacquisition Map 2” and dated April 30, 2015.

(3) CHOTA MEMORIAL PROPERTY AND TANASI MEMORIAL PROPERTY.—Approximately 18.2 acres of land generally depicted as “Chota Memorial 1” and “Tanasi Memorial” on the map titled “Eastern Band of Cherokee Historic Lands Reacquisition Map 3” and dated April 30, 2015, and including the Chota Memorial and all land within a circle with a radius of 86 feet measured from the center of the Chota Memorial without regard to the elevation of the land within the circle.

(b) PROPERTY ON LANDS.—In addition to the land taken into trust by subsection (a), the improvements on and appurtenances thereto, including memorials, are and shall remain the property of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

(c) REVISED MAPS.—Not later than 1 year after the date of a land transaction made pursuant to this section, the Tennessee Valley Authority, after consultation with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Secretary of the Interior, shall submit revised maps that depict the land taken into trust under this section, including any corrections made to the maps described in this section to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate.

(d) CONTOUR ELEVATION CLARIFICATION.—The contour elevations referred to in this Act are based on MSL Datum as established

by the NGS Southeastern Supplementary Adjustment of 1936 (NGVD29).

(e) CONDITIONS.—The lands taken into trust under this section shall be subject to the conditions described in section 5.

SEC. 3. PERMANENT EASEMENTS TAKEN INTO TRUST FOR THE EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS.

(a) PERMANENT EASEMENTS.—The following permanent easements for land below the 820-foot (MSL) contour elevation for the following Federal lands in Monroe County, Tennessee, on the shores of Tellico Reservoir, are declared to be held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians:

(1) CHOTA PENINSULA.—Approximately 8.5 acres of land generally depicted as “Chota Memorial 2” on the map titled “Eastern Band of Cherokee Historic Lands Reacquisition Map 3” and dated April 30, 2015.

(2) CHOTA-TANASI TRAIL.—Approximately 11.4 acres of land generally depicted as “Chota-Tanasi Trail” on the map titled “Eastern Band of Cherokee Historic Lands Reacquisition Map 3” and dated April 30, 2015.

(b) REVISED MAPS.—Not later than 1 year after the date of a land transaction made pursuant to this section, the Tennessee Valley Authority, after consultation with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Secretary of the Interior, shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate revised maps that depict the lands subject to easements taken into trust under this section, including any corrections necessary to the maps described in this section.

(c) CONDITIONS.—The lands subject to easements taken into trust under this section shall be subject to the use rights and conditions described in section 5.

SEC. 4. TRUST ADMINISTRATION AND PURPOSES.

(a) APPLICABLE LAWS.—Except as described in section 5, the lands subject to this Act shall be administered under the laws and regulations generally applicable to lands and interests in lands held in trust on behalf of Indian tribes.

(b) USE OF LAND.—Except the lands described in section 2(a)(2), the lands subject to this Act shall be used principally for memorializing and interpreting the history and culture of Indians and recreational activities, including management, operation, and conduct of programs of and for—

(1) the Sequoyah birthplace memorial and museum;

(2) the memorials to Chota and Tanasi as former capitals of the Cherokees;

(3) the memorial and place of reinterment for remains of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and other Cherokee tribes, including those transferred to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and other Cherokee tribes and those human remains and cultural items transferred by the Tennessee Valley Authority to those Cherokee tribes under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.); and

(4) interpreting the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

(c) USE OF SUPPORT PROPERTY.—The land described in section 2(a)(2) shall be used principally for the support of lands subject to this Act and the programs offered by the Tribe relating to such lands and their purposes including—

(1) classrooms and conference rooms;

(2) cultural interpretation and education programs;

(3) temporary housing of guests participating in such programs or the management of the properties and programs; and

(4) headquarters offices and support space for the trust properties and programs.

(d) LAND USE.—The principal purposes of the use of the land described in section 3(a)—

(1) paragraph (1), shall be for a recreational trail from the general vicinity of the parking lot to the area of the Chota Memorial and beyond to the southern portion of the peninsula, including interpretive signs, benches, and other compatible improvements; and

(2) paragraph (2), shall be for a recreational trail between the Chota and Tanasi Memorials, including interpretive signs, benches, and other compatible improvements.

SEC. 5. USE RIGHTS, CONDITIONS.

(a) FLOODING OF LAND AND ROADS.—The Tennessee Valley Authority may temporarily and intermittently flood the lands subject to this Act that lie below the 824-foot (MSL) contour elevation and the road access to such lands that lie below the 824-foot (MSL) contour elevation.

(b) FACILITIES AND STRUCTURES.—The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians may construct, own, operate, and maintain—

(1) water use facilities and nonhabitable structures, facilities, and improvements not subject to serious damage if temporarily flooded on the land adjoining the Tellico Reservoir side of the lands subject to this Act that lie between the 815-foot and 820-foot (MSL) contour elevations, but only after having received written consent from the Tennessee Valley Authority and subject to the terms of such approval; and

(2) water use facilities between the 815-foot (MSL) contour elevations on the Tellico Reservoir side of the lands subject to this Act and the adjacent waters of Tellico Reservoir and in and on such waters after having received written consent from the Tennessee Valley Authority and subject to the terms of such approval, but may not construct, own, operate, or maintain other nonhabitable structures, facilities, and improvements on such lands.

(c) INGRESS AND EGRESS.—The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians may use the lands subject to this Act and Tellico Reservoir for ingress and egress to and from such land and the waters of the Tellico Reservoir and to and from all structures, facilities, and improvements maintained in, on, or over such land or waters.

(d) RIVER CONTROL AND DEVELOPMENT.—The use rights under this section may not be exercised so as to interfere in any way with the Tennessee Valley Authority’s statutory program for river control and development.

(e) TVA AUTHORITIES.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to affect the right of the Tennessee Valley Authority to—

(1) draw down Tellico Reservoir;

(2) fluctuate the water level thereof as may be necessary for its management of the Reservoir; or

(3) permanently flood lands adjacent to lands subject to this Act that lie below the 815-foot (MSL) contour elevation.

(f) RIGHT OF ENTRY.—The lands subject to this Act shall be subject to a reasonable right of entry by the personnel of the Tennessee Valley Authority and agents of the Tennessee Valley Authority operating in their official capacities as necessary for purposes of carrying out the Tennessee Valley Authority’s statutory program for river control and development.

(g) ENTRY ONTO LAND.—To the extent that the Tennessee Valley Authority’s operations on the lands subject to this Act do not unreasonably interfere with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians’ maintenance of an appropriate setting for the memorialization of Cherokee history or culture on the lands and its operations on the lands, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians shall allow the Tennessee Valley Authority to enter the lands to clear, ditch, dredge, and drain said lands