

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3707

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Groundwork USA national office, to provide grants to certain nonprofit organizations.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 7, 2015

Ms. TSONGAS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Natural Resources and Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Groundwork USA national office, to provide grants to certain nonprofit organizations.

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 “Groundwork USA
5 Trust Act of 2015”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) locally organized and controlled entities that
2 are linked together through a national program of-
3 fice have the ability to lead cost-effective projects
4 and programs that are responsive to community
5 needs and essential to improving the local environ-
6 ment, economy, and quality of life;

7 (2) local community involvement with how land
8 is being used is an essential component to the eco-
9 nomic success of a neighborhood;

10 (3) underutilized and neglected vacant lands
11 significantly erode nearby property values and bur-
12 den municipal tax bases;

13 (4) landscaping and maintenance, especially
14 when local citizens are involved in the process, de-
15 creases negative stigma and generates civic pride,
16 which in turn significantly reduces vandalism and il-
17 licit activities typically associated with idle lands;

18 (5) cleaning, landscaping, and tree planting
19 within vacant and abandoned land and brownfields
20 adds economic value to a community through in-
21 creased occupancy rates, and improved sales appeal
22 of nearby residential and commercial real estate; and

23 (6) the transformation of idle lands and
24 brownfields into cleaner, greener, community assets

1 has been exemplified by a network of federally
2 backed Groundwork USA Trusts for over 8 years.

3 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

4 In this Act:

5 (1) BROWNFIELDS.—The term “brownfields”
6 means real property, the expansion, redevelopment,
7 or reuse of which may be complicated by the pres-
8 ence or potential presence of a hazardous substance,
9 pollutant, or contaminant.

10 (2) ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATION.—The term “eligi-
11 ble organization” means a—

12 (A) nonprofit organization that applies for
13 a grant award under section 4(b) to establish a
14 Groundwork USA Trust; and

15 (B) Groundwork USA Trust.

16 (3) GROUNDWORK USA NATIONAL OFFICE.—
17 The term “Groundwork USA national office” means
18 the independent, nonprofit, environmental business
19 incorporated under the laws of the State of New
20 York, which overseas and creates a link between
21 local Groundwork USA Trust offices.

22 (4) GROUNDWORK USA TRUST.—The term
23 “Groundwork USA Trust” means an independent,
24 nonprofit, environmental organization that works

1 with communities to improve their environment,
 2 economy, and quality of life through local action.

3 (5) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.—The term
 4 “nonprofit organization” means an organization that
 5 is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Rev-
 6 enue Code of 1986 and is exempt from tax under
 7 section 501(a) of such Code.

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

10 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF GROUNDWORK USA TRUST**
 11 **PROGRAM.**

12 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF GRANT PROGRAM.—The
 13 Secretary, in consultation with the Groundwork USA na-
 14 tional office, is authorized to award grants to eligible orga-
 15 nizations.

16 (b) APPLICATION.—An eligible organization desiring
 17 a grant under the program shall submit an application to
 18 the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and con-
 19 taining such information as the Secretary, in consultation
 20 with the Groundwork USA national office, may require.

21 **SEC. 5. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION.**

22 Each grant award provided under section 4(a) shall
 23 be made on the basis of the quality of the application sub-
 24 mitted, taking into consideration such factors as the fol-
 25 lowing:

1 (1) The population and demographics of the
2 community and the environmental, community, or
3 economic development issues which an eligible entity
4 could help address.

5 (2) The level of experience with community and
6 environmental improvement activities of an eligible
7 organization and the role such organization will play
8 in the implementation of Groundwork USA Trust
9 activities.

10 (3) The level in which the community or local
11 government in which the eligible organization is
12 based is a current or past recipient of funding or as-
13 sistance from the EPA Brownfields Program and
14 demonstrated success in those efforts.

15 (4) The level in which the eligible organization
16 has partnered with the National Park Service and
17 demonstrated success in those efforts.

18 (5) The level of community interest and com-
19 mitment to learn about, evaluate, and partner with
20 a Groundwork USA Trust.

21 (6) The number and level of opportunities to
22 improve the local environment for conservation,
23 recreation, and economic development, including:

24 (A) The potential to facilitate the creation,
25 improvement, and stewardship of parks, green-

1 ways, open space, and nature reserves and in-
2 crease opportunities for recreation, conserva-
3 tion, food security, environmental education,
4 and other environmental improvements in com-
5 munities impacted by brownfields.

6 (B) The potential to stimulate economic
7 and environmental rejuvenation of communities
8 impacted by brownfield issues.

9 (C) The potential to increase the capacity
10 of communities with limited means to improve
11 their environment, economy, and quality of life.

12 (D) The potential to engage the local com-
13 munity in the planning and development of
14 projects and programs to improve its local envi-
15 ronment, including the assessment, cleanup,
16 and reuse of brownfield sites for parks, recre-
17 ation facilities, nature areas, gardens, trails,
18 and other community benefits.

19 (E) The potential to contribute to the use
20 or reuse of existing infrastructure.

21 (7) The ability to address the issue of
22 brownfields in the community or target area, includ-
23 ing:

24 (A) The potential to leverage or stimulate
25 funds from other sources to support the assess-

ment and remediation of brownfields and their reuse for parks, recreation facilities, nature areas, and other community benefits.

(B) The potential to engage the local community in the planning and implementation of projects and programs to assess, cleanup, and reuse brownfields for parks, recreation facilities, nature areas, and other community benefits.

(C) The potential to help reduce the threats to human health and the local environment associated with the presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants.

(D) The potential to help address or facilitate the identification and reduction of threats to the health and welfare of populations at risk.

SEC. 6. USE OF FUNDS.

A grant award provided under the program may be used to—

(1) provide training, research, and technical assistance to individuals and organizations, as appropriate, to facilitate the inventory of brownfield sites, site assessments, remediation of brownfield sites, community involvement, or site preparation;

(2) increase the capacity of communities to improve and care for their local environment;

1 (3) reclaim vacant and derelict lands for con-
2 servation, recreation, and economic development;

3 (4) clean up and care for neglected areas to sig-
4 nal community pride and rejuvenation;

5 (5) return brownfields to economically produc-
6 tive use while restoring blighted landscapes with
7 healthy environments;

8 (6) integrate environmental education, food se-
9 curity, health and fitness, resource management,
10 and job training;

11 (7) encourage businesses, local governments,
12 nonprofits, and communities to work together for
13 sustainable environmental care and enhancement;

14 (8) support businesses, local governments, non-
15 profits, and communities in efforts to improve their
16 local environment;

17 (9) raise the profile of urban environmental im-
18 provements as part of a comprehensive approach to
19 smart growth strategies and rejuvenation of inner
20 city communities;

21 (10) acquire real property and buildings to re-
22 habilitate and improve upon for the local community
23 and perform maintenance on such property and
24 buildings, including mowing, irrigating, landscaping,
25 painting, and providing structural repairs;

1 (11) expand operations and locations of offices
2 to benefit a larger geographic area, and increase
3 staff;

4 (12) develop information systems and utilize
5 such systems for community- and regional-based re-
6 search and data dissemination; and

7 (13) develop programs that encourage regional
8 and national partnering with other environmental or-
9 ganizations.

10 **SEC. 7. MAXIMUM GRANT AWARD.**

11 A grant award under the program shall not exceed
12 \$400,000 for any fiscal year.

13 **SEC. 8. LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.**

14 The Secretary may reserve not more than 15 percent
15 of the amount made available under this Act to carry out
16 the program in a fiscal year for administrative costs, in-
17 cluding managing, administering, and assisting with tech-
18 nical support of operations for national and local Ground-
19 work USA offices.

20 **SEC. 9. ANNUAL REPORT.**

21 Each grant recipient shall submit to the Secretary
22 and the national Groundwork USA national office an an-
23 nual report at such time, in such manner, and containing
24 such information as the Secretary, in consultation with the
25 Groundwork USA national office, may require.

1 **SEC. 10. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
3 the program \$15,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2016
4 through 2021.

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