

Bison roamed across most of North America before nearly being wiped from existence. Through the efforts of tribes, ranchers, conservationists, and others, the species has survived and can once again be lifted as a literal and cultural example of productivity from which each of us can learn.

I am proud that my family has raised bison as well. They are majestic animals that represent the Plains that we are so proud of and that I am so honored to represent today.

I want to thank the chairman and his staff for bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers at this time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In conclusion, let me just say one of the most majestic animals on the face of the planet is the American bison. You go to see it and you just sit in awe and you think of the rich history and the role that it has played in our Nation. It serves as a symbol on two of our State flags, and it is the seal of the Department of the Interior.

I just want to say that I hope all Americans—especially the youth—get a chance to see one of the bison out in the wild. It was close to extinction, but it was brought back. There are hundreds of thousands of them now. Whether you go to South Dakota or up to Yellowstone, Montana, there are places where you can really see these bison out. It really is an amazing sight. I think it is appropriate that we move this bill today.

I want to thank Mr. CLAY of Missouri and, in particular, Mrs. NOEM of South Dakota for her recognizing the importance of this issue. I also want to thank Mrs. LUMMIS of Wyoming. She offered an important amendment that made an adjustment to the bill. I think this is a smart thing for the Congress to do, and I urge its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2908, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES CENTENNIAL COMMISSION ACT

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2615) to establish the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2615

*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 "Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission Act".*

#### SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT.

*There is established a commission to be known as the "Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission" (in this Act referred to as the "Commission").*

#### SEC. 3. DUTIES OF COMMISSION.

*The Commission shall—*

*(1) plan, develop, and carry out such activities as the Commission determines to be appropriate to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Virgin Islands of the United States becoming an unincorporated territory of the United States;*

*(2) provide advice and assistance to Federal, State, and local governmental agencies, as well as civic groups to carry out activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Virgin Islands of the United States becoming an unincorporated territory of the United States; and*

*(3) submit to the President and Congress the reports required pursuant to section 7.*

#### SEC. 4. MEMBERSHIP.

*(a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission shall be composed of 8 members as follows:*

*(1) The Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Insular Affairs or a designee of the Assistant Secretary.*

*(2) One member appointed by the Governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States or a designee of the Governor.*

*(3) Two Members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

*(4) One Member of the House of Representatives appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives.*

*(5) Two Members of the Senate appointed by the majority leader of the Senate.*

*(6) One Member of the Senate appointed by the minority leader of the Senate.*

*(b) TERMS.—Each member of the Commission shall be appointed for the life of the Commission.*

*(c) DEADLINE FOR APPOINTMENT.—All members of the Commission shall be appointed not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.*

*(d) VACANCIES.—A vacancy on the Commission shall—*

*(1) not affect the powers of the Commission; and*

*(2) be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made.*

*(e) RATES OF PAY.—Members shall not receive compensation for the performance of duties on behalf of the Commission.*

*(f) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Each member of the Commission shall be reimbursed for travel and per diem in lieu of subsistence expenses during the performance of duties of the Commission while away from home or regular place of business of the member, in accordance with applicable provisions under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code.*

*(g) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum to conduct business, but two or more members may hold hearings.*

*(h) CHAIRPERSON.—The chairperson of the Commission shall be selected by a majority vote of the members of the Commission.*

#### SEC. 5. DIRECTOR AND STAFF OF COMMISSION.

*(a) DIRECTOR AND STAFF.—The Commission shall appoint an executive director and such other additional personnel as are necessary to enable the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.*

*(b) APPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN CIVIL SERVICE LAWS.—The executive director and staff of the*

*Commission may be appointed without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and may be paid without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the executive director and other staff may not exceed the rate payable for level III of the Executive Schedule under section 5314 of such title.*

*(c) DETAIL OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.—Upon request of the Commission, the Secretary of the Interior or the Archivist of the United States may detail, on a reimbursable basis, any of the personnel of the Department of the Interior or the National Archives and Records Administration, respectively to the Commission to assist the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.*

*(d) EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.—The Commission may procure such temporary and intermittent services from experts and consultants as are necessary to enable the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.*

*(e) VOLUNTEER AND UNCOMPENSATED SERVICES.—Notwithstanding section 1342 of title 31, United States Code, the Commission may accept and use voluntary and uncompensated services as the Commission determines necessary.*

#### SEC. 6. POWERS OF COMMISSION.

*(a) HEARINGS.—The Commission may, for the purpose of carrying out this Act, hold hearings, sit and act at times and places, take testimony, and receive evidence as the Commission considers appropriate.*

*(b) MAILS.—The Commission may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as other Federal agencies.*

*(c) OBTAINING OFFICIAL DATA.—The Commission may secure directly from any Federal agency information necessary to enable the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission. Upon request of the chairperson of the Commission, the head of that Federal agency shall furnish that information to the Commission.*

*(d) GIFTS, BEQUESTS, DEVICES.—The Commission may solicit, accept, use, and dispose of gifts, bequests, or devises of money, services, or property, both real and personal, for the purpose of aiding or facilitating the work of the Commission.*

*(e) AVAILABLE SPACE.—Upon the request of the Commission, the Administrator of General Services shall make available to the Commission, at a normal rental rate for Federal agencies, such assistance and facilities as may be necessary for the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.*

*(f) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—The Commission may enter into contracts with and compensate the Federal Government, State and local governments, private entities, or individuals to enable the Commission to perform the duties of the Commission.*

#### SEC. 7. REPORTS.

*(a) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than January 31 of each year, and annually thereafter until the final report is submitted pursuant to subsection (b), the Commission shall submit to the President and the Congress a report on—*

*(1) the activities of the Commission; and*  
*(2) the revenue and expenditures of the Commission, including a list of each gift, bequest, or devise to the Commission with a value of more than \$250, including the identity of the donor of each gift, bequest, or devise.*

*(b) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than January 31, 2018, the Commission shall submit a final report to the President and the Congress containing—*

*(1) a summary of the activities of the Commission; and*

*(2) a final accounting of funds received and expended by the Commission.*

#### SEC. 8. ANNUAL AUDIT.

*The Inspector General of the Department of the Interior—*

(1) may perform an audit of the Commission;  
 (2) shall make the results of any such audit available to the public; and

(3) shall transmit such results to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

#### SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **FEDERAL AGENCY.**—The term “Federal agency” has the meaning given the term “agency” in section 551 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) **STATE.**—The term “State” means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, each territory or possession of the United States, and each federally recognized Indian tribe.

#### SEC. 10. TERMINATION.

The Commission shall terminate on September 30, 2018, or may terminate at an earlier date determined by the Commission after the final report is submitted pursuant to section 7(b).

#### SEC. 11. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No Federal funds are authorized or may be obligated to carry out this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I prefer to have the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands, who is the chief sponsor of this bill, speak first on this issue.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume and thank the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on behalf of H.R. 2615, the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission Act. H.R. 2615 will establish a short-term commission to research, plan, develop, and carry out activities related to the 100th anniversary of the Virgin Islands becoming part of the United States.

The commission will revisit the history leading up to and directly following the transfer of the islands from Denmark to the United States. Its purpose will be to educate those unaware of that history on a national level of the importance of the territories to the geopolitical advancement of this great Nation.

The history of the Virgin Islands and its people is profound, Mr. Speaker. It tells a story of a land so resource-rich and unique in its geography that it was occupied by seven different nations. It tells the story of a resilient people who insurrected slavery and colonial oppression to achieve self-governance.

In 1493, when Christopher Columbus landed on the island of St. Croix, which

was then called Aye Aye by its native inhabitants, it is the only place in what is now the United States in which Christopher Columbus landed, but it is also reported to be the first place that he met armed resistance. He renamed islands, part of a chain, the Virgin Islands.

In 1733, on the island of St. John, the slaves rose up, taking control of the island for almost a year until European powers worked together and the Danish received the help of the French and Spanish Armada to help quell what would have been and was one of the first slave uprisings in the New World.

In the mid-1700s, a young boy on the island of St. Croix by the name of Alexander Hamilton received the support of merchant patrons on the island who put together sufficient money to finance his travel and education to the Colonies. He brought to the Colonies his understanding of finance and a monetary system learned from apprenticeship from those merchants, as well as the unique accounting theories from the West African slaves of the island.

Those economic gifts, along with his fighting spirit for revolution, liberty, and abolitionist fervor served him and this country well, as he would soon become the first United States Secretary of the Treasury and creator of our modern financial system.

Virgin Islanders have played an integral role in the history of this Nation well before we were even part of this country. From its inception and beyond, activists and politicians, David Levy Yulee, the first Jewish United States Senator; Denmark Vesey, leader of the Charleston, South Carolina, slave revolt; Judah Benjamin, Secretary of Treasury of the Confederate Army, are all Virgin Islanders.

William Leidesdorff, the founder of San Francisco, and Edward Wilmot Blyden, one of the founders of Liberia, are also from the Virgin Islands.

After purchase by the United States in 1917, the contributions of Virgin Islanders have continued through individuals like David Hamilton Jackson, who was a staunch free press advocate and labor movement leader; Hubert Harrison, a key figure in the movement of the Harlem Renaissance; military veterans like Alton Adams, who was the first African American naval bandleader; and General Samuel Ebbesen.

Ambassador Terence Todman and Congress of Racial Equality chief, Roy Innis, are Virgin Islanders. Actor Kelsey Grammer and future NBA Hall-of-Famer Timothy Duncan are all from the Virgin Islands.

The first female physician of this body as a Member of Congress, my predecessor, Donna Christensen, is a Virgin Islander.

During the time of exploration and slave trade, our geographic location made us a hub of Western Hemisphere commerce for several centuries and served a crucial role in naval military activity in the Caribbean Basin.

So nearly a century ago, the United States purchased the Virgin Islands from Denmark for its geographic importance. On March 31, 2017, the Virgin Islands of the United States will celebrate 100 years as a possession and part of the union of the United States.

This bill, H.R. 2615, establishes the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission to research, plan, develop, and carry out activities the commission considers appropriate to commemorate—and I say commemorate, not celebrate—commemorate a more solemn and worthy endeavor, the 100th anniversary of the Virgin Islands of the United States becoming an unincorporated territory of the United States.

Now, I have spent a lot of time talking about the Virgin Islands' history and people because at the time of its transfer nearly 100 years ago, little thought was given to the history, and even less to the people of the Virgin Islands.

As the Islanders during that time, my ancestors, my grandparents, watched the Danish flag come down and the Stars and Stripes unfold and ripple over the Fort in Christiansted and over many places in the Virgin Islands, they thought out loud: We knew what we had, but we don't know what we are going to get.

Our elders and leaders hoped and believed that the purchase by the United States would herald greater opportunities and profound modernization. Unfortunately, this has not happened.

It took a decade of petitioning and lobbying to be given citizenship, and we asked for—we asked for it and petitioned again to be part of the draft.

What people willingly offer their sons to fight and die, except those wholly willing to be part of the entire American experience?

Even now we have greater casualties per capita than any other group in this Nation in a volunteer military and is an example in part of our valor and patriotism.

Through passage of H.R. 2615, the commission will serve as a vehicle to begin the work to tell the story and serve to expose the aspirations and dreams of the American people who call the Virgin Islands home.

The commission will begin a national conservation, a discussion to assist in commemorating the great relationship between the United States and its islands—its American islands.

The commission will allow a platform for meaningful dialogue around the Virgin Islands' history with the United States, the genesis of the issues affecting the territory, as well as how we solve them.

This is an opportunity to engage lawmakers and our Nation around the challenges and enormous opportunities present in the Virgin Islands—opportunities like our ports and transshipment position, our broadband capacity, our intellectual and artistic pursuits, our university which serves as the only

HBCU in the Caribbean, and, most important, our people. Yes, the people still waiting to be recognized and made whole in that transfer nearly a century ago.

As the Virgin Islands enters this next century under United States jurisdiction, it will have continued relevance in the region as foreign investments, commerce, information technology, and maritime traffic grow in the Caribbean. It is my hope and it is my dream that its people will have greater relevance in this great Nation and that this commission will show all the importance of that.

I would like to thank all of the members of the committee for supporting this bill, voting it unanimously out of committee, and thank Ranking Member CUMMINGS and especially the chairman, Mr. CHAFFETZ, for working with my staff and me on this bill.

□ 1745

This bipartisan commission, which will be comprised of House and Senate Members along with the administration and other officials, seems only fitting, as the 100th anniversary comes only once.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2615.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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

How can you reject that? She said it as eloquently and as passionately from her heart as you possibly could. I am pleased that we could move this forward.

In short, this bill creates a bipartisan congressional commission to plan and carry out commemorative activities for the 100th anniversary of the Virgin Islands becoming an unincorporated territory of the United States. The transfer of the Virgin Islands from Denmark to the United States in 1917 was a significant historic and cultural event.

Under the bill, the bipartisan commission will develop, plan, and execute formal commemorative activities to honor the rich heritage of the Virgin Islands. The commission's goal is to highlight the cultural, economic, and historical importance of the Virgin Islands. By celebrating this anniversary, the commission also has the opportunity to educate the citizens about the history of the United States Virgin Islands.

The commission may solicit and accept gifts and donations to fund its activities, but there is a prohibition, as the legislation bars any use of Federal funds.

Again, I thank our colleague, STACEY PLASKETT, the Delegate from the Virgin Islands, for her passion and caring. It is one of the most beautiful places on the face of the planet—second, of course, to Utah's Third Congressional District. But, nevertheless, I think that is why they accepted this. I hope everybody gets a chance to visit there.

My daughter—on a personal note—was able to work there this past sum-

mer for 3 months. She thoroughly enjoyed the people, the culture, and the sheer beauty that is the Virgin Islands.

I look forward to supporting this piece of legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2615, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

**ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE REFORM ACT**

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4359) to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide that Federal employees may not be placed on administrative leave for more than 14 days during any year for misconduct or poor performance, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4359

*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 "Administrative Leave Reform Act".

**SEC. 2. LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 63 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

**"§ 6330. Limitation on administrative leave**

"(a) IN GENERAL.—During any calendar year, an employee may not be placed on administrative leave, or any other paid non-duty status without charge to leave, for more than 14 total days for reasons relating to misconduct or performance. After an employee has been placed on administrative leave for 14 days, the employing agency shall return the employee to duty status, utilizing telework if available, and assign the employee to duties if such employee is not a threat to safety, the agency mission, or Government property.

**"(b) EXTENDED ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE.—**

"(1) IN GENERAL.—If an agency finds that an employee is a threat to safety, the agency mission, or Government property and upon the expiration of the 14-day period described in subsection (a), an agency head may place the employee on extended administrative leave for additional periods of not more than 30 days each.

"(2) REPORT.—For any additional period of 30 days granted to the employee after the initial 30-day extension, the agency head shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in the House of Representatives, the agency's authorizing committees of jurisdiction of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report, not later than 5 business days after granting the additional period, containing—

"(A) title, position, office or agency subcomponent, job series, pay grade, and salary of the employee on administrative leave;

"(B) a description of the work duties of the employee;

"(C) the reason the employee is on administrative leave;

"(D) an explanation as to why the employee is a threat to safety, the agency mission, or Government property;

"(E) an explanation as to why the employee is not able to telework or be reassigned to another position within the agency;

"(F) in the case of a pending related investigation of the employee—

"(i) the status of such investigation; and

"(ii) the certification described in subsection (c)(1); and

"(G) in the case of a completed related investigation of the employee—

"(i) the results of such investigation; and

"(ii) the reason that the employee remains on administrative leave.

"(C) EXTENSION PENDING RELATED INVESTIGATION.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—If an employee is under a related investigation by an investigative entity at the time an additional period described under subsection (b)(2) is granted and, in the opinion of the investigative entity, additional time is needed to complete the investigation, such entity shall certify to the applicable agency that such additional time is needed and include in the certification an estimate of the length of such additional time.

"(2) LIMITATION.—The head of an agency may not grant an additional period of administrative leave described under subsection (b)(2) to an employee on or after the date that is 30 days after the completion of a related investigation by an investigative entity.

"(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the following definitions apply:

"(1) INVESTIGATIVE ENTITY.—The term 'investigative entity' means an internal investigative unit of the agency granting administrative leave, the Office of Inspector General, the Office of the Attorney General, or the Office of Special Counsel.

"(2) RELATED INVESTIGATION.—The term 'related investigation' means an investigation that pertains to the underlying reasons an employee was placed on administrative leave."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall begin to apply 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(c) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in the amendment made by subsection (a) shall be construed to—

(1) supersede the provisions of chapter 75 of title 5, United States Code; or

(2) limit the number of days that an employee may be placed on administrative leave, or any other paid non-duty status without charge to leave, for reasons unrelated to misconduct or performance.

(d) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for subchapter II of chapter 63 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding after the item relating to section 6329 the following new item:

"6330. Limitation on administrative leave."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) and the gentleman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to