

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the national wildlife refuge referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the “Jocelyn Nungaray National Wildlife Refuge”.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous material in the RECORD on S. 1596, 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. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, Jocelyn Nungaray was a vibrant 12-year-old girl from Houston, Texas, whose life was tragically cut short on June 16, 2024, when she was murdered by two Venezuelan nationals who illegally entered the United States and are allegedly members of the Tren de Aragua gang. This senseless act has done irreparable damage to Jocelyn's family, friends, and community.

In May, Jocelyn's mother, Alexis, testified on this legislation, but more importantly, she highlighted Jocelyn's caring personality, deep love for animals, and passion for finding animals homes, sharing stories of Jocelyn's life, such as Jocelyn's efforts to nurse injured animals back to health. Alexis recounted one instance when Jocelyn brought a pigeon that had injured its legs into her home. Jocelyn, without hesitation, tried to nurse the pigeon back to health in her bedroom until it was well enough to be released back into the wild.

In March 2025, President Trump signed an executive order directing the Secretary of the Interior to rename the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge after Jocelyn Nungaray, permanently commemorating Jocelyn for her compassion for animals and people who care about nature.

To ensure the name change is permanent, Congressman BABIN and Senator CORNYN introduced identical legislation that would codify the President's executive order.

The National Wildlife Refuge System plays an important role in coastal conservation, public recreation, and environmental education, all of which honor Jocelyn by allowing current and future generations of Americans to enjoy the natural landscape and animals that Jocelyn also enjoyed.

I, again, thank my colleague, Congressman BABIN, for introducing the

House companion of the legislation and for his commitment to honoring Jocelyn's memory.

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

□ 1650

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, S. 1596 will codify the renaming of the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in Texas to honor the memory of 12-year-old Jocelyn Nungaray.

Wildlife refuges are more than places to protect our environment. They are places where so many young people are inspired to build a lifelong connection to nature and develop a sense of stewardship for the world around them.

Jocelyn Nungaray was one of those young people. She loved animals and the outdoors. Her life was tragically taken far too soon. This legislation ensures that her love for wildlife and the natural world will be remembered and honored forever at one of our Nation's most important coastal conservation areas.

Spanning 39,000 acres along Texas' Gulf Coast, this refuge is a vital sanctuary for migratory waterfowl, endangered species, and countless other wildlife. Now, it will also stand as a lasting tribute to Jocelyn's spirit and the values she held dear.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting S. 1596 and help preserve Jocelyn's legacy in a place that reflects the beauty and wonder she saw in the world. I hope that this will bring her family some semblance of peace.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BABIN), who is the lead sponsor of the House companion bill.

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN, my good friend and classmate, for his services here.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1596 to rename the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge located in the State of Texas and in my district as the Jocelyn Nungaray National Wildlife Refuge to forever commemorate the life of 12-year-old Jocelyn Nungaray, who was tragically killed on June 17, 2024.

Jocelyn was brutally murdered in Houston, Texas, last summer. Two illegal Venezuelan aliens, both reported members of Tren de Aragua, the gang notoriously known around the country, have been charged in her killing.

Naming the refuge after Jocelyn is a very fitting way to honor her love for animals and to preserve her spirit within the very landscape that she called home.

I thank Chairman WESTERMAN and Senator CORNYN for their leadership and support on these efforts. I also thank my Democratic colleague across the way for her support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote “yes” on this very commonsense

legislation. We can never bring back Jocelyn, but we can commemorate and memorialize her for the love of animals that she had, and her wonderful family, and have that as a fitting testimony to her short life.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BABIN), my friend who is the chair of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, for his unwavering work and dedication to bring this good piece of legislation to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for speakers. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, refuges are places dedicated to conservation, public enjoyment, and environmental education.

Jocelyn was a kind, compassionate young girl who loved animals and cared deeply for the natural world. Renaming this refuge is a fitting honor to Jocelyn's life that ensures that her memory lives on.

Again, I thank Congressman BABIN and the Texas delegation for their work on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I support this 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, S. 1596.

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. Mr. 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.

ALASKA NATIVE VIETNAM ERA VETERANS LAND ALLOTMENT EXTENSION ACT OF 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 410) to extend the Alaska Native Vietnam era veterans land allotment program, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 410

*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 Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025”.

**SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF THE ALASKA NATIVE VIETNAM ERA VETERANS LAND ALLOTMENT PROGRAM.**

Section 1119(b)(3)(B) of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (43 U.S.C. 1629g–1(b)(3)(B)) is amended by striking “5-year period” and inserting “10-year period”.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. 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 material on H.R. 410, 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. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise to support H.R. 410, the Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025.

Sponsored by Representative BEGICH, this legislation would extend the Alaska Native Vietnam era veterans land allotment program for an additional 5 years, to end on December 29, 2030.

Alaska Natives have long experienced land-related hardships. Recognizing this, Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971 to settle the aboriginal land claims of Alaska Natives.

Unfortunately, this congressional action coincided with the Vietnam war, meaning that many Alaska Natives who were serving overseas in the U.S. military at the time were unable to apply for a land allotment. Congress has attempted to fix this problem legislatively over the years, but many eligible Alaska Native veterans have yet to receive their allotment.

Accordingly, the Alaska Native Vietnam era veterans land allotment program was established in the 116th Congress. Through this program, eligible Alaska Natives, or their heirs, can select an allotment of up to 160 acres of certain Federal land.

In January 2021, the Trump administration revoked 11 public land orders, which opened up 28 million acres of Bureau of Land Management land for allotment purposes. The next month, however, the newly elected Biden administration postponed that revocation, prompting a battle that waged throughout the rest of President Biden's term. During that time, Alaska Natives remained without their allotments.

Immediately upon his return to office this year, President Trump reinstated the revocation through an executive order titled "Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential."

While this executive order will help address Alaska Natives' allotment needs, the program is running out of time. Recent estimates show that over 2,000 eligible Alaska Native veterans had yet to receive their allotment, illustrating a clear need for an extension.

H.R. 410 would provide this relief by extending the Alaska Native Vietnam era veterans land allotment program for an additional 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative BEGICH for sponsoring this legislation, for his hard work on behalf of Alaska Native veterans, and for ensuring that we keep our promises to those who fought for this country.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 410, a bill that would extend the Alaska Native Vietnam era veterans land allotment program until 2030, giving those brave men and women who served in the Vietnam war additional time to apply for and claim the land allotments that they were promised.

In 1906, Congress passed the Alaska Native Allotment Act to provide individual Alaska Natives up to 160-acre allotments. However, this law was later repealed with the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971. While many Alaska Natives were able to apply for allotments prior to the ANCSA, others were unable to due to their active military service at the time.

To correct the issue, Congress established the Alaska Native Vietnam era veterans land allotment program in 2019. Under the program, Alaska Native Vietnam-era veterans who served between 1964 and 1971 and had not previously received an allotment, or their heirs, were deemed eligible to apply.

Despite the number of veterans still eligible to apply, the program is set to expire in December of this year. By extending the program through 2030, Congress will reinforce our support for Native communities and give eligible Alaska Native veterans the time they need to apply for the land that they are entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1700

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH), the lead sponsor of the bill.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on H.R. 410, the Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025.

This bill extends the application period for the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program by 5 years, ensuring eligible veterans can claim the land that they were promised.

For decades, thousands of Alaska Native veterans who served in Vietnam were unfairly denied the ability to apply for land allotments due to their service overseas. While Congress took steps to correct this injustice, the executive branch until recently has been

slowly processing eligibility applications and conveyances, leaving many veterans in limbo. As of January 2025, out of more than 2,000 eligible Alaska Native veterans, only 41 applications have been certified, and only 18 veterans have received their conveyances.

Fortunately, executive orders issued by the current administration have reinstated Federal land withdrawals previously revoked, returning lands to the State of Alaska and unlocking lands that had been closed. This expansion of available land increases opportunities for veterans to select and receive their rightful allotments. This bill will give these veterans time to participate in the program with ample land for viable selections.

These veterans served our country honorably, and we need to make sure that they are not denied what they were promised.

Thank you for your consideration of H.R. 410. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, this legislation, again, would extend the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program through the end of 2030.

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

Mr. Speaker, I urge the adoption of H.R. 410, 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. 410.

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.

MICCOSUKEE RESERVED AREA  
AMENDMENTS ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 504) to amend the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act to authorize the expansion of the Miccosukee Reserved Area and to carry out activities to protect structures within the Osceola Camp from flooding, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 504

*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 "Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act".

**SEC. 2. MICCOSUKEE RESERVED AREA ADDITION.**

Section 4(4) of the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act (16 U.S.C. 410 note; Public Law 105-313) is amended by adding at the end the following: