

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman
Markup Memorandum

May 11, 2018

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Terry Camp
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Mark-Up: **H.R. 3186 (Rep. Niki Tsongas)**, To establish an Every Kid Outdoors program, and for other purposes.
May 16, 2018; 1324 Longworth House Office Building

H.R. 3186 “*Every Kid Outdoors Act*”

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 3186, introduced by Representative Niki Tsongas (D-MA-03), directs the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and the Army to establish the “Every Kid Outdoors” program to provide fourth graders free access to federal lands and waters to which the public has access.

Cosponsors

[52 Cosponsors](#)

Background

Since 2015, the U.S. Department of the Interior, through the “Every Kid in a Park” program, has offered fourth graders and their families free entrance to our national parks and other federal lands. The program launched prior to the National Park Service’s Centennial in 2016 as one way to connect with and create the next generation of park visitors. Funding and support for the program comes through the National Park Service’s budget for youth engagement programs as well as from private donations and volunteer hours.¹ To date, “Every Kid in a Park” has facilitated educational activities for more than 350,000 fourth-graders across the country and has provided an outdoor classroom for teachers and students across the 417 National Park Service units and other federal lands.²

In developing the “Every Kid in a Park” program, the U.S. Department of the Interior focused on children 10 years of age, the age of most fourth graders, based on research that

¹ Korte, Gregory. “Obama to Give Free Parks Admission to Fourth Graders.” USA Today, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 19 Feb. 2015, www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/02/19/obama-free-national-park-admission/23640451/.

² [United States. Cong. Senate. Senate Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks. Hearing on S. 1522 July. 19, 2017. 115th Cong. 1st sess. Washington. \(statement of Bob Vogel, Acting Deputy Director, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior\).](#)

indicates children ages 9-11 are at a unique developmental stage where they begin to understand how the world around them works in more concrete ways.³ By targeting this age group, the program strives to provide every child in the United States with the opportunity to visit their federal lands and waters by the time he or she is 11 years old, thereby establishing a lifelong connection to our parks and other public lands.

H.R. 3186 codifies the “Every Kid in a Park” program by directing seven bureaus in four agencies to jointly establish the “Every Kid Outdoors” program to provide any United States fourth grader with a pass to gain free access to publicly accessible federal lands and waters. The bureaus that would establish and administer the program are the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

A companion bill has been introduced in the Senate as S. 1522 (115th Congress) by Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM).

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

Administration Position

The Administration position on H.R. 3186 is unknown at this time. However, on July 19, 2017, the Administration testified before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks on an identical companion bill introduced as S. 1522 by Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM). The Administration recommended that Congress defer action on S. 1522 until the Administration had the opportunity to review all of the Department’s youth programs and determine the most cost-effective strategies for engaging children, youth, and young adults in our nation’s great outdoors.⁴

Anticipated Amendments

Congressman Bishop (R-UT) will offer an amendment that will:

- 1) Allow for home-schooled youth to request a pass
- 2) Authorize participating agencies to coordinate the program with the Department of Education
- 3) Ensure that passes are available to youth in any U.S. territory or possession and that agencies are authorized to collaborate with both state and territorial park systems that opt to implement a complementary park pass
- 4) Make minor technical changes

³ Ibid. at 2.

⁴ Ibid. at 2.