

Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of the Interior
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Legislative Hearing on
H.R. 926, Fort Pillow National Battlefield Park Study Act;
H.R. 3922, Cross-Boundary Wildfire Solutions Act;
H.R. 4038, Wildfire Response and Preparedness Act of 2025.

January 14, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this Statement for the Record on H.R. 926, Fort Pillow National Battlefield Park Study Act; H.R. 3922, Cross-Boundary Wildfire Solutions Act; and H.R. 4038, Wildfire Response and Preparedness Act of 2025.

H.R. 926, to conduct a special resource study of Fort Pillow Historic State Park in Henning, Tennessee

H.R. 926 directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Pillow Historic State Park in Henning, Tennessee for its potential for inclusion in the National Park System.

The Department recognizes the importance of Fort Pillow and the significance of events that occurred there during the Civil War. However, we do not support H.R. 926, as the National Park Service is focusing its resources on addressing other critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

Fort Pillow was constructed by confederate troops in 1861 and played a strategic role along the Mississippi River. The fort is remembered as the site of a Confederate massacre of surrendering Union troops during the 1864 Battle of Fort Pillow. Today, the site is preserved and is well managed as a Tennessee State Historic Park and is open to the public. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and designated as a National Historic Landmark.

If the Committee decides to act on H.R. 926, we recommend amending the bill to correct the name of the National Park System and to provide that the study to be conducted in accordance with the requirements of 54 U.S.C. 100507, as is standard for bills authorizing special resource studies. We would be happy to provide the recommended language.

H.R. 3922, Cross-Boundary Wildfire Solutions Act

H.R. 3922 directs the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on existing Federal programs, rules, and authorities that enable or inhibit wildfire mitigation from being completed across land ownership boundaries on Federal and non-Federal land and identify opportunities to increase capacity, efficacy, or to access funding to mitigate wildfires. However, the Department notes that the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 is only one of the authorities under which Federal wildfire mitigation efforts are conducted and recommends broadening the focus of the bill accordingly. The Department supports the bill and its objective of identifying and addressing barriers to effective cross-boundary wildfire mitigation across both Federal and non-Federal lands.

H.R. 4038, Wildfire Response and Preparedness Act of 2025

H.R. 4038 establishes national goals for wildfire response times, mandates faster deployment of firefighting resources to support wildland fire incident response, and requires a comprehensive report to Congress addressing wildfire preparedness and resource needs. The bill further directs the Department, USDA, and the Department of Homeland Security, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to establish a standard response time metric of under 30 minutes for all wildfire ignitions, as practicable, as well as a three hour standard timeframe for deployment of fire suppression assets. The bill also directs that DOI provide a single point of contact for all DOI fire bureaus, and that DOI and USDA jointly provide Congress a unified budget that covers all wildland fire activities. The Department is pleased to report that some of the unification and reporting requirements are already in progress under President Trump's and Secretary Burgum's leadership. As I mentioned earlier, DOI is unifying its internal wildland fire activities under a single command structure at the new US Wildland Fire Service.

The Department appreciates the Sponsor's interest in promoting timely and effective responses to wildland fire incidents. As provided in the 10 Standard Firefighting Orders, the safety of firefighters and the public is always the highest priority of wildland fire management agencies. Each wildland fire incident is unique and particularly hazardous incidents may require the delay of suppression efforts until conditions allow for a safe response. The Department notes that the establishment of a standard response timeframe could inadvertently reduce firefighter safety in an effort to meet the bill's benchmark deadlines. For example, many wildland fires occur in remote terrain that requires the deployment of aerially delivered resources for effective suppression. During high winds, deploying aerially delivered resources becomes unsafe; therefore, it is crucial to postpone suppression efforts until conditions allow for a safe response, which may fall outside of the legislation's timeframe. With these factors in consideration, the Department looks forward to working with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee to promote timely, safe, and effective wildland fire responses.