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DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND ALASKA RAILROAD EXCHANGE ACT OF 2007

October 22, 2007

**REFERENCE:** Vol. 153, No. 160

**SECTION:** House

**SPEAKER:** Mr. GRIJALVA; Mr. YOUNG of Alaska

**TEXT:** [\*11785]

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill ([H.R. 830](#)) to authorize the exchange of certain lands in Denali National Park in the State of Alaska, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

[H.R. 830](#)

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 "Denali National Park and Alaska Railroad Exchange Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) Corporation.-The term "Corporation" means the Alaska Railroad Corporation owned by the State of Alaska.

(2) Secretary.-The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. EXCHANGE.

(a) In General.-

(1) Easement expanded.-The Secretary is authorized to grant to the Alaska Railroad Corporation an exclusive-use easement on land that is identified by the Secretary within Denali National Park for the purpose of providing a location to the Corporation for construction, maintenance, and on-going operation of track and associated support facilities for turning railroad trains around near

Denali Park Station.

(2) Easement relinquished.-In exchange for the easement granted in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall require the relinquishment of certain portions of the Corporation's existing exclusive use easement within the boundary of Denali National Park.

(b) Conditions of the Exchange.-

(1) Equal exchange.-The exchange of easements under this section shall be on an approximately equal-acre basis.

(2) Total acres.-The easement granted under paragraph (1) of subsection (a) shall not exceed 25 acres.

(3) Interests conveyed.-The easement conveyed to the Alaska Railroad Corporation by the Secretary under this section shall be under the same terms as the exclusive use easement granted to the Railroad in Denali National Park in the Deed for Exclusive Use Easement and Railroad Related Improvements filed in Book 33, pages 985-994 of the Nenana Recording District, Alaska, pursuant to the Alaska Railroad Transfer Act of 1982 ([45 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.](#)). The easement relinquished by the Alaska Railroad Corporation to the United States under this section shall, with respect to the portion being exchanged, be the full title and interest received by the Alaska Railroad in the Deed for Exclusive Use Easement and Railroad Related Improvements filed in Book 33, pages 985-994 of the Nenana Recording District, Alaska, pursuant to the Alaska Railroad Transfer Act of 1982 ([45 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.](#)).

(4) Costs.-The Alaska Railroad shall pay all costs associated with the exchange under this section, including the costs of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 ([42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.](#)), the costs of any surveys, and other reasonable costs.

(5) Land to be part of **wilderness**.-The lands underlying any easement relinquished to the United States under this section that are adjacent to designated **wilderness** are hereby designated as **wilderness** and added to the Denali **Wilderness**, the boundaries of which are modified accordingly, and shall be managed in accordance with applicable provisions of the **Wilderness** Act (78 Stat. 892) and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 ([94 Stat. 2371](#)).

(6) Other terms and conditions.-The Secretary shall require any additional terms and conditions under this section that the Secretary determines to be appropriate to protect the interests of the United States and of Denali National Park.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. Grijalva) and the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. Young) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona.

General Leave

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, [H.R. 830](#) was introduced by the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. Young). The legislation would authorize an exchange of easements on land along the Alaska Railroad track inside the Denali National Park.

The exchange would make it possible for the railroad to build a turnaround track near the Denali Park station, helping to accommodate the increasing popularity of rail travel in the park.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exchange of easements only. No park land will change hands. The railroad has an existing easement along its entire track, granted as a result of the 1982 Alaska Railroad Transfer Act. But the easement will not accommodate the turnaround.

[H.R. 830](#) would allow the Secretary of the Interior to grant a new easement for the turnaround. In exchange, the railroad will relinquish its existing easement on an approximate equal number of acres elsewhere along the current track.

Mr. Speaker, we support [H.R. 830](#), as amended, and recommend its adoption by the House today.

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

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. YOUNG of Alaska asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the full committee and the chairman of the subcommittee for allowing this legislation to come to the floor of the House.

As a sponsor of [H.R. 830](#) and of the Alaska Railroad Transfer Act of 1982, I am pleased we are considering this legislation today. Although it is small, the land exchange provided by [H.R. 830](#) will improve the ability of the Alaska Railroad Corporation to serve its customers who wish to visit Denali National Park. The construction of a turnaround track will increase scheduling frequency and flexibility. This not only reduces overcrowding of Denali at any one time, it makes the Park Service's job of managing visitation much smoother.

This is a noncontroversial bill and enjoys the support of the National Park Service, the State of Alaska which owns the railroad, and the National Parks Conservation Association.

For anyone who has not traveled on the Alaska Railroad, it is a journey you should not miss. For those who have had an opportunity to enjoy the splendor of Alaska's scenery aboard the train, I am sure you will agree it is a first-class experience.

You may not know, but Alaska Railroad was once owned by the Federal Government; but Congress in its wisdom passed bipartisan legislation in 1982 to transfer the railroad to the State of Alaska. As Congress faces immense backlogs in caring for Federal assets, perhaps there is a lesson to be learned here. We might consider transferring more of these assets to the States. Alaska has proven it can take a Federal asset like the Alaska Railroad and manage it for the benefit of everyone who uses it. I believe this is a fine piece of legislation.

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

Mr. GRIJALVA. 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 Arizona (Mr. Grijalva) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, [H.R. 830](#), as amended.

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

The title was amended so as to read: "A bill to authorize the exchange of certain interests in land in Denali National Park in the State of Alaska."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table. [\*11786]

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