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**Booker, Grijalva Introduce Bill to Permanently
Protect American Bison, Grizzly Bears, and Gray
Wolves**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and U.S. Representative Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ-07) introduced the *Tribal Heritage and American Bison, Grizzly Bear, and Wolf Restoration and Coexistence Act*, legislation to establish permanent federal protections for these three species and expand recovery efforts and coexistence measures.

Additionally, the bill would enhance existing tribal management authorities over these species by creating oversight committees that work in unison with Indian Tribes to identify tribal lands suitable for possible reintroduction efforts.

“American bison, grizzly bears, and gray wolves are iconic American species and are timeless symbols of our nation’s heritage, yet these animals were driven to the brink of extinction,” **said Senator Booker**. “Building on the success of past conservation legislation like the American Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, I am proud to introduce legislation that directs the Secretary of the Interior to work closely with Indigenous communities to ensure permanent protection for these animals.”

"Bison, grizzly bears, and wolves hold significant spiritual, cultural, and ecological value to many tribal communities and our nation," **said House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Raúl M. Grijalva**. "I'm proud to introduce this legislation with Senator Booker to enshrine protections for these species and ensure that conservation and management are conducted in close consultation with Tribal Nations. For centuries, the United States' policies have systematically failed to honor our treaties, harming Tribal Nations and resulting in significant cultural losses and ecological damage. Congress has a trust responsibility to move forward from past injustices and craft policies for the future that are based on respect and recognition of Tribal Nations' leadership in recovering these iconic species and their habitats."

American bison, grizzly bears, and gray wolves hold important cultural significance to the Indigenous peoples of North America. Despite their important ecological roles and cultural symbolism, during the 19th and 20th century each of these species were hunted to the point of eradication from most of their historic range throughout the continental United States. The elimination of these animals from their traditional ranges has dramatically compromised the integrity of their former ecosystems. Continuing to reestablish their presence – and prohibiting future eradication efforts – will restore the health of these ecosystems.

As seen with the 1995 reintroduction of gray wolves in Yellowstone National Park, reestablishing keystone species in their former ranges can have significant benefits to the ecosystem. The 1995 introduction rebalanced elk and deer populations, allowing vegetation to flourish in response to reduced herbivore grazing pressure. This landmark conservation effort helped re-stabilize the Yellowstone ecosystem, while creating an immense boom in ecotourism revenue that now generates an annual average of over \$80 million for local economies in the Greater Yellowstone region. Grizzly bears play a similar role by regulating prey populations and preventing overgrazing, while bison grazing and foraging aid in plant growth and increase biodiversity by aerating soil and dispersing native seeds. These are just a few examples that demonstrate the positive impacts that bison, grizzly bears, and wolves have on North American ecosystems.

Specifically, the *Tribal Heritage and American Bison, Grizzly Bear, and Wolf Restoration and Coexistence Act* would:

Prohibit the take, possession, purchase, sale, or transport of American bison, grizzly bears, and wolves, exclusive of captive-bred bison intended for human consumption, with targeted exceptions authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to issue permits for scientific or conservation purposes and for protection of agricultural interests and public safety.

Exempt religious, cultural or treaty-reserved purposes of Federally recognized Indian Tribes.

Provide for civil and criminal penalties for violations.

Require consultation with federally recognized Indian Tribes before a take permit is issued under this Act or before any activity is carried out on the Tribal land of a federally recognized Indian Tribe that may negatively impact habitat or increase mortality of bison, grizzly bears or wolves.

Authorize federally recognized Indian Tribes, in consultation with the Secretary, to manage bison, grizzly bears and wolves reintroduced on Tribal land.

"In the gulf coast of Texas remains a species of wolf called "The Ghost" wolf for its elusive nature and ability to 'come back from the dead'. After

generations of persecution, encroachment, and habitat loss, the Red Wolf was thought to be extinct, but that wasn't the case. This story is much like the story of my people, the Karankawa. By hiding in plain sight, mixing and adapting to our ever-changing environment, both of us are still here. If only there had been a system in place like this legislation proposes today; that defends and protects, under the wings of their original stewards, our relatives who defend biodiversity, health, culture, and the climate," **said Chiara Beaumont, Karankawa.**

"Indigenous peoples, like our relatives the Buffalo, Grizzly and Wolves have distinct cosmology with our natural world. We have inhabited our natural world prior to colonization, dating back to our creation stories. "Comes Holy" a white buffalo was born June 4, 2024 and fulfills a prophecy that teaches our human relatives that spiritual unity is of essence to our survival. Indigenous people speak on behalf of those who cannot - the Buffalo, Grizzlies and Wolves," **said Vivian Delgado, Yaqui.**

"We must protect and speak for our sacred relatives because they can't speak for themselves. For they maintain an ecological balance that is imperative for our survival, knowledge and growth. Just like we seek guidance from our elders, we are also guided by our relatives of the Wolf Nation. By protecting and restoring our bond with our relatives we receive their teachings and many blessings. Through this we can begin to heal our relationship with ourselves, others and Mother Earth," **said Osvaldo Cabral, Huichol.**

"This legislation reverses the current doom narrative, instead asks, "What do we stand to gain and how fast." This fresh novel inquiry is the best approach to wildlife coexistence, reversing climate warming, stemming biodiversity loss and move humans to right relationship with the natural world. This legislative framework utilizes, to the fullest, traditional ecological knowledge together with western science in tribal Co-stewardship decision-making collaboratives for conservation, restoration and protection of our 4-leg relatives, their habitat and their natural active role in maintaining overall ecological health," **said Dallas Gudgell, Yankton Dakota.**

"Our relatives within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the nation, from all walks of life whether they are keystone species like buffalo or an

...from the wolves, bison, grizzly bears, and other apex predator, deserve to be protected from corporate interests and settler-colonial practices that put private interests above the American public and the original occupants of the land,” **said Devin Oldman, Arapaho.**

"All these species are important and it is that, also, we need their "spirit" in our world to live as the Creator wants us to,” **said Allen Pinkham, Nez Perce.**

“In 2021 President Joe Biden issued an executive order that elevated Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and ancestral wisdom into federal policy decisions. “Indigenous Knowledge cannot be separated from the people inextricably connected to that knowledge,” the order states. “It applies to phenomena across biological, physical, social, cultural, and spiritual systems.” Indigenous Peoples worldwide “manage over 24% of land, which contains about 40% of all ecologically intact landscapes and protected areas left on the planet, and a staggering 80% of the world’s biodiversity.” Now is the time for Native people to share stories about the wolves, bison and Grizzly bears that would receive lasting protections under this senate bill, which began in 2019 with House Bill 2532, originally co-sponsored by Representative Deb Haaland, who is now by the first Native director of the Department of the Interior,” **said Tony Evans, Mohawk.**

“The relationship between Indigenous peoples and animals like wolves, grizzly bears, and buffalo is deeply rooted in spiritual, cultural, and ecological significance. These animals are not just seen as wildlife but as relatives and integral parts of the natural world, embodying lessons, symbols, and connections that are vital to the balance of life. The protection of wolves, grizzly bears, and buffalo is not only about preserving species but also about maintaining the natural order and the sacred bonds that sustain life. In this way, the relationship with these animals is a profound reminder of the responsibilities humans have to the Earth and all living beings. The respect and reverence for these animals are central to Indigenous teachings, which stress that all life is interconnected, and the well-being of one species affects the well-being of all.” **said Red Fawn Janis, Iglala Lakota.**

To read the full text of the bill, click [here](#).

To read the section by section summary, click [here](#).

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