



REP. TOM PRICE, M.D. (R-GA), CHAIRMAN
PAUL TELLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
424 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

rsc.price.house.gov

ph (202) 226-9717 / fax (202) 226-1633

Legislative Bulletin.....March 19, 2010

Contents:

H.R. 1612—Public Lands Service Corps Act

H.R. 1612 - Public Lands Service Corps Act of 2009 (Rep. Rahall, D-WV)

Order of Business: The bill is expected to be considered on Friday, March 19, 2010 under a structured rule. For H.R. 1612, the rule ([H.Res.1192](#)) provides for one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the majority and minority, waives all points of order against consideration of the bill except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI (earmarks & “pay-go”), provides for consideration of 2 amendments under Part C of the rule, and provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Summary: H.R 1612 significantly expands the authority of the Secretary of Interior to attract individuals to participate in the Public Lands Corps (PLC), first established in 1993. The U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) partner with the non-profit conservation corps to recruit young individuals (16 to 25 years old) to build trails, perform maintenance, rehabilitate campgrounds, restore historic structures, and eradicate invasive species. Under H.R 1612, not only would their duties expand to include coastal areas, but participants will be eligible to receive certain benefits such as job training “for careers in public service,” living allowances, and medical care in exchange for services.

Specifically, H.R. 1612 would expand on these programs by:

- Changing the name from the Public Land Corps (PLC) to the Public Lands Service Corps (PLSC) and expanding the mission to include an “understanding and appreciation of the Nation’s natural, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, and scenic resources” and allow participating youth to include 16 to 25 year old resource assistants and consulting interns. These individuals would be enrolled for a term of up to 24 months of service.
- Expanding the scope of the number of federal agencies that participate in the PLSC to also include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The bill also establishes a coordinating office and a coordinator for the corps within the Forest Service and NOAA.
- Directing the secretaries of each participating agency to grant preference to youth from areas that are economically, physically, or educationally disadvantaged. In addition, the

bill establishes training programs at residential conservation centers and creates “department-wide standards for the program that include training in resource stewardship, ethics for those in public service, principles of national service, health and safety, teamwork and leadership, and interpersonal communications.”

- Permitting participation in a program that allows the Secretary to establish residential conservation centers for needs such as housing, food service, medical care, transportation, and other services as the Secretary deems necessary for the Public Lands Service Corps.
- Allowing the Secretary to recruit mentors to assist with programs consisting of individuals from agency retirees, veterans groups, military retirees, active duty personnel, and from appropriate youth-serving organizations.
- Establishing a new category of participants called consulting interns that carry out management analysis activities for the agencies. The consulting intern must have completed at least one full year at a graduate or accredited professional school. The cost sharing requirements for non profits to cover expenses of the intern may be reduced to 10%.
- Requiring the Secretary to issue guidelines for regional and State directors to establish living allowances for terms of service that cover cost-of-living, transportation, and allowing qualifying experience in the Corps toward preferential treatment in future federal hiring.
- Allowing the Secretary to reduce the cost sharing requirement to 10% (from 25%) if he determines the reduction will enable participation by a greater range of organizations.
- **Repealing the \$12 million appropriations ceiling contained in existing law and authorizing such sums to carry out the legislation.**

Additional Information: The PLC was created in 1993. It combined the activities of the youth conservation corps and the defunct Young Adult Conservation Corps. Funding for PLC programs are derived from the 20% Recreational Fee Demonstration Program, which mandates all fees generated by the park service be retained within the NPS (80% remaining at the site where it is collected and 20% to be used for service projects at the Director's discretion). While the program is authorized at \$12 million annually, Congress had not appropriated funding until 2009. In FY 2009, the Forest Service received a specific appropriation of \$2.5 million for some PLC projects, but the funding was dedicated for activities associated with hazardous fuel reduction. In 2010, the NPS requested \$5 million to expand youth activities at national parks.

In 2009, Secretary of Interior Salazar announced the Department of Interior's goal of increasing youth employment on public lands by 50% in 2010. H.R. 1612 attempts to meet this goal and CBO determined that, over the next five years, by expanding the use of federal-nonprofit partnerships the affected agencies would need a total of about \$30 million annually to 2015. While CBO expects increased participation in the PLSC program, CBO estimates that implementing the expanded program would require a significant increase in funding after 2015.

The mission of the PLC is to provide service-learning opportunities on public lands for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 by providing maintenance projects, cultural and historical

rehabilitation services, while promoting the value of national service and augmenting services to park visitors. More information on the organization can be found at the NPS by [clicking here](#).

Some of the approximately 100 nonprofit organizations that work in collaboration with the PLC are the Student Conservation Association (SCA), the Corps Network, and local community organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, local high schools, and job training youth organizations.

Possible Conservative Concerns: Currently, the main mission for the Public Lands Job Corps program is to assist a new generation of land managers in developing the training and proper understanding to prevent catastrophic wildfires. Some conservatives have expressed concerns that H.R. 1612 undermines this mission by ignoring the goals enacted by the bipartisan Healthy Forest Restoration Act. Some conservatives believe this will expose many additional communities to the increased risk of fire danger; especially to those in the incredibly dry West.

Some conservatives have also expressed concern that CBO anticipates the bill will cost \$120 million over a five year period – a tenfold increase over currently authorized levels. Additionally, the bill eliminates any sort of authorization cap by authorizing “such sums” to carry out H.R. 1612. At a time of severe unemployment, some conservatives may take issue with legislation that could be considered a “blank check.”

Committee Action: On March 19, 2009, the bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Agriculture, and Education and Labor. On June 10, 2009, the Natural Resources subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands held a mark-up and ordered the bill reported, as amended, by a voice vote. On March 23, 2009, H.R.1612 was reported from the Committee on Natural Resources and discharged from the Education and Labor and the Agriculture Committee.

Administration Position: A Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) for H.R. 1612 is unavailable at press time.

Cost to Taxpayers: According to CBO, H.R. 1612 authorizes \$150 million over the FY 2011-2014 period. The affect on discretionary spending is uncertain, largely because total costs would depend on how the Administration chooses to implement the legislation and on how much funding the Congress would provide in appropriations acts. CBO also estimates that funding for the PLSC would grow after 2014 as the Administration uses the enhanced authorities contained in the bill to recruit participants directly to agency programs. ***CBO estimates that implementing the expanded program would require a significant increase in funding after 2015.***

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government? Yes, the bill significantly expands PLC programs to allow participants to receive classroom education, additional job training, transportation subsidies, housing, and hiring preferences upon completion of their tenure in the program.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates? No.

Does the Bill Comply with House Rules Regarding Earmarks/Limited Tax Benefits/Limited Tariff Benefits? According to Committee Report 111-312, H.R. 1612 does not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 of rule XXI.

Constitutional Authority: Committee Report 111-312 cites Article I, section 8 and Article IV, section 3 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this bill.

RSC Staff Contact: Bruce F. Miller, bruce.miller@mail.house.gov, (202)-226-9720.
