



Legislative Bulletin.....June 9, 2005

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H.Res. ____ — Expressing the importance of immediately reopening the famous Beartooth All-American Highway from Red Lodge, Montana, to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming

H.Res. ____ — Expressing the importance of immediately reopening the famous Beartooth All-American Highway from Red Lodge, Montana, to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. — *as introduced* (Pombo)

Order of Business: The resolution is scheduled for consideration on Thursday, June 9, 2005, under a motion under unanimous consent.

Summary: H.Res. ____ would express the importance of immediately reopening Beartooth Highway in Montana. The resolution explains why Beartooth Highway is currently closed, notes the national heritage and significance of Yellowstone National Park, and highlights the usefulness and role of Beartooth Highway in accommodating visitors to Yellowstone. Several of the findings are stated below:

- “On May 16–17, 2005, a major mudslide bisected the scenic Beartooth Highway in 6 sections requiring visitors from Montana to undertake a detour to the Northeast Entrance to the Park;”
- “Over 2.8 million people visit Yellowstone National Park annually to admire its world famous geysers, hot springs, remarkable wildlife, and hike its more than 950 miles of backcountry trails;”
- “The scenic Beartooth Highway provides on average 190,000 visitors annually easy access to the Northeast Entrance to the Park;”
- “The scenic Beartooth Highway has been recognized as one of one the most scenic drives in America; and”
- “The scenic Beartooth Highway is the economic artery for the citizens of the gateway communities of Red Lodge, Cooke City, and Silver Gate, Montana.”

The resolution resolves that the House of Representatives:

- “Recognizes the critical importance of ensuring unfettered access to visitors of Yellowstone National Park and preserving the economy of Red Lodge, Montana; and”

- “Urges the President of the United States to take, without hesitation, all necessary actions to assist the Governor of the State of Montana in reopening this critical highway to our Nation’s oldest national park.”

Additional Information: According to the National Park Service website, “Due to mudslides in May, US 212 [Beartooth Pass] southwest of Red Lodge, Montana did not open to the public Memorial Day weekend as scheduled. Regular updates are available from the Central Federal Lands Highway Division Website. The portion of the Beartooth Highway that connects Yellowstone's NE Entrance to Cody, WY via Chief Joseph Byway opened at 8 a.m. on May 27 as scheduled. Red Lodge, MT is accessible via the Chief Joseph Byway.”

According to the National Park Service (NPS) and Yellowstone National Park, the entire section of Beartooth Highway that is closed is outside of Yellowstone and within the state of Montana. The National Park Service website states, “This road segment [Beartooth Highway] is outside of Yellowstone National Park boundaries. It starts on the east side of Cooke City, Montana, and extends to the Wyoming state line.” According to NPS, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is responsible for the highway and is currently working to clear and repair it for reopening. **A NPS official told the RSC it “may take months, and because the mudslides were so severe, initial cost estimates suggest it may cost \$20 million” to complete the project.** According to NPS, this road closure does not impede visitors from entering or traversing Yellowstone National Park, as there are other routes available to gain access to the North East entrance of Yellowstone (see map on NPS website: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/orientation/travel/05roadupdate6-2.pdf>).

According to the MDT website, “This project is a priority and MDT is devoting all available resources to developing a repair plan and timeline.” For more information from the MDT website, click here: <http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/travinfo/beartooth/>

For more information, please visit the Yellowstone National Park website:
<http://www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/orientation/travel/roadopen.htm>
<http://www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/orientation/travel/roadclos.htm>

Committee Action: H.Res. ___ will be introduced today, and no Committee action has been taken on the resolution.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution authorizes no expenditure.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

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

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