

# Reconciliation in Place Names Act

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## The problem.

Public lands are a part of the fabric of America that are meant to welcome everyone, however thousands of geographic features, national forests, wilderness areas, and other public lands have offensive names that celebrate people who upheld slavery, committed unspeakable acts against Native Americans, or perpetuated racism against the Asian and Latinx communities. Many of landmarks include offensive slurs that degrade people based on their race or background making many feel unwelcome.

## The solution.

*The Reconciliation in Place Names Act* seeks to make public lands and outdoor spaces more inclusive by creating an advisory committee that would make recommendations to the Board on Geographic Names and to Congress on renaming Federal land units with offensive names.

## Background

There is not a comprehensive list of public lands or geographic features named for people or events who perpetuated racist attitudes, however a 2015 survey found 1,441 places named with racial slurs including "Chinaman" and "Squaw." More than ten National Forests are named for perpetrators of atrocities including "Custer" and the Wall Street Journal identified more than 100 places on public lands honoring Confederate leaders.

## Reconciliation in Place Names Act specifically:

- Create an advisory board comprised of individuals with backgrounds in civil rights and race relations, Tribal members and organizations to bring a depth of knowledge and experience to the process.
- Solicit proposals from Indian tribes, state and local governments, and members of the public, and would provide an opportunity for the public to comment on name change proposals.
- Require the advisory board to make recommendations to the Board on Geographic Names on geographic features to be renamed and to Congress on renaming Federal land units with offensive names.