



October 27, 2017

America Outdoors Association Bulletin

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[House Passes Budget Bill Paving the Way for Tax Cut Vote](#)

[Health Insurance Relief on the Way?](#)

[Fee Increases for Commercial Tours Proposed for 2019](#)

[NPS Proposes Raising Entrance Fees to \\$70 per Car at 17 Parks](#)

[Raft Rental Customers in Oregon May Not Need an Aquatic Invasive Species Permit](#)

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House Passes Budget Bill Paving the Way for Tax Cut Vote

By passing the budget resolution on Thursday, Republicans paved the way for passing a tax cut plan with a simple majority (in the Senate). The goal is to have the bill on the President's desk before Thanksgiving, so the tax cut will apply to 2017. Time will tell if Congress will get the job done, since the deficit hawks among Republicans are likely to find allies among Democrats who don't support tax cuts for business.

For small businesses organized as partnerships, sole proprietors and subchapter S-corporations the debate is about

how much to cut. 25% has been proposed as the pass-through rate for small businesses. The corporate tax rate is expected to range from 20% to 25%.

Health Insurance Relief on the Way?

It's hard to think Congress will do anything right about the health insurance crisis, but Senators Murray and Alexander are trying with a bipartisan bill that will restore coverage options in states with few if any providers of qualified health insurance coverage. 12 Republicans and 12 Democrats have signed on as cosponsors. Individuals and small groups have been especially hard hit by increased insurance premiums. Large parts of Tennessee and other states have no qualified health insurance plans being offered under Obamacare. Premium increase of 20% or greater are expected in many states especially among those whose premiums benefited from subsidies paid to insurance companies by the federal government. President Trump ended those payments which had not been approved by Congress.

While all the details of the legislation are not available, two issues hold some promise for lowering rates. The Murray/Alexander bill will allow consumers to buy catastrophic coverage instead of comprehensive coverage. President Trump also signed an Executive Order allowing insurance to be sold across state lines to members of associations and similar groups. That move allows those entities to negotiate for lower rates on behalf of their members. Unfortunately, the details for the association plans will have to be worked out in rules and may take a few months to be finalized.

NPS Proposes Fee Increase for Commercial Tours

In conjunction with the entrance fee increase for non-commercial visitors, NPS is also raising commercial land-based tour entrance fees during peak season at many Parks beginning May 1, 2019. To view those new standards and comment go to:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/commercialtourrequirements>

Submit comments before November 23, 2017.

Note the CUA fee increase for backcountry operations is 5% of gross to start in 2018, which has caused a furor among operators who are struggling to adjust to that much increase on such short notice.

NPS Seeks Comments on Entrance Fee Increases at Popular Parks

While you may get a tax break, NPS is proposing dramatic entrance fee increases for 17 National Parks. Fee revenues would be used to pay for infrastructure improvements. The fee increases are expected to raise \$70 million, a drop in the bucket toward the estimated \$11 billion back-log.

During the peak season at each park, the entrance fee would be \$70 per private, non-commercial vehicle, \$50 per motorcycle, and \$30 per person on bike or foot for a week-long pass. A park-specific annual pass for any of the 17 parks would be available for \$75. Under the proposal, peak-season entrance fees would be established at 17 national parks. The peak season for each park would be defined as its busiest contiguous five-month period of visitation.

The proposed new fee structure would be implemented at Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Denali, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Olympic, Sequoia & Kings Canyon, Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Zion National Parks with peak season starting on May 1, 2018; in Acadia, Mount Rainier, Rocky Mountain, and Shenandoah National Parks with peak season starting on June 1, 2018; and in Joshua Tree National Park as soon as practicable in 2018

The fee increases are astoundingly insensitive to young adults saddled with student loan debt and citizens living on limited incomes. A day trip in these Parks would cost \$70. While some Parks are overcrowded in the peak tourist season and some crowd control may be necessary, raising entrance fees should not be the only strategy. NPS should consider the following:

- Sell passes for a day or three days instead of requiring everyone to buy a week-long pass.

Information and a forum for public comments regarding commercial permit requirements and fees is available October 24, 2017 to November 23, 2017 on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment website

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/commercialtourrequirements>.

Oregon Raft Rental Customers May Not Need Invasive Species Permit

The Oregon Marine Board is considering dropping a requirement for customers of raft and canoe liveries to hold an Aquatic Invasive Species Permit, if the company renting the craft holds a permit.

Since January 1, 2010, Oregon and out-of-state operators of canoes, kayaks, drift boats, and other manually powered boats 10 feet in length or longer have been required to purchase an AIS prevention permit while boating in the state.

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