



# America Outdoors Association Bulletin

[GO Act Passes House of Representatives](#)

[Brian Merrill Testifies on Recreation Not Red-Tape Legislation](#)

[Secretary of Interior to Hire Recreation Director](#)

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## **GO Act Passes House of Representatives**

The GO Act, H.R. 289, passed the House of Representatives on the suspension calendar on Monday night (Oct. 2, 2017). The Republicans and Democrats agreed to suspend the rules and pass the bill on a simple voice vote of members present. The Democratic Congressman representing the minority objected to the categorical exclusion language in the bill but said they would leave that issue up to the Senate, clearing way for H.R. 289 to pass the House with a bang of the gavel. The bill is backed by America Outdoors Association and its affiliates and makes important permit-streamlining and cost recovery reforms that were strongly supported on the House floor in statements by the bill's primary sponsor, Rep. LaMalfa (R-CA) and Rep. McClintock (R-CA), who also spoke on behalf of the bill.

## **Brian Merrill Testifies on Recreation Not Red-Tape Legislation**

AOA Board member, Brian Merrill, represented AOA and outfitters in testifying at a Congressional hearing on what may become landmark legislation contained in H.R. 3400, the Recreation Not Red-Tape Act sponsored by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT). Senator Wyden (D-UT) sponsored a companion bill in the Senate. Mr. Merrill identified provisions of the bill that AOA supported, as well as issues that need to be addressed before AOA can fully endorse the bill. The bill's sponsor in the House is Chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources, Rob Bishop, who expressed appreciation for AOA's testimony and asked for changes to the legislation.

Many in the recreation community support the language as proposed in the bill when, in fact, some provisions could be interpreted to create a strict conservation directive that could subject recreation activities to legal challenges. Some of these groups support strict conservation agendas while others have not done their due diligence on the bill's language. Mr. Bishop said he understood AOA's concerns and looks forward to addressing them in the changes to the bill. For example, in SEC. 305, the bill calls for maximizing protection for ecological, cultural, geological, hydrological, scenic and historic features, which could be interpreted to mean to the greatest extent possible.

Former Chairman of the House Resources Committee, Nick Rahall, testified on the bill as well and provided general support for its concepts while also suggesting some modifications. Many thanks to Chairman Rahall and to Brian Merrill for taking time to testify.

## **Secretary of Interior to Hire Recreation Director**

At a meeting with the Secretary of Interior attended by AOA's V.P. for Government Affairs David Brown, Secretary Zinke revealed that he was hiring someone to head up what sounded like a new Office of Recreation in the Department of Interior. No details were provided although he cited the old Bureau of Outdoor Recreation as an example.

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