

Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee,
My name is Heather Szklarski. I was born and raised in Grafton, ND and have a love of the history and natural beauty of our state and region.

While I have admiration for Theodore Roosevelt and enjoy sharing the history of his time in North Dakota with my young family, I am writing in opposition of SRC 4014 relating to horses and cattle within Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I feel that the historical and emotional reasons for this resolution are compelling, but I do not agree that they should be the criteria used to make this decision.

Through my volunteerism in our state I have learned a great deal about the ecosystems in our region and important plants, mammals and invertebrates that call these ecosystems home. Prairie is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world. Many pollinators that depend on prairies are also endangered and are keystone species in many regional food webs. Because horses and cattle are non-native species to our environment, I would like to see the decision to keep or remove these animals from our National Park made by the scientists and managers that work with the land and ecosystems directly.

My family had the pleasure to visit Theodore Roosevelt National Park a couple of years ago. Our biggest hope was to be able to view the majestic bison herd, an animal native to this landscape, and we were lucky to have had that experience. I have heard that many people feel the same about the wild horses in the Park, but to be honest, my family did not know that a horse herd existed in the Park until this resolution was discussed in the media.

In conclusion, I oppose SCR 4014 so that the individuals who interact with and are responsible for the awe inspiring landscape of Theodore Roosevelt National Park can make the decisions that are best at an ecosystem level rather than an emotional one.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony.