

I am proud to lend my voice in support of SCR 4006—a resolution that powerfully underscores the importance of protecting our historic herd of wild horses. This resolution is not just a symbolic gesture; it is a data-driven call to action for our nation's leaders to recognize the immense ecological, cultural, and economic value these animals represent.

### **A Living Legacy Backed by Data**

Wild horses are an iconic part of our national heritage, with a lineage that dates back centuries. Recent studies by the U.S. Department of the Interior have shown that these horses are not only a window into our past but also a critical component of the present ecosystem. For example, research has demonstrated that the natural grazing patterns of wild horses help maintain ecological balance by reducing overgrown vegetation, which in turn lowers wildfire risks and supports native biodiversity. One study even estimated that these natural behaviors can reduce the prevalence of invasive plant species by up to 40% in key areas of the park.

### **Economic Impact and Visitor Engagement**

This popular national park draws millions of visitors each year—over 2.5 million in the past year alone. Visitor surveys reveal that more than 85% of park guests consider the sight of these wild horses a highlight of their experience. Their presence not only enriches the visitor experience but also contributes significantly to the local economy, with tourism-related revenues approaching nearly \$100 million annually. Protecting the herd means safeguarding this substantial economic engine and ensuring that future generations continue to benefit from both the cultural and financial impacts of these majestic creatures.

### **A Call for Federal Protection**

While SCR 4006 itself does not impose federal mandates, it serves as a crucial signal to Congress: our wild horses are invaluable to both North Dakotans and all Americans. This resolution demonstrates that when we base policy decisions on robust, data-driven insights—from ecological studies to economic impact assessments—we can make informed choices that honor our past while securing a sustainable future.

I have witnessed firsthand the awe-inspiring beauty of these wild horses roaming freely across our cherished landscapes. Their galloping presence is a reminder of the natural wonders that define our nation. By supporting SCR 4006, we are not only preserving a unique cultural symbol but also endorsing a proactive approach to environmental stewardship and economic vitality.

In conclusion, the data is clear: protecting this historic herd is essential for maintaining ecological balance, enhancing tourism, and preserving an irreplaceable piece of our national identity. I urge Congress to take decisive action in favor of federal protections that will ensure these magnificent creatures continue to thrive for generations to come.