

The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) are not just majestic creatures roaming the rugged landscapes of North Dakota; they are a living tribute to Theodore Roosevelt himself, symbolizing his indelible legacy of conservation and the untamed spirit of the American West. By protecting these horses, we honor the park's namesake and his monumental contributions to public land preservation.

However, it is alarming to note that unlike other wild horse herds, the TRNP horses lack federal protection under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. This oversight leaves them vulnerable, as they can be removed at any time without legal consequence, threatening their very existence within the park that bears Roosevelt's name.

Moreover, these horses are not only a symbol of natural heritage but also a vital asset to North Dakota's economy. They draw thousands of tourists to Medora and the surrounding regions each year. The potential removal of these horses could devastate local businesses and lead to significant job losses, underlining the economic impact of wildlife tourism.

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The proposal to establish a North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group through SB 2331, modeled after the successful approach in Colorado, is a testament to our commitment to humane and sustainable conservation. This group would bring together state officials, advocates, experts, and other stakeholders to ensure a collaborative, science-based approach to the conservation of the TRNP wild horses, helping to prevent their removal and ensuring long-term oversight.

We must act now to preserve this irreplaceable part of our national heritage and continue Theodore Roosevelt's vision for our nation's wild spaces and wildlife. Protecting the wild horses of TRNP is not only a tribute to our past but a crucial investment in the future of our natural world.

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