

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

PREAMENDED

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 25-0204.01 Jery Payne x2157

SENATE BILL 25-053

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Danielson,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Joseph, Duran

Senate Committees

Agriculture & Natural Resources
Appropriations

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE CLASSIFICATION OF BISON AS WILDLIFE UNLESS**
102 **CLASSIFIED AS LIVESTOCK, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH,**
103 **MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov/>.)

American Indian Affairs Interim Study Committee. The bill classifies bison as big game wildlife unless the bison are livestock. Classifying bison as wildlife means that hunting or taking one is illegal unless authorized by rule of the parks and wildlife commission.

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 finds and declares that:

4 (a) The history of the American bison is deeply intertwined with
5 the history of indigenous peoples in North America. Once roaming the
6 continent in vast herds numbering in the tens of millions, bison are a
7 cornerstone of life for many American Indians and are revered as sacred
8 relatives. Many American Indians and Tribal Nations continue to rely
9 upon bison for survival, including for food, shelter, and clothing.

10 (b) Recognizing the bison's critical role in the livelihood of
11 indigenous peoples and in the campaign to continue European claim and
12 control over lands inhabited by indigenous peoples, the United States
13 government implemented a scorched-earth policy, granting military
14 commanders the authority to decimate bison populations;

15 (c) Over a span of 40 years, more than 30 million bison were
16 killed. This mass extermination was not only wasteful and inhumane but
17 also a calculated effort to undermine the cultural and physical survival of
18 indigenous peoples.

19 (d) Colonel Richard Irving Dodge infamously declared, "Kill
20 every buffalo you can! Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone." The policy
21 of killing bison had devastating impacts on American Indians and Tribal
22 Nations and played a significant role in the federal government's efforts
23 to destroy tribal sovereignty. The resulting food and cultural scarcity
24 played a significant role in the forced relocation of the plains peoples
25 from Colorado in the late 1860s. It also contributed to the pressures
26 restricting the Ute people to western Colorado.

1 (e) By the time Colorado achieved statehood in 1876, hunting and
2 habitat destruction caused by the development of farms, cities, and
3 railroads had reduced the bison population to only a few hundred south
4 of the Platte river;

5 (f) Colorado seeks to protect, serve, and honor the enduring bond
6 between bison and American Indians and Tribal Nations by classifying
7 certain bison as wildlife; and

8 (g) This action represents a step toward making amends for the
9 attempted genocide of American Indians through the eradication of their
10 food source, the bison.

11 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-1-102, **amend** (2)
12 and (51); and **add** (2.6) as follows:

13 **33-1-102. Definitions - rules.** As used in this title 33, unless the
14 context otherwise requires:

15 (2) "Big game" means elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose,
16 rocky mountain bighorn sheep, desert bighorn sheep, rocky mountain
17 goat, pronghorn antelope, black bear, mountain lion, BISON THAT ARE
18 WILDLIFE, and all species of large mammals that may be introduced or
19 transplanted into this state for hunting or are classified as big game by the
20 commission.

21 (2.6) "BISON" MEANS THE UNGULATE CLASSIFIED AS THE SPECIES
22 BOS BISON OR BISON BISON, KNOWN AS THE AMERICAN BISON.

23 ==

24 (51) (a) "Wildlife" means ~~wild~~ vertebrates, mollusks, and
25 crustaceans, whether THE ANIMAL IS alive or dead, ~~including~~ IF THE
26 ANIMAL PRESENTLY OR HISTORICALLY EXISTS AS A SPECIES IN A NATURAL
27 WILD STATE IN ITS PLACE OF ORIGIN.

1 (b) "WILDLIFE" INCLUDES:
2 (I) BISON; OR
3 (II) Any part, product, egg, or offspring ~~thereof, that exist as a~~
4 ~~species in a natural wild state in their place of origin, presently or~~
5 ~~historically, except~~ OF WILDLIFE.

6 (c) "WILDLIFE" DOES NOT INCLUDE:

7 (I) PRIVATELY OWNED CATTLE, INCLUDING PRIVATELY OWNED
8 BISON, BISON LEGALLY REDUCED TO CAPTIVITY, OR BISON THAT HAVE
9 ESCAPED LAWFUL CAPTIVITY;

10 (II) BISON OWNED BY OR LAWFULLY REDUCED TO CAPTIVITY BY AN
11 INDIAN TRIBE; OR

12 (III) Those species ~~determined to be~~ CLASSIFIED AS domestic
13 animals by rule ~~or regulation by~~ OF the commission and the state
14 agricultural commission, BY STATUTE, OR BY COURT DECISION.

15 (d) ~~Such determination within this statute shall~~ A CLASSIFICATION
16 MADE UNDER SUBSECTION (51)(c)(III) OF THIS SECTION DOES not affect
17 other statutes, RULES, or court decisions determining injury to persons or
18 damage to property ~~which~~ THAT depend on the classification of animals
19 by ~~such~~ THE OTHER statute, RULE, or court decision as LIVESTOCK OR wild
20 or domestic animals.

21 **SECTION 3. Appropriation.** For the 2025-26 state fiscal year,
22 \$75,000 is appropriated to the department of natural resources for use by
23 the division of parks and wildlife. This appropriation is from the wildlife
24 cash fund created in section 33-1-112 (1)(a), C.R.S. To implement this
25 act, the division may use this appropriation for wildlife operations.

26 **SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
27 takes effect January 1, 2026; except that, if a referendum petition is filed

1 pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this
2 act or an item, section, or part of this act within the ninety-day period
3 after final adjournment of the general assembly, then the act, item,
4 section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the
5 general election to be held in November 2026 and, in such case, will take
6 effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the
7 governor.