



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

May 20, 2008

H.R. 554

Paleontological Resources Preservation Act

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on May 14, 2008

H.R. 554 would codify current Administration policy regarding the preservation and use of paleontological resources on federal lands. (Paleontological resources include fossilized remains, traces, or imprints of organisms that are preserved in or on the Earth's crust.) The bill also would establish criminal and civil penalties for unlawfully collecting or selling paleontological resources. CBO estimates that any budgetary impact of implementing the bill would be negligible.

The bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would have no significant impact on the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

H.R. 554 would prohibit taking or damaging paleontological resources located on federal lands without permission, selling or purchasing such resources, or submitting false documents relating to them. By codifying prohibitions against those activities, the bill would make it easier for the federal government to prosecute cases against violators. CBO expects, however, that any increase in federal costs for law enforcement would be minimal because of the small number of cases likely to be involved. Any such additional costs would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Because those prosecuted and convicted under H.R. 554 would be subject to criminal fines and civil penalties, the federal government might collect additional revenues if the bill is enacted. Under existing law, criminal fines are deposited in the Crime Victims Fund and spent without further appropriation in subsequent years. Under the provisions of this bill, certain civil penalties also would be available to be spent without further appropriation. CBO expects that any additional revenue collected under H.R. 554 would be less than \$500,000 each year and would be offset by additional direct spending.

On February 12, 2007, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for S. 320, the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act, as ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on January 31, 2007. The two versions of the legislation are very similar, and their estimated costs are the same.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Deborah Reis. This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.