

**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**

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**SENATE SPONSORSHIP**

**Danielson,**

**HOUSE SPONSORSHIP**

**Joseph,** Duran

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**Senate Committees**

Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Appropriations

**House Committees**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

101      **CONCERNING THE CLASSIFICATION OF BISON AS WILDLIFE UNLESS**  
102      **CLASSIFIED AS LIVESTOCK.**

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**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.

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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.

27            (e) By the time Colorado achieved statehood in 1876, hunting and

1 habitat destruction caused by the development of farms, cities, and  
2 railroads had reduced the bison population to only a few hundred south  
3 of the Platte river;

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

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

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

12 **33-1-102. Definitions - rules.** As used in this title 33, unless the  
13 context otherwise requires:

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

20 (2.6) "BISON" MEANS THE UNGULATE CLASSIFIED AS THE SPECIES  
21 BOS BISON OR BISON BISON, KNOWN AS THE AMERICAN BISON.

22 ==

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

27 (b) "WILDLIFE" INCLUDES:

1 (I) BISON; OR

2 (II) Any part, product, egg, or offspring ~~thereof, that exist as a~~  
3 ~~species in a natural wild state in their place of origin, presently or~~  
4 ~~historically, except~~ OF WILDLIFE.

5 (c) "WILDLIFE" DOES NOT INCLUDE:

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

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

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

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

20 **SECTION 3. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act  
21 takes effect January 1, 2026; except that, if a referendum petition is filed  
22 pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this  
23 act or an item, section, or part of this act within the ninety-day period  
24 after final adjournment of the general assembly, then the act, item,  
25 section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the  
26 general election to be held in November 2026 and, in such case, will take

- 1 effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the
- 2 governor.