



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

June 30, 2003

S. 546

Paleontological Resources Preservation Act

*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
on June 25, 2003*

S. 546 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 unlawful activities related to paleontological resources. CBO estimates that any budgetary impact of implementing the bill would be negligible.

Specifically, the bill would prohibit taking or damaging paleontological resources located on federal lands without a permit or permission, selling or purchasing such resources received from federal lands, or submitting false records or identification for such resources removed from federal lands. As a result, the federal government would be able to pursue cases that it otherwise would not be able to prosecute. CBO expects that any increase in federal costs for law enforcement, court proceedings, or prison operations would not be significant, however, 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 S. 546 could be subject to criminal fines and civil penalties, the federal government might collect additional fines or penalties if the bill is enacted. Collections of such fines and penalties are recorded in the budget as revenues. Under existing law, criminal fines are deposited in the Crime Victims Fund and spent without further appropriations 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 and direct spending as a result of enacting S. 546 would be less than \$500,000 each year and would offset each other over time.

Those found in violation of the act also could be subject to the seizure of vehicles and equipment used in connection with the violation. S. 546 would allow the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to use the proceeds from the sale of such seized assets to pay up to \$500 to any person who furnishes information which leads to a criminal conviction or a

finding of civil violation. CBO estimates, however, that any increase in revenues or direct spending from the sale of forfeited assets would be negligible.

S. 546 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.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Deborah Reis and Jenny Lin. This estimate was approved by Paul R. Cullinan, Chief for Human Resources Estimates Unit of the Budget Analysis Division.