

**CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE (TX-18)**

**STATEMENT BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

**MEMBER DAY HEARING ON  
INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES  
APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR FY2021  
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2020**

**9:30 A.M.**

**H-309 CAPITOL**

*SJL scheduled to testify at 11:15 A.M*

9

*Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:*

- As a senior member of the Committees on the Judiciary Subcommittee and on Homeland Security, let me offer my appreciation and thanks to Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce for the difficult work and choices that must be made to produce a truly bipartisan Interior and Environment spending bill, and for their commitment to preserving the environment and our precious natural parks and green spaces, historic places, and cultural heritage.
- Madam Chairwoman, I understand that my entire statement will be made part of the record so I will keep my remarks brief.
- Madam Chairwoman, there is no higher priority than the safety, security, health and wellbeing of the American people.
- All Americans are concerned about the Coronavirus, it is evolving into a global epidemic that is quickly spreading.
- Reports of outbreaks in relation to the coronavirus are emerging from different countries abroad and multiple states within the U.S.
- Growing fears over this virus are quickly manifesting and are resulting in negative impacts to the American economy, lifestyle, and is playing a role in the decision making of everyday activities.
- National parks, mountain ranges, parkways, and other designated historical areas that attract millions of visitors are in jeopardy of losing the revenue and tourist that these sights provide.

- As the author of H.R. 434 – the “Emancipation National Historic Trail” act, a bill that would create a 51 mile route traveled by newly freed slaves, I want to thank the House for its passage and eagerly await for this legislation to be signed into law.
- Collective action is necessary to combat this pandemic and together we can impede the Coronavirus abroad, protect the health and wellbeing of the people and ensure the safety of our nation.
- In the few minutes allotted I wish to highlight three areas which warrant the Committee’s continuing attention and support: (1) historic preservation and cultural enrichment; (2) clean and safe drinking water for all persons in America; and (3) protection of endangered or threatened animal and plant species.

### **1. HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND CULTURAL ENRICHMENT**

#### **I support \$165 million for National Endowment for the Arts**

- This funding will help the NEA maintain its extremely successful programs, including The Big Read, Our Town, and Challenge America, Blue Star Museums and Operation Homecoming, which help the NEA reach every congressional district in the country. In FY15, the NEA awarded over \$116.9 million in appropriated funds through 2,337 grants, with at least one award reaching every congressional district.

#### **I support \$165 million for National Endowment for the Humanities**

- NEH is the single most important source of federal support for the humanities and this investment advances critical U.S. interests by fostering a globally competitive workforce, strengthening civic engagement, preserving our cultural heritage, and protecting our national security. Investment in the humanities advances vital U.S. interests by fostering a globally competitive workforce, strengthening civic engagement, preserving our cultural heritage, and protecting our national security. In a world where interconnectedness is continuously growing investment in the NHS is critical.

#### **I support \$11 million for HBCU Historic Preservation Program**

- Considering the age of many HBCU campuses, historic preservation costs are daunting. In 1998, the National Trust for Historic Preservation designated the nation’s HBCUs among the nation's most endangered historic sites. These funds provide much-needed assistance to schools combating increased challenges

associated with maintaining their schools and gaining access to capital for campus improvements.

### **I support \$95 million for Historic Preservation programs**

- The Historic Preservation Fund provides funding for the core historic preservation programs. The amount includes \$46.9 million for State Historic Preservation Officers and \$11.985 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and \$2,500,000 in grants to underserved communities and \$3 million for competitive grants for Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

### **I support \$10 million for National Heritage Partnership**

- The 49 National Heritage Areas across the country preserve and revitalize cultural, historic and natural resources, delivering recreational and educational opportunities to visitors, residents and entire regions. Through innovative public-private partnerships, National Heritage Areas have effectively leveraged federal resources, attracting an average of \$5.50 of private funding for each dollar appropriated.

### **I support \$165 million for Historic Preservation of Japanese American Confinement Sites**

- The Japanese American incarceration constituted one of the darkest periods in our country's modern history. However, **it would be an even greater failure on our part not to guard against the future perpetration of similar racially motivated acts.** The camps, relocation centers, processing areas, and other confinement sites scattered throughout the South and West, therefore, are invaluable physical links which help to connect today's Americans with the history and meaning of the incarceration.

## **2. SAFE DRINKING WATER, CLEAN AIR AND LAND, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

### **I support \$2 billion for the EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (Drinking Water SRF)**

- Through SRFs investment programs, states provide loans and other financial assistance to local communities or utilities to support upgrades and replacements of water distribution pipelines, treatment plants, sewer lines, storm water conveyances, and other similar infrastructure. This funding is critical as it helps communities maintain safe and effective water infrastructure and affords states the flexibility to fund their highest-priorities.

**I support \$75 million for United States Geological Survey's National Water Quality Assessment (NAWQA) Program**

- NAWQA seeks to identify such threats to our nation's aquatic systems through long-term monitoring and assessment, in particular by understanding how human activity impacts surface water and groundwater. Additional funding to support NAWQA will enhance its ability to gather data and create more substantive evaluations, and thereby protect Americans.

**I support \$16 million for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

**Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP)**

- The ORLP is a new competitive grant program that complements the traditional formula State Conservation grants program by focusing on national priorities, specifically helping urban communities to acquire or develop land to create or reinvigorate public parks and other outdoor recreation spaces in ways that will encourage people to connect or re-connect with the outdoors. Priority is given to projects that engage and empower underserved communities and youth; provide opportunities for employment or job training; involve and expand public-private partnerships; and rely on a high degree of coordination among all levels of government, to improve recreation opportunities for all.

**I support \$95 million for EPA Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup Grant Program**

- Requested funding will support EPA's grant program to assess and/or cleanup brownfields and would fund the assessment activities at more than 1,300 properties, and cleanup operations at more than 120 properties. In addition, requested funding will support environmental workforce development and job training grants, and area wide planning grants.

**I support \$5.8 billion for Indian Health Service (IHS)**

- In 2015, the IHS provided essential health care services to approximately 2.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. The federal government is entrusted with the responsibility of providing health care to American Indians and Alaska Natives, yet the IHS is chronically underfunded. In 2015 health care per capita spending through the IHS was less than half of the per capita rate for the total U.S. population. In

2014, the Indian Health Service's budget was insufficient to meet even 60% of its identified needs, forcing many to go without critical treatment and preventative care.

### **3. PROTECTION OF ENDANGERED OR THREATENED ANIMAL AND PLANT SPECIES**

#### **I support \$88 million for Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF)**

- The CESCF provides vital funding to regional Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) through competitive grants. Regional HCPs, which are led by local governments, facilitate urban-suburban development and job creation through coordinated permitting for endangered species impacts. They are very important in areas where there is a large and growing population and many species of rare animals and plants that often occur nowhere else.

#### **I support \$13.2 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund**

- The Multinational Species Conservation Fund helps conserve tigers, elephants, rhinos, great apes, and marine turtles in their native habitats while advancing U.S. security and economic interests. This Fund also plays a key role in U.S. efforts to address the illegal trafficking in wildlife, which is linked with organized crime syndicates and terrorist groups.

#### **I support \$82.5 million for Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)**

- OLE investigates wildlife crimes, regulates wildlife trade, and works in partnership with international, state, and tribal counterparts to conserve wildlife resources. OLE plays an integral role in the ongoing efforts to combat the global crisis of wildlife poaching and trafficking, given the strong involvement of transnational criminal networks in the growing poaching crisis.

### **CONCLUSION**

- Madam Chair, I thank you and the Ranking Member for your leadership and for extending me this opportunity to share my major priorities with the Subcommittee.