

Rep. Marsha Blackburn
Testimony in Support
Hearing on “Establishing a Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Women’s
History Museum”
December 11, 2013

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today and giving me the opportunity to testify in support of this very important initiative.

I greatly appreciate the efforts of the Committee to make this hearing happen, and for taking a serious look at how we should best move forward with the long- overdue creation of a privately-funded museum to honor our nation’s influential women throughout history. It is my sincere hope that today we will have an informative discussion on how we can make this come to fruition, and that we are able to move this legislation to the floor for consideration of the full House.

Back in February, I was pleased to work with my colleague, Congressman Carolyn Maloney, to introduce H.R. 863, legislation designed to create a commission to study the feasibility of building a Women’s History Museum. Congressman Maloney and Senator Susan Collins have been actively trying to pass similar legislation in the past few Congresses, and while they have had success in passing it by voice vote in the House and by unanimous consent in the Senate, the bills have never passed both chambers in the same Congress.

The fact that we are here today discussing this is a symbolic message that the time has come to move this forward this Congress, and I am hopefully that we can come together to do so. This is a very crucial time in our nation and world for women.

Now more than ever, women are starting and running their own companies, and moving into positions of leadership in the corporate world. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that women hold more than 51% of all management, professional, and related occupations, and that number will only continue to rise.

But let us not forget about those women who persevered and changed the course of history at times in our history when opportunities for women were limited and frowned upon. Our nation would not be what it is today without visionaries like Deborah Sampson, who disguised herself as a man to fight alongside her countrymen in the Revolutionary War; or Susan B. Anthony, who fought for women’s right to vote; or Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross; Or, last but not least, Jeannette Rankin- the first woman ever elected to the US Congress in 1916. There are

countless other women who sacrificed so much to fight for what they believed in despite their tough circumstances.

Today their legacies live on as women continue to break historical barriers and reach new heights. In the 113th congress we have a record high number of 98 women members in both chambers of congress. All women have their own personal history they can bring to the table.

My fellow female colleague here was the first woman ever elected in her Congressional District in New York and has continued to be a trail blazer on so many issues important to her and her constituency. I started my professional career by convincing the company I worked for- Southwestern Company- that I could sell books just as well if not better than any man, and after proving myself true to that, they made me the first ever sales woman in a male-dominated sales team.

While Congressman Maloney and I may disagree on some political issues, that is not what today is about. Today is about coming together to lift up women and helping to preserve and share the legacies of women who paved the way before us and helped shape the nation that we hold so dear. And in doing so, these stories will inspire future generations by illustration how bravery, patriotism, and perseverance can truly make a difference. We would not have the freedom and opportunity that we have today without the sacrifices of those that have gone before us.

This proposed women's history museum would be financed privately only and not a dime of taxpayer money. The museum has already had generous support from women like Meryl Streep and other private donors who want to do what they can to make it happen. Moving forward with plans to create the museum will only garner more support and donations from people who believe in the purpose and direction of the museum.

This bill is the first step forward. It lays out steps to set up a commission of 8 members- chosen equally by the leadership in both parties of the House and Senate- who have demonstrated their commitment to the study or teaching of women's history. They will examine possible locations, devise fundraising strategies, analyze overall logistics of building the museum and asses the feasibility.

As we discuss this bill and the steps forward, I look forward to hearing ideas and suggestions to help this become a reality. I am honored to with my colleague Carolyn Maloney to help get this bill passed. I thank the committee again for allowing me to testify this morning and I hope that we can work together to honor our nation's women.