

Latino Museum Testimony – up to 5 min

Chairwoman Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis and fellow colleagues, thanks for having me here today. As the lead Republican on H.R. 2420, the *National Museum of the American Latino Act*, and as the Representative of a majority-Latino district, I'm proud to discuss the need for a Smithsonian Museum of the American Latino, right here in our nation's capital.

The National Mall in Washington, DC is our country's front yard. It has museums for miles telling our nation's stories – stories of Natural History, of Air and Space, of Art, of Buildings, of the American Indian, and most recently of African American History and Culture. But there is one set of stories that's missing -- the stories of the largest ethnic minority in the U.S.

The United States is home to almost fifty-nine million Latino and Latina Americans and estimates show that by 2060, one out of every four people in the United States will be of Latino heritage.

This bill would make the first strides toward establishing a permanent museum for the American Latino by instituting a Board of Trustees that will be responsible for finding a location, developing a long term plan for construction and advising the Smithsonian Board of Regents. Not only does this bill establish a leadership structure to make the idea of this museum a reality, but it authorizes a public-private partnership that will establish a 50-50 matching program to fund this project.

Next year, the Smithsonian is opening within the Museum of American History, a Latino Center – the first gallery space to celebrate the experience of American Latinos and Latinas. This space will showcase the contributions of the American Latino, like how they have served in our nation's uniform in every war since the Revolution. But this space will pale in comparison to the existing museums many of which have exhibition space well over 100,000 square feet.

In just over 4 months the National Museum of African American History and Culture hit the 1 million visitor mark and since its opening

the museum has welcomed more than 6 million tourists. This is an indication of how successful a museum of the American Latino can be. Our nation's investment in displaying these stories that Americans and millions of tourists from around the world want to hear will be more than worth it.

Our bill has over 260 bipartisan cosponsors in the House and my colleagues Senators Cornyn, Menendez, Rubio, McSally and Capito are leading this bipartisan effort in the Senate. This isn't a Republican or Democratic issue. This is an American issue. This transcends each of us here today and will allow future generations of Americans from sea to shining sea to learn from our past, appreciate the progress made today and work together to create a stronger future.

Growing up in San Antonio, I was exposed to the rich Latino culture that is prominent in all aspects of American culture.

From the music we listen to, the clothes we wear and the food we eat to the gifted minds of our doctors, educators and business people, we see these accomplishments woven into our everyday lives and the very fabric of our nation.

Thank you, and I look forward to any questions you may have.