

Opening Statement of
Republican Leader Don Young (AK-At Large)
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and
Public Lands

Legislative hearing on H.R. 182, H.R. 307, H.R.
473, H.R. 1088, H.R. 1130, H.R. 1179, H.R.
1248, H.R. 1472, H.R. 1487, H.R. 1727, H.R.
2369, H.R. 2427, H.R. 2490, and H.R. 2525

May 22, 2019

As the chair noted, today the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands will consider fourteen bills related to the National Park System, recreation, and historic preservation.

The sheer number of bills being considered today is a departure from the more focused legislative hearings that used to be the standard for this committee. I fear that packing a hearing with too many pieces of legislation, particularly bills that cover such different topics, may weaken the diligent review

we owe to the individual proposals that come before this subcommittee. In some cases, we do not hear from an invited expert, which is an opportunity that both sides of the aisle could benefit from.

As Members of Congress, we should ensure we have enough time to celebrate good proposals and debate solutions to fix flawed legislation. I am worried we have not allowed time to do either.

These fourteen bills represent a wide variety of policy changes, some of which I am more skeptical of than others. I don't have time in this opening statement to discuss each bill on today's hearing, but I wanted to highlight a few

H.R. 1727, the Complete America's Great Trails Act represents a major change in our tax code that outside observers predict will be vulnerable to exploitation. In fact, Senators Grassley and Wyden, on a bipartisan basis, have begun an investigation of the current abuse of the conservation deduction already present in our tax code. Also of note, no outside experts have been invited to testify on this

legislation. I hope that we all continue to analyze this proposal closely to see if it would be a benefit, particularly with a cost to American taxpayers.

I appreciate the majority adding H.R. 1088, sponsored by Congressman Marshall of Kansas. This bill authorizes the Society of the First Infantry Division to modify the First Division Monument here in Washington D.C. to honor members of the First Infantry Division of the U.S. Army who died during U.S. operations, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, and Enduring Freedom.

Next, I wanted to highlight H.R. 2490, sponsored by Representative Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska. This bill would authorize a special resource study of designating the Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail. This legislation passed the House in the 114th Congress and is timely, as the State of Nebraska recently voted to replace one of its current statues in the U.S. Capitol with one of Chief Standing Bear.

We will also be hearing testimony on H.R. 307, the Preserving America's Battlefields Act, offered by

Representative Hice. This bill increases the authorization for appropriations to the Battlefield Acquisition Grant Program from \$10 million to \$20 million each fiscal year through 2028. The Battlefield Acquisition Grant Program provides professional consultation to individuals, groups, and governments interested in preserving historic battlefields, and awards grants to groups that sponsor preservation projects, as well as to local governments and States looking to purchase battlefield land. These grants encourage private sector and state investment in battlefield preservation.

We will also hear testimony on H.R. 473, sponsored by Representative Neguse of our Subcommittee. This bill authorizes the “Every Word We Utter Monument” to establish a site in Washington, D.C. honoring the many important women in the suffrage movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Finally, I would like to highlight H.R. 1179 offered by Representative Adams of North Carolina. This is a great piece of legislation which will establish an

African American Burial Grounds Network to aid in the preservation, restoration, interpretation, and research of African American burial grounds throughout the United States.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee today and look forward to hearing their testimony. With that, I yield back.