

**OPENING STATEMENT AND QUESTIONS FOR
CONGRESSMAN JOE NEGUSE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS
HEARING ON H.R. 473 EVERY WORD WE UTTER
WEDNESDAY MAY 22, 2019 10:00 AM**

Opening Statement

Good afternoon and thank you to everyone for being here today! I want to thank my colleagues and the Chairwoman for holding today's hearing on H.R. 473 to establish the Every Word We Utter statue, which could become **the first** outdoor statue in tribute to the women's suffrage movement in Washington, D.C.

100 years and 1 day ago, the U.S. House of Representatives passed House Joint Resolution 1 proposing an amendment to the Constitution extending the right to vote to women. It took just over a year for the states to ratify this amendment, forever enshrining women's right to vote in our constitution.

At the forefront of this effort was a diverse and multi-generational movement of women. From their first official call for equality at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, to demonstrations in the streets of the very city in which we sit now; across multiple generations, from farms and villages throughout our nation, women organized, educated, picketed, and demanded their enfranchisement. Through this brave and enduring movement, women received the vote.

And they have never looked back: Today women vote in **higher numbers** than men and have done so **in every election** since 1964.

It is in tribute to the fearlessly bold and righteous women who championed equality in our nation that I sit before you today.

I am honored to be joined at this hearing by Jane Dedecker, a Colorado resident, nationally renowned sculptor, and the artist behind this statue. Jane has been sculpting the human figure for over thirty-five years. In her work she seeks to capture moments that reveal truths about the human condition, which - when stripped down to their essence - are understood intrinsically. She has placed over 175 life and monumental sized public sculptures in over thirty-three states. Jane's

beautifully crafted design in Every Word We Utter brings to life the women behind the suffrage movement from its beginning to its final victory.

I also feel privileged to be joined by Jody Shadduck-McNally who is the President of the Every Word We Utter Board and a constituent of mine.

Together these women, along with the rest of the Every Word We Utter Board, have advocated tirelessly for the placement of this statue and for national recognition of the movement for women's suffrage. Their dedication has led to several successes, including this bill which was first introduced in the 115th Congress by my predecessor Gov. Jared Polis.

H.R. 473 has received strong bipartisan support, including from the entire Congressional delegation of Colorado. It will bicameral with the bipartisan Senate companion introduced just yesterday. Leading women's organizations are in support of this legislation including six chapters of the American Association of University Women, among them the chapters for the states of Colorado and Nevada, as well as the League of Women Voters of Colorado. I would therefore like to enter into the record a letter of support for this statue from the American Association of University Women of Colorado.

The Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission is also supportive of this statue, and I am honored to have the Commission's National Events Director Anna ("Layman") Laymon here today to testify on the significance of this legislation and statute.

Under the Commemorative Works Act, this sculpture can be donated to the National Park Service with our Congressional Authorization. This bill authorizes that private donation and stipulates that this statue will not cost anything to the Federal government. While the bill suggests a preferred location for the statue, it leaves the ultimate decision of location to the National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee.

The women included in this sculpture hail from every corner of our country and from a diverse set of backgrounds and circumstances. It depicts Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton with her daughter Harriot Stanton Blatch, Sojourner Truth, Alice Paul, and Ida B. Wells, all renowned women's rights activists and foundational members of this multigenerational movement.

Each of these women's efforts across the decades was irreplaceable to the ultimate enfranchisement of women throughout our nation. While I could highlight the

incredible words and actions of each of them, I would like to focus for a moment on Sojourner Truth. A former slave, Sojourner became an outspoken advocate for abolition, temperance, and civil and women's rights in the nineteenth century.

My daughter Natalie is just 8 months old. As a proud father of a daughter, I want to ensure that my daughter and every girl growing up alongside her feel represented, empowered, and are assured of the fundamental role they play in our society. Establishing this statue is a critical way to guarantee just that, and to inspire the next generation to continue advocating for justice and equality for one another and for all that will follow them.

In honor of this auspicious anniversary, in reverence to all of the generations that came before us, and on behalf of all of those still to come, I thank the committee for hearing this bill today and for their consideration moving forward!