

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Russ Fulcher
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Legislative Hearing
on H.R. 820, H.R. 920, H.R. 2497, and H.R. 2626
April 21, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Neguse. I would like to thank you for holding this hearing today and look forward to working with you as you start your tenure as the Chairman of this important Subcommittee. Today's bills are perfect examples of areas where we can set aside partisanship and focus on productive policy, and I look forward to trying to find other bipartisan areas of cooperation we can work on together throughout this Congress.

This week is National Parks Week, a week where we celebrate our parks and look to the future. Our National Parks commemorate the triumphs and tragedies of our past and help us learn about the seminal events of our history, and hopefully learn from them as well. The United States is, and has always

been, a country of many cultures and our parks should reflect the uniqueness and diversity of our nation.

I hope that as we discuss these bills that we can reflect on the current state of the National Park System. We currently have 423 National Park System units spanning more than 84 million acres. Congress recently provided \$9.5 billion through the Great American Outdoors Act to address deferred maintenance at our National Parks and public lands, and this is frankly a time when the Park Service should be focusing on using the funds Congress provided to reduce its backlog, not adding new sites.

Before I talk about the specifics of each piece of legislation, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that we are missing one vital witness today – the National Park Service. NPS had ample time to prepare for this hearing and was able to provide written statements, which makes it even more perplexing that

they couldn't provide a witness to answer questions, particularly in this virtual environment. Continuing to conduct hearings virtually and without administration witnesses is no way to run a government, and I hope that we can return to normal soon in this Committee and across the nation.

However, I am looking forward to hearing from the witnesses we do have here today. First, we will discuss H.R. 820, sponsored by our colleague from Illinois, Congressman LaHood. This bill would establish the New Philadelphia Historical Park as a unit of the National Park System. New Philadelphia in Illinois was founded in 1836 by "Free" Frank McWorter. The site would help tell the incredible life story of Frank McWorter, a man who was born into slavery and eventually purchased freedom for himself and his family.

Next, we have H.R. 920, the “Brown v. Board of Education Historic Site Expansion Act,” sponsored by our colleague from South Carolina, Congressman Clyburn. This bill expands the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site currently located in Topeka, Kansas, to include additional sites in South Carolina, and establishes as affiliated areas sites in Virginia, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. This bill will help to recognize and preserve sites associated with *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which resulted in the landmark Supreme Court ruling that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional.

Next, we have H.R. 2497, the “Amache National Historic Site Act,” offered by our distinguished Subcommittee Chairman, Mr. Neguse. This bill would establish the Amache National Historic Site in Colorado as a unit of the National Park System.

During World War II, tens of thousands of Japanese Americans were forcibly moved from the West Coast to internment centers further inland. Amache imprisoned over 7,000 residents of Japanese ancestry, most of them American citizens. We have the distinct honor of hearing from Dr. Robert Y. Fuchigami, an Amache survivor, who later served our nation in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War, among a litany of other accomplishments.

Finally, we will hear testimony on the “Pullman National Historical Park Act,” sponsored by another colleague from Illinois, Representative Robin Kelly. This bill expands and redesignates the Pullman National Monument designated by President Obama in 2015. This bill is a prime example of why park units should be established through the open debate of the legislative process and not via executive fiat using the

Antiquities Act. Instead of working with Congress to establish Pullman the right way, President Obama decided to go it alone and now Congress must step in to fix this mess.

I thank each of the witnesses for being with us today and I look forward to hearing the testimony. I yield back.