



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Bruce Westerman
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, and congratulations on your new position as Chairman of the Subcommittee. I look forward to getting to work with you this Congress on all of the important pieces of legislation under this Subcommittee's jurisdiction.

I would also like to acknowledge that this is National Park Week. Each April we celebrate our National Parks and invite every American to get out and enjoy their parks. I'm fortunate that the best park in the entire System is located right in my district, Hot Springs National Park. Hot Springs National Park celebrated its 100th anniversary last month, and I look forward to

the next century of visitors discovering everything Hot Springs has to offer.

The National Park Service has long preserved some of the most historic and scenic locales in America. Our national parks should reflect our nation's varied landscape as well as the diverse culture and experiences of our people.

In recent years, the National Park Service has made a concerted effort to provide an honest look at American history and to ensure that our parks tell the stories of all Americans. I applaud the National Park Service for their efforts to make all Americans feel welcome and included in our Park System. The bills before us today highlight important and difficult stories and lessons from our nation's past. It is important to acknowledge the dark spots from our history so that we do not repeat the same mistakes.

One of the bills we are considering, Representative Clyburn's "Brown v. Board of Education Historic Site Expansion Act," is of special significance to my home state of Arkansas. Little Rock Central in Arkansas, now a National Historic Site, was the epicenter of the fight over school desegregation during the 1950's. Much like the bill before us, the Little Rock Central National Historic Site allows us to learn from the stories of those before us and reminds us about their struggles and sacrifices.

Another bill we are considering, Chairman Neguse's Amache National Historic Site Act, would establish the Amache National Historic Site in Granada, Colorado. Arkansas has a similar site, the Rohwer Japanese American Relocation Center. Similar to Amache, the Rohwer site imprisoned tens of

thousands of Japanese Americans during World War II, and has been largely forgotten in history.

As Dr. Fuchigami stated in his written testimony, when we bring attention to these important sites, we “shine a light on our forgotten history and help tell a more complete story of America.” I couldn’t agree with that sentiment more, and believe that stories like those of Dr. Fuchigami and survivors of the Rowher site in Arkansas need to be at the forefront of our discussions.

I’d also like to highlight the Republican bill we are considering today, H.R. 820, sponsored by Congressman LaHood. This bill would establish the New Philadelphia Historical Park in Illinois. New Philadelphia was founded in 1836 by “Free” Frank McWorter and is the first known town to be founded by an African American in the United States. Frank

McWorter lived a truly incredible and inspiring life, and I look forward to hearing more about him and this site today from our witness, Mr. Phillip Bradshaw.

Lastly, the Committee will also consider the Pullman National Historical Park Act, sponsored by Representative Robin Kelly. While the Committee would have liked to hear testimony from the Park Service on all of the bills under consideration today, it would have been particularly beneficial to hear from the agency on this bill, considering that this piece of legislation is only necessary because President Obama designated this as a national monument through the Antiquities Act in 2015.

With that, I look forward to hearing from our expert witnesses who are here today and I yield back.