

Chair Porter
NPFPL Legislative Hearing
Opening Statement
November 7, 2021

Thank you all for joining us today for the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands' hearing.

Last week House leadership announced a small change to this week's voting schedule, so Chair Neguse is unable to attend today's hearing.

I am happy to be here today in his absence and would like to extend gratitude to my colleagues who have sponsored these bills, as well as today's witnesses for their time and thoughtful testimony.

Today we will be reviewing three important bills that may not seem obviously connected; however, they are all designed to help protect and preserve our shared story in their own unique ways.

First, we have H.R. 1117 from Representative DeSaulnier. This bill authorizes the expansion of the Rosie the Riveter--World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, California.

This partnership park tells the story of the Americans who banded together and worked to support the war effort in boomtowns like Richmond throughout the country.

The proposed expansion allows the National Park Service to acquire sites like the Nystrom Elementary School, which would be the first public education facility within the boundaries of the park.

Today we were scheduled to hear more about the ongoing preservation efforts at the park from Betty Reid Soskin.

At the impressive age of 100, Miss Soskin is the oldest active National Park Ranger and a woman who herself worked on the home front during World War II.

She has worked as a park ranger for nearly 20 years, dedicated to sharing her story and that of other Black women who made important and sometimes forgotten contributions during the World War II era.

Not everyone knows that integration of the workforce that occurred during World War II was an important precursor to the Civil Rights Movements that followed, and I am eager to hear more about her perspective and how this bill will contribute to the park's founding mission and objectives.

Unfortunately, Miss Soskin is unable to attend today, but we will hear from the Mayor of Richmond about the importance of the park and why the residents of his city support the proposed expansion outlined in H.R. 1117.

We will also be discussing H.R. 3525 from Representative Meng.

Representative Meng is the Vice Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, and her bill will establish a commission to examine the establishment of a National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture.

The Asian American experience is woven into the fabric of this country, and creating a commission is the first step in creating a museum designed to elevate this story and ensure that Americans of all ethnicities and generations have the opportunity to learn about our nation's values, traditions, culture, and history.

Nowhere is this more true than in Orange County, where I'm from. Orange County is home to the 3rd largest Asian-American population in the country. They are our colleagues, neighbors, and friends and we understand better than anyone the rich contributions of Asian Americans to our country.

The commission model worked well for the Women's History and American Latino Museum, both of which were recently established by Congress, and I am proud to support Representative Meng's bill.

The final bill on today's docket is H.R. 5230 from Representative Katko of New York. This bill authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to provide the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum with a one-time grant to support its operation and security needs.

This committee recognizes the importance of this memorial, and previously authorized a grant program administered by the Interior Department which provided the museum with approximately \$2 million last year.

I look forward to learning more about the continuing management challenges and the need for ongoing federal support.

Public lands tell our story, and it is critical that they tell the story of ALL Americans. While they might not all be strictly related to federally managed sites, these three bills advance that critical goal in their own unique ways.

Again, I want to thank my colleagues and all of the witnesses for being here with us today.

With that, I would like to turn it over to Ranking Member Rosendale for his remarks.