



Bay Front. Home Front. Out Front.

Testimony of Tom Butt, Mayor, City of Richmond CA

Before The United States House of Representatives
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

In Support of
H.R. 1117 – Rosie the Riveter National Historic Site Expansion Act

Legislative Hearing – December 7th, 2021

Thank you, Mr Chairman and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify before you today, fittingly on the 80th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, which brought the United States into WWII.

My name is Tom Butt, and I am mayor of Richmond, CA, home of Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park. I am here to talk about HR 1117, the Rosie the Riveter National Historic Site Expansion Act, which would add the WWII-era Nystrom Elementary School to the current inventory of park sites.

I am substituting today for my good friend, Betty Reid Soskin who at over 100 years old, is the oldest ranger in the National Park Service. I am sorry that she was not able to be with us today.

I am also a founding member of the Rosie the Riveter Trust, the official non-profit partner of Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park, and currently serve as a member of its Board of Directors.

Along with two “Rosies,” who are now deceased, I testified in front of this same committee 22 years ago when legislation establishing the park was being considered. It was signed into law by President Clinton in 2000.

In 2010, the park completed its General Management Plan which outlined a process for the addition of sites to the park. A willing property owner who wishes their site to be included as part of the park can request inclusion and evaluation. The first step in this process is to have the structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which happened with Nystrom

School in 2017 in a determination of significance to the World War II Homefront and how its story is told.

West Contra Costa Unified School District rehabilitated Nystrom Elementary according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation.

Nystrom Elementary School, a K-5 elementary school within the West Contra Costa Unified School District, is an original structure built during World War II to accommodate the large number of families that moved to Richmond to work at the Kaiser Shipyards. Incidentally, the school was fully racially integrated, which is indicative of the societal transformation that took place in Richmond during the war years. These families played a critical role in the successful mobilization of people and resources on the WWII Home Front to ultimately win the war. It is vital that we add this crucial site to Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park to showcase the important history of this community, and to properly honor the service of all those who assisted in the war effort.

The City of Richmond serves as one of the key partners for the park (as well as the owner of a number of other Rosie the Riveter park sites), and strongly supports the inclusion of the Nystrom Elementary School.

Rosie the Riveter is a unique "partnership park," where the National Park Service does not own any of the properties that are named in the original enabling legislation and the National Park Service has no legislated financial commitment to maintaining or restoring them. Adding Nystrom Elementary school would require no acquisition or operational costs.

H.R. 1117 would allow for the future addition of other sites to the park, which are similarly determined to be nationally significant in showcasing the World War II Home Front story in Richmond, California. Any nationally significant site added to the park would help advance the conservation of WWII-era resources that help tell the park stories and educate the public about this important time in our nation's history.

Thank you for considering this legislation, and for allowing me this time to speak before the Committee. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, for his heartfelt support and continued dedication to preserving Richmond's World War II Home Front legacy.

At this time, I am happy to address any questions you might have.

Sincerely,



Mayor Tom Butt
City of Richmond