

Opening Statement for Ranking Member Fulcher
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 4878, H.R. 6589,
H.R. 6805, H.R. 7002, H.R. 7075, and H.R. 7218
April 28, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Neguse. I'm looking forward to hearing from our witnesses and discussing the legislation before us today. But there is an "elephant in the room" not on our agenda which is related to the subject matter at hand: astronomical gas prices and a dramatic increase in inflation.

Some of the legislation before us today would spend billions of new dollars that we just don't have.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the "Historic Preservation Enhancement Act," would create up to \$2.7 billion in new, mandatory spending over the

next 10 years. Millions of Americans across this country are struggling fiscally just to get by, and those struggles are only exacerbated by exorbitant spending practices.

According to AAA, the national average for a gallon of gas is \$4.12. Couple this with the 8.5 percent inflation we've seen over the past 12 months – the highest since 1981 – and a national debt surpassing \$30 trillion, and it's clear that the last thing we should do is create \$300 million in new mandatory spending - every year in perpetuity.

What's especially concerning about this situation is that we are considering the reauthorization of the Historic

Preservation Fund while simultaneously attacking the
very energy revenues that fund it.

Since taking office, the Biden administration has done everything in its power to delay and prevent domestic energy production. Almost immediately after taking office, President Biden placed a moratorium on oil and gas leasing on federal lands and waters. Although this moratorium was blocked by injunction last June, the Biden administration spent months delaying the leasing process... which resulted in a “chilling effect” across the domestic energy production industry. The Department of Interior held one offshore lease sale in November 2021, but a district court vacated the lease sale in January 2022

in an unprecedented decision. The Biden administration chose not to appeal this case, astonishingly declining to defend its own work. Since that time, no new leases have been issued for this sale.

In addition, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management has not scheduled the three remaining sales under the current five-year plan for offshore leasing and is rapidly running out of time to do so. Despite repeated Congressional requests for information, the Department of the Interior has not provided any information about when the agency will publish the next five-year plan. This has created uncertainty for American businesses, offshore oil and gas development, energy security, and

conservation programs like the Historic Preservation Fund.

If the administration was interested in more than just rhetoric, they would roll-back the red-tape they have put in place that stymied sustainable energy production on federal lands and waters. This is the only way to ensure the long-term solvency of the Historic Preservation Fund, which they claim to care so much about.

In contrast to the administration's policies, Committee Republicans have introduced a suite of bills to show America's desire to reduce dependence on countries like Russia. This includes two bills I'm co-sponsoring, the "American Energy Independence From

Russia Act” and the “No Timber From Tyrants Act.”

Both would not only improve our national security and that of our allies, but also create jobs at home by increasing American energy and timber production.

This suite of Republican-led efforts also includes two bills we will be considering today (thank you), which will show our solidarity with the people of Ukraine as they face Putin’s unhinged rampage. First, Representative Wagner’s bipartisan bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to light up the Gateway Arch in St. Louis in the colors of the Ukrainian flag, and Second, Representative Spartz’s bill to formally name a small park in Washington, D.C., as Ukrainian Independence

Park. Representative Spartz, the only Ukrainian-born Member of Congress, has been a real champion of this legislation and I thank her for her leadership during this incredibly trying time. Mr. Chairman - thank you, and I yield back.