

**Testimony of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton**  
**Hearing on H.R. 1256, the Francis G. Newlands Memorial Removal Act**  
**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands**  
**July 14, 2022**

Chairman Neguse, thank you for holding this hearing on the Francis G. Newlands Memorial Removal Act, which I co-introduced with Congressman Jamie Raskin. The bill would remove the plaque and inscriptions bearing Francis Newlands' name from Chevy Chase Circle, a federal park located both in the District of Columbia and Maryland. I am pleased Senators Chris Van Hollen and Ben Cardin have introduced the companion bill.

Newlands was a U.S. senator from Nevada and the founder of the Chevy Chase Land Company, which developed the Chevy Chase neighborhoods in D.C. and Maryland. Newlands was also a segregationist. He built Connecticut Avenue and ran a streetcar up the road to the newly built Chevy Chase Lake. However, homes on Connecticut Avenue were purposely priced to keep working families out, and covenants were later added to many of the property deeds in Chevy Chase explicitly prohibiting the land from ever being owned by African Americans or Jews. These covenants have since been declared void.

Newlands went further to keep Black and white Americans separate. In the late 1800s, he and Senator William Stewart secured 2,000 acres of land for Rock Creek Park. Establishing this park not only increased property values for landowners like Newlands and Stewart, but also kept white communities distinct from emerging Black communities on what they called the "wrong side of the park." Newlands' racist views went even further. In 1912, he called for the repeal of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which gave African American men the right to vote.

The fountain was established in 1932 by Congress. In 1990, the Chevy Chase Land Company also added a plaque next to the fountain. A resolution to remove Newlands' name from the fountain was first introduced by the D.C. Chevy Chase Advisory Neighborhood Commission in 2014. On July 27, 2020, the commission voted unanimously to ask the National Park Service to remove the plaque bearing Newlands' name and to begin discussion on a new name for the fountain. This bill would remove Newlands' name from the fountain and remove the plaque entirely. Newlands does not deserve to be honored on federal land.

Again, I thank you for holding this hearing.