

Proposed Remarks by President T. Randall
University of Utah Research Park Act, H.R. 2876
Committee on Natural Resources

1. Presentation:

a. Personal Introduction:

- i. I am Taylor Randall, President of the University of Utah, the flagship public institution of higher education in Utah.
- ii. I'm here in support of the University of Utah Research Park Act.

b. Brief Summary of Issue: *The University asks that Congress affirm the University's operation of Research Park under the RPPA, in response to recent BLM concerns*

- i. For more than fifty years, University of Utah has successfully operated a research park on land the Department of the Interior granted to the University under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, or RPPA.
- ii. The Research Park contributes significantly to development of new technologies and facilitates valuable academic and research collaborations among private companies and University faculty members and students.
- iii. For the State of Utah, Research Park is an important economic catalyst, and proposed improvements to Research Park will significantly increase these benefits.
- iv. BLM, on behalf of the Department of the Interior, has indicated that such improvements, as well as historical park development, might be prohibited by the RPPA.
- v. BLM has taken this position notwithstanding more than fifty-five years of the Department's approval (tacit and express) of the Research Park.
- vi. The University of Utah Research Park Act will confirm, for both the University and the BLM, that operation of the Research Park on this land is an allowed use under the RPPA.
- vii. This assurance includes University plans to improve the park to increase its academic and research value, as well as its economic return to the State of Utah and its citizens.
- viii. The University of Utah strongly supports enactment of H.R. 2876.

c. *What are the purposes of research parks and what makes them so valuable?*

- i. Numerous U.S. universities operate research parks, sometimes referred to as innovation districts.

- ii. Research parks support new and emerging-growth companies that commercialize university technologies, promote further development of those technologies, and create employment opportunities.
- iii. Research parks offer buildings for lease by private companies, incubators supporting newly formed companies, laboratory space, as well as recreation and other amenities for park community members such as cafes, coffee shops, retail stores, housing and transportation services.
- iv. University of Utah's Research Park operates consistently with the many university-affiliated parks across the United States.
- v. Because of its significant value to the University and surrounding community, the University has invested, and hopes to continue to invest, significant institutional resources for the operation of and improvement to Research Park.

d. How does operation of the University's Research Park relate to the RPPA?

- i. The University's Research Park is located on land acquired by the University from the Department of the Interior in 1968.
- ii. The patent transferring this land requires that the University use this land for University purposes consistent with the RPPA.
- iii. Operation of the Research Park is a valid public purpose under the RPPA, according to assurances previously provided to the University by the Department of the Interior.
- iv. In its 1968 original petition requesting transfer of the lands on which the University operates the Park, the University expressly stated its intent to use a portion of the land as a research park.
- v. Importantly, our petition acknowledged that operation of a research park might present a novel use of land under RPPA.
- vi. Consequently, we suggested that, if the Department of the Interior believed it more appropriate, the University could instead use its land grant entitlement to acquire this land.
- vii. Nonetheless, the Department granted this land to the University under the RPPA, based on the University's description of its intended uses.
- viii. In fact, by letter dated December 10, 1970, then Secretary of the Interior Fred J. Russell expressly confirmed that the University's operation of a research park on these lands is a "valid public purpose" under RPPA.

- ix. Following 1970, and until very recently, the BLM has not objected to the University's operation of the research park citing restrictions in the RPPA.
 - x. In good faith reliance on Department of the Interior assurances, the University has invested significant institutional resources in the development of Research Park to ensure that it fulfills its mandate for public benefit.
 - xi. Research Park has become a successful innovation hub for Utah and is home to dozens of companies and many University departments, with a combined workforce totaling more than 14,000 employees.
 - xii. Research Park is home to BioFire, which was recently acquired by multi-national biotech company bioMérieux, as well as ARUP Laboratories, a leading national academic reference laboratory offering high-quality diagnostic testing and consulting services to hospitals and health systems across the nation.
 - xiii. Research Park was also the original home of Myriad Genetics, a leading genetic testing company that played a key role in the discovery and sequencing of the BRCA1 and BRCA2 breast cancer genes.
 - xiv. All of these companies are key players in a vibrant and growing life sciences economy in Utah.
 - xv. The University hopes to continue making significant investments in improvements to Research Park including, for example, adding a public transportation hub that is connected to the system across the Salt Lake Valley.
 - xvi. However, the BLM recently informed the University that the commercial, residential and transportation uses associated with research parks are typically problematic under the RPPA.
- e. ***The University of Utah Research Park Act will settle, once and for all, the University's authority to operate the Research Park on University land that is subject to the RPPA.***
- i. The University understands questions the Department of the Interior might have regarding whether operation of a research park qualifies as a valid public purpose contemplated by the RPPA.
 - ii. The University acknowledged this much in its original petition for the grant, as demonstrated by the University's offer to receive the land pursuant to the University's land grant entitlements.

- iii. However, this question was resolved long ago, as demonstrated by the written materials the University has submitted to this Committee.
- iv. Nonetheless, in order to put this issue to rest, and to provide guidance to both the University and BLM, the University respectfully requests that this Committee vote in favor of the University of Utah Research Park Act.
- v. It is critical to the University, the State of Utah and the Federal government that the University's Research Park continues to succeed.
- vi. If the University is now prohibited from improving Research Park in ways that ensure its continued success, as has recently been suggested by the BLM, progress made to date will be undone, and significant public and private investments in the Park will be wasted.
- vii. The University has been a good steward of this land for more than fifty years, and will continue to be a good steward for many years to come.