



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable French Hill
Testimony
House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Federal Lands
U.S. House of Representatives
June 10, 2025

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I appreciate the chance to testify in support of my legislation, H.R. 3187, to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey a parcel of property owned by the Forest Service to Perry County, Arkansas, and for other purposes.

This bill seeks to transfer ownership of a vacant federal building owned by the U.S. Forest Service, and 0.81 acres of land located at 1069 Fourche Avenue in Perryville, Arkansas, to Perry County. The property is no longer in use by the Forest Service and there are no plans for its future utilization.

Perry County is a small, rural community with a population of around 10,000. Approximately 16% of residents live below the poverty line. About 77% of the county is forested, with 72% of that land privately owned. The U.S. Forest Service is the largest public landowner in the county, managing 119,171 acres as part of the Ouachita National Forest.

For several years, Perry County has sought to acquire this property. However, due to limited resources and a high poverty rate, the small county has been unable to purchase it outright. My legislation would enable the federal government to convey the property at no cost to the county.

While the building will require repairs and updates, Perry County has the funds to make the necessary improvements. Once restored, the facility will support vital local programs. Specifically, it will house the permanent operations of the University of Arkansas Extension Program, the Perry County Conservation District, and serve as a meeting space for the 4-H Youth Development Program. These organizations are currently struggling with limited space, which hampers their ability to serve the community effectively.

The University of Arkansas Extension Office provides critical, research-based information to local families, youth, and farmers. It hosts educational workshops focused on agriculture, health, and nutrition. This is particularly important, as 40% of youth and 64% of adults in Perry County are classified as overweight or obese. A larger space will enable the Extension Program to better promote healthy eating habits and teach residents how to grow and prepare nutritious meals, empowering them to make long-term improvements in their health and well-being.

There is strong local support for this conveyance. Those who have expressed their support include:

1. Larry Blackmon, Perry County Judge
2. Kevin Lawson, County Extension Agent – Agriculture, Faulkner County
3. Tammy Farnam, Administrative Assistant III, Perry County Extension Office
4. Jacob Farnam, Board President, Perryville School District
5. Kallem Hill, President, Perry County Farm Bureau Board of Directors
6. Nicole Strecker, 4-H Leader, Perryville High School
7. Donnie Crain, President/CEO, Perry County Chamber of Commerce
8. Amy Branch, Chair of the Board, Perry County Conservation Board
9. David “Butch” Hoyt, Vice President, Perry County Cattlemen’s Association
10. Chairperson, Perry County Conservation District
11. Rose Gunther, Former 4-H Member, Perry County
12. Ettamarie Belden, 4-H Leader and Volunteer, Perry County
13. John Roland, Mayor, Perryville

In conclusion, H.R. 3187 will provide Perry County with a much-needed facility to expand youth development, agricultural education, and community health initiatives. The conveyance of this unused federal property will create lasting benefits for the people of Perry County.

Chairman Tiffany, that concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you, or other members of the subcommittee may have.