

**Statement of Jane Abraham, Former Chairman of the Congressional Commission  
to Study the Potential for an American Museum of Women's History  
Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 2:00 pm**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to join you here today. This Committee is being asked to approve a narrow land transfer necessary to carry out a decision Congress has already made and the Smithsonian has already validated.

I proudly stand in support of House Resolution 1329 to permit the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum to be located within the Reserve of the National Mall and to transfer the identified land to the Smithsonian for that use.

While I currently serve as Co-Chair of the Advisory Council for the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum, I have personally been involved with the creation and establishment of the Museum for over a decade.

In 2014, I was Senator McConnell's appointee to the American Women's History Museum Congressional Commission, impaneled to determine the feasibility of establishing a women's history museum and recommend a pathway forward if we concluded such an institution should be established. That bipartisan Commission was composed of eight women from different professions, regions, and backgrounds and I was elected as its Chair. I often tell the story of the first time the eight of us met. Given that we were selected in a political setting with four of us Republican and four of us Democrat, you might say we were all a bit apprehensive about the situation. That lasted about 10 minutes. As we went around the room to introduce ourselves and articulate why each of us had agreed to this assignment it became clear that there was far more that connected us than divided us. We all envisioned a place that represented everyone and shined a light on the many roles and accomplishments of women that no one knew about. So, we simply kicked politics to the side, rolled up our sleeves and got to work.

After 18 months of work, the Commission unanimously recommended that such a museum was needed and should be part of the Smithsonian.

The Commission focused much of its effort on determining where this museum should be located. We established a list of 10 key criteria on which to evaluate potential sites including location, private and public funding attractiveness, visitor attractiveness and public transportation access. We did an extensive review of dozens of potential sites including reuse and off-Mall sites but determined that the South Monument Site met the Commission's criteria and desire for a prominent location on the Mall as one of our preferred sites. This is the site identified in H.R. 1329.

Since Congress passed the legislation establishing the Museum and President Trump signed it into law, there has been a ground swell of bi-partisan support from women and men throughout the country and already over \$71 million has been raised.

While we are making great progress in terms of raising private funds and generating support for the museum, we must have congressional approval for the land to build the physical museum. In 2022 after a rigorous process examining over two dozen locations, the Smithsonian Board of Regents recommended the South Monument site as the optimal location for the Museum. Each year, millions of visitors come to the National Mall to learn about the past and present of our nation. This location and a new structure are paramount to ensuring the success of the museum. Just as importantly, it is where women should be represented: at the forefront of history, on America's front lawn illuminating their stories in an originally designed building that reflects the spirit, essence, and strength of American women.

This bill is needed to transfer this land to the Smithsonian. I want to thank Representative Nicole Malliotakis for sponsoring this legislation and Representatives Chu, De LaCruz and Dingell for being original co-sponsors as well as the other co-sponsors, including several of you on this committee. The bipartisan list of 230 co-sponsors is testimony to the widespread support this Museum has throughout the country and the commitment for it to be built on the National Mall.

In closing I would like to emphasize the following points:

First, this is not authorizing legislation for the Museum. Congress has already authorized it.

And second, this is not appropriation legislation. There is no request for funding in this bill.

This legislation's purpose is to allow the Museum to have a home; to be built on the National Mall alongside many other Smithsonian buildings, accessible to visitors from all over the world. We urge Congress to support this legislation and provide us with a site that can serve as the primary repository of America's artifacts, stories and memories of the contributions that American women have made to this country's founding, and its experiences since.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. I encourage unanimous support for this legislation. I'd be happy to answer any questions.