

Congressman Dan Newhouse

H.R. 3937, To redesignate the facility of the Bureau of Reclamation located at Highway-155, Coulee Dam, WA 99116, as the "Nathaniel 'Nat' Washington Power Plant" - Testimony

June 25, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock, for having me today and for bringing up my bill to rename the Third Pumphouse at Grand Coulee Dam after Nathaniel “Nat” Washington and his son, Nat Washington, Jr.

The Grand Coulee Dam is the largest power station in the nation. With a 6,809-megawatt generating capacity, the Dam supplies an average of 21 billion kilowatt hours of clean, affordable, and reliable electricity to 11 States and Canada each year. Reservoirs from the Dam are the backbone of the Columbia Basin Project, which supplies irrigation to 10,000 farms on 671,000 acres of farmland in the Columbia Basin.

In fact, the Grand Coulee Dam can truly be credited for establishing our way of life in Central Washington, transforming what would otherwise be an arid desert into one of the most productive agricultural regions in the country. While communities throughout the Pacific Northwest reap the benefits provided by Grand Coulee, most are unaware of how the Dam came to be or how the work of a father and son changed our region forever.

In 1908, Nat Washington, Sr., a decedent of President George Washington’s family, left his home in Virginia and established a homestead along the Columbia River, not far from where the Grand Coulee Dam sits today. Shortly after arriving in Washington, Nat Sr. was elected as Grant County Prosecutor and the first president of the Columbia River Dam, Irrigation, and Power District. In this role, Nat Sr. played a key role in the conception, approval, and construction of the Grand Coulee Dam.

Nat Jr. shared his father's passion for public service. After earning his law degree from the University of Washington, Nat Washington, Jr. also served as Grant County Prosecutor and later in the Washington State Legislature for 30 years. During this time, Nat Jr. was instrumental in the development of several hydropower projects across the region, including the Columbia Basin Project, which is the largest water reclamation project in the United States, providing nearly \$2 billion dollars in economic benefits to the region each year.

I would – again – like to thank Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock for having me today and for bringing up my bill to recognize the contributions of these gentlemen. Renaming the Third Pumphouse at Grand Coulee Dam after both Nathaniel Washington, Sr., and his son, Nathaniel Washington, Jr., will help honor their legacy as pioneers of Northwest hydropower.

Thank you, and I yield back...