

Representative Richard Nugent Testimony
H.R. 2743, *Veterans Eagle Parks Pass Act*
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
April 4, 2014

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me here and affording me the opportunity to testify in support of my bill, the *Veterans Eagle Parks Pass Act*.

Last May, my constituent, David Chilbert, brought it to my attention that senior citizens are eligible for a \$10 dollar lifetime pass to more than 2,000 recreation sites across the country, but our nation's veterans are not. Furthermore, active duty military personnel and their dependents are eligible for free annual admission to any National Park that charges entrance or standard amenity fees. My constituent simply asked, "Don't our veterans deserve the same?" Mr. Chairman, I agree with my constituent.

Our nation's veterans have made tremendous sacrifices in defense of our freedom. If it weren't for those brave men and women, we wouldn't be sitting here today having this hearing.

The *Veterans Eagle Parks Pass Act* would allow honorably discharged veterans - upon providing their DD214 – the freedom to purchase a lifetime National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass for \$10 dollars. The DD214 is a certificate of release or discharge from active duty that is issued at a service member's retirement, separation or discharge.

Upon introducing this bill, I was pleased to learn that at least 80 percent of the revenue collected at sites stay at those sites, providing agencies flexibility and enabling them to directly address visitor and site needs. By offering a \$10 dollar pass instead of a free pass, recreation sites will still be able to collect much needed revenue. Frankly, Mr. Chairman, if

the committee finds that a different dollar amount is more sensible, I would defer to you on that aspect.

Recreation sites throughout our county bring families together. I know some of my fondest memories include teaching my sons about the great outdoors. We must also not forget about the impact recreation sites have on local economies. Tourism has the great potential to foster economic growth and create jobs for Americans.

Before concluding, I would like to take a moment to recognize my colleague from California, Mr. Ruiz. I applaud the gentlemen's efforts to provide a lifetime pass to service-connected disabled veterans and I hope we can collaborate in the future.

We are all indebted to our veterans for their honorable and heroic service. With the *Veterans Eagle Parks Pass Act* I hope we can honor their service with a discount to the land they helped defend.