

Opening Statement for Ranking Member Russ Fulcher

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Legislative
Hearing on H.R. 149, H.R. 250, H.R. 3197, H.R. 3531, H.R. 4009, H.R.
4380, H.R. 4454, H.R. 4648, & H.R. 4706

October 14, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Neguse. Today we meet to discuss the merits of nine National Park Service-related bills that are predominantly focused on preserving historic locations from our nation's past to help us better tell the unique and diverse stories that make up the fabric of America.

However, I'm incredibly disappointed that despite *repeated* requests, the Majority is still refusing to hold an oversight hearing on the Great American Outdoors Act. I think most people would find it shocking that this subcommittee is apparently uninterested in overseeing the expenditure of over \$2 billion annually. Given the recent spending spree our Committee

Democrats have been on, this amount of money may seem like a drop in the bucket to them but I assure you it is not to me or my constituents. I will continue asking for this oversight hearing until we get one, and I implore you, Chairman Neguse, to schedule this hearing before the year's end.

Now, I'd like to briefly highlight a few of the bills on today's hearing. The first is the "Save the Liberty Theatre Act" sponsored by Representative Mike Johnson of Louisiana. This bill gives full ownership of the Liberty theater to the City of Eunice, a commonsense consolidation that will save taxpayer money and enable the City to pursue important renovations and improvements for this historic theatre.

Next, I'd like to commend another Representative Johnson proposal, the "Cane River Creole National Historical Park Boundary Modification Act," that facilitates a locally supported

effort that will unify the property and simplify the management of the Historical Park.

Finally, I'm pleased to see Representative Gonzalez's bill to designate the Blackwell School in Marfa, Texas as a national historic site. The Blackwell School in Marfa, Texas, served as the sole public education institution for the city's Mexican and Mexican American children from 1909-1965. This is a fitting bill to consider during Hispanic Heritage Month, and I applaud my friend from Texas leadership on this effort.

The common thread for each of these bills is that they are local in nature, have widespread support, and would either simplify management or save taxpayers money.

Regrettably, not all the bills before us today meet those standards. Specifically, the "Reconciliation in Places Names Act" is a divisive, duplicative, and unnecessary virtue-signaling

bill that creates an unaccountable new layer of federal bureaucracy to re-write history under the guise of addressing “offensive” place names. Certain sites are undoubtedly in need of name changes and should be and *will be* changed through the existing U.S. Board on Geographic Names process.

It’s therefore perplexing that Democrats have offered this bill which is both unnecessary and overly broad. The language in this bill will give a new board of unelected bureaucrats virtually unlimited power to rename sites they now deem offensive. Where will we draw the line? Will they seek to rename the Washington Monument? What about an area that was designated by Congress with a specific name? These are all egregious examples of unaccountable overreach that will be made possible under the bill as written. Put simply, this bill will

only create more division and conflict around this issue while doing little to nothing to actually expedite name changes.

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing here today. I look forward to your testimony, and for the ensuing discussions that will follow.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.