

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Russ Fulcher
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1664, H.R. 1931, H.R. 2278, and H.R. 2444
May 27, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Neguse, and thank you for holding this hearing today to discuss four pieces of legislation relating to the National Park Service. Much like our last Subcommittee hearing, the bills before us today are bipartisan pieces of legislation that can help improve the stories told by the National Park Service and, for the most part, do so without relying heavily on taxpayer resources.

Before I discuss the specifics of each piece of legislation, I would like to echo the views of Ranking Member Westerman in a letter he led that was sent to Speaker Pelosi last week. The House needs to follow the science and cease remote committee proceedings. It is time that we get back to work in-person to serve the American people. More than 272 million COVID-19

vaccine doses have been administered and at least 75 percent of Members of Congress have been fully vaccinated, with all Members and Congressional staff having access to the vaccine. Our virtual committee hearings have been riddled with technical difficulties and have failed to deliver quality debate and legislation on behalf of the American people. While I certainly appreciate that COVID-19 has created unprecedented circumstances, it is far beyond time that we resume standard Congressional proceedings.

With that said, I am looking forward to discussing the bills on today's hearing. As always, I hope that as we debate the merits of these bills, we keep in mind the current state of the National Park System and don't lose sight of the fact that we must still address the crippling maintenance backlog on our federal lands. To that end, I would like to request that this

subcommittee hold an oversight hearing on the implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act as soon as possible, so we can make sure that the administration is using the \$1.9 billion Congress provided to them annually to appropriately wind down the maintenance backlog. The administration should be releasing more information on this tomorrow through their annual budget request, which Congress is receiving over 3 months behind schedule. We cannot let the important oversight duties of this committee fall by the wayside and instead must ensure we are making the administration fully transparent and accountable when stewarding such a vast amount of taxpayer money.

The first bill before us is H.R. 1664, sponsored by Congressman Veasey and co-led by one of our subcommittee members, Representative Moore of Utah. This bill would authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to

establish a commemorative work on federal land in Washington, D.C. to recognize members of the U.S. Armed Forces who received the Medal of Honor. The Medal of Honor is our nation's highest medal for valor in combat that can be awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces and a commemorative work in our nation's capital is an appropriate way to honor the brave men and women who received this award. I want to thank Representative Veasey and Representative Moore for their leadership on this important bill.

Next, we have H.R. 1931, sponsored by Congresswoman Matsui. This bill would establish a new competitive grant program to award grants to Japanese American history museums to educate individuals in the United States on the historical importance of Japanese American confinement during World War II. Additionally, the bill permanently reauthorizes the

Japanese American Confinement Sites grant program within the National Park Service and authorizes \$38 million to be appropriated each year in perpetuity. This is a dramatic authorization increase as the original law provided \$38 million for the entire life of the program, not each year. Moving forward, I'd like to work with the bill's sponsor to determine whether this is the appropriate authorization level and on other technical changes the bill requires, such as looking at whether this program established in Section 3 of the bill could be served by the existing Japanese American Confinement Sites grant program, with funding to be matched by the recipients. The grants issued under this program would not require matching funds.

Next, we have H.R. 2278, sponsored by Congressman Connolly. This bill would authorize the Secretary of the Interior

to designate a memorial trail of approximately 1,300 miles to link the National September 11th Memorial and Museum in New York City, the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, and the Flight 93 National Memorial in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. The trail will be administered by the Park Service and management will be coordinated with States, localities, and private organizations. 2021 marks the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. This bill will help all Americans remember the tragic events of that day and keep alive the memory of the nearly 3,000 Americans who lost their lives.

Finally, we will hear testimony on H.R. 2444, the Fort San Gerónimo Preservation Act, sponsored by our committee colleague, Jenniffer González-Colón. This bill would establish Fort San Gerónimo as an affiliated area of the National Park System. Fort San Gerónimo has a storied history and was a

centerpiece of San Juan's first line of defense and played a crucial role in the pivotal 1797 Battle of San Juan. National affiliated area designations are a valuable tool we in Congress can use to ensure that our nation's important historic sites are maintained and preserved without placing them under the direct ownership and management of the National Park Service. I want to thank my colleague for her leadership of this bill and her staunch advocacy for her constituents in Puerto Rico.

I thank each of the witnesses for being with us today and I look forward to hearing the testimony. I yield back.