



Gateway Arch Park Foundation
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Testimony of

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Legislative Hearing on

H.R. 5254, Gateway Partnership Act of 2025

Before the

House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Introduction

Good morning Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony today in support of H.R. 5254, the Gateway Partnership Act of 2025.

I am Ryan McClure, and I have the honor of serving as executive director of Gateway Arch Park Foundation. The Foundation is the nonprofit conservancy and official philanthropic partner of Gateway Arch National Park in St. Louis. We are dedicated to ensuring Gateway Arch National Park and neighboring Downtown spaces will remain a vital, welcoming, and well-supported resource for future generations.

Demand for private events returns, yet private event operations do not

St. Louis' \$380 million CityArchRiver Project—which our Foundation led and coordinated—is still, to this day, the largest private investment in a national park project in U.S. history and is a model of how public-private partnerships can succeed for a park and a community. With the project fully completed as of this year, Gateway Arch National Park has more event spaces than ever before, and demand to activate those spaces is

prevalent. Our hometown national park now has a new outdoor amphitheater in the North Gateway, a new Visitor Center at the Gateway Arch, an expanded and modernized Museum, and a newly restored Old Courthouse, creating both indoor and outdoor venues to activate and enjoy.

These are extraordinary assets for the National Park Service and the millions of residents, visitors, and businesses that are the heartbeat of the St. Louis region. Gateway Arch National Park is one of the only national parks embedded in the center of a major U.S. city, making it uniquely positioned to host corporate events, community gatherings, weddings, and other private events.

Yet despite these opportunities, the Park cannot currently meet the demand. Due to limited staffing and resources at the Park, Gateway Arch National Park has been restricted in its ability to host private events over the last few years, with no private events being hosted currently. Each potential event that passes means the Park misses out on opportunities for additional revenue—and the St. Louis region misses out on economic impact.

Earlier this year, we commissioned a third-party study to determine the CityArchRiver Project's economic impact on our region. The study found that in 2024, operations and visitors to Gateway Arch National Park and surrounding areas generated more than \$572 million in economic impact for the St. Louis region. Imagine the additional impact if we could draw more people to the grounds for private events.

In short, we have built world-class spaces, the public wants to host private events there, and yet the Park is not able to take advantage of these opportunities.

H.R. 5254 is the solution

I'm here to tell you today that Gateway Arch Park Foundation is ready to help solve this challenge—in service to our Park and in service to our region. And with your support, we can make this a reality.

H.R. 5254 will allow Gateway Arch Park Foundation to assist Gateway Arch National Park by formally managing private event execution and marketing on behalf of the Park.

Having managed and marketed many events on the Arch grounds ourselves, we have garnered trust from both our Park partners and the community. We know what it takes to get the job done in a way that serves our Park and our region at the same time. The same

economic impact study I mentioned earlier found our Foundation-produced events attracted nearly 76,000 visitors to Gateway Arch National Park and its surroundings in 2024, generating nearly \$10 million in regional economic impact.

To go back even further, after the CityArchRiver renovations of the Arch grounds were completed, we hosted 15 private events each year in 2018 and 2019, until the pandemic halted demand across the entire events industry.

Today, that demand has returned, and the community is ready to re-engage. With our experience, Gateway Arch Park Foundation is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between the Park's mission and the public's interest in private events in Gateway Arch National Park, which is why I am here today to seek your support for H.R. 5254.

Impact for our Park and our region

Current projections show private events at Gateway Arch National Park could generate up to \$780,000 in additional annual revenue, creating more opportunities to support Park operations, enhance visitor experiences, and bolster the surrounding regional economy.

Even more, this legislation is about ensuring that our national treasure—which symbolizes our nation's westward expansion and is St. Louis' calling card to the entire world—can continue to be a place where people gather, celebrate, learn, and connect with our history and American culture.

In conclusion

The Foundation has the trust, expertise, and operational capacity to manage private events for the Park. H.R. 5254 would provide the framework that will allow us to take this critical step forward for our Park and our region. This will allow us to build on our strong track record of serving Gateway Arch National Park in monumental ways. I want to sincerely thank Representative Bell, Representative Wagner, and Representative Budzinski for their sponsorship of this legislation and support of our Park.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to strengthening our national parks.

I look forward to answering your questions.