

**STATEMENT OF PEGGY O'DELL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SENATE ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING S. 615, TO ESTABLISH
COLTSVILLE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

April 23, 2013

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior regarding S. 615, a bill to establish Coltsville National Historical Park in the State of Connecticut, and for other purposes.

The Department supports enactment of S. 615 with the amendments discussed later in this statement.

S. 615 would authorize the establishment of a new unit of the National Park System centered on the Coltsville Historic District in Hartford, Connecticut. Establishment of the park would depend upon the Secretary of the Interior receiving a donation of a sufficient amount of land to constitute a manageable unit; the owner of the East Armory property entering into an agreement with the Secretary to donate at least 10,000 square feet of space in that building for park facilities; and the Secretary entering into an agreement with the appropriate public entities regarding compatible use and management of publicly owned land within the Coltsville Historic District.

The legislation also authorizes agreements with other organizations for access to Colt-related artifacts to be displayed at the park and cooperative agreements with owners of properties within the historic district for interpretation, restoration, rehabilitation and technical assistance for preservation. It provides that any federal financial assistance would be matched on a one-to-one basis by non-federal funds.

S. 615 also provides for the establishment of a commission to advise the Secretary on the development and implementation of a general management plan for the unit. The advisory commission would terminate ten years after the date of enactment of the legislation unless extended for another ten years by the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary).

The Secretary designated the Coltsville Historic District a National Historic Landmark on July 22, 2008. The manufacturing complex and associated resources constitute the site of nationally important contributions to manufacturing technology by Samuel Colt and the industrial enterprise he founded in 1855 – Colt's Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company. It includes, among other resources, the armories where firearms and other products were made, the home of Samuel and Elizabeth Colt, Colt Park, and housing used by factory workers.

Samuel Colt is most renowned for developing a revolver design which revolutionized personal firearms. The Colt's Firearms Company is best known for its manufacture of the Peacemaker, a six-shot revolver. Colt was a major innovator in the "American System" of precision

manufacturing, replacing the practice of individually crafting each component of a product with the use of interchangeable parts. After his death in 1862, his wife Elizabeth owned and directed the manufacturing complex for 39 years, becoming a major entrepreneur in an age when women rarely occupied positions of importance in manufacturing.

During both World War I and World War II, the Colt Firearms Company was one of the nation's leading small arms producers and made vital contributions to U.S. war efforts. The company applied its interchangeable-parts techniques to a wide variety of consumer products and the Colt complex became an "incubator" facility for other inventors and entrepreneurs. Coltsville is also noteworthy as a fully integrated industrial community that includes manufacturing facilities, employee housing, community buildings, and landscape features that were built largely under the personal direction of Samuel and Elizabeth Colt. Colt, whose labor practices were advanced for their time, attracted highly skilled laborers to his manufacturing enterprise.

Pursuant to Public Law 108-94, the Coltsville Study Act of 2003, the National Park Service (NPS) conducted a special resource study of the resources associated with the Coltsville Historic District. Based on Coltsville's National Historic Landmark designation in 2008, the study concluded that Coltsville meets the national significance criterion. An analysis of comparability to other units of the national park system and resources protected by others demonstrated that Coltsville is suitable for designation as a unit of the national park system. The study was unable, however, to conclude that Coltsville was feasible to administer at that time due to the lengthy duration of financial issues surrounding the site. In concert with the lack of feasibility, the study was also unable to determine the need for NPS management, or specifically what the NPS would manage.

The special resource study did not conclude that the site absolutely failed to meet feasibility criteria or require NPS management, but rather that it did not meet feasibility criterion with the circumstances present at the time of the study and that it was impossible to determine, at that time, the need for NPS management of the site. In both cases, the uncertainty of public access and financial viability of the financial developer of the privately owned portion of the site were at issue.

Since the time of the study, much progress has occurred, showing significant promise for the future of Coltsville and preservation of the resources. During a visit in 2011, the Secretary noted the progress made in the area since the study was completed, while stating that "Coltsville again promises to be an economic engine, producing jobs and spurring growth in the Hartford area." Significant re-development has already begun. Several of the buildings have been rehabilitated and are occupied as educational facilities, residential housing, and businesses. Negotiations are underway between the developer and the city on an agreement for the East Armory building, which would serve as the focal point for park visitors. We have been advised the plan has designated benchmarks for the project as well as projected funding for the development.

The conditions in S. 615 for establishing Coltsville as a unit of the National Park System are intended to assure that the park is established only when the development is moving forward and there is certainty that the public will have the ability to learn about the manufacturing process that took place at the site. However, to ensure the viability of the park, we recommend that the

conditions include additional requirements regarding the evaluation of the financial feasibility of the park's operations and management, including ownership and financing of Coltsville properties.

A 2008 Visitor Experience Study developed visitor service scenarios identifying a range of potential costs from a very basic scenario (small contact station, limited hours, and staff shared with a neighboring park unit) estimated at \$720,000 to a full site scenario estimated at \$9.3 million (four level East Armory development, cultural landscape plan implementation, and multimedia exhibit construction). If a park were established, a comprehensive planning process would assess the actual needs for visitor services and staffing, further defining the park's operational budget. In addition, there could be significant Federal costs in providing financial assistance to restore or rehabilitate the properties, as authorized in Section 4(c)(1). All funding would be subject to NPS priorities and the availability of appropriations.

We recommend that S. 615 also be amended to eliminate the establishment of an advisory commission. The management planning process required under section 5 already provides a forum to involve key stakeholders and provide a broad representation of interested parties, without the need for a commission. In addition, we note that the inclusion of an advisory commission in park enabling legislation is not as common as it once was. Other bills before this committee that would establish new parks, including the two parks honoring Harriet Tubman, the park composed of resources in the State of Delaware, the park commemorating the Manhattan Project, and the Valles Caldera park, do not provide for advisory commissions. This change can be accomplished by striking line 20 on page 8 and all that follows through the remainder of the bill.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be glad to answer any questions that you or other members of the subcommittee may have.