

Sen. Steve Daines
June 7, 2017
National Parks Subcommittee
Legislative Hearing

OPENING STATEMENT and SCRIPT

The Subcommittee will come to order.

This is our first oversight hearing in the National Parks Subcommittee this Congress.

I look forward to presiding over the important work of this subcommittee and working with you, Ranking Member Hirono. I have already had a great experience working with you on other issues. I am proud we were able to work together to recognize National Park week most recently and I look forward to more great things to come.

Growing up 90 miles away from Yellowstone National Park in Montana, I know how important our parks are to our national heritage and to the Montanans I represent. I want to thank Chairman Murkowski for this opportunity and her leadership in also prioritizing this critically important issue to our National Parks.

The title of our hearing today is “Moving Into a Second Century of Service: Working to Improve the National Park Service Workplace Environment.”

Last year the National Park Service celebrated its Centennial. The Centennial was more than just a celebration, it had a goal-- to create the next generation of National Park visitors, supporters and advocates that look like America. Based on the record numbers of visitors to our parks it appears it was a resounding success.

But marring the successes of the Centennial that same year was the growing number of Park Service employee complaints about a workplace culture where bullying is rampant, sexual harassment goes unaddressed, complaints leading to retribution, and top employees facing no accountability at some of our most high-profile parks...

Including at one of Montana's crown jewels –Yellowstone National Park. At Yellowstone an investigation conducted by the Inspector General documented a hostile work environment that carried on because of the actions or inactions of supervisors.

These are not new problems. The Park Service has been aware of them for nearly two decades. As a son, husband, and father of four, including two young women, this is completely unacceptable.

Our National Parks are what makes our great country uniquely American. China has the Great Wall. Europe has centuries old cathedrals. America—we have our National Parks. And frankly, what I have learned about the workplace environment at the National Park Service is entirely unworthy of that ideal. Concrete steps must be taken to put an end to this outrageous behavior in the workplace. While I recognize our witness today along with previous and current administrations have taken some action, it is our duty to demand rigorous accountability.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how the National Park Service can reform and improve.

Now, I will turn to our ranking member, Senator Hirono, for her remarks.