



**TESTIMONY
ON BEHALF OF ENERGY COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE**

OF

**MAYOR THOMAS L. BEEHAN
CITY OF OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE
CHAIRMAN, ENERGY COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE**

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES SENATE
ON**

S. 3300

**A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE MANHATTAN PROJECT NATIONAL
HISTORICAL PARK IN OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE, LOS ALAMOS, NEW
MEXICO, AND HANFORD, WASHINGTON**

June 27, 2012

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Chairman Udall and Ranking Member Paul and Members of the Committee, I thank you for inviting me to testify on S. 3300, a bill to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Los Alamos, New Mexico and Hanford, Washington. I would also like to thank the co-sponsors of this bill: Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Tom Udall (D-NM) and Patty Murray (D-WA). I am Tom Beehan, the Mayor of the City of Oak Ridge, Tennessee and as the Chairman of the Energy Communities Alliance (ECA), the association of local governments that are adjacent to or impacted by Department of Energy (DOE) activities. Our members include local governments and other community organizations from the Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and the Tri-Cities (Hanford) areas, and all three communities have passed resolutions supporting the Manhattan Project National Historical Park and have jointly prepared the testimony I will present to you today.

Energy Communities Alliance Supports the bill to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and Hanford

First, and most importantly, I would like to stress that all three of our communities are united in our support for the passage of this bill to establish a 3-unit National Historical Park in Tennessee, New Mexico and Washington. There is also bi-partisan support for this bill from the Senators and Members of Congress from all three of our states. Last week, House Energy and Natural Resources Chair Doc Hastings, along with Congressmen Chuck Fleischmann and Ben Lujan also introduced a bill to establish a park at all three sites (HR 5987). Our communities have been working for many years to preserve the history of the Manhattan Project at our sites, and we feel that now is the time to pass a bill that will lead to the establishment of a National Historical Park. In addition, there is support for both bills among the state and local elected officials, historic preservation organizations, National Park Service officials, Department of

**Energy Communities Alliance Testimony on S. 3300
June 27, 2012**

Energy officials, business leaders, environmental cleanup advocates, chambers of commerce, museum officials, librarians and many others.

Among the biggest advocates of the National Historic Park are the people who worked at the three sites during World War II. It is important to remember that no one in our country knew what the workers were building at the sites--they were truly "Secret Cities." Most of the young men and women working in these communities did not even know what the project was. These were among the nation's best and brightest citizens from all walks of life.

National Historical Parks are developed to ensure that we protect our country's assets and open them to the public to learn about our nation's history. We should work to open this park while some of the Manhattan Project Veterans are still alive and able to see their work recognized by our nation. These people played a valuable role in ending World War II and defending not only the United States but also democracies throughout the world. These true heroes, who dedicated their wartime service to the Manhattan Project, appreciate the legislation developed by your committee.

The Important History of the Manhattan Project Sites Must Be Preserved

As an expert panel of historians reported in 2001, the top-secret Manhattan Project program during World War II, centered in Los Alamos, NM, Oak Ridge, TN, and Hanford, WA, has been called "the single most significant event of the 20th Century." Operating from December 1942 until September 1945, the Manhattan Project was a \$2.2 billion effort that employed 130,000 workers at its peak, but was kept secret and out of public view.

It is easy for those of us who live in the communities of Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and the Tri-Cities to say that the Manhattan Project changed the world. The Manhattan Project began in great secrecy in 1942, and the original mission was successfully completed by August of 1945 when the Japanese surrendered. The engineering and construction feats of the more than 100,000 men and women who were brought to these three sites from all over the world to build and operate first-of-a-kind nuclear plants, is an incredible story that deserves to be preserved and told.

Energy Communities Alliance Testimony on S. 3300
June 27, 2012

On August 13, 1942 at the direction of FDR, the Manhattan Engineer District was established under the command of Colonel Leslie R. Groves. By September of 1942 Groves had selected Oak Ridge, Tennessee as the site for uranium isotope separation. In November 1942 Los Alamos was chosen as the laboratory to build the integral parts, under the direction of J. Robert Oppenheimer. And in January 1943 Hanford was selected for plutonium production. In 1945, just three years after the start of the project, the war with Japan was over. This was an incredible wartime achievement.

In today's world, it is mind-boggling to think of what happened in these three short years. First, the actual land had to be acquired and existing homes and landowners had to be relocated. Then, workers of all types had to be recruited—engineers, physicists, chemists, mathematicians, as well as carpenters, electricians, iron workers, cement masons, and a multitude of office workers, cooks, guards and truck drivers. These individuals had to first build their own towns with dormitories and barracks, mess halls, utilities roads and railroads and even shower houses. Now almost 70 years later, these sites are being reindustrialized, and many ancillary buildings have been demolished and removed. The history of these human scientific and engineering achievements at the birth of the Atomic Age must be interpreted and preserved.

Let me be clear. Interpretation at these sites will be about giving current and future generations an understanding of this indisputable turning point in American, and indeed world history. Despite what some detractors may claim, this is not a Park about weapons. I believe this Historic Park is about the feats of scientific and engineering accomplishments developed at a time when our country was defending itself, both during World War II and the Cold War. The construction and operation of the first generation reactors in total secrecy was an astounding development. Now, the science of the Manhattan Project has transformed contemporary society with significant contributions in fields such as nuclear medicine and nanotechnology. This Historic Park will tell all sides of the story of what occurred at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and the Tri-cities, as has been identified in the National Park Service Special Resource Study released last year. The National Park Service interprets all sites and attempts to address all viewpoints to give a full and fair picture, and we support such actions.

Background of Legislation

The National Park Service, at the direction of Congress, conducted a special resource study on several Manhattan Project sites for possible inclusion in the National Park System. The study recommends that the best way to preserve and interpret the Manhattan Project is for Congress to establish a national historical park at the three sites where a majority of the key scientific activity associated with the project occurred: Los Alamos, Oak Ridge and Hanford. The study acknowledged the significant Department of Energy investment in preservation of its assets, which played a role in the Park Service recommendation to proceed with a park designation. The DOE support provides the foundation for National Park Service interpretation of these assets for the public to see.

According to the National Park Service study, “Cultural resources associated with the Manhattan Project are not currently represented in the national park system, and comparably managed areas are not protected . . . the comprehensive story of the nationally significant Manhattan Project is not told anywhere . . . Including Manhattan Project-related sites in the national park system will provide for comprehensive interpretation and public understanding of this nationally significant story in 20th century American history.”

Furthermore, as Senator Bingaman said in a recent press release for this bill: “Providing visitors with opportunities to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with the significance of sites to be included in the Manhattan Project National Historical Park helps them understand its relevance to our shared national heritage. There is no better place to understand history than where it happened, and that’s what national parks and the National Park Service do best.” We agree.

Oak Ridge, Los Alamos, the Tri-Cities Communities Are Committed to Working Together to Establish a National Historical Park

Since the Department of Interior’s final study and recommendation was announced in July of last year, our state, city and county officials, business leaders, historical societies and groups, various community groups and individuals in our communities and throughout the

Energy Communities Alliance Testimony on S. 3300
June 27, 2012

country have been working diligently with you and your staffs to support this legislative process; and we come here to support the legislation introduced in both the Senate and the House.

Most recently, many of us participated in an Energy Communities Alliance “Peer Exchange” meeting in Richland, Washington to discuss many of the issues surrounding the establishment of a National Historical Park at our sites. At the meeting, all the participants stressed the need to work together to get this park established. The three communities have not only partnered together to work on this important initiative, but we have also worked with DOE, the Department of the Interior, State Historical Preservation Officers, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Atomic Heritage Foundation and many others to provide comments on various drafts of this bill and visions for a National Park Unit at our sites. The meeting in Richland provided us with an opportunity to meet many of the involved parties and discuss the potential for a National Park at our sites.

While in Richland, our group also toured the B Reactor, the incredible engineering accomplishment that is the world’s first full scale production nuclear reactor. The B Reactor was built in just 11 months. The design was based on the success of Enrico Fermi’s “Chicago Pile 1” and a pilot plant, the X-10 Graphite Reactor, located at what is now the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. This tour provided the potential experience that a visitor to a National Park would have when visiting the site, and the National Park Service has not even started their interpretative work. When visiting the B Reactor, one really gets an appreciation for the potential of the site to attract thousands of visitors a year. Already the few public tours that are available for the B Reactor fill up almost as soon as they become available. Last year, more than 8,000 seats were filled in less than 5 hours. This year more than 10,000 people will go on the tour. The B Reactor has had visitors from all 50 states and 48 countries.

Oak Ridge has many assets that are open to visitors and community members who want to learn more and get a glimpse of what life was like “behind the gate”. The Department Of Energy Facilities Public Bus Tours, held from June through August each summer, highlight the Graphite Reactor at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the New Hope Center at Y-12, the DOE operated American Museum of Science and Energy, and portions of the City of Oak Ridge, where housing and other structures from the Manhattan Project era remain. In 2011, around

Energy Communities Alliance Testimony on S. 3300
June 27, 2012

eight thousand people visited the Graphite Reactor at ORNL and close to five thousand people came through the Y-12 New Hope Center. Additional special tours of these facilities, along with the Y-12 facility are held each year during the “Secret City Festival,” which attracts between 20-30 thousand people. These tours are one of the most popular events during the festival weekend and over 700 people recently participated in the tour in a single day.

In Los Alamos, the industrial work at the laboratory was on a smaller scale than at Oak Ridge or Hanford. Properties, such as the Gun Site, where the work on Little Boy was done, and at the V Site, where work on the "Gadget" was accomplished, visitors get a sense of the "can-do" spirit of the scientists and technicians who had to make do in make-shift buildings with some rather creative equipment. We are confident the Department of Energy and Department of Interior can work out visitor access issues to these sites. At the same time, in the Los Alamos’ historic center, visitors can walk the same paths as the giants of 20th century physicists, and see the homes where J. Robert Oppenheimer, Hans Bethe, and other talented scientists once lived and socialized.

Recommendations

The Manhattan Project National Historical Park is needed to preserve the history of the most significant event of the 20th Century. As you proceed, we ask that you consider the following recommendations:

- ***Establish the Park Now to Honor Our Manhattan Project Veterans.*** There is unanimity among the three communities that the Park should be established in the near term in order to honor our Manhattan Project and Cold War veterans.
- ***Protect ongoing Missions of DOE.*** We support legislative language that protects the ongoing missions of DOE, and recognize the need for appropriate flexibility in the partnership among the stakeholders.
- ***Authorize User/Entrance Fees.*** Although the legislation should recognize DOE’s responsibility to maintain its assets, authorization for a modest entry/user fee should be included to assist in the long term stewardship of non-DOE-owned assets.

Energy Communities Alliance Testimony on S. 3300
June 27, 2012

- ***Donations authority should be broad.*** We want to ensure that the National Park is permitted to accept both personal property and financial donations to support the park and the tours of the sites. The bill should include language that “The Secretary may accept, hold, administer, and use gifts, bequests, and devises (including real and personal property, labor and services), for the purpose of preserving and providing access to, historically significant resources relating to the Department.”
- ***Allow inclusion of Nationally Significant Sites.*** We need flexibility to permit the NPS to work with communities to be able to add sites that are nationally significant and suitable for inclusion in the Historic Park.

Conclusion

In closing, we believe the proposed Historical Park will serve as a 21st Century model for the National Park Service, or as the National Park Service study calls it “A new innovative Manhattan Project National Historical Park,” one that is based on federal, state and community partnerships. We look forward to working with you, and urge that this Congress pass the National Park legislation. The Energy Communities Alliance and our individual communities support this important legislation Senate Bill 3300. We thank you and the full committee for your leadership and support.

More information about Energy Communities Alliance can be found at www.energyca.org.