

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS CONCERNING S. 886, TO AUTHORIZE THE LOCATION OF A MONUMENT ON THE NATIONAL MALL TO COMMEMORATE AND HONOR THE WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT AND THE PASSAGE OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

JUNE 21, 2023

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior’s views on S. 886, a bill to authorize the location of a monument on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the women’s suffrage movement and the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, and for other purposes.

The Department strongly supports honoring the American suffragists’ long struggle to secure the 19th Amendment which provided women with the right to vote. We support building the Women’s Suffrage National Monument in a place of national honor and prominence. However, since the establishment of the Reserve by Congress in 2003, the Department has endeavored to protect the Reserve by discouraging the establishment of any new commemorative works within it. It is for that reason that we do not support S. 886 as currently drafted. This position is consistent with other testimony the Department has submitted on legislation that proposes new commemorative works within the Reserve.

S. 886 would authorize the Women’s Suffrage National Monument to be established in the Reserve, which otherwise would not be permitted under the Commemorative Works Act Commemorative Works Act (40 USC 89 et seq.) (CWA). The bill requires the monument to comply with other provisions of the CWA.

In December 2020, legislation to authorize the establishment of the Women’s Suffrage National Monument (then called Every Word We Utter Monument) was enacted as Public Law 116-217. This law authorizes the monument to be established on Federal land managed by the National Park Service or the General Services Administration in Washington, DC, in accordance with the CWA. The Department testified in support of authorizing the establishment of the monument with the understanding that the CWA, including the Act’s prohibition on locating new memorials in the Reserve, would apply.

The CWA was enacted to ensure that proper consideration is given to authorization, location, and design of new memorials within Washington, DC. Congress amended the CWA in 2003, establishing the Reserve and declaring it a completed work of civic art where “the siting of new commemorative works is prohibited.” The CWA identifies the Reserve as “the great cross-axis of the Mall” which extends from the United States Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, and from the White House to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

The Department’s concerns about establishing the Women’s Suffrage National Monument in the Reserve are similar to those expressed by the Department on similar legislation. Other sponsors of memorials have sought prominent locations as well, and have worked with the National Park

Service, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Commission of Fine Arts to secure sites outside of the Reserve that meet their needs. The National Park Service is committed to continuing to work with the sponsors of the Women's Suffrage National Monument to identify a suitable location for this monument that is not in the Reserve.

Through communication that the National Park Service has had with the monument sponsor, we understand that they are also considering multiple sites in Area I. If the sponsors of the monument were to obtain approval from Congress for placement in Area I, a number of prominent sites would become available for consideration. Area I is part of the monumental core but includes sites outside of the Reserve. The monument sponsors would then have the full range of options available in both Area I and Area II.

Congress' 2003 Reserve designation responded to a pressing need to preserve the integrity of the National Mall and rapidly diminishing public space in the city's monumental core. The pressures on the Mall's open space have amplified through time. In addition to hosting over 35 million visitors to the Mall each year, more than 9,000 permitted events including 1,000 first amendment demonstrations take place on or near the National Mall annually. The space is also heavily used for recreational activities, national celebrations, critical operational and security movements associated with its placement at the city center, and park visitation. Maintaining the Mall's open spaces and existing architecture is essential to ensuring that it continues to convey its significance as our nation's premier civic space. We urge the Committee to protect this special place for the enjoyment of Americans for generations to come.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the other members of the Subcommittee have.