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Witnesses Support Bipartisan Bill to Establish Manhattan Project National Historical Park

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands held a [legislative hearing](#) on [H.R. 5987](#), a bipartisan bill introduced by Natural Resources Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04), Congressman Chuck Fleischmann (TN-03) and Congressman Ben Lujan (NM-03) to establish a Manhattan Project National Historical Park that will include facilities at Hanford, Washington, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Los Alamos, New Mexico. The Manhattan Project was an unprecedented top-secret program to produce an atomic bomb, which played an integral part in ending World War II.

“Some historic Manhattan Project facilities like B Reactor are very accessible today, others could be made readily accessible, while others will take time and care, and possibly a few more years, before regular public access is possible. The goal of this bill is to preserve these pieces of history from destruction and to facilitate and enhance public access,” [said Full Committee Chairman Hastings in his prepared opening statement](#). “Clearly, the nature and location of these facilities, especially those located on secured Department of Energy sites, presents a challenge and this legislation aims to address this by ensuring maximum flexibility as steps are taken now and in the future to allow more public access. There is genuine bipartisan desire in both the House and Senate to advance this proposal into law – and to do everything we can to make that happen this year. I look forward to continuing to work with Chairman Bingaman, Senators Murray and Cantwell from Washington state and my fellow House sponsors of this legislation, Congressman Fleischmann representing Oak Ridge, and Congressman Lujan representing Los Alamos to establish the Park. We will all continue working together with local community advocates and leaders to accomplish our goal of ensuring these remarkable pieces of our history are preserved to tell the story of the Manhattan Project.”

Gary Petersen, Vice President of the Tri-City Development Council, [testified](#) at today’s hearing on the job, economic and historic benefits of preserving these sites as national parks.

“There is no question of the importance of creating this new national park, nor of the public interest to view these former ‘secret’ sites and preserve them for future generations,” [said Petersen](#). “At Hanford, DOE [Department of Energy] hosted 8,000 visitors to B Reactor last year. These visitors came from all 50 states, and from 48 foreign countries. ... These visitor numbers also clearly demonstrate that designating these three sites as the Manhattan Project National Historical Park will create jobs and provide an economic development benefit for all

three communities. Such designation will come at a time when all three communities are seeing downturns in federal employment as these sites are being cleaned up. Cleaning up these sites, and opening them to public viewing is of major importance to three communities that have been supporting national security missions since 1943. The Manhattan Project National Historical Park at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and Hanford is critical to the preservation of perhaps the most historic event of the 20th Century.”

Under the bill, the Department of the Interior has one year to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park and enter into an agreement with the Department of Energy governing the respective roles in administering the facilities, enhancing public access, management, interpretation and historic preservation. Last year, a Congressionally-directed National Park Service study recommended a Park Unit that includes facilities at Hanford, Oak Ridge and Los Alamos.

Similar legislation, [S. 3300](#), has been introduced in the Senate by Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman. Senators Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Tom Udall and Lamar Alexander are also sponsors of the Senate legislation.

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