

TESTIMONY OF REP. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.
ON H.R. 482, THE OCMULGEE MOUNDS
NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK
BOUNDARY REVISION ACT OF 2015

JUNE 16, 2015

Thank you, Chairman McClintock and Ranking Member Tsongas, for inviting Representative Austin Scott and I to testify on behalf of our bill, H.R. 482, the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Park Boundary Revision Act of 2015.

I know that the Subcommittee has asked that we keep our remarks brief in the interest of time so I will spare you a detailed retelling of Ocmulgee's 17,000-year history.

In fact, there are few if any historic sites in the United States that have evidence of continuous human habitation from so long ago, when the first nomadic people came to North America to hunt Ice Age mammals and began to settle the Macon Plateau.

It is what makes that Ocmulgee National Monument so unique. On its 702 acres, one can find archaeological evidence from these first nomads, the mound builders of the Mississippian Period, British traders of the late seventeenth century, and the Civil War.

Our bipartisan legislation consists of three parts. First, it will expand the boundaries from approximately 702 acres to over 2,800 acres, providing protection to additional archaeological resources, linking two currently noncontiguous areas, and improving the site's connection to the City of Macon, Georgia.

Most of the land will be donated from nonprofit associations and government agencies. Property also will be acquired only from willing donors or sellers, subject to the availability of funding.

Second, the bill will change the name from "Ocmulgee National Monument" to "Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park," which would increase name recognition and draw additional visitors.

Finally, H.R. 482 would authorize a resources study to explore the possibility of expanding the park even further and include additional opportunities for hunting, camping, fishing, and other recreational activities.

The legislation enjoys widespread local support including Macon Mayor Robert Reichert, the Macon Chamber of Commerce, the Macon-Bibb Visitors Bureau, the Macon-Bibb Commission, the Macon-Bibb Economic Development Commission, the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Association, and the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole).

I ask unanimous consent that letters of support for this legislation be included in the record.

In short, we believe that our bill would strengthen the current Ocmulgee National Monument and bolster the economy and cultural life of Georgia and beyond. I urge your support and would be happy to answer any questions.