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Testimony on HR 1208

Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

A Bill to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park

In Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Hanford, Washington

On behalf of:

The Tri-Cities Community

April 12, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I thank you for inviting me to testify on HR. 1208, a bill to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Hanford Washington. I also would like to thank Chairman Doc Hastings, Representatives Ben Ray Lujan, and Chuck Fleischmann for co-sponsoring this bill.

I am Steve Young, Mayor of the City of Kennewick, Washington, speaking in favor of HR 5987 on behalf of the Tri-Cities Community in Washington State, and in support of community organizations in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Los Alamos, New Mexico. All three of our communities have passed resolutions supporting the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, and we have been united in our support of this bill.

Support for HR 5987

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.

On August 13, 1942 the Manhattan Project was established under the command of Colonel Leslie R. Groves. Three years and one day later, August 14, 1945, the War was done!

In between those dates, more than 100,000 men and women were brought to these three sites from all over the world. The majority of these young men and women had no idea what they were building.

At Hanford more than 2,000 residents – mostly farmers – were given just days to weeks, to move off their land. This included moving, getting rid of thousands of animals, all the farm equipment and most importantly closing schools and moving families – lock-stock-and barrel!

Once the land was acquired by the government, the workers had to be found – engineers, physicists, chemists, carpenters, electricians, iron workers, cement masons and a multitude of office workers, cooks, guards, and truck drivers. Then these same individuals first had to build their own town with dormitories, mess halls, water, sewer, roads and railroads. This had to be done BEFORE they could start construction on reactors, nuclear fuel manufacturing and chemical separations. At Hanford the construction camp quickly became the third largest town in the State of Washington, with 50,000 construction workers.

Hanford construction stretched the imagination. Housing for 50,000 men and women; 386 miles of highway (including Washington State's first four-lane highway); 780,000 yards of concrete, and 158 miles of railroad track.

All of this was done without the aid of computers! These were the days of slide-rules and hand-crafted blueprints!

Equipment, electronics and piping could not be bought off-the shelf. For the most part everything had to be fabricated on the Hanford site.

B Reactor itself, the world's first full-scale nuclear reactor, was built in just 11 months start-to-finish. The design was based on the success of Enrico Fermi's "Chicago Pile 1;" and a pilot plant, the X-10 graphite reactor located in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. B Reactor was designed to produce 250 million watts; a million times more powerful than Chicago Pile 1, which produced the first ever sustained nuclear fission chain reaction under the bleachers at the University of Chicago's Staff Field in December of 1942.

Most of the workers brought in to these three sites were among the most talented in their respective fields; whether it was physics, or pipefitting. While we recognize the names of Enrico Fermi, J. Robert Oppenheimer and Hans Bethe; we also need to give recognition to individual workers, many of whom stayed on the job and in these communities after 1945.

These are engineering feats and accomplishments that must be told to future generations! And, it needs to be told before all of the "old-timers" are gone.

As these three sites in Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and Hanford are being cleaned up, and many buildings are demolished and removed; the history of scientific and engineering achievement at the birth of the Atomic Age must be preserved.

The National Park Service, as it does with all of its sites, interprets the sites, and attempts to address ALL viewpoints to give a full and fair picture. We support such actions. This will not be a park that gives just a nuclear weapons viewpoint. We believe it is more about the thousands of men and women who built buildings, equipment and processes that became a turning point in the history of the United States. The science of the Manhattan Project has transformed contemporary society with significant contributions in fields such as nuclear medicine, industrial isotopes, and nanotechnology. This historic park will tell all sides of the story of what occurred at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and the Hanford/Tri-Cities area, as was identified in the National Park Service Special Resource Study released last year.

Our three communities have collectively worked toward this legislation for more than three years. Within the Tri-Cities an ad-hoc group of TRIDEC, the Visitor & Convention Bureau, B Reactor Museum Association and Hanford Communities led the charge. In this process, we not only partnered with each other, but we also worked closely with the Department of Energy, the Department of the Interior, the Energy Communities Alliance, the Atomic Heritage Foundation, the National Parks Conservation Association, State Historical Preservation Officers, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

There is no question in our minds of the importance of creating this new national park, nor of the public interest to view these former "secret" sites.

At Hanford, DOE hosted 8,000 visitors to B Reactor last year. These visitors came from all 50 states, and from 48 foreign countries. These numbers were the result of only ONE announcement by DOE that 8,000 seats to B Reactor would be open to the public last summer. The tours filled in less than 5 hours. Last year DOE h increased the number of seats to 10,000. Unlike the National Park Service, DOE (except for one single public announcement) does not advertise its tours.

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 sites 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 missions since 1943.

The Manhattan Project National Historical Park at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and Hanford is critical to the preservation of one of our nation's most historic events of the 20th Century.

Our Tri-Cities community encourages you to move forward with this legislation. We have unanimity with our sister communities in Oak Ridge and Los Alamos that the Park should be established in the near term in order to honor our Manhattan Project and Cold War veterans.

We urge Congress to pass this National Park legislation.

Sincerely

Steve C. Young
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