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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

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**Opening Statement by**  
**The Honorable Rob Bishop**  
**Chairman**

**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**  
**At the Oversight Hearing on**  
***“The Future of the National Mall”***  
**Friday, June 1, 2012**

The National Mall is America’s front yard. It stretches from the Capitol building to the Lincoln Memorial and is home to the Washington Monument, the World War II and Vietnam Veterans Memorials, and the Smithsonian Museums. We can also include the vast area from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial. Millions of Americans visit these historic sites every year and it is essential that the beauty and dignity of this hallowed ground be protected and preserved as we plan for its future.

Each year Congress must consider potential changes and additions to the Mall and deliberate how each proposal could affect this important resource and its finite capacity. In recent months we have seen exactly why it is important to advance memorials with caution. The memorial to President Eisenhower has gained significant attention and in my opinion, the process has failed to achieve a design with a consensus of support. As that particular situation is worked out, it is my hope that we can learn from that process, what was done well, and what we, as the committee of jurisdiction, can do to legislate a better process in the future.

This committee must also consider the pace at which new memorials have proliferated in the past several decades. We have to evaluate each proposal on its own merits, and I believe Congress has done that in the past. However, taken on their own, there are probably thousands of ideas that make sense. The Vietnam Memorial is very popular and most people find it very inspiring. I doubt at the time Congress approved the Vietnam Memorial, they considered the fact that it would lead to a Korean War Memorial, and subsequently, that would be used as justification for an enormous World War II Memorial. And now that all those have been built, some have asked, ‘why isn’t there a World War I Memorial?’

Again, it isn’t to say that each of these isn’t meritorious on its own, but this committee must take a broader view and consider the future generations, and their heroes, and their historic events, that they may want to commemorate, before we devour the remaining space in a zealous attempt to immortalize our generation. Where do we draw the line between elements appropriate for the Mall and what has become of Gettysburg National Battlefield?

This hearing will provide an opportunity to discuss what we can do better when it comes to the future of our National Mall. We have invited witnesses who should be able to provide us with an

inside prospective to the care and planning for this iconic landscape. I would especially welcome insights and suggestions as to what this committee and this Congress can do better to preserve the grandeur of our National Mall and ensure that it continues to be hallowed ground where the greatest heroes of our blessed land are honored.

For all of these reasons, it is our special duty, as I'm sure all my colleagues will agree, to preserve a very prominent and fitting site on the Mall for the memorial to President Ronald Wilson Reagan.