

Statement of Mayor Tom Dolan
Sandy City, Utah
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
H.R. 5718, Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act
November 15, 2016

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, Subcommittee Chairman McClintock and Subcommittee Ranking Member Tsongas, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on H.R. 5718, the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act. As introduction, I am Tom Dolan - the Mayor of Sandy, Utah. It has been my great honor to be the Mayor for the past 23 years.

We invite you all to come visit us in Sandy and when you do it will become clear why Sandy is called the basecamp for the incredible Wasatch Mountains and the Central Wasatch Canyons that we are talking about today. Our eastern boundary abuts the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon. This is a very special place and I want to personally thank Chairman Bishop, Representative Chaffetz, Representative Love and Representative Stewart for their willingness to support this locally driven collaboration that will lead to crucial transportation improvements, protect what is a vital watershed for hundreds of thousands of Utahns as well as thoughtfully improve how we recreate in what is a world class recreational wonderland. We in Utah are very fortunate to have great representatives working on our behalf and we are very appreciative of Chairman Bishop for his strong leadership and for scheduling this hearing today.

This legislation addresses urgent needs we have in this area and I believe the collaborative approach provided in this legislation is a new and smart approach to how to deal with the complex issues of land use in these precious canyons. We have had rapid growth in our population in this part of Utah, and we gratefully see that continuing. But that means impact on these natural treasures has begun and solutions MUST be implemented now or never. To give you a sense of what is at stake - one-third of my City's clean drinking water comes from this watershed, and we MUST protect that source of our very livelihood. Some of my residents live full time at the base of Little Cottonwood Canyon and we welcome thousands of visitors daily to ski, hike, bike, scenic drive, and enjoy these mountains. My personal interest and I believe that goes for all of us here today, is to think long-term about how our great-grandkids will still be able to access, drink from and enjoy these canyons, while being careful to protect and preserve them forever. You've heard both Mr. Fisher and Mr. Bonar very well express the benefits this bill will bring to the land, and additionally for those who enjoy recreating in these mountains. But for me, I am laser focused on one area – TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS IN THE

CANYON. Addressing the issue of traffic congestion and transportation access, while providing for the long-term protection of our canyon and watershed is my highest priority.

Improving transportation is what brought me to the table. As you've heard, this process began with concerned local citizens, including public officials like me. It has taken thousands of hours of hard work and commitment to secure the compromises reflected in this bill. I've looked at how the bill balances sometimes competing concerns and from my point of view; it's solid, has strong, broad local support and is the right step to take at this time.

I'm engaged in this process because of my concern about transportation in this canyon, and as I said that is where I remain focused. Let me be plain spoken when I say, before designations that this bill will authorize go in to effect, I guarantee this Committee, that the local elected officials involved will first sign off on immediate, accompanying transportation improvement plans - that address congestion, access, protection of our watershed and can be implemented in the next three or four years.

I have agreed to continue to work with the next phase of this coalition which will be called the Central Wasatch Commission. While this Commission will certainly address planning for the possible implementation of future long-term mass transit options, I will insist that our number one task will be addressing the most immediate needs of short-term transportation solutions that can make a difference RIGHT NOW. The next two to five years must see measurable, visible, and tangible improvements to canyon access. My priorities and focus will not veer from these goals. As I've said before and want to reiterate it, there is room for smart solutions to recreate, protect, conserve and access these canyons and this bill will allow us to take this important step forward on land use while we sharpen our collective focus on immediate transportation improvements.

The balance and cooperation of our local coalition has been tested and has proven strong. I believe it will continue to be as we move to implementation. I ask for your support for this vital legislation, and pledge local involvement and investment for recreation, safety, preservation and better transportation systems for these mountain areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.