

Rep. Marsha Blackburn

Testimony for Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation on H.R. 863

March 25, 2014

Chairman Bishop and members of the committee I would like to thank you for having a hearing on this important legislation.

I appreciate all of the effort that has gone into making the hearing possible today, and thank you for the attention to figuring how we can go about with the creation of a privately funded museum to honor our Nation's most influential women.

It is my hope today that we will have a well-informed discussion about how we can move forward with this.

I have been pleased to work with Mrs. Maloney on H.R. 863, which would create a commission to study the feasibility of building a women's history museum. She and Senator Susan Collins have worked for many Congresses to secure this effort, and while it pass in the House or pass in the Senate, we have never been able to line these up and make it happen with each Chamber in the same Congress.

And let us remember that the women's suffrage movement started in New York, and ended in Tennessee, which in 1920 became the final state needed to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and send it into national law.

As we discuss a potential museum to honor women's history, we remember those women who went before us. Women who persevered and changed the course of history, and on whose shoulders we stand today. Women like Deborah Sampson, who disguised herself as a man so that she could fight alongside men in the Revolutionary War.

Women like Susan B Anthony, one of the pioneers of securing women's right to vote.

Or Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross. And as a woman Member of Congress, I would like to also remember Jeannette Rankin, the first woman ever elected to Congress in 1916.

There are countless other women who sacrifices so much to fight for what they believed, in spite of very challenging circumstances.

Today their legacies live on as women continue to break many historical barriers around the world.

In the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, we have a record high number of women Members in the House and Senate. In my own state of Tennessee, just to name a few, women such as Speaker Beth Harwell (Speaker of the TN House of Reps); Chief Justice Connie Clark (Chief Justice of TN Supreme Court); Pat Summit (All time winning-ist coach in NCAA history and advocate for the fight against Alzheimer's disease); Sandra Cochran (CEO of Cracker Barrel); and Dr. Mildred Stahlman (pioneering professor of pediatrics and pathology at Vanderbilt University Medical Center) have been incredible leaders in their fields, and continue to serve as inspirations to young women today.

The fact that we are here discussing this museum today is symbolic, because it is a very important time for women in our Nation.

Now more than ever, women are starting and running companies; they are moving into positions of leadership not only in our nation, but around the globe; and they are seeking to look at history, the past, and role models that have paved the way.

All women have their own personal history that they bring to the table.

My colleague, Mrs. Maloney, was the first women ever elected in her district in New York and has continued to be a trailblazer on so many issues that are important to her constituency.

While she and I may disagree on some political issues, that is not the case today. Today we come to lift up women and to help preserve and share the legacies of women who paved the way before us, and who have helped shape the freedom that we in this Nation hold so dear.

And in doing so, these stories will inspire future generations by illustrating how that bravery, that patriotism, and that perseverance did indeed make a difference.

We would not have the freedom and the opportunities that we have today without the sacrifices of those who have gone before us. This proposed women's history museum would be financed privately without taxpayer money.

The women's museum project has already had generous support from private donors, and they are willing to move forward to make it happen, and this hearing is a good step.

It lays out how this bill would have a commission of eight members chosen equally by the leadership in both parties of the House and Senate who have demonstrated their commitment to the study of women's history.

They will examine possible locations, devise fundraising strategies, and analyze overall logistics of building the museum, as well as assess the feasibility of the total project.

As we continue to discuss this bill and the steps forward, I look forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions, and working to make this a reality.

I thank you all for the courtesy of the hearing, and I yield back the balance of my time.