

Bleeding Kansas Testimony
Rep. Jim Ryun
November 10, 2005

Chairman Pearce, Ranking Member Christensen, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for taking time to hear from me today regarding the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area.

At the very outset of my remarks, I want to share how I arrived at my position of strong support for the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area. I come to this position, and this hearing, with a unique perspective. I have long been a strong supporter of private property rights, and as such have been hesitant to endorse programs that in any way involve the federal government in private lands. With that in mind, the bill that I am asking you to consider today is crafted specifically to tell the critical story of Bleeding Kansas, and outline the role that it played in our nation's history *without* infringing on the rights of private property owners.

This private property protection is accomplished through two main provisions. The first requires that the Heritage Area management obtain written opt-in consent from any landowner with property that would potentially be included in any Heritage Area activities. The second provision allows landowners to at any time provide a written request for removal from the program. This request will result in the property being immediately removed from the program.

I will leave the details of the Bleeding Kansas history to our expert witness, Judy Billings. However, I want to just briefly express my belief that the events that this Heritage Area hopes to tell are extremely significant and pivotal in the shaping of America. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Battle of Black Jack, and the Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* are just a few of the landmark events that occurred in this region, and that this Heritage Area will work to share with the nation. They are stories highly worth telling, and appropriate for inclusion in the Heritage Area program.

In closing, I want to commend Judy Billings, who you will hear from on the next panel, for her outstanding work on this legislation. Judy has worked tirelessly to pull together the areas and stories of significance for this designation, and is a terrific representative for my home state of Kansas. I want to welcome her to the committee and thank her for her dedication to this designation effort.

Finally, I ask my colleagues on this committee to support designation of the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and I look forward to the testimony of our next panel.