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Chairman Pearce, Ranking Member Christensen and members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the possibility of a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of a national park unit for Delaware. Special greetings as well to Congressman Castle.

My name is Tim Slavin and I serve as the Director of Historical and Cultural Affairs for the State of Delaware. I oversee the management of more than thirty historic sites and properties in Delaware, including museums, historic homes, lighthouses, and two shipwrecks off Delaware's ocean and bay coast. I am one of many Delawareans interested in this matter. We greatly appreciate the time and effort of Senator Carper in forwarding this cause and thank you for holding this hearing today.

Not too long ago, I was visiting my 10-year-old daughter in Colorado. (She lives there with her mother and for the past seven years, I've spent one weekend a month with her there.)

Our plans called for an overnight camping trip to Rocky Mountain National Park in Estes Park. I explained to my daughter that this was a national park, similar to the one at the Grand Canyon which we had camped in during the summer of 2004.

Like a good 10-year-old, she was unfazed.

When we arrived at the gated entrance to the park and she saw the familiar signage and the familiar hats of the National Park Service rangers, she blurted out "oh...yeah."

Her simple recognition was evidence of something far deeper. She was familiar with our national parks, and it brought her an immediate sense of comfort and security.

As our day progressed, I found that the national parks had taught her other things, as well. She became a very conscientious steward of the land she was visiting, mindful of not disturbing anything and making sure that every last bubble gum wrapper was stuffed into her father's jacket pocket. She left only footprints, because the national parks had taught her that.

She was also amazed by how many different kinds of people were using the park, and noted how many different states' license plates there were.

And she became very proud. She was proud of her beautiful adopted state, she was proud of her country, and she was proud that such a beautiful and important place was cared for by so many people.

I told her that I would be in Washington to testify on behalf of a national park for Delaware – Senator Carper had asked me to testify before the Senate Sub-Committee, as well - and she said something else which was very insightful: "do it."

So here I am today, on behalf of my daughter and many Delawareans recommending that this bill be passed and Delaware be afforded what every other state in our country has, inclusion in the National Park System.

Why should Delaware have a national park? The answers are simple:

- Delaware deserves it. Delaware's rich history and heritage have a unique place in American history. Likewise, the natural

beauty and landscape of Delaware's coastline is matched only by the important role it has played throughout our history.

- Our national heritage deserves it. The importance of Delaware's history and heritage can not and should not be left out of any consideration of American history; to think that our national parks system would not address the importance of such places as Fort Christina, the Delaware Bay, and coastal towns along the Delaware River and Bay is to realize that there is a void in the telling of our natural and historical landscapes.
- Our citizens deserve it. Every American citizen deserves the right to access our history and heritage in every state.

A significant amount of thought has been put into what a national park in Delaware should look like, and we look forward to working with the National Park Service on the study. I believe this study will demonstrate that the Senator's proposal does, in fact, represent a historical and cultural concept that is of national significance, suitable for inclusion in the National Park System and very feasible to implement.

First, Senator Carper's proposal for a park unit that embodies and highlights the role Delaware's coastal regions have played in the history of our state and the cultural development of our society is of national significance. In short, Delaware's history is our history.

It starts with the history of indigenous peoples, such as Leni Lanape and Nanticoke Indians. It includes the colonization and establishment of the frontier with the first European settlers in the Delaware Valley who built Fort Christina in what is now Wilmington in 1638. Along our coastline can be found the home of John Dickinson, the "Penman of the Revolution," along with examples of America's earliest exploitation of water power along the Brandywine River, of transportation systems that connected early settlers with other colonies and Europe and with coastal defenses that protected Delaware and America from the earliest days like Fort Christina right through to submarine watchtowers constructed in World War II. It includes the valiant efforts of the Underground Railroad, with points along Delaware's coastline being the "last stop to freedom" for slaves escaping to the North.

These contributions are undoubtedly significant to the historical, cultural and commercial development of America. Is there a more suitable way for us to highlight these contributions than as a National Park?

Finally, in a time of a serious budget crunch at the National Park Service and elsewhere, it's important to note that we believe this will be among the least expensive park units to develop and to operate. Unfortunately, over the years, neither the local or state governments in Delaware have been able to muster the resources to adequately preserve, recreate or highlight our wonderful resources. That is why it is so important that you authorize this study. With each passing year, we get further and further away and the task becomes more and more difficult.

In 1903, in the midst of the movement to create a national park system, Theodore Roosevelt stated that "above all, we should recognize that the effort toward this end is essentially a democratic movement." More than 100 years later, the movement to create a national park in Delaware has respected both Roosevelt's words and the long and important history of national parks in our country.

A national park for Delaware is needed, necessary, and long overdue. Let us create an opportunity in Delaware for all citizens to share in their national heritage, to become stewards of our natural and historical landscape, and to have pride in a country which provides all of these things for its citizens. The American experience exists in the stitching together of all such national treasures in all of our states.

Thank you.