

STATEMENT OF PETER MAY, ASSOCIATE REGIONAL DIRECTOR, LANDS, RESOURCES, AND PLANNING, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS, COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 5494, A BILL TO DIRECT THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO TRANSFER CERTAIN PROPERTIES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

JUNE 24, 2010

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 5494, a bill to direct the Director of the National Park Service and the Secretary of Interior to transfer certain properties in the District of Columbia.

The Department supports H.R. 5494. This legislation is intended to clarify the ownership of four properties and provides for the conveyance of two properties by the United States to the District of Columbia government (the District). All six properties are located within the District of Columbia. The National Park Service (NPS) and the District have been in discussions regarding these properties for more than a year and this legislation represents the appropriate solution to several issues.

According to our records the NPS has no current interest in four of the properties – the Shaw Junior High School recreation fields, the Southwest Library, the Meyer Elementary School, and a portion of the Marie Reed Learning Center. However, the District seeks to redevelop these properties and their research indicates that the United States may retain a right to these properties. Since the NPS has for decades regarded these properties as the property of the District, we have no objection to issuing a quitclaim deed for the properties at this time.

The legislation also addresses two other properties. The first is Reservation 277A, which is essentially a traffic island at the intersection of Florida Avenue and North Capitol Street. The second is another portion of the Marie Reed Learning Center, which is a combined school building and recreation center. These are very small parcels of land that were previously transferred to the jurisdiction of the District. The NPS has no current role in the use of these lands nor are they vital to the National Park System within the District. The Department believes that the properties to be conveyed to the District in H.R. 5494 are not currently providing substantial value to the Federal government, and could be better utilized if conveyed to the District.

The Federal Government has a special interest in ensuring that the Nation's Capital provides a healthy, vibrant environment for its employees, citizens, and visitors from across the United States and the world. The Federal government has a unique

relationship with the District and shares responsibility to ensure the Nation's Capital is one of the great cities of the world. H.R. 5494 advances this important Federal interest.

There is one issue regarding the specific language of the legislation that we recommend be addressed. While specific agencies or bureaus such as the Department of the Interior and the NPS have administrative jurisdiction over specific properties, the land is typically titled to the United States. We recommend that the legislation be clarified by removing the distinction between "National Park Service Properties" and "Other Interior Properties," and that the legislation simply transfer a single list of six properties. We also recommend, more consistent with general practice, that the legislation simply provide that all six properties be transferred by the Secretary of the Interior, without reference to the NPS Director.

That concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to any questions from you and members of the committee.