

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL T. REYNOLDS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
CONGRESSIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL
RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 386, A
BILL TO PROVIDE THAT NO FEDERAL FUNDS SHALL BE USED TO ALTER,
CHANGE, DESTROY, OR REMOVE, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, ANY NAME, FACE,
OR OTHER FEATURE ON THE MOUNT RUSHMORE NATIONAL MEMORIAL.**

JULY 13, 2023

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 386, a bill to provide that no Federal funds shall be used to alter, change, destroy, or remove, in whole or in part, any name, face, or other feature on the Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

The Department takes seriously its commitment to protect resources entrusted to its management, including protecting the iconic carving of the four U.S. presidents on Mount Rushmore National Memorial. The Department, however, does not support H.R. 386 as it is unnecessary and, as drafted, could potentially interfere with the preservation and maintenance of this world-renowned landmark. Regarding the bill's naming of Mount Rushmore, the Department recognizes Congress' prerogative to enact this designation.

Located in the Black Hills of South Dakota, Mount Rushmore National Memorial was authorized in 1925 to commemorate the founding, expansion, preservation, and unification of the United States and has been under the administration of the National Park Service (NPS) since 1938. The famous mountainside sculpture paying tribute to Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt has become one of our Nation's most recognizable landmarks both at home and abroad. The 1,278-acre Memorial receives over two million visitors each year who have the opportunity not only to view the sculpture but also to experience the beauty of the Black Hills and learn about the complex and controversial history associated with the Memorial, which was established on lands that are sacred to Indigenous peoples.

Section 3 of H.R. 386 would prohibit the National Park Service (NPS) from using funds appropriated by Congress to administer the Memorial to "alter, change, destroy, or remove, in whole or in part, any name, face, or other feature" on the Memorial. Given the existing laws, regulations, and policies that protect the Memorial's sculpture in its historic form, the Department does not see a need for this legislation. Additionally, the NPS routinely performs vegetation treatments at the base of the sculpture to maintain the viewshed of the Memorial; maintains sensors and monitoring equipment on the features of the sculpture; and maintains and upgrades the security equipment, including fencing and other infrastructure, that supports protection of the sculpture. Depending on how the words "alter", "change", and "feature" are interpreted in the bill as drafted, this language could prevent the NPS from carrying out the very activities that help ensure that the Memorial remains safe and recognizable for future generations. However, if the Committee decides to move forward with H.R. 386, we would appreciate having the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Committee to try to ensure

that the language does not jeopardize the necessary preservation and maintenance of the Memorial.

Section 4 of H.R. 386 would designate the mountain where Mount Rushmore National Memorial is located as Mount Rushmore. This section would establish in statute the name for the mountain that was recognized as Mount Rushmore by the United States Geographic Board in 1930. There is no proposal pending before that organization, now called the Board on Geographic Names, or in Congress, to change the name of Mount Rushmore. However, the Department recognizes that it is within the prerogative of Congress to pass legislation designating any geographic feature in the United States and thus provide a statutory confirmation of an existing name.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.