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Testimony of Councilman Lawrence Weekly
before the
Committee on Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans
on
H.R. 4345/S. 2041, the Ed Fountain Park Expansion Act

September 14, 2006

Mr. Chairman, my name is Lawrence Weekly, and I represent Ward 5 on the Las Vegas City Council. I want to thank you for inviting me to testify today on behalf of the City of Las Vegas in support of H.R. 4345, the Ed Fountain Park Expansion Act. I've represented the area that includes Ed Fountain Park on the Council for the last six years.

Ed Fountain Park was established over 35 years ago in what would have then been characterized as near the outskirts of the City of Las Vegas. Today, it is very much located in the urban core of the City, which is a testament to the tremendous growth we have experienced in the Las Vegas valley over that time period. As one of the City's mature, urban parks, Ed Fountain plays host to thousands of visitors each year, most of whom are my Ward 5 constituents. The park provides a venue for many of our youth sports leagues, especially soccer and football, and also contains basketball courts and a playground. As is the case with many of the urban parks in the City, I have found that the demands for space and services at Ed Fountain is unfortunately met by an inadequate supply.

The legislation before us today provides the City of Las Vegas with a unique opportunity to answer the calls I have heard from the community to expand and improve the offerings of Ed Fountain Park. As I see it, the benefits of this legislation are twofold. First, the City will acquire additional lands for the park to site a much needed community recreation center, and secondly, by avoiding the land acquisition costs, the City will have additional resources to devote to youth services and recreational programs offered at the park. A new community recreation center at this location would also provide opportunities to youth and families who live near the park boundaries to participate in

activities that increase their health, social and mental well being. There are very limited services for seniors in this area. The community center and a proposed walking track will help to provide those services. I am also hopeful that the development of this site will attract more user groups and residents for use of the recreation center, promoting increased economic prosperity in the area.

The property that is the subject of this legislation consists of approximately eight acres of land that is located on the corner of a busy intersection adjacent to Ed Fountain Park. My understanding is that the property was abandoned by both the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) several years ago after they relocated to a larger, multi-jurisdictional facility in the northwest part of the Las Vegas valley. The property to be acquired by the City is technically classified as part of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex and is currently under the jurisdiction of the FWS, although it is essentially a vacant urban lot far from the actual wildlife refuge. Consequently, legislation is needed to transfer ownership of the property from the FWS to the City. Were the property under the jurisdiction of the BLM, as is usually the case in the Las Vegas valley, the property could have been transferred administratively under the authority of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you again for giving me this opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 4345, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.