Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to share the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s perspectives on the Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act (S. 3609/H.R. 801), the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park Act (S. 3439/H.R. 5532), and the Preserving America’s Battlefields Act (S. 3505). My name is Pam Bowman and I am the Director of Public Lands Policy.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a privately-funded charitable, educational and nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949 in order to “facilitate public participation in historic preservation” and to further the purposes of federal historic preservation laws. The intent of Congress was for the National Trust “to mobilize and coordinate public interest, participation and resources in the preservation and interpretation of sites and buildings.” With headquarters in Washington, D.C., nine field offices, 27 historic sites, more than one million members and supporters and a national network of partners in states, territories, and the District of Columbia, the National Trust works to save America’s historic places and advocates for historic preservation as a fundamental value in programs and policies at all levels of government.

We appreciate the Subcommittee scheduling this hearing to discuss various legislative proposals pending before Congress. While the hearing addresses several pieces of legislation, we confine our comments to the three bills noted above, all of which the National Trust strongly endorses.

**Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act (S. 3609/ H.R. 801)**

We appreciate Senators Udall and Inhofe and Representatives LaHood, Davis, and Napolitano’s leadership on this legislation to designate Route 66 as a National Historic Trail. H.R. 801 passed the House of Representatives unanimously on June 5, 2018 and has the support of 22 bipartisan members of the House. The National Trust enthusiastically endorses this legislation.

Historic Route 66 stretches approximately 2,400 miles from Chicago, IL to Santa Monica, CA, passing through eight states and more than 300 communities. This vital transportation corridor between the Midwest and southern California has endured as a symbol of freedom and mobility while epitomizing a new optimism that pervaded the nation’s economic recovery following World War II.

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1. 54 U.S.C. §§ 312102(a), 320101.
It is along this route that the National Trust embarked on a Route 66 road trip this summer, making 232 stops on the journey from Illinois to California and collecting petition signatures in support of a National Historic Trail designation for Route 66. To date, the petition collected 62,876 signers from 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, while over 80 organizations, businesses, and local governments from the 8 states bisected by Route 66 have pledged support for the designation.

Route 66 was found by the National Park Service (NPS) to be nationally significant in its 1995 *Route 66 Special Resource Study*, which determined that Route 66 met the eligibility requirements for a National Historic Trail. Numerous buildings along Route 66 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and a 2012 Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) establishing the road’s national significance was recently approved by the Keeper of the National Register. Route 66 has been designated a National Scenic Byway in four states, including one segment that has been designated an All-American Road—the highest designation offered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Route 66 is internationally recognized as representing America’s love of the automobile and open road. As a Dustbowl migration route, a World War II strategic military route, and a vacation travel route, it has been celebrated in music, literature, television, movies, and popular lore. The National Trust has been supportive of Route 66 preservation efforts for many years, including it in our signature National Treasures program, participating in symposiums, providing strategic assistance, and including Route 66 on the 2018 list of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

When Congress passed the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program in 1999, a program administered by the National Park Service (NPS), Route 66 was described as a symbol of the American people’s heritage of travel and their legacy of seeking a better life. Unfortunately, this program is scheduled to sunset in 2019, making the passage of S. 3609/H.R. 801 and historic trail designation vital to highlighting the significance of Route 66, the idiosyncratic culture of independent businesses, kitschy roadside architecture, and unique attractions associated with the route.

We applaud the bill authors and cosponsors of S. 3609/H.R. 801 for their commitment to recognizing the national significance of Route 66 and we look forward to working on securing passage of the legislation this year.

**The Reconstruction Era National Historical Park Act (S. 3439/H.R. 5532)**

We appreciate Senators Graham and Scott and Representatives Clyburn and Sanford’s leadership on this legislation to re-designate and expand the Reconstruction Era National Monument and establish the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network. H.R. 5532 passed the House of Representatives unanimously on September 12, 2018, and the National Trust enthusiastically endorses this legislation.

We were excited when President Obama designated the Reconstruction Era National Monument—spanning five different sites across Beaufort County, South Carolina—to commemorate the stories of African Americans in the South immediately following the Civil War.

In addition to the re-designation of the monument as a national historical park, this legislation includes authority for park boundary adjustments or expansions within the Beaufort National Historic Landmark District on St. Helena Island and at the Camp Saxton Site in Port Royal. It
also directs the National Park Service (NPS) to establish the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network, which would comprise existing units and programs of the NPS related to the history of the Reconstruction Era, as well as the properties and programs of other federal, state, local, and private entities that would apply to join the network. This concept has been utilized in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom and the African American Civil Rights Network which was established last year.

**The Preserving America’s Battlefields Act (S. 3505)**

The National Trust enthusiastically supports this bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Johnny Isakson, Tim Kaine, Roy Blunt and Roger Wicker.

The bill reauthorizes the federal Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants Program, a successful matching grants program that promotes preservation of Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War battlefields. The grants, competitively awarded through the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP), encourage state and private-sector investment in battlefield preservation. The legislation would increase the authorization of the program to $20 million annually, including up to $2 million annually for the restoration and interpretation of high-priority battlefield sites.

The program was first authorized in 2002 with the passage of the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Act. Its eligibility was expanded to include Revolutionary War and War of 1812 battlefields as part of the FY15 National Defense Authorization Act. This important program has already preserved more than 30,000 acres of the most significant battlefields in our history, including Gettysburg, Antietam, Appomattox and Princeton.

**Conclusion**

Thank you again for the opportunity to present the National Trust’s perspectives on these issues, and we look forward to working with the subcommittee and full committee, Administration, and other key stakeholders to ensure passage of these key priorities as soon as possible.