

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, REGARDING H.R. 759, A BILL TO REDESIGNATE THE ELLIS ISLAND LIBRARY ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE ELLIS ISLAND IMMIGRATION MUSEUM, LOCATED ON ELLIS ISLAND IN NEW YORK HARBOR, AS THE BOB HOPE MEMORIAL LIBRARY.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2007

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 759, a bill to redesignate the Ellis Island library on the third floor of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum as the Bob Hope Memorial Library.

The National Park Service believes there should be a strong association between the park and the person being commemorated, and that at least five years should have elapsed since the death of the person. This basic principle is reflected in our National Park Service Management Policies. Therefore, the Department cannot support this bill. On May 12, 2005, the Department also testified that we could not support H.R. 323, an identical bill from the 109th Congress.

A unique repository of resources in history, ethnology, and sociology is located on the third floor of the Immigration Museum on Ellis Island. The space has been reconfigured to provide a reading room, a preschool children's reading center, an archive for controlled storage of valuable paper artifacts, and a room designed to provide retrieval access to the library's collection of more than 1,000 oral histories. It is a resource devoted to the

American immigration experience and the stories of those who came to America with hopes and dreams for a better life. The library provides important lessons to our citizens of the meaning of liberty and opportunity in the history of our nation.

Although Bob Hope's life story exemplifies the experience of many who came to the United States with little, rose to the heights of their professions, and gave back in abundance to their adopted nation, the Department cannot support H.R. 759. Bob Hope did enter the United States through Ellis Island, as did many other great Americans, however there is no compelling connection between his life and the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

Bob Hope was born Leslie Townes Hope, the son of stonemason William Henry Hope and Avis Townes Hope. The family emigrated from England to Cleveland, Ohio in 1908, when Leslie, one of seven children, was not yet five years old. In Cleveland, the Hope family struggled financially, as they had in England. Mrs. Hope took in boarders to supplement her husband's erratic income. She gave singing lessons to Leslie, who entertained his family with song, impersonations, and dancing. When he left school at age 16, Leslie worked at a number of part-time jobs. He boxed for a short time under the name of "Packy East" but later changed his name to Lester Hope. His interest in entertainment and show business led him to take dancing lessons and to seek employment as a variety stage entertainer. Not until he had achieved considerable success on the stage did he begin using the name, "Bob Hope."

Bob Hope's more than fifty-year commitment to public service has made him one of the most honored and esteemed performers in history. His charitable work and tours on behalf of the armed forces brought him the admiration and gratitude of millions and the friendship of every President of the United States since Franklin D. Roosevelt.

National Park Service Management Policies 2006 state that the National Park Service will discourage and curtail commemorative works, especially commemorative naming, except when Congress specifically authorizes them or there is a compelling justification for the recognition, and the commemorative work is the best way to express the association between the park and the person, group, event, or other subject being commemorated. While Bob Hope had a distinguished career, we do not believe there is sufficient association between him and the Ellis Island Library to merit renaming the library.

Mr. Chairman this concludes my statement and I will be happy to answer any questions that members of the committee may have.