

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO REVIEW S.959, SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN
WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM ACT; AND S.1267, NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN LATINO ACT

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Washington, D.C.

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1 HEARING TO REVIEW S.959, SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S
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3 AMERICAN LATINO ACT

4
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6
7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Rules and Administration

9 Washington, D.C.

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11 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m.,
12 in Room SR-301, Russell Senate Office building, Hon. Roy
13 Blunt, chairman of the committee, presiding.

14 Present: Senators Blunt [presiding], Capito, Wicker,
15 Klobuchar, Feinstein, Udall, and Cortez Masto.

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BLUNT

2 The Chairman. The committee on Rules and
3 Administration will come to order. Good morning. I want
4 to thank my colleagues for attending today's hearing, some
5 virtually some in person. The same for our witnesses, and
6 we are going to be welcoming them as well. Mr. Lonnie
7 Bunch, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Mrs.
8 Jane Abraham, Former Chairman of the Congressional
9 Commission to Study the Potential for a National Women's
10 History Museum, Ms. Cici Rojas, Chairman of the Latino
11 Coalition, and Mr. Danny Vargas, Chairman of the Friends of
12 the National Museum of the American Latino. I want to
13 thank all of them for joining us.

14 We will hear from a number of Senators who have spent
15 time on this and have been sponsors of this bill, Senator
16 Collins, Senator Cornyn, Senator Menendez will all be
17 joining us for remarks following the remarks of the three
18 of us here at the dais. This is Secretary Bunch's second
19 appearance before the Senate Rules committee. We are
20 grateful to have him with us today. He was appointed the
21 Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in June of 2019.
22 And Lonnie, what a first year you have had. Obviously
23 COVID forced the closure of all 19 of the museums for the
24 first time ever, and it happened in the middle of March of
25 this year. That really created an opportunity and a

1 requirement for Secretary Bunch and the great staff at the
2 Smithsonian to even further turn to their already
3 substantial digital efforts. They launched Smithsonian
4 Cares, a new website that aggregates the Smithsonian's many
5 online resources.

6 In addition to Smithsonian Cares, the Smithsonian
7 offers a learning lab that is an online tool created
8 specifically to work with teachers and students in distance
9 learning. No shock that the learning lab had a 500 percent
10 increase from March 2019 to March 2020, and I suspect that
11 increase has only continued to grow. Established in 1846,
12 the Smithsonian, now 170 years later, encompasses 19
13 museums and galleries, numerous research and educational
14 facilities, the National Zoo, a growing collection of 155
15 million objects and specimens of various kinds.

16 We are here today to discuss whether the Congress
17 should authorize the addition of two new museums to the
18 Smithsonian's vast portfolio, specifically a Smithsonian
19 Museum of Women's History and a National Museum of the
20 American Latino. We truly have an expert witness on the
21 whole idea of new museums and expanding museums. Secretary
22 Bunch was the founding director of the African National
23 Museum of African-American History and Culture and really
24 led that entire 11 year process of planning and
25 constructing the 400,000 square foot museum that tells a

1 powerful story. There are other powerful stories to be
2 told, and that is what we are talking about today, the
3 vibrant stories of American women and American Latinos.
4 How important they are.

5 I would say also, I just mentioned 11 years in that
6 other effort that Secretary Bunch was so involved in. No
7 matter what we decide here today, these critically
8 important stories need to be told in better and more
9 substantial ways than they have been in the past. During a
10 long period of time it would take to accomplish the goal we
11 are talking about today assuming we set that goal, in 2021,
12 the Smithsonian is set to open a permanent 4,500 square
13 foot Latino gallery named the Molina Gallery, thanks to a
14 \$10 million gift from the Molina family, and the
15 Smithsonian's Latino Center continues to show -- to be a
16 showcase for that experience.

17 At the direction of the Congressional Commission on
18 the study of the potential creation of a National Women's
19 Museum, and again, Ms. Abraham is here to talk about that,
20 the Smithsonian launched its own American Women's History
21 Initiative in 2018. That initiative has since raised \$10
22 million toward the development of exhibitions, programs,
23 educational materials and digital content across the
24 Smithsonian space.

25 I look forward to hearing Secretary Bunch's update on

1 all this important work, which again, we need to continue
2 to encourage and figure what we can do to tell this story
3 in a better way. Even if we decide to have these two new
4 museums, they will not be available for a while.

5 And so, Senator Klobuchar, I want to turn to you for
6 any opening remarks you might have. And then we are going
7 to recognize Senator Feinstein and then the three Senators
8 who have joined us who have also been sponsors of this
9 legislation. Senator Klobuchar.

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1 STATEMENT OF SENATOR KLOBUCHAR

2 Senator Klobuchar. Thank you very much, Chairman
3 Blunt. And I am so glad that we are holding this important
4 hearing today. We have much to do, including pandemic
5 relief, but I was looking back, as you were talking, about
6 during the depression actually, if you go back to the 30s,
7 one of Franklin Roosevelt's main programs was the Public
8 Works of Art, WPA project. And one of them is actually
9 hanging in my office that I have on loan from a Minnesota
10 museum.

11 So, as you mentioned, these museums will take years to
12 build, but I actually think now is a good time to actually
13 get this started and to get this passed. I am particularly
14 excited to hear from our colleague, Senator Collins and
15 Feinstein, who are here, as well as Senator Menendez and
16 Senator Cornyn. I am pleased to be a co-sponsor of both of
17 these bills, and I believe these new museums are critical
18 to expanding our understanding of the remarkable
19 contributions that women and Latino Americans have made
20 throughout the history of our country.

21 The Smithsonian Institution was founded on the noble
22 principle that as a Nation we must strive to expand our
23 knowledge and to spread that knowledge widely. Nearly 175
24 years later, the Smithsonian continues to fulfill its
25 mission, having grown to become the world's largest museum,

1 education and research complex. We should all be proud of
2 it. Every year, this year different with a pandemic, but
3 every year tens of millions of people visit the museums,
4 galleries, the National Zoo. The National Mall is lined
5 with the iconic structures that comprise the crown jewels
6 of the Smithsonian. When families come to Washington and
7 they visit these museums, they think that they are seeing
8 the complete representation, of course, of the history of
9 our Nation.

10 Unfortunately, that is not always the case. The fact
11 that our museums do not adequately portray the
12 contributions of women and Latino Americans has been well
13 documented. In 1999, President Clinton signed an executive
14 order to establish a commission to better identify the
15 accomplishments of women in our Nation's history and to
16 consider whether we should establish a women's museum. In
17 1994, the Smithsonian issued a report regarding the lack of
18 representation of Latino Americans or their contributions
19 to our Nation. Of course, there have been recommendations
20 for both of these museums by several commissions in the
21 past. Even though the need for these two museums is clear,
22 the path to getting it done is not always clear.

23 We know that these projects can take a long time, as
24 the chairman pointed out, and they will require a
25 tremendous level of resources, and let's get this,

1 momentum. The success of the new Smithsonian museum, the
2 National Museum of African-American History and Culture,
3 certainly sets a high standard for any museum moving
4 forward. But as Secretary Bunch discusses in his
5 testimony, it didn't just happen overnight. In fact, it
6 took 13 years from the passage of Congressman Lewis's bill
7 after until the museum opened in September of 2016. Under
8 that timeline, even if the legislation we are discussing
9 today was signed into law tomorrow, the museums would be
10 open to the public until maybe 2034. That is why I would
11 make the case we should pass legislation as soon as
12 possible so that the hard work to create these museums can
13 truly begin.

14 When I arrived in the Senate, there were only 16 women
15 Senators led by our dean at the time, the great Senator
16 Barbara Mikulski from Maryland, who during her time in the
17 Senate was a key leader of the legislation to establish a
18 women's history museum. And as we know, this year marks an
19 important milestone in our democracy, the centennial of the
20 19th Amendment guaranteeing women in America the right to
21 vote. We now have 26 women Senators, which is an all-time
22 high. Women continue to break barriers. Earlier this
23 month, our colleague, Senator Kamala Harris, became the
24 first woman elected to be Vice President of the United
25 States.

1 I loved one of the graphics that had been sent around
2 online after the election and it says, "ladies, make sure
3 to wear shoes because there is glass everywhere." My
4 witness today is a Latina woman who knows about breaking
5 barriers. Eva Longoria is a trailblazer for Latinos in the
6 film industry. She is known for her work both in front of
7 and behind the camera, and continues to lead the charge of
8 diverse and female representation in the industry and
9 beyond. In addition to speaking about the need for a
10 women's history museum, she can provide a powerful voice in
11 support of an American Latino museum. American Latinos
12 have been a vital part of our country since its founding,
13 and it is past time for their contributions and experiences
14 to be honored with a museum on the National Mall. I think
15 it is very significant that our colleagues are here today,
16 that both these bills before us have passed the House, that
17 both these bills before us have strong leadership,
18 bipartisan leadership, Democrats and Republicans coming
19 together.

20 It is my hope that we can add both of these bills to
21 our final executive business meeting for the 116th Congress
22 and work to get the bills passed this year, not yet next
23 year, not the year after. As I point out, Roosevelt did
24 this in the middle of the depression where he saw the
25 future, something that wouldn't get done now, but something

1 that would help us to plan ahead for a decade from now.
2 Think about the kids that are watching. Think about the
3 kids that want to go to that museum and see that women are
4 honored, that Latinos are honored.

5 This is our moment, colleagues, to do something really
6 great by the end of the year. Thank you.

7 The Chairman. Thank you, Senator Klobuchar. Senator
8 Feinstein.

9 Senator Feinstein. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman and
10 Ranking Member Klobuchar and fellow members of the
11 committee. Thank you for including the Smithsonian
12 American Women's History Museum Act in today's hearing. It
13 has been a while coming and I am very grateful. I am
14 pleased to join my friend and colleague, Senator Collins,
15 in introducing this bipartisan bill to establish a National
16 Women's History Museum. It has been a long time coming,
17 and in the Senate are 13 co-sponsors include every woman
18 who sits on this committee, Mr. Chairman.

19 And I thank Ranking Member Klobuchar, Senators Capito,
20 Fischer, Hyde-Smith and Cortez Masto for their support. In
21 February, the House overwhelmingly passed the companion to
22 our bill by a vote of 374 to 37. And it is my hope that
23 this legislation can get done by the end of the year and we
24 can celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment
25 giving women the right to vote with this commission.

1 From the earliest days of our Nation, women have made
2 substantial and lasting contributions. I don't know why
3 the recognition process has been so difficult, but it has
4 been, and I think the election of women to places of power
5 like political bodies has made a difference. But the fact
6 is, American women have transformed the fields of science,
7 Government, literature, medicine and so much more. So it
8 is well past time that we establish a museum that
9 specifically pays tribute to this history. It would honor
10 and recognize tremendous collective achievements of
11 American women and will help to tell a more complete story
12 of our past. Just a bit of history.

13 In 2014, Congress established an independent
14 bipartisan commission to study the potential for creating a
15 National Women's History Museum. Mrs. Jane Abraham, Chair
16 of that Commission, is here with us today and will be
17 testifying. The Commission submitted its report to
18 Congress in November 2016 with a unanimous recommendation
19 to establish a comprehensive Women's History Museum. The
20 report further recommends that this museum be on a
21 prominent location on or near the National Mall and that it
22 be established as an official part of the Smithsonian. So
23 the bill we are considering today incorporates the
24 Commission's recommendations and moves us closer to the
25 realization of what I saw begin on this committee, Mr.

1 Chairman, 25 years ago, and that is to establish this
2 museum.

3 The Act would establish it run by the Smithsonian. It
4 would be part of the Smithsonian creative process to
5 determine a location for it on the National Mall and
6 appoint leadership to carry out its construction and
7 operations. I just want to say that I am very proud to be
8 here. I welcome Senator Collins's support and leadership.
9 It has been fantastic. And I also thank you, Senator
10 Klobuchar. As women have gained in this body, I think we
11 have gained our ability to achieve this legislation. So
12 thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

13 The Chairman. Thank you, Senator Feinstein. Senator
14 Collins.

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1 STATEMENT OF SENATOR COLLINS

2 Senator Collins. Good morning. Good morning,
3 Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member, Klobuchar, Senator
4 Feinstein, and other members of this committee. Let me
5 begin by thanking you for holding this hearing on
6 legislation to establish new museums, including the bill
7 that Senator Feinstein and I have introduced called the
8 Smithsonian American Women's History Museum Act. Mr.
9 Chairman, ranking member Klobuchar, this cause to establish
10 a Women's History Museum has always been a bipartisan one.
11 The very first bill that I introduced to create such a
12 museum was in 2003. And at that time, Senators Barbara
13 Mikulski, my dear colleague Senator Feinstein, were co-
14 sponsors of that bill.

15 This year, as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of
16 women's suffrage and the decades long fight for women's
17 equality at the ballot box. It is fitting that we at long
18 last establish an institution in our Nation's capital to
19 honor American women. Women have made invaluable
20 contributions to our country in every field, Government,
21 business, medicine, law, literature, sports, entertainment,
22 the arts, and the military. As Senator Klobuchar mentioned
23 here in the Senate, we have a record number of women, 26,
24 and all serving. When I first became a Senator, there were
25 only nine of us telling the history of American women

1 matters. It inspires girls to know that there are no
2 boundaries to their potential. A museum recognizing the
3 achievements and experiences of American women is long
4 overdue.

5 In 1999, a Presidential Commission on commemorating
6 women in our history concluded that, "an appropriate
7 celebration of women's history in the next millennium
8 should include the designation of a focal point for women's
9 history in our Nation's capital." In 2014, Congress took
10 the important step toward realizing this goal when it
11 passed legislation creating an independent bipartisan
12 Commission to study establishing such a museum right here
13 in Washington, D.C..

14 After 18 months, the bipartisan commission unanimously
15 concluded that America needs and deserves some fiscal
16 National Museum, dedicating to showcasing the historical
17 experiences and impact of women in this country. I agree
18 wholeheartedly with the Commission's conclusion and I want
19 to thank Jane Abraham for her leadership in heading the
20 Commission. Following the Commission's recommendations,
21 Senator Feinstein and I introduced legislation to create an
22 American Women's History Museum that would collect, study,
23 and create programs incorporating and exhibiting a wide
24 spectrum of women's experiences, contributions, and
25 history. It would be part of the Smithsonian Institution,

1 ensuring that it is free and open to all who visit
2 Washington, and would be representative of the diverse
3 viewpoints held by American women.

4 It is important to emphasize that this woman -- that
5 this museum would portray all aspects of women's
6 contributions to our history without partisanship or bias.
7 It would share the stories of pioneering women such as
8 abolitionist Harriet Tubman, the founder of the Girl
9 Scouts, Juliette Gordon Low, Supreme Court Justice Sandra
10 Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, leading suffragists
11 like Maine's own Florence Brooks, Whitehouse, and so many
12 others. The Commission also recommended a Smithsonian wide
13 American Women's History Initiative.

14 And since 2018, Congress has provided nearly \$10
15 million in Federal funding toward this important step
16 toward creating the museum. Building on these successes,
17 our bill calls for a funding commitment from both the
18 private sector and the Federal Government following the
19 successful model used by the National Museum of African-
20 American History and Culture. Mr. Chairman, ranking member
21 Klobuchar, our bill enjoys broad bipartisan support, and I
22 want to thank the women Senators who serve on this
23 committee as well as others for co-sponsoring it. It is
24 also supported by several organizations, and I would ask
25 that their letters of support be entered into the record

1 without objection. I also want to acknowledge the
2 steadfast leadership of Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and
3 Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, who have led the effort on
4 the House side.

5 In February, the House passed its bill by an
6 overwhelming bipartisan vote of 374 to 37. Mr. Chairman,
7 ranking member Klobuchar, as our women's suffrage
8 centennial year draws to a close, I can think of no better
9 way to honor those women and that momentous achievement
10 than by passing the Smithsonian American Women's History
11 Museum Act. I would note in closing, Mr. Chairman, that in
12 Washington we all enjoy the many museums along the National
13 Mall that commemorate various aspects of our history and
14 our culture.

15 We even have a museum that celebrates buildings.
16 Surely if we can have a museum that celebrates buildings,
17 we ought to have one and are long overdue in establishing
18 one that celebrates the many contributions of American
19 women to our Nation. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

20 [The prepared statement of Senator Collins follows:]

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1 The Chairman. Thank you, Senator Collins. Senator
2 Cornyn.

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1 STATEMENT OF SENATOR CORNYN

2 Senator Cornyn. Good morning, Chairman Blunt, Ranking
3 Member Klobuchar. It is great to be here with all of you,
4 including our good friend Senator Collins and the rest of
5 the members of this committee. As a proud Texan and a
6 Senator from a border State, I have been fortunate to
7 experience firsthand the tremendous influence of Latinos on
8 our country and culture throughout my life, from learning
9 the stories of the brave soldiers who fought in the Texas
10 revolution, to experience the vast influence of the
11 Hispanic culture in my hometown of San Antonio.

12 I am incredibly proud and appreciative of the Latino
13 influence on Texas and American life. Unfortunately for
14 many Americans the contributions of generations of Latinos
15 are largely unknown, and I hope this committee will soon
16 take action to right this wrong by advancing legislation to
17 establish a National Museum of the American Latino. This
18 effort has been underway for more than 25 years. I note
19 Senator Collins talking about the long journey of the
20 women's museum. These are not hastily -- these museums are
21 not hastily established. And I think a lot of thought has
22 gone into both. But in particular, the Latino Museum has
23 been an idea that, whose time has now come for more than 25
24 years.

25 In the 1990s, the Smithsonian Institution commissioned

1 a report to examine the relationship between the museum and
2 Latinos. It was entitled notably, willful neglect. And
3 those two words adequately sum up the findings. For
4 everything from a lack of exhibits to curators to staff,
5 Latinos were excluded at virtually every level of the
6 world's largest museum complex. According to a 2018 report
7 by UCLA, not much progress has been made. Latino
8 representation within the Smithsonian is still far from
9 what it should be, even as the Latino population in America
10 has doubled.

11 One of the recommendations of the initial 1994 report
12 to improve representation of Latinos was through the
13 establishment of a museum dedicated to the contributions of
14 Latino Americans. As I said, that was more than 25 years
15 ago. And Congress has not yet authorized this critical
16 museum. With the support of this committee and this
17 Congress, I hope that will change. Every year, millions of
18 Americans visit the Smithsonian to learn about our Nation's
19 complex and fascinating story, and the men and women who
20 helped write it. These museums teach us about American
21 Presidents, soldiers, artists, astronauts, innovators,
22 icons and heroes of every breed. They house priceless
23 artifacts of American history from the Star Spangled
24 Banner, which inspired the National anthem, to the hat that
25 President Lincoln wore the night he was assassinated.

1 For too long these museums haven't told the whole
2 story of the rich diversity of our country. That is slowly
3 changing due to the recent editions of the National Museum
4 of the American Indian and the National Museum of African-
5 American History and Culture. But we still have a ways to
6 go. The process of creating a National Museum of the
7 American Latino began in 2008 in earnest when President
8 George W. Bush established a Commission to study the
9 feasibility of such a museum, and again, when their report
10 was released in 2011.

11 Now that it has been nearly a decade since the
12 Commission formally recommended this museum be built, it is
13 time to act. The National Museum of the American Latino
14 Act authorizes the Smithsonian Institution to create a
15 museum honoring American Latinos here in Washington, and I
16 am proud to have introduced this with our colleague,
17 Senator Menendez, in a bipartisan fashion.

18 This Congress and nearly 300 members of the House have
19 co-sponsored this legislation, and it unanimously passed
20 the House earlier this year. The bill has 46 co-sponsors
21 here in the United States Senate, and I hope the committee
22 will soon favorably report this bill to the floor so we can
23 send it to the President's desk before the end of this
24 Congress. It has been more than 25 years since this effort
25 began. It is time to honor the contributions of

1 generations of Latinos by providing a brick and mortar home
2 for their stories right here in our Nation's capital.

3 So thank you again, Mr. Chairman and ranking member
4 Klobuchar, for allowing me to join you here today to talk
5 about this important step, and I am happy to answer any
6 questions you might have, or failing that, I will go back
7 to the Judiciary committee.

8 [The prepared statement of Senator Cornyn follows:]

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1 The Chairman. Well thank you, Senator Cornyn. I
2 don't know that we will have questions for the Senators
3 here, though we certainly appreciate the fact that you have
4 been here. Senator Collins, the co-sponsor of the women's
5 museum bill. You and Senator Menendez, the sponsors of the
6 museum representing and recognizing Latino contributions.
7 But thank you for being here. Now we will turn to Senator
8 Menendez for his remarks.

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1 STATEMENT OF SENATOR MENENDEZ

2 Senator Menendez. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, to
3 you and to Ranking Member Klobuchar and members of the
4 committee. Thank you for holding this important hearing to
5 review S. 1267, the National Museum of the American Latino
6 Act, a bill that would fill the most glaring gap in our
7 National history and on our National Mall by authorizing
8 the construction of a new museum dedicated to telling the
9 Latino story.

10 As a lead sponsor of S. 1267, I firmly believe it is
11 time that Hispanic Americans get their own world class
12 museum on the National Mall, built and administered to the
13 standards that only the Smithsonian Institution can uphold.

14 This effort has been decades in the making, as our
15 former colleagues, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and
16 Senator Ken Salazar of Colorado wrote in The New York Times
17 this past Sunday and I quote, in 1994, a task force
18 outlined the ways in which the Smithsonian, "almost
19 entirely excludes and ignores Latinos in nearly every
20 aspect of its operations."

21 Its report, willful neglect, offered 10
22 recommendations for improvement, including that it should
23 support the development of a museum on the National Mall
24 dedicated to honoring and preserving over 500 years of
25 American Latino history and culture.

1 So, Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit the entirety
2 of their op-ed for the record.

3 The Chairman. Without objection.

4 [The information referred to follows:]

5 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Menendez. Thank you. This is not a partisan
2 issue. There is strong support from both sides of the
3 aisle, as Senator Cornyn suggested, to establish a museum
4 devoted to Hispanic American history. Our bill, as well as
5 S. 1267, has nearly unanimous support from Senate Democrats
6 and six Republican co-sponsors, an accomplishment that
7 seems barely achievable in today's hyper partisan
8 environment.

9 And the companion bill in the House, H.R. 2420, passed
10 the lower chamber by voice vote with overwhelming
11 bipartisan co-sponsorship. Presidents from both parties
12 have supported the creation of a National Museum of the
13 American Latino. In fact, the first bill to create the
14 Commission to study the potential creation of a National
15 Museum of the American Latino was first introduced in the
16 Senate back in 2004 by Senator Orrin Hatch, a Republican
17 from Utah.

18 Now is the time for Congress to finish what it started
19 almost two decades ago. No one can deny that the 60
20 million Latino Americans living in this country will
21 continue to shape America's future. Just as we have shaped
22 America's past from day one, Hispanics have shaped this
23 Nation in countless ways as military leaders, as pioneers
24 and business, in the arts, as activists and elected
25 officials. Yet the history and contributions of Hispanic

1 Americans to the United States since its inception have
2 been at best overlooked and at worst erased.

3 When our Nation's children read their assigned
4 American history textbooks, the presence of Latinos in the
5 United States is missing. They are not taught that half a
6 century before English speaking colonies were settled in
7 Jamestown, Virginia, Spanish was already being spoken in a
8 settlement established in St. Augustine, Florida, or that
9 Bernardo de Galvez, a Spanish colonel of the Louisiana
10 regiment in New Orleans, thwarted every British advance in
11 the area, helping the army of General George Washington win
12 the American Revolutionary War. Neither are children
13 taught that the origins of Latino presence in the United
14 States have little to do with economic migration as many --
15 and more to do with the American expansion, which
16 integrated Hispanic occupied territories.

17 These are but a fraction of the numerous examples of
18 galleries and exhibitions the Smithsonian National Museum
19 for the American Latino could house for millions of
20 visitors all over the world to learn about. And if there
21 is anything this recent election has taught us is that both
22 Democrats and Republicans have lots to learn about who the
23 Latinos and Latinos living in this country are. We are not
24 a monolithic community. Some of us have ancestors who
25 lived on the American soil before there was an America.

1 Some of us have immigrated to the United States from many
2 of 20 different countries around the Western Hemisphere
3 seeking the promise of opportunity. We all have unique
4 cultural identities that make us different. And yet all of
5 us live in the United States share a common bond, the
6 continuous strive to make this country the best version of
7 itself it can be. That is the story that only the
8 Smithsonian Institution can tell.

9 That is the history the National Museum of the
10 American Latino will bring to life. It will inspire
11 families, tourists, students and people from all
12 backgrounds to celebrate the diverse threads that bind the
13 United States of America together as one Nation
14 representation matters when it comes to our history.
15 Imagine what it would mean to Latino children coming to
16 visit our Nation's capital and seeing their ancestors
17 contributions to our country. What would it mean for
18 children of different ethnic backgrounds to learn about the
19 history of the people that look like their neighbors and
20 their friends in school?

21 These are the building blocks of acceptance and
22 inclusion. It is hard to believe that a month and a half
23 from 2021, a museum devoted to Latino history does not
24 already exist in the Nation's capital. And today, I am
25 sure some may argue that now is not the time to build new

1 museums, that the Smithsonian has a maintenance backlog in
2 the millions of dollars in order to bring every other older
3 museum up to standards, and that we must first address that
4 backlog before beginning to discuss a new museum. But we
5 have heard that excuse before, and I am sure Secretary
6 Bunch heard that excuse many times before turning the dream
7 of this Smithsonian National Museum of African-American
8 History into a reality.

9 We also must not forget that as S. 1267 has a 50/50
10 public and private cost sharing model. Pass the bill now
11 and dare us to harness the economic power of Latinos and
12 Latinas in the United States, and I guarantee you our
13 community will meet the challenge. It is long past time
14 for Congress to pass legislation to authorize the
15 construction of this museum to celebrate the indelible
16 history and contributions of Latino Americans to make
17 America great.

18 I thank the committee for the discussions, the
19 importance of the bill, and I sincerely hope you will move
20 forward to passage to finally make this dream a reality.
21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 [The prepared statement of Senator Menendez follows:]

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1 The Chairman. Thank you, Senator Menendez. We have
2 one other co-sponsor of the bill who is also a member of
3 the committee, who has a comment to make before we go to
4 witnesses. Before that, do you have a unanimous -- Senator
5 Klobuchar --

6 Senator Klobuchar. Yes. Mr. Chairman, I have a
7 letter from the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs and a
8 list of names of prominent leaders in the Twin Cities
9 Latino community in support of the National Museum of the
10 American Latino Act. And a letter of support from 3M, a
11 major company in my State, that supports the establishing
12 of this museum. And a letter from the sponsors of the
13 House legislation that would establish the National Museum
14 of the American Latino. I ask unanimous consent that each
15 of these items be included in the record.

16 The Chairman. Without objection.

17 [The information referred to follows:]

18 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 The Chairman. And Senator Capito, who is also a
2 member of this committee and a co-sponsor of the bill, do
3 you have some comments you would like to make?

4 Senator Capito. I do. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I
5 would like to thank you and Ranking Member Klobuchar for
6 the opportunity. I will be relatively brief. We have
7 heard all of the wonderful contributions that the
8 Smithsonian has made. We know that in 2020 there have
9 been, even in this year, 3.3 million visits free of charge
10 for people to explore our great history and to learn more
11 about the world around them. These two bills before the
12 committee today will expand that ability of the Smithsonian
13 to provide that high quality educational source and to
14 preserve our heritage.

15 Passage of the Smithsonian American Women's History
16 Museum Act and the National Museum of the American Latino
17 Act will enable visitors to learn more about the impact
18 that diverse groups have had in shaping our shared history.
19 As you mentioned, I am the proud co-sponsor of both of
20 these bills. I would like to thank my friend, former
21 Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, for prevailing upon me
22 to be a co-sponsor of the National Museum of the American
23 Latino Act. She in and of herself could be an exhibit, I
24 believe.

25 I am proud to co-sponsor both bills, as I said, and I

1 want to recognize the leadership of all the co-sponsors and
2 the main sponsors of these bills. We know we are marking
3 the one 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which
4 gives us the perfect time to say to American women and
5 women around the world that we want to enshrine our history
6 and make it available to all of the women around -- the men
7 and women around the world. We know we have a record
8 number of women, Senator Klobuchar mentioned that, in
9 Congress right now. And I am proud to be the first woman
10 to represent West Virginia in the United States Senate. I
11 can't think of no better time.

12 You know, in West Virginia, I created a program called
13 West Virginia Girls Rise Up, which aims to inspire that
14 next generation of female leaders. I ask the girls, I
15 travel the State, and the fifth grade girls to encourage
16 them to set goals for themselves and work to achieve them.
17 I brought it to elementary and middle schools. I have had
18 fantastic guests, Library of the Congress, Carla Hayden,
19 the astronaut Peggy Whitson, our former ambassador to the
20 United Nations, Nikki Haley, and others. So what I think
21 of the women's museum, I think of those girls faces that I
22 see when I do my West Virginia Girls Rise Up visits and how
23 excited they will be to be inspired by the contributions of
24 past generations and to be able to give them the confidence
25 to be a part of seizing that mantle of leadership in the

1 next generation.

2 Similarly, the National Museum of the American Latino
3 is way overdue. We have heard for how many years it has
4 been in the making. I am very, very excited about future
5 generations viewing the contributions of Latinos all
6 throughout this country and reminding us of our diversity
7 has allowed our democracy to flourish.

8 So for these reasons, I am hopeful that we pass these
9 -- after our hearing, we pass these bills. I thank you
10 again for letting me add my voice. I am a strong co-
11 sponsor of both bills and I look forward to their passage.
12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 The Chairman. Thank you, Senator Capito. Senator
14 Udall.

15 Senator Udall. Thank you, Chairman Blunt, a pleasure
16 to be here with everyone today. I am pleased to be here
17 this morning to discuss these two bills authorizing new
18 museums that celebrate our history, the Latino community
19 and American women's history. These museums would
20 recognize and celebrate our Nation's diverse heritage and
21 has broad bipartisan. I am very pleased that this has
22 broad bipartisan support.

23 I am also proud to have had the chance to oversee the
24 institution as both a member of this committee and as
25 ranking member of the Senate Interior Appropriations

1 subcommittee. In both roles, I have worked to make sure
2 Congress is an active partner with the Smithsonian
3 Institution and provides the resources that it needs to
4 meet its obligations to advance the civic, educational,
5 scientific, and artistic life of this Nation.

6 We all know that the Smithsonian requires real
7 investment to keep its existing museums operating, to
8 expand its collections, to tell the story of all Americans,
9 and to support the reach of its research and educational
10 programs across the country. I expect we will hear this
11 morning about the importance of gathering resources needed
12 to take the next steps to bring inclusivity into the
13 narrative of our American history through these museums to
14 illuminate an American story for all.

15 And I look forward to hearing from my colleague,
16 Secretary Bunch, and the advocates here today. Secretary
17 Bunch -- is he answering questions, Mr. Chairman, at this
18 point?

19 The Chairman. We are not asking questions yet. We
20 want to have his testimony first.

21 Senator Udall. Thank you. Thank you --.

22 The Chairman. Senator Cortez Masto.

23 Senator Cortez Masto. Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
24 Ranking Member. Thank you to all my colleagues for their
25 statements and to the witnesses today. Let me just say, as

1 the first female Senator ever from the United States or
2 from the great State of Nevada and the first Latina ever
3 elected to the United States Senate, I am so excited to be
4 able to support these two museums. One of the things I
5 think is so important to emphasize when we are discussing
6 the future of these museums is that they are not just
7 museums. For one group of people, a women's history museum
8 won't just benefit women.

9 And the Latino Museum is not just for Latinas to
10 visit. Instead, these museums are for all of us to help us
11 expand our understanding of what it means to be an American
12 and learn more about the contributions of all those who
13 have come before us and contributed to who we are today.
14 In May 2011, the Commission to study the potential creation
15 of a National Museum of American Latino reached the finding
16 that a National Museum focused on American Latino history,
17 art and culture is not only viable but essential to
18 America's interests.

19 Similarly, in November 2016, the Commission to study
20 the potential creation of a National Women's History Museum
21 came to the unanimous conclusion that America needs and
22 deserves a physical National Museum dedicated to showcasing
23 the historical experiences and impact of women in this
24 country. So I strongly support passing these bills into
25 law so we can start the process of building two essential

1 museums that Americans need and deserve. But that also
2 means we need to provide the Smithsonian Institution with
3 the support it needs for staffing or maintenance and
4 security of our existing museums and collections.

5 It is long past time to make these new museums a
6 priority. So I hope we get serious today and in the future
7 about making it happen. I am looking forward to the
8 discussion today, both on the many reasons we should build
9 these two museums and how to continue supporting the
10 incredible public servants who make them the Smithsonian
11 the treasure that it is. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

12 The Chairman. Thank you, Senator Cortez Masto. We
13 will have the testimony now from all of our witnesses
14 before we have time for questions. I would remind all of
15 them that your written testimony is part of the record.
16 You have five minutes and you can use that by going through
17 your written testimony or summarizing it in whatever way
18 you think is most effective.

19 And again, we are going to start with Secretary Bunch,
20 and Secretary Bunch, glad to have you back before the
21 committee today.

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1 STATEMENT OF LONNIE G. BUNCH III, SECRETARY, SMITHSONIAN
2 INSTITUTION

3 Mr. Bunch. Okay. Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member
4 Klobuchar, members of the committee, thank you for the
5 opportunity to testify before you today. I am so grateful
6 that you are exploring the creation of new museums at the
7 Smithsonian. As the founding director of the National
8 Museum of African-American History and Culture, I am happy
9 to share some insights I gained in building a museum that
10 began without a staff, without a building, and without
11 collections.

12 And yet the broad and diverse popularity of the museum
13 has shown us that Americans are excited about learning not
14 only the culture of a community, but how that story shapes
15 who we all are. As Congress considers museum legislation,
16 we continue to provide our visitors with a broader and more
17 inclusive history. We have integrated Latino and women's
18 history, its art, culture, scientific achievements
19 throughout the Smithsonian.

20 In many ways, we have launched things that provide the
21 foundation for any new museums. For example, we launched
22 the American Women's History Initiative because of our
23 story in the year 2000. Let's see, is my video now on now?
24 I am sorry.

25 The Chairman. Mr. Secretary, I think we lost your

1 video again, but we do have the audio. We are working on
2 the video if you want to continue -- there you are.

3 Mr. Bunch. Okay. Alright. For instance, we launched
4 the American Women's History Initiative because of our
5 story in 2018. It is one of the country's most ambitious
6 undertakings to research, collect, document, and display,
7 and share women's compelling stories. It has established a
8 pool of funds. It has increased online engagement. It has
9 allowed us to do something crucial, hire curators, and
10 develop internships to ensure the next generation. It has
11 also helped us produce world class exhibitions, including
12 votes for women at the National Portrait Gallery and
13 Girlhood, It is Complicated, which just opened at the
14 National Museum of American History.

15 Since 1997, we have also expanded representation of
16 Latino Americans at the Smithsonian with our Latino Center.
17 The Center administers a Latino Museum studies program. It
18 has helped attract Latino curators, and it has helped us
19 build the largest collection of U.S. Latino art among any
20 of the Nation's major art museums. And the Latino Center's
21 new exhibitions, Baseball, will open next April in the
22 National Gallery of American History, National Museum of
23 American History, and one of its crowning achievement is
24 the Molina Family Latino Gallery.

25 When it opens in the spring of 2020, its inaugural

1 exhibition, Presente, will give us a Latino history of the
2 United States, which will be the first National Latino
3 Gallery on the National Mall. Thank you for your ongoing
4 support of the Latino Center and the Women's History
5 Initiative. Creating new museums is challenging, but the
6 Smithsonian has the skill, experience, and expertise to do
7 it right.

8 Obviously, it is something I care passionately about.
9 We can create museums that meet the needs of the Nation and
10 showcase the United States of the world -- to the world.
11 But to do so, there are several things we must determine.
12 The public's expectations of a museum size, program, new
13 technology, collections, and staffing are all issues we
14 have to think about and grapple with, and most importantly,
15 a suitable location. And yet, irrespective of physical
16 space, we have seen how important it is to reach audiences
17 digitally. Since March, when our use of digital assets has
18 dramatically increased, for instance, we created a learning
19 lab, which is our free educational platform, which features
20 millions of authentic digital resources.

21 And the Smithsonian Cares initiative is an extensive
22 collection of our online resources that people can use from
23 home, including open access collections, distance learning
24 resources, online events, exhibitions, and podcasts. These
25 considerations, as well as the design, construction, and

1 operation of future museum costs must be part of any
2 discussion. With the support of Congress, we continue to
3 make headway addressing the backlog of maintenance costs
4 through our major renovations and our targeted approach to
5 maximizing our limited resources.

6 Allocating resources between existing needs and new
7 projects will always create tension. Appropriate resource
8 levels can minimize that tension. Congressional support
9 can help fund a new museum and continue to help us address
10 our significant maintenance requirements. It would be
11 crucially important for both to be addressed because we
12 want to make sure that we can create and continue to prove
13 -- improve, provide high quality experiences for visitors.
14 I trust that members of this committee will understand and
15 will plan for the long term obligations the new museums
16 would incur.

17 Thank you for holding this hearing. It is important
18 to me. Thank you for your ongoing support and for your
19 commitment to sharing the experiences of all Americans.
20 And I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

21 [The prepared statement of Mr. Bunch follows:]
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1 The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Bunch. And if you will
2 stay with us, we are going to go ahead and have all of our
3 witnesses testify and then everybody will be available for
4 questions for whatever time we have for questions. But
5 again, thanks for your presence here today and your
6 leadership at the Smithsonian.

7 Jane Abraham is the Former Chairman of the
8 Congressional Commission to study the potential for a
9 National Women's History Museum, also on a Smithsonian
10 effort looking at how that story is being currently told.
11 And Mrs. Abraham, we are glad you are here with us and look
12 forward to your testimony.

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1 STATEMENT OF JANE ABRAHAM, FORMER CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL

2 COMMISSION TO STUDY THE POTENTIAL FOR A NATIONAL

3 Mrs. Abraham. Thank you. Do I need to push

4 something? There. Okay. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member

5 Klobuchar, members of the committee, and committee staff,

6 thank you for inviting me to join you here today. I

7 proudly stand in support of Senate Bill 959 to establish

8 the first ever comprehensive Women's History Museum as part

9 of the Smithsonian. I would like to tell you why I believe

10 this is the best way to pay tribute to the remarkable role

11 women have played in America's history.

12 In December of 2014, Congress considered this question

13 important enough to form a bipartisan National Commission

14 consisting of eight women, all appointed by House and

15 Senate leaders and all from very different walks of life.

16 I had the honor of chairing that Commission. Over 18

17 months, from July 2015 through November 2016, we explored

18 how to most effectively tell the story of women's

19 phenomenal contributions to the history of America. And as

20 I am sure each of you knows, in Washington in recent years,

21 finding bipartisan solutions to policy challenges can be

22 nearly impossible.

23 Indeed, any group of four Democrats selected by

24 Speaker Pelosi and former Leader Reid, and four Republicans

25 picked by then Speaker Boehner and Leader McConnell might

1 be expected to reach an impasse on almost any policy
2 solution. Trust me when I say our group of eight
3 commissioners were an outspoken, opinionated group
4 representing the full spectrum of political viewpoints, and
5 no one was shy about expressing her views. The good news
6 is we did not end up with gridlock. Instead, this
7 bipartisan Commission found common ground. We found a way
8 to stand together, work through differences, listen deeply
9 to each other, respect and trust that we were committed to
10 the same outcomes.

11 Ultimately, that is the spirit that devised a
12 democratic Government for America at its inception, and it
13 is that spirit which this American Women's History Museum
14 will recognize, elevate, and celebrate. We believe the
15 unified bipartisan plan we forged together deserves your
16 support and the support of the American people. Our
17 overall conclusion was that America needs and deserves a
18 National Museum, one that is part of the Smithsonian
19 Institution that is dedicated to the often untold stories
20 of exceptional women who change the course of our Nation's
21 history.

22 We now believe this museum is more important than
23 ever. Such a National Museum will reflect all the many
24 different ideas, perspectives, and causes that were
25 championed, invented, and led by American women. It will

1 remind us of our Nation's inspiring history and our
2 limitless future. That is why we believe we can raise
3 significant funds from the private sector to support this
4 venture. This museum reflects the desire of so many women
5 and men to reflect on the uncommon achievements that
6 contributed to America's place in the world and their
7 desire that the next generation know about those
8 achievements as well.

9 Now, more than ever, we believe Americans are eager
10 for such a museum, not just mothers, wives, sisters, and
11 daughters, but fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons as
12 well. And we believe the new leadership of the Smithsonian
13 Institution also recognizes that. The Commission
14 acknowledged that museums aren't built overnight and the
15 project would require at least a 10 year timeline. But we
16 wanted to get going immediately. During the Commission's
17 deliberations, we had a series of conversations with
18 Smithsonian leadership. As a result, the Commission
19 proposed that the first critical phase establish an entity
20 called the American Women's History Initiative within the
21 Smithsonian.

22 We felt that this initiative would immediately make
23 women's history a top priority across all of the
24 Smithsonian's museums, and would be the first essential
25 step toward a permanent museum. We are delighted that as a

1 result of our recommendation, the Smithsonian immediately
2 launched this first step in 2017, and our Commission was
3 instrumental in securing the first \$3 million to begin it.
4 As you have heard from Secretary Lonnie Bunch, the
5 initiative has been very successful over the past four
6 years, and we are very grateful to the Smithsonian for
7 taking the Women's History Initiative from an idea to
8 reality.

9 My fellow commissioners and I unanimously support
10 Senate Bill 959. We ask each of you to join us and we
11 encourage unanimous support from the entire Senate. I
12 especially want to thank Senator Collins for sponsoring the
13 Smithsonian American Women's History Museum Act and Senator
14 Feinstein for being the original co-sponsor, along with the
15 many members of this committee who are also co-sponsors. I
16 appreciate the opportunity to testify this morning.

17 And I ask that the supporting documents and letters of
18 support I have submitted and have been received by the
19 Rules committee be read into the record. I would be happy
20 to answer any questions.

21 [The prepared statement of Mrs. Abraham follows:]
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1 The Chairman. We will accept those things on the
2 record, without objection.

3 [The information referred to follows:]

4 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 The Chairman. Danny Vargas is the Chairman of the
2 Friends of the National Museum of the American Latino. And
3 Mr. Vargas, we are glad to have you with us today.

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1 STATEMENT OF DANNY VARGAS, CHAIRMAN, FRIENDS OF THE
2 NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN LATINO

3 Mr. Vargas. Good morning, Chairman Blunt, Ranking
4 Member Klobuchar, and members of the committee. Thanks for
5 the opportunity to testify today. As a kid from the
6 streets of Brooklyn, an Air Force veteran, an entrepreneur,
7 and as a dad, it is truly humbling to be before you.
8 However, today I am also representing our organization, our
9 many supporters, nearly 61 million Latinos in the United
10 States, and we have received many support from
11 corporations, from organizations, academia, and
12 individuals. And we ask that those letters be entered into
13 the record.

14 As a patriot, I want America to reach its fullest.
15 But to get there, we need to know where we came from.
16 Sadly, much of what is in our history books and our
17 National Museums is incomplete. Latinos have been vital in
18 the founding, the building, the shaping, the defending of
19 this Nation for over 500 years. But most Americans are
20 unaware of these indispensable contributions. Our mission
21 is to create a museum that illuminates the American story
22 for the benefit of everyone, for a more complete and
23 accurate telling of American history. Latinos have been
24 settling communities in what is now U.S. territory since
25 1493. So by the time the British get to Jamestown in 1607,

1 there had already been a bunch of people saying,
2 bievenidos, what took you so long? America would be
3 unrecognizable without the century's worth of Latino
4 contributions, including our military.

5 Latinos have fought in every war we have ever had,
6 from Spanish General Galvez helping General Washington win
7 the war of independence, to the first full Admiral of the
8 United States Navy, David Farragut famously saying, damn
9 the torpedoes, full speed ahead during the civil war, from
10 the half million Latino troops in World War II to the Army
11 65th Infantry Regiment, the Borinqueneers of Puerto Rico
12 and their legendary exploits in Korea, and the thousands of
13 Hispanic surnames etched on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial
14 Wall, from the young Latinos and Latinas serving and
15 sacrificing on our behalf in the battlefields of
16 Afghanistan and Iraq to the 60 Medal of Honor recipients.
17 As an Air Force veteran myself, I can tell you that Latinos
18 take a backseat to no one in the defense of liberty. Our
19 community has had a lasting impact in every single aspect
20 of society, from arts, to science to business, sports,
21 politics and more.

22 One of my personal heroes, Roberto Clemente, helped
23 usher in the era of Latinos in baseball despite facing
24 discrimination because he was both Latino and black. Lynda
25 Carter, television's Wonder Woman in the 1970s, changed the

1 face of strong women on TV. Before Brown v. Board of
2 Education there was Mendez v. Westminster, which laid the
3 groundwork for school desegregation.

4 Throughout history, we have been relying on Latinos to
5 fight our wars and to run our businesses, to tend our
6 fields and to mend our wounds, to teach our kids, patrol
7 our streets, and to share the word of God. Contrary to
8 what some might believe, Latinos are not a recent patch
9 being sewn onto the tapestry of America. We are an
10 essential foundational thread woven into the very fabric of
11 America. We are a wonderfully complex community today. We
12 are over 18 percent of the population, \$2 trillion in
13 purchasing power.

14 We are Afro Latinos, we are Asian Latinos, we are
15 blond hair and blue eyed, we are mulattoes and mestizos and
16 Native Americans and everything in between. We are not a
17 race. We are a culture. We are Republicans, Democrats,
18 and independents. We have foundational shared values
19 around family and faith and freedom and opportunity and
20 optimism and pride and passion, and those are the qualities
21 most in need in our country today. We also have a
22 responsibility to inspire future generations. By 2060,
23 Latinos will make up 30 percent of the population. So if
24 we hope to remain a strong, thriving, and vibrant Nation,
25 that segment of the population needs to feel acknowledged,

1 engaged and invested in our future.

2 This is about honoring our ancestors and inspiring our
3 descendants. This initiative began 26 years ago when the
4 Smithsonian task force found willful neglect in its
5 portrayal of Latino stories. They recommended the creation
6 of an American Latino Museum. And in 2008, President Bush
7 signed the bill creating the Commission to study the
8 museum's feasibility, which I was appointed to by John
9 Boehner. In 2011, we delivered our report to Congress and
10 President Obama saying three basic things, there was a
11 clear and pressing need for the museum, that it should be
12 part Smithsonian Institution, and that it really ought to
13 be on the National Mall. This year or that year, we first
14 introduced the authorization bill, and this year the House
15 passed the American Latino Museum Act unanimously in a
16 voice vote with 295 bipartisan co-sponsors.

17 We now have 45 bipartisan co-sponsors for the Senate
18 bill. We urge the committee to advance the bill and we
19 urge the full Senate to pass the House bill by unanimous
20 consent. The House bill includes language ensuring the
21 diversity of political viewpoints, meaning this would be
22 the first and only Smithsonian Museum in the Institution's
23 174 year history requiring the representation of various
24 points of view, including the conservative viewpoint. We
25 stand on the shoulders of the leaders who created previous

1 ethnic museums. We have learned from their experiences, and
2 I am confident in our ability to raise the funds needed to
3 build a world class institution.

4 In closing, I have been involved with this initiative
5 for the last 13 years. For me, it is a labor of love, a
6 legacy initiative. It is about family. And one day, God
7 willing, I will be able to walk into this museum with my
8 family and my two sons, Daniel and David. And I have a
9 vision of a young Latina born today in America and on her
10 sixth grade field trip, she can come to D.C. and she can
11 marvel at the monuments and she can visit Capitol Hill and
12 she can go to the National Museums, including the American
13 Latino Museum. And she can see all these stories that I
14 have been talking about and more. And she can leave that
15 museum not only proud to be a Latina, but proud to be an
16 American.

17 Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify and I
18 would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

19 [The prepared statement of Mr. Vargas follows:]
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1 The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Vargas. It is great to
2 see you again. And another friend of this committee, Cici
3 Rojas, who is the Chairman of the Latino Coalition, will be
4 our next witness. Ms. Rojas.

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1 STATEMENT OF CICI ROJAS, CHAIR, THE LATINO COALITION
2 FOUNDATION

3 Ms. Rojas. Good morning, Chairman Blunt, and thank
4 you, Ranking Member Klobuchar and members of the committee.
5 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As a proud
6 Midwesterner from Missouri, an engaged citizen who is
7 working on many worthy projects in my community, and most
8 importantly, a mother, it is truly an honor to be before
9 you to testify for such a meaningful project to our
10 community.

11 I also serve on the friends of the National Museum of
12 the American Latino with my board colleague Danny Vargas,
13 whom you just heard from. However, I come before you today
14 as the Chairman of the Latino Coalition Foundation, a
15 National organization dedicated to providing Latino
16 businesses a platform to thrive and shape public policy.
17 Additionally, we strive to accomplish our mission by
18 advocating for pinnacle efforts such as this. Latinos have
19 contributed positively to every aspect of American history.
20 They have impacted the areas of business, education,
21 health, sports and, most recently, politics.

22 The Latino community has probably enriched our
23 Nation's competitiveness, culture, and prosperity through
24 the generations. We are a diverse community with a wide
25 range of viewpoints, work environments, and passion. Yet

1 we possess the commonality of valuing the importance of
2 culture, family, and patriotism. Therefore, we find it
3 vital that we proudly share our incredible stories and
4 celebrate a more complete telling of American history. Our
5 community has certainly been essential to our Nation's past
6 and will be integral to our current and future history.
7 Here is a summary of some impressive facts that make
8 Hispanic Americans critical to America. Our population
9 size and growth. At nearly 60 million people making up 18
10 percent of the U.S. population, Latinos are the largest
11 diverse population segment and account for over 50 percent
12 of total population growth from 2008 to 2018.

13 Today, one in four or 25 percent of children under 18
14 is of Hispanic descent. Hispanics are projected to become
15 30 percent of the population by 2060. As a result, Latinos
16 are becoming an economic force. In 2017, Hispanic
17 households earned more than \$1 trillion. This allowed them
18 to pay more than \$252.2 billion in Federal and local taxes.
19 And after taxes, Hispanic households held more than \$781
20 billion in spending power. And Latinos are a thriving
21 business community and job creators. We are opening more
22 small businesses faster than anyone else in the U.S. .
23 With a total of 4.7 million Latino owned businesses in the
24 Nation, one in four new businesses are Latino owned and
25 provide 3 million jobs to workers in the U.S. Over -- with

1 over \$2.3 trillion in 2018 gross domestic product, American
2 Latinos are the 8th largest economy in the world.

3 From a funding standpoint, it is equally important to
4 note, the museum will be built utilizing a 50/50 model. 50
5 percent of the cost of construction of the museum will be
6 raised through private funds by the museum's Board of
7 Regents. The remaining 50 percent of the costs will be
8 appropriated by Congress. Additionally, the House bill
9 added language to ensure diversity of political views,
10 reflecting the diversity of our community as a whole. And
11 although there will be many important stories enshrined in
12 the museum, which will both highlight the struggles and
13 resilience of this community, as well as celebrate the
14 achievements of Latinos across all industries, the most
15 important message is that the American -- is that the
16 Latino story is the American story, and as a Nation, we
17 must honor the promise of what our country was built on and
18 stands for.

19 One such example of those great American stories that
20 made a positive impact in the Latino American community is
21 that of the late Hector Barrero Sr., a Midwesterner.
22 Hector was originally born in Mexico City, Mexico in 1935.
23 His American journey began in 1958 when he moved to West
24 Central Missouri. After a series of hard and back-breaking
25 jobs, he decided to do what many Americans dream of doing,

1 be his own boss. He started his first enterprise, a
2 Mexican restaurant, and then that establishment grew into
3 another and then another.

4 After success in business, he went on to help
5 establish the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. His
6 journey to success is one of many Latinos whose tales are
7 woven into the American history and whose essence will be
8 captured within the walls of the National Latino -- of the
9 National Museum of the American Latino for generations to
10 come.

11 Thank you for this opportunity to be before you today,
12 and I welcome your questions.

13 [The prepared statement of Ms. Rojas follows:]

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1 The Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Rojas. Our last witness
2 today, Eva Longoria, is an actor, an activist, a member of
3 the Commission to study the potential creation of a
4 National Museum of the American Latino. And Ms. Longoria,
5 we are glad to have you with us today.

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1 STATEMENT OF EVA LONGORIA BASTÓN, ACTOR, ACTIVIST, AND
2 MEMBER OF COMMISSION TO STUDY THE POTENTIAL CREATION OF A
3 NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN LATINO

4 Ms. Longoria. Thank you, Chairman Blunt. I
5 appreciate this opportunity. Thank you, Ranking Member
6 Klobuchar and committee members. It is my honor to be here
7 alongside my fellow witnesses and community leaders, Danny
8 Vargas, Cici Rojas, and Jane Abraham. As a woman, as a
9 Latina, and as a very proud ninth generation American, I
10 come before you as a citizen who lives at the intersection
11 of the opportunities that we have gathered here to discuss,
12 the establishment of the National Museum of the American
13 Latino and the National Women's History Museum. And if you
14 look at our history textbooks, you look at our National
15 monuments and our celebrated statues, they only reflect one
16 kind of American hero, one that looks like our founding
17 fathers, white and male.

18 There are many other extraordinary Americans who are
19 responsible for scientific breakthroughs, military feats,
20 civil rights accomplishments, artistic achievements, and
21 landmark legislation. But when you don't have
22 representation in the official record, these contributions
23 are effectively erased. Tens of millions of people visit
24 Smithsonian museums each year, and they are presented with
25 an incomplete picture of our Nation's history. And when we

1 allow this to go unaddressed, we maintain the status quo in
2 which women and Latinos are left out of our collective
3 perception of American history, relegated as sidekicks to
4 white male heroes.

5 Our history is only shared as a footnote or in
6 relation to someone else's story like Dolores Huerta to
7 Cesar Chavez or Eleanor Roosevelt to FDR. That is why this
8 legislation is presented to you today to correct the record
9 for women's history. The story of one statue sums this up.
10 In February 1921, the National Women's Party presented
11 Congress with a statue of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B.
12 Anthony, and Lucretia Mott, three white pioneers of the
13 women's suffrage movement. Their statues inscription
14 included a quote that asked for justice, not favor men,
15 their rights and nothing more women, their rights and
16 nothing less.

17 At the time, Congress deemed the inscription
18 blasphemous and removed it from the statue and then moved
19 the statue to the basement of Congress, where it remained
20 for 76 years out of public view and the eyes of three
21 generations of American girls, three generations of young
22 women who could have benefited from the display of this
23 statue because of what it represented, women claiming their
24 place in America's future.

25 And thanks to decades of work by Congresswoman Carolyn

1 Maloney and other dedicated women on both sides of the
2 aisle, this monument now lives in the rotunda of the U.S.
3 Capitol, alongside statues of Martin Luther King Jr. and
4 George Washington. Now, the statue of three white women is
5 just one part of the story. It is not the whole story,
6 which includes centuries of labor by black and white and
7 Latino and Asian and indigenous activists. The struggle
8 for recognition mirrors the battles we continue to fight
9 today. Two centuries after the women's suffrage movement
10 began, a lack of representation of women's place in history
11 prevents us from moving forward on gender equality issues
12 today, from wage gap to reproductive freedom to
13 representation in boardrooms and Government.

14 If America can't recognize our past contributions, how
15 can America respect our present significance? We won't
16 achieve full gender equality until generations of girls and
17 boys have the opportunity to see the complete picture of
18 women's accomplishments, historic feats, and innovations
19 which represent half of our Nation's story. And I am not
20 only here today as a woman, but as a Latina. 18 percent of
21 Americans identify as American Latinos, the largest
22 minority ethnic group in the country. And as Dr. Rudy
23 Akuna wrote, history is not supposed to be ideological. It
24 is truth deduced from known facts. So for the Latino
25 community, the facts are missing because there is no story

1 in American history that does not include American Latinos.
2 We have been here since before the Mayflower, since before
3 the colonies, since before the Declaration of Independence.
4 We have a broad and diverse community from indigenous
5 Latinos to black and Afro Latinos to Caribbean Latinos.

6 We have built this country brick by brick, railroad by
7 railroad, from seed to harvest. And we did this alongside
8 the folks who already have their place in history books and
9 museums. Often those people were the very same people who
10 oppressed us. Yet it is our story that isn't told. But
11 now we have the chance. We have the chance to correct the
12 record, to present a fuller, clearer picture of our diverse
13 Nation. And the Smithsonian Institution, the official
14 record of our history and culture, has the opportunity to
15 recognize the fact that Latinos are as essential to
16 America's history as they are to America's future. Our
17 institutions must be large enough to hold the truth and the
18 expanse of American history and large enough to offer
19 representation, inspiration, and the promise of a bright
20 future to all of our Nation's people. When I served on the
21 National Museum of the American Latino Commission, we
22 traveled the country and we held townhalls from Phenix to
23 Philadelphia.

24 And it was no surprise that there is very little
25 representation of Latinos in our great museums across the

1 country. But with each stop, members of the community
2 offered heartfelt testimonials about the art and the
3 artifacts and the stories that should live in a National
4 Museum of the American Latino, but more than what it should
5 contain. They shared what it would represent.

6 Finally, an acknowledgment that we too are heroes in
7 American history. We, too, are patriots. We too take
8 pride in the country we have all built together without the
9 museum. It is all too easy for some to write off the
10 accomplishments of Latinos and our place in this Nation.

11 It is easy to vilify us today and hold us back from
12 claiming our place in history and hold us back from full
13 equality as American citizens. So to establish this museum
14 on the National Mall, the place where we inaugurate our
15 presidents, honor our veterans, exercise our freedom of
16 speech, conduct business in our Nation and Congress, that
17 would send the message that we belong among our Nation's
18 most important monuments.

19 We value the experience and contributions of Latinos,
20 the great American experiment. So, because by offering
21 each and every American the opportunity to fully understand
22 and appreciate women and Latino contributions, we can
23 collectively work towards the highest ideal of our Nation.
24 E Pluribus Unum, one out of many, out of many one. Thank
25 you for the opportunity to testify.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Longoria follows:]

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1 The Chairman. Thank you very much. And thanks to all
2 of our witnesses for really an outstanding and helpful
3 testimony. We are in the middle of a series of votes on
4 the floor, and so we are going to bring this to a
5 conclusion here in a minute. I hope we all -- that
6 everybody that wants to has time to ask two or three
7 questions. Let me start with that.

8 Secretary Bunch, you have said in interviews that the
9 most important work you have ever done was the opportunity
10 to build the museum you built. What is the most important
11 lesson you learned and the most important work you have
12 ever done that might relate to these two questions we are
13 looking at today?

14 Mr. Bunch. In some ways, it is really two things.
15 First is that the American public has a thirst to
16 understand itself, to understand itself fully, and by
17 looking at the African-American experience, that was one of
18 the ways we enriched the public understanding of our
19 identity.

20 And secondly, what was really clear to me is that this
21 is something that the Smithsonian is good at, crafting a
22 museum that is full of wonder, that is rife with
23 scholarship, that inspires and educates. That, in essence,
24 is part of the glue that holds the country together.

25 So what I learned more than anything else is that the

1 Smithsonian has a responsibility to help America better
2 understand itself, to look at its past clearly and
3 candidly, to use that past to understand where we are
4 today, and to use that past to point out towards a better
5 tomorrow.

6 The Chairman. Well, thank you. That is, you are in a
7 perfect position to give advice on this. As we would move
8 forward with this legislation, do you believe it has
9 everything it needs to have in it to launch the fundraising
10 effort and the other effort that you are familiar with that
11 needs to be made?

12 Mr. Bunch. I think a couple of things that can be
13 sharpened, but I think it is crucially important to have a
14 50/50 funding mechanism. That is really key. But it is
15 also important to recognize that there needs to be some
16 significant resources up front to allow a museum to move
17 forward, to think about how it builds a fundraising
18 apparatus, to think about how it begins to bring people
19 together, scholars and others, to think about what this
20 museum could really be.

21 I think it is also essential to find a way to better
22 rationalize the way the public money was mixed with the
23 private money. Is it a one to one ratio? What is the way
24 to really ensure that you can plan based on what you know
25 will be coming in the future? But I think that in many

1 ways this is an opportune time to change the country by
2 helping it better understand itself through the creation of
3 these kinds of museums.

4 The Chairman. Well, good. I hope we have a chance to
5 follow up on that in the very near future before we
6 finalize this bill and look at the two things you just
7 mentioned. Mrs. Abraham, I think you said in your
8 testimony you thought that currently the Smithsonian was
9 stepping up and telling this story in a better way in the
10 likely decade we would have even if we went forward today.
11 Am I right in characterizing your view of that?

12 Mrs. Abraham. Yes, I do believe that the Smithsonian
13 has implemented our first recommendation, which was to
14 establish the initiative within the Smithsonian to do a
15 better job of sharing the stories about women's history,
16 because we recognize as a Commission that it would take at
17 least 10 years to be able to build a permanent museum.

18 And looking at the African-American example of their
19 museum and cultural center, being able to build much of
20 that infrastructure and nucleus of the museum in existing
21 Smithsonian was critical. And so we felt it was the first
22 important step. We are so proud that the Smithsonian
23 embraced that and do believe that they are doing a very
24 nice job as we move forward with establishing a permanent
25 museum.

1 The Chairman. Ms. Rojas mentioned that the House bill
2 had added language on the Latino, American Latino Museum,
3 recognizing the importance of understanding the diversity
4 of political views. Is there anything like that in the
5 other bill or should there be?

6 Mrs. Abraham. Well, there is on the House version.
7 The Wicker Amendment did something very, very similar to
8 that. And certainly I would support if in the Senate
9 version there was a companion amendment. Let me just tell
10 you, our eight commissioners could not have been more
11 diverse politically.

12 And the topic of content was something that we
13 discussed many, many times over the 18 months that we
14 participated. And we felt very strongly, which resulted in
15 our unanimous recommendation, that this museum needed to
16 represent all viewpoints on all issues. And so we would
17 support certainly any strengthening amendment that the
18 Senate felt necessary.

19 The Chairman. Thank you. I will have a couple of
20 questions for the record for other three witnesses. But if
21 we are going to let other people ask questions, I need to
22 stop at the end of my five minutes. And so I will.

23 Senator Klobuchar.

24 Senator Klobuchar. Thank you very much. Thank you,
25 Senator Blunt. I moved over from the hearing room. Mostly

1 I wanted to show Director Bunch that I have art from the
2 Wisemen Art Gallery in Minnesota alone in my office. And I
3 appreciate your leadership, Mr. Bunch.

4 And I know the goal number for the Smithsonian
5 Institution's strategic plan discusses the need to
6 understand and impact 21st century audiences. And it reads
7 exactly this. It says, we will let the complete American
8 story in person and online in all our museums, exhibits,
9 and programs, and across them with a focus on all Americans
10 Nationally and locally.

11 To me, the American Women's History Museum and the
12 National American Latino Museum both embody the spirit of
13 that goal. Do you agree?

14 Mr. Bunch. I do indeed agree. I think it is
15 crucially important that my career has really been about
16 expanding the narrative and making sure we have a diverse,
17 inclusive history. And I think that has really always been
18 the goal of the Smithsonian under my leadership. So these
19 museums can help us achieve that goal.

20 Senator Klobuchar. So I understand you have this
21 backlog. You are very prudent about how to manage the
22 museums. We appreciate that. But when the African-American
23 Museum started to research, of course, involved in all of
24 this, did you have this kind of pushback and you have
25 advice for all of us as we move forward on these two

1 museums?

2 Mr. Bunch. I think it is important to recognize that
3 there is the great need to help the Smithsonian improve its
4 backlog. But my notion has always been that with the right
5 resources and creative leadership, the Smithsonian can do
6 several things at once. And it is really important to me
7 to make sure that we maintain all that we have. But we are
8 also open to the possibility of new.

9 Senator Klobuchar. Very good. And I think that is
10 really important for us to remember. In my opening
11 statement, I talked about how even during the Great
12 Depression, that Roosevelt thought ahead and did the WPA.
13 I have one of those Smithsonian murals actually in my
14 personal office here, and thought ahead to the WPA murals
15 that are such a big part of us not losing -- our soul.

16 So that is what I want to remember as we look at doing
17 this during the middle of this economic crisis and
18 pandemic. I turn to Ms. Longoria. Thank you so much for
19 being here. I gave you some nice words at beginning and
20 thank you. You talk about how we depict our world to
21 generations to come is going to matter to kids, Latino
22 kids, is going to matter to little girls that they see that
23 they are represented with their own museum.

24 Ms. Longoria. Yes. Thank you, Senator Klobuchar.
25 Thank you for all of your work. Look, representation

1 matters, if we have learned anything. And there is -- it
2 is a twofold benefit because it is important for everyone
3 to see themselves reflected in our history and in our art
4 so they can feel that their experiences are seen and
5 understood so they can be inspired to similar feats by
6 people who look like them and sound like them. So that is
7 for young little girls and it is also for Latinos
8 everywhere.

9 But the second part is it educates others about us,
10 okay, and quality representation teaches us about each
11 other. So for some folks who don't have a Latino in their
12 town, learning about journalist Gwen Ifill or labor rights
13 leader Dolores Huerta, it teaches them about the values of
14 our community, the values and strength of women, and it
15 shares who we are and what we care about.

16 So I think it more importantly allows us to better
17 understand and appreciate diverse viewpoints and shared
18 priorities as Americans. That is what we are missing right
19 now, I think, in our society. So those museums are not for
20 women and for Latinos. It is going to be for everybody.

21 Senator Klobuchar. And we do appreciate the work that
22 Secretary Bunch has done in terms of bringing these
23 exhibits in. But I think so much -- many of us would be so
24 excited to actually get these museums. We have been talking
25 about them for so long. I really appreciate also you

1 brought up the statue and maybe I will end with this, you
2 are somehow competing, Ms. Longoria, with Mark Zuckerberg
3 and Dorsey in a judiciary hearing I have going on at the
4 same time but I prioritized you.

5 Ms. Longoria. Thank you.

6 Senator Klobuchar. I love that you brought up that
7 statue because I don't know that everyone knows about this,
8 that this was presented to Congress in 1921 with the
9 suffragettes. And of course, it didn't have full
10 representation of votes, but it had this inscription that
11 read, justice, not favor, men their rights and nothing
12 more, women, their rights and nothing less. And it was
13 these three women and it got put in the basement of the
14 Senate as an attempt to erase especially the words that
15 were at the bottom of the statute that were considered
16 blasphemous at the time.

17 And I do want you to know is we have gotten the
18 statues out of the basement, our first step, and are
19 bringing it up and restoring it where it belongs. But I
20 want to let you know that and thank you for your work. And
21 thank you to all the witnesses. I know we are not going to
22 be able to do a second round because of the vote schedule
23 and other things. But thank you so much to all of you. I
24 am really excited to get moving and look forward to working
25 with the Smithsonian.

1 The Chairman. Thank you, Senator Klobuchar.

2 Ms. Longoria. Thank you, Senator.

3 The Chairman. I am not -- I don't believe any other
4 member is waiting to ask questions. I have one other
5 question, if they don't. I think everybody is on the
6 floor, at this at this point are headed to the floor to
7 vote. Thinking about the next 10 years, Ms. Rojas and Mr.
8 Vargas, are you comfortable with the way the story is being
9 moved in a new direction as to how we tell it?

10 And is there enough input in telling the story, the
11 Latino story, as part of the current structure of the
12 Smithsonian? Ms. Rojas? And have you been asked for input
13 on that would be another part of that question for both of
14 you?

15 Ms. Rojas. Yes, well, yes and I will turn to my
16 colleague, Mr. Vargas, as well. But, yes, I believe that
17 we have been able to -- this has been a journey, obviously.
18 We have been very actively seeking input and content along
19 the way and with advocates like Ms. Longoria. You know, we
20 have many people that are also thinking about this actively
21 and how we can make -- how we can create the most robust
22 storytelling that we can and obviously trying to project
23 out, you know, who we should be talking to now for what,
24 you know, because as you said, 2034.

25 So we have to certainly be curating all the potential

1 content that we believe, but I think we have -- I believe
2 we have great resources and talent. Thinking about that,
3 Danny, I would ask you as well to weigh in.

4 Mr. Vargas. So, thank you -- we applaud strongly the
5 efforts of the Smithsonian Latino Center. They have done
6 wonderful work in terms of making sure that they are able
7 to build a bench of curators and professionals within the
8 museum community. They are incorporating exhibits into
9 other Smithsonian Institution museums. They have got the
10 Molina Gallery coming up soon.

11 So we strongly support their efforts and we applaud
12 what they have been able to do. But I will tell you, as
13 one of the former commissioners on the Commission, we
14 travel all over the country reaching out to audiences from
15 California to New York and Puerto Rico and everything in
16 between. What we heard was that there was a strong need
17 and desire to be able to tell this incredibly complex
18 story. This is a story of not just the origin of the
19 United States of America, but also the ongoing evolution of
20 the Latino community in the country, 23 or 24 different
21 countries of origin over time, the diaspora.

22 It is a complex, multidimensional journey through time
23 and space. So to be able to tell that story well is going
24 to require a full museum, full complement of museum
25 professionals and curators. So I think the Latino Center

1 is an important, significant first step. But until we have
2 a full museum over the next 10 years or so, I think that
3 story is still yet to be told well and completely.

4 The Chairman. Well, thank you. Thanks to all of our
5 witnesses. The record will remain open for one week from
6 today. The committee is adjourned.

7 [Whereupon, at 11:31 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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