

**H.R. 53, VIRGIN ISLANDS
NATIONAL PARK
SCHOOL LEASE ACT**

LEGISLATIVE FIELD HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

Monday, July 9, 2007, in Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI

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**LEGISLATIVE FIELD HEARING ON H.R. 53,
TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE
INTERIOR TO ENTER INTO A LONG-TERM
LEASE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS FOR
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES. "VIRGIN ISLANDS
NATIONAL PARK SCHOOL LEASE ACT"**

**Monday, July 9, 2007
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs
Committee on Natural Resources
Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI**

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 6:00 p.m., in the St. John Legislature Hearing Room, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI, Hon. Donna Christensen [Chairwoman of the Subcommittee] presiding.
Present: Representatives Christensen and Grijalva.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN, A
DELEGATE IN CONGRESS FROM THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Good evening. Can everyone hear me? Good evening. The legislative hearing by the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs will come to order.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on H.R. 53, to authorize the Secretary of Interior to enter into a long-term lease with the Government of the United States Virgin Islands for the establishment of a school, and for other purposes.

Under the Committee Rules, the Chairman and other members may make an opening statement. I will begin with my opening statement. I want to begin by welcoming my colleague, Mr. Raúl Grijalva, who is the Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands of the Committee on Natural Resources. He is also a member of the Committee on Education and Labor. So, I think it's very fortuitous for us that Mr. Grijalva is here wearing both hats. One, on the Education Committee, and two, as Chair of the Subcommittee on Parks.

And this is a very important hearing as can be witnessed by the number of people in attendance this evening, and I'm sure some more will join us as we go on from here. I don't think there is any more important issue before the people of St. John right now than securing suitable land to construct a school.

I want to welcome everyone who came out this evening, especially our witnesses, those who will give written testimony and those who will give oral testimony as well.

We received written statements thus far from Mr. Alvis Christian, Mr. Steve Black, Ms. Crystal Fortwangler and Ms. Myrtle Barry. They will be included in the record of tonight's hearing, and we welcome anyone else who wishes to submit a statement as well. Anyone wishing to do so have up to ten business days from today to send it in. I want to especially welcome our Administrator and our Senator-at-Large who is just joining us.

Let me just say before we get into the testimony, I introduced the bill before us, H.R. 53, in an attempt to move the issue of a school for St. John forward. For many years now we've been bogged down, administration after administration, in working to find suitable land to exchange with the Park Service. And over the years both sides, the Park Service as well as the Virgin Islands Government, has acted in good faith in attempting to come up with an exchange of land without success. And I'm sure there are many people in the room who are glad that has been without success.

In the meantime, more than 30 years have passed and the school age population in St. John has doubled. High school students continue to make the trip by ferry over to St. Thomas every day just to attend school. And I'm certain that all of us remember little Javone Alfred, a second grader on his way home from a Christmas party at Julius Sprauve School, who was struck and killed by a delivery truck while crossing the street, in full view of many other students who were also heading home. And this tragedy clearly demonstrates that the crowded town of Cruz Bay is not the place for an elementary school and the urgency to get the school out of downtown.

Over the years, more and more of you have met me and expressed your strong opposition to the people of St. John and the Virgin Islands giving any more land to the National Park. After researching other options through the Congressional Research Service and committee staff, I introduced H.R. 53, which calls for a long-term lease instead of the exchange of land. And we all appreciate what the Park means to St. John and the territory.

But I still know that many of you still believe that owning more than two-thirds of the land of the island of St. John is enough land for the National Park, and would like to see the Park outright donate the land needed to build the school as a gesture of good will to the people of St. John.

While the Park Service does not have the legal authority to donate or lease land, we still have not ruled out the option of a conveyance completely. And this hearing today is the first step in deciding which is the best option and which is the most feasible option for us to pursue. But the most important thing is getting our children out of harm's way in a supportive and nurturing educational environment as soon as possible.

And in closing, I want again to thank everyone who is attending this evening. I want to recognize two Senators who are with us, Senator Hill, excuse me, and Senator Ottley. Thank you for the use of the Legislative Chamber. And also I want to recognize our former Judge Moore. This morning we were at the Federal Court in St. Thomas.

At this time I would like to recognize for such opening statement as he may want to make, Congressman Raúl Grijalva.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Madam Chair. Can you hear me? Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just lean closer.

Good evening, and let me begin by once again thanking Congresswoman Christensen for hosting these hearings here in her district. The U.S. Virgin Islands are truly a special place, and it's been an honor to be able to visit this beautiful place with my distinguished colleagues, and other colleagues that joined us earlier in the day. As I mentioned at our hearing this morning in St. Thomas, Chairwoman Christensen is the leader on the National Resources Committee. She is active on a variety of issues, education, health care, homeland security, and just to let her constituents know that you are well represented by a strong advocate and with a great deal of intelligence and discipline in Congress. And you should be pleased by her representation.

As Chairman of the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee, I am particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to visit St. John and the Virgin Islands National Park. This Park includes some of the most beautiful special places and scenery in the entire National Park System. But what's also significant is the historic and cultural resources that are being preserved.

The topic today is the need for school facilities on St. John. On the Education and Labor Committee we've had a variety of hearings as we've gone through the process of reauthorizing No Child Left Behind. And one of—with the intent of reauthorizing No Child Left Behind and with a mission behind No Child Left Behind, was to close out achievement gap and make sure that every child had the opportunity equal to anybody else's opportunity. And one of—besides all the other complicated issues we need to go through, one of our hearings I recall posing a question to a school superintendent, and I asked him, the issue of school facilities, how important is that to achievement, to the well-being, the quality of education, the safety, the security of children and students. And they said, well, that is sometimes not factored into the issue of achievement and is a critical part of the issue of achievement.

So, I'm looking forward to the witnesses today. I think it is imperative that the students here on St. John have the opportunity to have education on their island and it's critical. The Federal government, National Park Service, and the Government of the Virgin Islands must work together to address this very, very critical issue. It is a pressing need on behalf of the students of St. John.

So, I look forward again to hearing from our witnesses this evening regarding the best solution for this problem, and the next steps we can take to move toward a solution. I appreciate the time and the effort of our witnesses and thank them for joining us this evening. And with that, Madam Chairwoman, thank you and I yield back.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Grijalva. I will allow some of the people joining us to take some seats. And when we run out of seats we will start to use some of these up here. But at this time I would like to recognize the witness for our first panel. And as is customary, we begin with the representative from the Federal government.

So our first panel will be Ms. Martha Bogle, the Acting Superintendent of the Virgin Islands National Park. And if you will join us here, I will recognize you for five minutes to give testimony. We

have a little light here to help guide you on that, and welcome to the hearing.

**STATEMENT OF MARTHA BOGLE, ACTING SUPERINTENDENT
OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK**

Ms. BOGLE. Thank you, Ms. Chairwoman. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your subcommittee at this field hearing on H.R. 53, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Interior to enter into a long-term lease with the Government of the United States Virgin Islands to provide land for the establishment of a school. Because we don't typically provide positions on bills at field hearings, I will limit my comments to the history of this proposal and information concerning the National Park Service's existing administrative authorities to exchange or lease land within the park. We plan to follow up with a letter providing our position on the bill at a later date.

As you know, Virgin Islands National Park was authorized by Congress in 1956 and established largely by an initial land donation from Laurance Rockefeller through the Jackson Hole Preserve, Incorporated. Congress enlarged the park in 1962 and additionally in 1978 when they added Hassel Island in St. Thomas Harbor to the park.

H.R. 53 would authorize the Secretary to lease to the Government of the United States Virgin Islands real property, including any improvements, for the purposes of constructing a school complex to serve grades K through 12. The piece of property that has been tentatively identified for lease is a 10-acre plot that is part of Estate Catherineberg, a historic sugar plantation located near the center of the island, close to Centerline Road. The property in question was not part of the Rockefeller donation, and is not encumbered by the reversionary clause that restricts the use of the Rockefeller properties to national park purposes. Though no formal survey has been done, the property is believed to contain fewer historic resources than other parts of the Estate. The property is near a road and other developments.

During the past 14 years, the Government of the United States Virgin Islands and Virgin Islands National Park have discussed many proposals that would allow the Government of the Virgin Islands to construct a school on land currently owned by the National Park Service. These proposals have included an administrative land exchange. Though the Secretary of the Interior does have the authority to make minor boundary revisions of a unit of the National Park Service through a land exchange, the Land and Water Conservation Act stipulates several conditions that must be met before the land is exchanged and the boundary is revised.

The land gained in the exchange must be "necessary for the proper preservation, protection, interpretation, or management of an area of the national park system." Second, the total value of the land exchanged must be less than \$750,000. Though no formal determination has been made, a land exchange involving the Catherineberg Estate property does not appear to meet either of these criteria. The exchange does not appear necessary for the protection of the park, and it appears that the Estate land alone is likely to be worth more than \$750,000.

During the 109th Congress, Delegate Christensen introduced H.R. 272 to legislatively authorize a land exchange. The Department of Interior did not take a position on H.R. 272.

The Secretary does not have any other authority to allow the construction of a school on property owned and managed by the National Park Service. The 1998 National Parks Omnibus Act does give the Secretary the authority to lease buildings and associated property as long as the lease does not “result in degradation of the purposes and values of the unit.” While public education is not in conflict with the purpose of the Virgin Islands National Park, the construction of a complex of buildings appears to be in conflict with the direction given by the park’s authorizing legislation.

The National Historic Preservation Act gives the Secretary the authority to lease historic property, including historic buildings and historic lands, but only if the lease will adequately insure the preservation of historic property. New construction of an education complex would not insure that the historic character of the land in question is preserved.

Finally, the Land and Water Conservation Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to convey to a freehold or leasehold interest in lands within the national park system, but this authority does not apply to property within national parks.

That concludes my prepared remarks and I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bogle follows:]

Statement of Martha Bogle, Acting Superintendent, Virgin Islands National Park, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

Ms. Chairwoman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your subcommittee at this field hearing on H.R. 53, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a long-term lease with the Government of the United States Virgin Islands to provide land for the establishment of a school. Because we do not typically provide positions on bills at field hearings, I will limit my comments to the history of this proposal and information concerning the National Park Service’s existing administrative authorities to exchange or lease land within the park. We plan to send a followup letter providing our position on this bill.

Virgin Islands National Park (park) was authorized by Congress in 1956 and established largely by an initial land donation from Laurance Rockefeller through the Jackson Hole Preserve, Incorporated. Congress enlarged the park in 1962 by adding 5,650 acres of submerged lands along the north and south coasts of St. John. In 1978, Congress added approximately 135 acres at Hassel Island in St. Thomas Harbor to the park. The park protects Caribbean forests, coral gardens, beaches, and historic ruins and currently owns 12,917 acres of land and water within its 14,689-acre boundary.

H.R. 53 would authorize the Secretary to lease to the Government of the United States Virgin Islands real property, including any improvements, for the purposes of constructing a school complex to serve grades K through 12. The piece of property that has been tentatively identified for lease is a 10-acre plot that is part of Estate Catherineberg, a historic sugar plantation located near the center of the island, close to Centerline Road. The property in question was not part of the Rockefeller donation, and is not encumbered by the reversionary clause that restricts the use of the Rockefeller properties to national park purposes. Though no formal survey has been done, the property is believed to contain fewer historic resources than other parts of the Estate. The property is near a road and other developments.

During the past 14 years, the Government of the United States Virgin Islands and Virgin Islands National Park have discussed many proposals that would allow the Government of the Virgin Islands to construct a school on land currently owned by the National Park Service. These proposals have included an administrative land exchange. Though the Secretary of the Interior does have the authority to make minor boundary revisions of a unit of the National Park System through a land ex-

change, the Land and Water Conservation Act stipulates several conditions that must be met before the land is exchanged and the boundary is revised.

The land gained in the exchange must be “necessary for...the proper preservation, protection, interpretation, or management of an area of the national park system.” Second, the total value of the land exchanged—the combined value of both the land added and the land deleted from the unit—must be less than \$750,000. Though no formal determination has been made, a land exchange involving the Catherineberg Estate property does not appear to meet either of these criteria. The exchange does not appear necessary for the protection of the park, and it appears that the Estate land alone is likely to be worth more than \$750,000.

During the 109th Congress, Delegate Christensen introduced H.R. 272 to legislatively authorize a land exchange. The Department of the Interior did not take a position on H.R. 272.

The Secretary does not have any other authority to allow the construction of a school on property owned and managed by the National Park Service. The 1998 National Parks Omnibus Act does give the Secretary the authority to lease buildings and associated property (16 U.S.C. 1a-k), as long as the lease does not “result in degradation of the purposes and values of the unit”. While public education is not in conflict with the purpose of Virgin Islands National Park, the construction of a complex of buildings appears to be in conflict with the direction given by the park’s authorizing legislation, which states, “The national park shall be administered and preserved by the Secretary of the Interior in its natural state...” (70 Stat. 940).

The National Historic Preservation Act gives the Secretary the authority to lease historic property, including historic buildings and historic lands, but only if the lease “will adequately insure the preservation of the historic property” (16 U.S.C. 470h-3). New construction of an education complex would not insure that the historic character of the land in question is preserved.

Finally, the Land and Water Conservation Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to convey to a freehold or leasehold interest in lands within the national park system, but this authority does not apply to “property within national parks” (16 U.S.C. 460l-22(a)).

That concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Acting Superintendent Bogle. I will now recognize my colleague Congressman Grijalva for five minutes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Madam Superintendent. I appreciate your testimony, and I appreciated the tour today. Thank you very much.

Ms. BOGLE. It’s my pleasure.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me, you mentioned in your testimony a particular parcel in your written testimony. Let me ask you, how is that particular parcel currently managed? What is it used for? You mentioned a particular parcel in your testimony, in your written testimony. So my questions are, how is that parcel currently being managed?

Ms. BOGLE. It’s a—I’m sorry, excuse me.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Two parts. How is it being managed? What is it used for? And are there any buildings or other facilities on that particular parcel?

Ms. BOGLE. Currently that property is in a natural state. The only buildings would be ruins associated with the sugar plantation. The area that we’re talking about, the ten acre track, seems to have had less of the historic property on it than other parts of the larger track, and it’s managed in a natural state basically.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And that is based on an inventory about the historical, cultural significance that is or isn’t on that particular—

Ms. BOGLE. We haven’t done a full inventory or a full survey of the lands to determine just how many artifacts, just how many historic structures are there. We haven’t done a full survey.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK, is it removed from the National Park itself?

Ms. BOGLE. No, sir. It is part of national—

Mr. GRIJALVA. Geographically it is not—

Ms. BOGLE. No, it is not geographically removed. It is about the center of the island. That's why we thought that it would potentially be a good place for a school when the park was discussing the possibility of a land exchange.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And just finally, can you explain if there is a significance to the fact that the parcel that we're talking about is not covered by a reversionary clause that covers other land in the park.

Ms. BOGLE. The reversionary clause applies to the initial lands that were basically established in 1956 when the park was established. Laurance Rockefeller owned the land. And in that, he put a reversionary clause that said that at any time any of that land was used for anything but a park or for the public, basically a National Park, that it would revert back to the foundation.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And so this parcel is covered or not covered by that clause?

Ms. BOGLE. It is not covered by that clause. It was added at a later date.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. I don't have any more questions.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Grijalva. I just have a few questions. You said in your statement that for a transfer to be done administratively, the property shouldn't have a value of not more than \$750,000. Do you know what the value—is there an estimated value of the property that you're talking about?

Ms. BOGLE. We haven't appraised it. I can tell you that that's for a minor boundary adjustment. There are certainly adjustments to boundaries all the time within national parks, but those require legislative authority to adjust boundaries. For a minor boundary adjustment, it has to be \$750,000 or less.

We haven't done an appraisal on this property. My guess with the acreage involved on St. John, my guess is it would appraise for over \$750,000.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I think that's a safe guess. Was any other parcel of land, as you review the history and the discussions that might have gone on between the Park Service and the Government of the Virgin Islands, are you aware of any other parcels of land that were a part of that discussion?

Ms. BOGLE. No, I'm not. But hang on just one second, if you will, let me confer. My technical expert, can you come up for a moment?

Is that OK, Madam Chair?

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Sure.

Ms. BOGLE. He said that this piece of land was the only land that was looked at mainly because it was the center part of the island, relatively flat, would be fairly easy to develop, we thought, as well as the fact that we believe that the historic structures as part of the Catherineberg Estate, are not on the ten acres that were identified. So the archeological work would not be as stringent.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Can you go ahead and state your name and position for the record?

Mr. BOULON. My name is Ralph Boulon, Jr.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. My next question would be, also in your review of the discussions between the Park Service and the

Government of the Virgin Islands, did the Government of the Virgin Islands indicate that they accepted this as a parcel of land that would be suitable for the school?

Ms. BOGLE. In my review of the files, it appeared that the Government of the Virgin Islands seemed to be willing to talk about that again for the same reasons that I expressed before. The concern with the exchange was again trying to find equal value of land for that.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. My last question, as you've stated in your testimony, the Park Service generally doesn't take a position on field hearings. But in your opinion, is there anything about H.R. 53 that goes against established Park Service policy that would likely lead the department and the service to oppose H.R. 53? Is there anything about policy as you read the bill that would likely lead to opposition?

Ms. BOGLE. There is no doubt that there is a dire need for a school on St. John. The only thing that I would see is that this would very possibly set a precedent for things of this sort happening, leases happening in the future elsewhere.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Is there no precedent for a long-term lease of park property anywhere in the parks?

Ms. BOGLE. Not anywhere. There are historic leases which would be to maintain historic structures so that the Park Service benefits, and the public benefits, because the historic structures are maintained in the historic fashion. There are agricultural leases. And for that, say for example, in the Blue Ridge Parkway, we lease out land to keep for—we lease out land for hay fields, instead of us mowing them to keep the rural nature of the fields, people mow them for us. So, basically it is for the good of the public and the good of the National Park Service, but there is really not a precedent for a lease such as this.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Well, wouldn't you consider this for the good of the public, the school?

Ms. BOGLE. The school is very good for the public, I agree.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you.

Mr. Grijalva, did you have any other questions?

Mr. GRIJALVA. No, I don't, thank you.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Well, thank you, Acting Superintendent Bogle. You're excused, and I will call up the next panel.

Ms. BOGLE. Thank you.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. OK, I would like to recognize the second panel of witnesses and ask them to come up to the podium: The Honorable Leona Smith, the St. John Administrator; The Honorable Lisa Forde, the St. Thomas/St. John Superintendent of Schools; and The Honorable Carmen Miranda Wesselhoft, Senator-at-Large of the 28th Legislature.

The Chair now recognizes Administrator Smith to testify for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE LEONA SMITH, ST. JOHN ADMINISTRATOR, GOVERNMENT OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Ms. SMITH. Good evening, Honorable Donna Christensen, and members of the House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you in this setting to convey

the views of the DeJongh-Francis administration as it regards H.R. 53. By the way of introduction, I am Leona Smith, a resident of St. John, and the appointed Administrator of this island.

The Delegate's bill, H.R. 53, authorizes the Interior Secretary to enter into a long-term lease with the Virgin Islands Government to provide land on this island for the establishment of a school. As I am sure you will hear or have heard from other witnesses who will testify at tonight's hearing, the DeJongh-Francis administration wholly supports the legislation as a long-term lease would represent the less challenging option in securing the land that is necessary for the construction of a school on St. John. The administration looks forward to passage of the bill and subsequent negotiations toward identifying the most suitable location for the school's development. I cannot emphasize enough the need for the process to get underway in earnest that will lead to the construction of a new school on St. John.

The residents of this island have for years commuted very early in the morning and very late at night to and from our neighboring island of St. Thomas to facilitate their children's attendance of high school, whether at private, parochial or at public institutions of learning. The construction of a new school would end this daily commute, one that is often challenged by inclement weather, rough seas and transportation snafus, for the many families who have made St. John their home.

I will defer to the Acting Superintendent of Schools for the St. Thomas-St. John district, Lisa Hassell-Forde, to provide the panel with more details on the need to establish a school on St. John.

I thank the Delegate and members of the House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs for the opportunity to convey the administration's position in full support of a long-term lease with the Virgin Islands National Park on St. John for the development of a school which will better serve the residents of this island.

And Madam Chair, I will have Ms. Lisa Forde continue.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Smith follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable Leona Smith, St. John Administrator,
Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands**

Honorable Donna Christensen and members of the House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you in this setting to convey the views of the De Jongh-Francis administration as regards H.R. 53. By way of introduction, I am Leona Smith, a resident of St. John and the appointed Administrator of this island.

The Delegate's bill, H.R. 53, authorizes the Interior Secretary to enter into a long-term lease with the Virgin Islands Government to provide land on this island for the establishment of a school. As I am sure you will hear or have heard from other witnesses who will testify at tonight's hearing the DeJongh-Francis administration wholly supports the securing of the land that is necessary for the construction of a school on St. John. The administration looks forward to passage of the bill and the subsequent negotiations towards identifying the most suitable location for the school's development. I cannot emphasize enough the need for the process to get underway in earnest that will lead to the construction of a new school on St. John.

The residents of this island have for years commuted very early in the morning and very late at night to and from our neighboring island of St. Thomas to facilitate their children's attendance of high school whether at private, parochial or at public institutions of learning. The construction of a new school would end this daily commute, one that is often challenged by inclement weather, rough seas and transportation snafus, for many families who have made St. John their home.

I will defer to the Acting Superintendent of schools for the St. Thomas-St. John district, Lisa Hassell-Forde to provide the panel with more details on the need to

establish a school on St. John. I thank Delegate and members of the House Subcommittee on the Insular Affairs for the opportunity to convey the administration's position in full support of a long-term lease with V.I. National Park on St. John for the development of a school which will better serve the residents of this island.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Ms. Forde, we now recognize you.

**STATEMENT OF LISA FORDE, ST. THOMAS/
ST. JOHN SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Mrs. FORDE. Good evening, Delegate Christensen, Committee Member Grijalva, and audience. My name is Lisa Forde. I'm the Insular Superintendent for the St. Thomas/St. John district.

I'm here this evening to testify on the proposed land lease upon review of the proposed bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a long-term lease with the Government of the Virgin Islands and the island of St. John, with the ultimate end being a lease of land for the establishment of a school. The Office of the Insular Superintendent has attempted to research the possibilities and probabilities associated with this bill and the benefits which can be reaped from such a long-term lease.

It is the opinion of the Office of the Insular Superintendent that clearly a school educational facility is needed that takes care of the needs of all of the students in the St. John district.

Currently, there are two public school facilities, the Julius E. Sprauve School, which houses K-9 students, and the Guy Benjamin Elementary School which houses K-6.

Because of the vast land spread on the island, these two public facilities currently educate 304 students, 240 in Cruz Bay and 64 in the Coral Bay area. The students in Cruz Bay receive services in regular education, gifted and talented, special education, school to work and career and technical education. In Coral Bay, students receive services in regular education. And all students at both sites are identified as individuals with varied needs and achievement goals.

Students requiring a senior high education must be transported to St. Thomas to receive their education, as there are currently no public educational facilities on St. John for grades 10-12. This clearly places students at a disadvantage as they are forced to travel inter-island twice daily to receive a free and quality public education.

A school facility to provide full services to all K-12 students on the island of St. John is definitely needed. Students must be able to avail themselves to special education, vocational education, music education, scholarship consideration, JROTC participation, participation in sports, membership in competitive and travel clubs, as well as intervention strategies to which they have no access while they are on St. John.

The St. Thomas/St. John Office of the Insular Superintendent is willing to partner with any entity and/or organization that has the best interest of our public education students in mind. My office looks forward to making the necessary moves to ensure that all students in the St. Thomas/St. John district receive quality educational experiences that prepare them to be life-long learners and productive citizens within our global society. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Forde follows:]

Statement of Lisa A. Hassell-Forde, Government of the United States Virgin Islands, Department of Education, Office of the Insular Superintendent, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

Upon review of the proposed bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a long-term lease with the Government of the Virgin Islands on the island of St. John, with the ultimate end being a lease of land for the establishment of a school, the Office of the Insular Superintendent has attempted to research the possibilities and probabilities associated with this bill and the benefits which can be reaped from such a long-term lease.

It is the opinion of the Office of the Insular Superintendent that clearly a school/educational facility is needed that takes care of the needs of all of the students in the St. John District. Currently, there are two public school facilities, the Julius E. Sprauve School, which houses K-9 students and the Guy Benjamin Elementary School which houses K-6 students. Because of the vast land spread on the island, these two public facilities currently educate 300 students, 240 in Cruz Bay and 64 in the Coral Bay area. The students in Cruz Bay receive services in Regular Education, Gifted and Talented, Special Education, School to Work and the Career and Technical Education. In Coral Bay, students receive services in regular education and all students at both sites are identified as individuals with varied needs and achievement goals.

Students requiring a senior high education must be transported to St. Thomas to receive their education as there are currently no public educational facilities on St. John for grades 10-12. This clearly places students at a disadvantage as they are forced to travel inter-island twice daily to receive a free and quality public education. A school facility to provide full services to all K-12 students on the island of St. John is definitely needed. Students must be able to avail themselves of Special Education, Vocational Education, Music Education, Scholarship consideration, JROTC participation, participation in sports, membership in competitive and travel clubs, as well as intervention strategies to which they have no access while they are on St. John.

The St. Thomas-St. John Office of the Insular Superintendent is willing to partner with any entity and/or organization that has the best interests of our public education students in mind. My office looks forward to making the necessary moves to ensure that all students in the St. Thomas-St. John District receive quality educational experiences that prepare them to be life-long learners and productive citizens within our global society.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you. The Chair now recognizes the Senator-at-Large, The Honorable Carmen Wesselhoft.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CARMEN MIRANDA WESSELHOFT, SENATOR-AT-LARGE, 28TH LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Ms. WESSELHOFT. Thank you, and good evening Delegate Christensen, members of the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, staff and all concerned St. Johnians gathered here for this important hearing. I am Carmen Wesselhoft, the Senator-at-Large, and I am a proud native-born St. Johnian, but I'm especially concerned about St. John issues and the pressing need for a new school.

I am very pleased that we are going forward on this issue today or tonight, and we truly must all work together to see the construction of this new school through. Thanks to Delegate Christensen's Office and all those involved in organizing this meeting.

The need to relocate Julius Sprauve School is clear to all of us, as is the need for a high school here on St. John. The school was once conveniently located at the center of town, but now that the town of Cruz Bay has grown exponentially, it is no longer an optimal location for students. It is noisy, there is no room for expansion, little parking and there are danger zones all around the campus.

Just this March a truck lost its brakes and rammed a car into the school's crosswalk, ending up hanging over the school's ball field. There is a great deal of traffic surrounding the school on all sides. We have heavy drinking taking place just across the street from morning until night. It is not an environment that is especially conducive to learning.

I would like to see a new school include both a high school and some kind of vocational training program. We do have a high school on St. John, but it is a private school and tuition is out of reach for most residents. Students drop out every year, I believe partly because of the frustration of traveling to St. Thomas each day for their classes. Good students are motivated to make the trip, but it doesn't take much to discourage those young people already at-risk.

Construction of a new school would allow the Virgin Islands Government to reassign the property at Sprauve School for other purposes.

Our need for a fire station is well known as is the lack of youth and senior centers. We are also in need of a centrally located government complex. Land on St. John is certainly at a premium and I will push for the campus to continue to be used for the greater public good. I wholeheartedly support the good intentions behind H.R. 53. One question I ask, though, why can't this land be given outright to the people of St. John?

Construction of a new school has been stymied by the lack of available and affordable land on St. John, but so has construction of affordable housing, a nursing home, a fire station and recreational facilities for our young people. The skyrocketing cost of property on St. John, this has put home ownership out of reach of many, if not most, St. Johnians.

Some change is inevitable and there is certainly a new culture being developed here on St. John, but it is time we took some significant steps toward making homeownership more feasible. The most significant step we could take and the only real remedy at this point is for the Virgin Islands National Park to transfer some land back to the people of this Territory.

I love the park. It has been a tremendous blessing in terms of keeping our island serene and beautiful. I cannot imagine St. John without the park and the significant land it protects. It has been a tremendous tourist attraction and has created many jobs and opportunities for Virgin Islanders. St. John is the gem of the Caribbean largely because of the National Park.

But when Rockefeller created what is known as the National Park, he said that it was never to bring hardship to the people of St. John. Well, today it has created a hardship in terms of lack of land for a school, for a new basketball court, for a fire station, for a senior center, for housing, for homeownership, and for local families. The National Park owns two-thirds of St. John or approximately 9,000 acres. If even just 200 of these acres, if even just 200 of these acres were returned to the people of St. John, we could greatly relieve this hardship for decades to come.

Just a couple hundred acres out of 9,000 could make all the difference in the world to young St. Johnians and those older St. Johnians who would like to return home but cannot. I am confident

we could do this without jeopardizing the beauty or ecology of the Virgin Islands National Park.

If we do not take steps to make land available for infrastructural improvements and homeownership now and work toward building and stabilizing a shrinking middle class, I truly fear for the future of St. John. We must make our voices heard in Washington. If we all unite, I am confident we can find creative ways to resolve the lack of developable land without further disenfranchising St. Johnians.

I truly hope that you will take my words under consideration. I know that untold numbers share my sentiments and I hope we can move forward in giving back a small portion of land to St. Johnians.

I ask for the Committee members' support for any efforts to assist in the construction of a new school on St. John, and I stand ready to offer any local legislation that may be necessary to facilitate this process. I thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wesselhoft follows:]

Statement of Carmen Wesselhoft, Virgin Islands Senator-At-Large

Good Evening to Delegate Christensen, the members of the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, staff and all the concerned St. Johnians gathered here for this important hearing.

My name is Carmen Wesselhoft and I am the Virgin Islands Senator-At-Large. This is my first term in office and I was sworn in on January 8 of this year. Although I represent constituents throughout the Territory, I am a proud native born St. Johnian and I am especially concerned about St. John issues and the pressing need for a new school.

I am very pleased that we are going forward on this issue today as we truly must all work together to see the construction of this new school through. Thanks to Delegate Christensen's Office and all those involved in organizing this meeting.

The need to relocate Julius Sprauve School is clear to all of us. As is the need for a high school here on St. John. The school was once conveniently located at the center of town, but now that the town of Cruz Bay has grown exponentially it is no longer an optimal location for students. It is noisy, there is no room for expansion, little parking and there are danger zones all around campus. Just this March a truck lost it breaks and rammed a car into the school's crosswalk, ending up hanging over the school's ballfield. There is a great deal of traffic surrounding the school on all sides. We have heavy drinking taking place just across the street from morning until night. It is not an environment that is especially conducive to learning.

I would like to see a new school include both a high school and some kind of vocational training program. We do have a high school on St. John, but it is a private school and tuition is out of the reach for most residents. Students drop out every year partly because of the frustration of traveling to St. Thomas each day for their classes. Good students are motivated to make the trip, but it doesn't take much to discourage those young people already at risk.

Construction of a new school would allow the Virgin Islands Government to reassign the property at Sprauve School for other purposes. Our need for a fire station is well known, as is the lack of youth and senior centers. We are also in need of a centrally located Government complex. Land on St. John is certainly at a premium and I will push for the campus to continue to be used for the greater public good.

I wholeheartedly support the good intentions behind H.R. 53, but I do have some concerns.

The information I was provided with did not provide specific information as to the plot size and location of the land in question and I am hoping this will be addressed in the course of this hearing.

The question that many St. Johnians are asking is whether or not there is some legal reason why we must lease this land from the Federal Government? Why can't this land be given outright to the people of the St. John? What purpose does a 90 year lease serve?

Construction of a new school has been stymied by the lack of available and affordable land on St. John, but so has construction of affordable housing, a nursing

home, a fire station and recreational facilities for our young people. The skyrocketing cost of property on St. John and this has put home ownership out of the reach of many, if not most, young St. Johnians.

No matter how flexible the terms or low the interest rate may be, no one making \$33,000 a year—and that is about what the average Virgin Islander earns—can afford a mortgage on a million dollar home. Prices do go up and property values will increase, but local salaries have not risen to match the rise in prices of homes and land on St. John. Prices have primarily been driven up by outside investors who have made their money elsewhere. There is a growing gap between the haves and the have nots here on St. John and, at this point, the Federal Government is the only entity with the power and the land to ameliorate some of these concerns.

We as a community have attempted to respond by creating affordable housing opportunities at Bellevue and soon at Calabash Boom. This is not enough. And I do not think our people should be relegated to solely living in “affordable housing communities”. They should have the opportunity to purchase land at a reasonable price and to build a home of their own preference and style.

There are those newcomers among us who have been heard to say that if St. Johnians cannot afford to live on St. John, they should move to St. Croix or St. Thomas. This is insulting and unacceptable. Our families are being broken apart. Our culture and our traditions lost.

Some change is inevitable and there is certainly a new “culture” being developed here on St. John, but it is time we took some significant steps towards making homeownership more feasible. The most significant step we could take and, the only real remedy at this point, is for the Virgin Islands National Park to transfer some land back to the people of this Territory.

I love the park, it has been a tremendous blessing in terms of keeping our island serene and beautiful. I cannot imagine St. John without the park and the significant land it protects. It has been a tremendous tourist attraction and has created many jobs and opportunities for Virgin Islanders. St. John is the gem of the Caribbean, largely because of the National Park.

But there is always a flipside. All those people coming from outside that fell in love with the beauty of the park have driven up real estate prices. All the land held by the park has made little available for growth. All those tourists have altered our way and quality of life.

When Rockefeller created what is now known as the Virgin Islands National Park he said that it was never to create a hardship for the people of St. John. Well today it has created a hardship in terms of lack of land for a school, for a new basketball court, for a fire station, for a senior center, for housing and for homeownership for local families.

The National Park owns 2/3s of St. John or approximately 9,000 acres. If even just two hundred of these acres were returned to the people of St. John, we could greatly relieve this hardship for decades to come.

I know that some may find this idea controversial, but what is the alternative? I propose that this Committee undertake a feasibility study in this regard. The park is bringing in hundreds of thousands of visitors, yet there is not adequate land available to host the services and employees needed to serve these guests. A detailed plan would have to be crafted whereby established families would have first opportunity to purchase this land and be required to hold on to it for a specified number of years. It wouldn't be easy, but it can be done.

When the National Park was created, Virgin Islanders did not have a strong voice in national affairs and there was certainly a different standard in terms of racial relations and politics back in 1956. Things have changed in the world, things have changed on St. John and it is time that we demand that changes are made to better accommodate our people.

Just a couple of hundred acres out of over 9,000 could make all the difference in the world to young St. Johnians and those older St. Johnians who would like to return home, but cannot. I am confident we could do this without jeopardizing the beauty or ecology of the Virgin Islands National Park.

If we do not take steps to make land available for infrastructural improvements and homeownership now and work towards building and stabilizing our shrinking middle class, I truly fear for the future of St. John. No one is immune from the social and economic crisis being created here.

We must make our voices heard in Washington. If we all unite I am confident we can find creative ways to resolve the lack of developable land, without further disenfranchising St. Johnians.

I truly hope that you will take my words under consideration. I know that untold numbers share my sentiments and I hope we can move forward in giving back a small portion of land to St. Johnians.

I ask that Committee members support any efforts to assist in the construction of a new school on St. John and I stand ready to offer any local legislation that many be necessary to facilitate this process.

Thank you.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Senator. And the applause were restrained at least two points in your testimony and I know what you said definitely reflects the sentiment of many in the audience.

I will now recognize Mr. Grijalva for such questions as he may have.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Madam Chair. If I may, Madam Senator, a couple of questions just for my background. The trip that students must take to St. Thomas for high school, how long is that?

Ms. WESSELHOFT. Well, if you take into consideration, sir, you have some students that live on the eastern end of the island, they must get up probably about 4:30 in the morning to catch the school bus, take the 6:00 o'clock ferry to Red Hood. The ferry ride is about 20 minutes. Most of them attend school on the eastern end of St. Thomas. So, it could take anywhere just in travel an hour, two hours just to get across the ocean one-way. And then travel back late in the evening to get back. You have homework. You have other things to do at home.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. And you mentioned in your testimony tuition to private school. How high is that tuition?

Ms. WESSELHOFT. We have a private school on St. John, and the tuition, if you don't get a scholarship, could range anywhere from \$350 and even higher, \$550, and even higher.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Per month.

Ms. WESSELHOFT. Per month.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I would assume that price takes a lot of people out of that opportunity.

Ms. WESSELHOFT. Definitely.

Mr. GRIJALVA. If a suitable parcel was to be leased, direct transfer, whatever, as that process moves along, do you know what the estimated cost, Senator, is for the construction of those facilities and the funding available if it is available?

Ms. SMITH. Probably over \$3 million to construct a school.

Ms. WESSELHOFT. It's probably more than \$3 million and up. Because I don't know if you realize but St. John, the cost of living is very high. To build on St. John is very, very costly. So it could range anywhere, I believe, double \$3 million and up. Anywhere from \$10 million and up it could cost.

Mrs. FORDE. Those are conservative estimates considering that if we were to build a facility on St. John, we wouldn't want a half done facility. We want to make sure that it had an auditorium that could take care of public use, as well as school use. You would want a gymnasium facility so that the children have all sports advantages that other schools have been afforded in other islands in the territory.

Mr. GRIJALVA. You would want a comprehensive high school.

Mrs. FORDE. Yes. And not just a high school. Recognize that we're talking a K-12 education.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. And if I may, Superintendent, you mentioned in your testimony, and I appreciate that comment, keeping the public education students in mind as we go through this

process, and you mentioned a partnership with entities that sub. Elaborate how you see that partnership, and Administrator Smith as well.

Mrs. FORDE. I think it's important for us to understand that education cannot exist on its own. We know that for education to be successful, we have to partner with the Legislature. We have to partner with private entities, businesses. There are corporations. There are community groups. If we are to be successful, we have to pull all entities in. And we're willing to do that. We don't intend to be an insular education. We intend to make use of all partners who are willing to provide service, goods, expertise, so that we can build quality education in the Virgin Islands again.

Ms. SMITH. I concur with Ms. Forde.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Madam Chair, I don't have any further questions. Thank you.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Grijalva. I would like to get a couple of things on the record. Administrator Smith, thank you for your support of the bill and the intention on the lease. Would you know if the administration supports the position, and Senator Wesselhoft, have you had that discussion with them that a reference to a lease, they would prefer a conveyance or an outright conveyance of land?

Ms. SMITH. I really don't have that knowledge at this moment.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. OK. And this is not the end of the discussion. So we can follow-up with you and the administration on that issue.

Ms. Forde, in your testimony you talked about the number of students attending school on St. John, and in other testimony the estimates have been 700 students traveling to 1,000 students traveling from St. John to attend school in St. Thomas. Do you have a number on the number of students that leave St. John every day?

Mrs. FORDE. No, but recognize that these are the students that attend school in St. John. We know that to attend Eudora Kean High School between eleventh and twelfth grade we've got conservatively 60 to 70 students traveling daily. We also have students from the St. John community that attend private schools in St. Thomas, and that number I don't have available.

But we do know that it's enough that if you attend school in the St. John district, if you live in the St. John district, you should be able to attend school in the St. John district comfortably. And if you make the choice to attend school in St. Thomas, that's a choice. It shouldn't be that it has to be a travel for these children every day.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I totally agree with you on that, the need for a school, period. But just for the record, I wanted to know if we had an accurate number of the students that travel. But certainly it does present a hardship as described by the Senator, getting up that early in the morning and having to travel across the island and then the ferry and so forth and so on. It's difficult enough just as if they were attending school here.

The other question I would have for you, Ms. Forde, is the 10 acres suitable, in your estimation and the estimation of the department, do you have any idea what the acreage is of the larger school that we have in the St. Thomas/St. John district?

Mrs. FORDE. No, I don't have that information. Ten acres would be conservative in my guess. If we're going to put a full service facility, 10 acres is conservative. If you're going to put something here, you're going to want a state-of-the-art gymnasium; you're going to want a track and field that the children can run on, that they can practice on and prepare for competitive meets stateside; you're going to want classrooms where we can put comfortably 30 children in a classroom and they are not hitting elbows against each other; that we've got computer drops in the classrooms for these children; that there are cafeterias where the children can eat and we don't have to jam them into lunch hours.

What we want is a vision for education. Ten acres can do it. We can make do with that, but certainly I think we would want to double that number if we wanted to put a full fledged facility in St. John.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. For example, Eudora Kean, do you have any idea what the acreage is?

Mrs. FORDE. No, I have no idea. But we also recognize that with Eudora Kean, we're sharing land with Housing, Parks, and Rec. So—

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Right, I understand that.

And Senator Wesselhoft, are there any current measures in the 27th Legislature addressing any school related issues on St. John?

Ms. WESSELHOFT. Not that I know of, Delegate Christensen. And if I may, just for the record, just to clarify what you said, I'm not against the land lease.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I understand.

Ms. WESSELHOFT. I'm hoping that one day that the National Park will recognize our needs and start giving us something as opposed to us having to enter into a lease. And even if we do a lease, it will be lease to own eventually. So, I'm in full support of it.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I understand. But for the record, because this is the official record of the Congress, we just want to make sure that we're clear on all of the opinions that are being voiced here. And I'm clear that you support the lease, but that you also would support an outright conveyance.

I don't have any other questions. Do you have any other questions, Mr. Grijalva? Is there anything else that was left unasked that you would like to add before we dismiss you?

Ms. SMITH. Madam Chair, I would like to see this come to fruition. We've been speaking about the school situation for the last 30 years.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Yes.

Ms. SMITH. So, we would really like to see it come to fruition.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I think that's the bottom line and as quickly as possible.

So, thank you for your testimony, and I would now like to call up the last panel which is a relatively large panel of witnesses.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. OK, the next panel consists of Ms. Lorelei Monsanto—as they are coming up, if there is room on the bench in which you're sitting, if you would just move over a little it would allow our individuals who are still standing to have a place to sit.

So, Ms. Monsanto, Mr. Ronnie Jones of Unity Day Group, Ms. Kristen Cox of the One Campus Group, Mr. Gaylord Sprauve, Mr.

Joe Kessler, President of Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park, and former Senator-at-Large, Craig Barshinger.

OK, thank you. We will begin this panel by recognizing Ms. Monsanto for five minutes. Ms. Monsanto of the One Campus Group.

STATEMENT OF LORELEI C. MONSANTO, ONE CAMPUS GROUP

Ms. MONSANTO. Good evening, distinguished guests, Members of Congress and our Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen and other guests and the audience. I am Lorelei Monsanto, a St. John resident and member of One Campus Group. I would like to thank you in advance for the opportunity to give my presentation to the Committee on Natural Resources on H.R. 53, also known as the Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act.

St. John has no doubt been changed by the existence of the National Park Service. I do believe the various agencies that support the park and its growth will support this initiative to acquire lands to demonstrate a team effort to educate the local populous of students that reside on St. John.

I would like to give a brief history. Number one, the overall population of students on St. John in both the private and public sector is approximately 700 students and growing with a rash of development on the island.

Two, the current educational complexes on the island of St. John are crumbling, dark, located in congested areas and have outgrown their overall usefulness.

Three, due to lack of land space on St. John and overall planning for the future, we are at a point where our partner, Jackson Hole Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, Friends of the National Park, students, parents and all concerned groups on the island of St. John, have recognized that we must become team players in this venture.

Four, the private sector has established a school on St. John that clearly states a need for K-12 on the island. Their location is quite hilly and provides some difficulties in expansion and diversification.

However, we're talking about the public school sector here. My group, the One Campus Group, have done several studies and investigations. One, we found that Laurance Rockefeller donated lands with a special stipulation that lands be held to enhance the local population on the island of St. John. Our Delegate to Congress was advised by a Mr. Clayton Frye, Jr. On November 10, 2006 that Jackson Hole Preserve retains no property that might be suitable for such a purpose, and finds that they didn't own any land on the island. Investigation reveals that they liquidated a good portion of that property and disregarded Mr. Rockefeller's wishes.

Two, discussion of swapping local Virgin Islands' land and/or cays with the National Park Service in 2006 raised a high public outcry against such an action.

Three, Ms. Ethel Bishop died March 2006. She conveyed a deed to the United States National Park in 1968. That parcel is known as No. 6 Estate Catherineberg, and it consists of 55 acres of land, more or less, and it is not subject to any reversionary clause. The National Park Service noted that this is just one of several land

parcels managed by the National Park Service that has this condition. However, based on the location, this parcel seems to be the best location for the project that we are now considering, and we did send to you a copy of her death certificate and a deed of conveyance.

Four, the opportunity will provide the most educational venture the National Park System, Virgin Islands and Congress has ever seen. St. John's needs are truly unique, and this joint venture will enable the National Park Service and the Department of Education to construct a school complex that adds a Marine Biology, Botany, National Park Service Mid-island Visitor's Center and Educational Complex, all under one environmental friendly environment.

It is my belief that this request for a lease will enhance the overall position on the National Park Service and the Virgin Islands. With the goal of incorporation of National Park Service programs and the educational programs, the possibilities are limitless. An investigation on leasing National Park lands now exist in the Park system.

Preservation of the Bishop home, educating the students with National Park Service programs, advising the visitors of how St. John and this co-adoption enhances the knowledge power of kids' learning both inside and outside the classroom will be mind-boggling.

The bill, H.R. 53, is an excellent solution to the educational goals. I do have a few suggestions, however, that might enhance the bill. I would request the Secretary of Interior request that a volunteer school board be set up to work with the National Park Service on this plan.

Also, I would like the school to be designed by a certified school design group with an environmentally friendly design so that we can co-exist with the National Park's mandate and our own. I would clearly like to request the entire 55 acres of the Bishop land.

And four, intent with the formation of the National Park Service, to be designated for such a purpose.

In conclusion, I know that this bill will become a reality. We will forge ahead to make this a reality. We will lobby, we will call you, we will harass you, we will do whatever it takes to make this happen. Thank you again for hearing this testimony. Respectfully yours, Lorelei Monsanto.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Monsanto follows:]

Statement of Lorelei Monsanto, One Campus

Good Evening distinguished Members of Congress and our Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen and other distinguished guests and audience.

I am Lorelei Monsanto, a St. John resident and member of the One Campus group. I Would like to thank you in advance for the opportunity to give my presentation to the Committee on Natural Resources on H.R. 53, also known as the "Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act".

St. John has no doubt been changed by the existence of the National Park Service. I do believe the various agencies that support the park and its growth will support this Initiative to acquire lands to demonstrate a team effort to educate the local populous of students that reside on St. John.

Brief History:

1. The overall population of students on St. John in both the private and public sector is proximately seven hundred students and growing with the rash of development on the island.

2. The current educational complexes on the island of St. John are crumbling, dark, located in congested areas and have out grown their overall usefulness. (see Photos)
3. Due to lack of land space on St. John and overall planning for the future we are at a point where our partners, Jackson Hole Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Friends of the National Park, Students, Parents and all concerned groups on the island of St. John have recognized that we must become team players in this venture.
4. Private sector has established a school on St. John that clearly states for a need for a K-12 on the island. Their location is quite hilly and provides some difficulties in expansion and diverication.

Investigation:

1. Laurance Rockefeller donated lands with a special stipulation that lands be held to enhance the local population on the island of St. John. Our Delegate to Congress was advised be a Mr. Clayton Frye Jr. on November 10, 2006 that Jackson Hole Preserve retains no properties that might be suitable for such a purpose, and find that we do not at this time own any land on the island. Investigation reveals lands were liquidated with an apparent disregard for Mr. Rockefeller's wishes. (See attachment)
2. Discussion of swapping local Virgin Island land and or cays with the National Park Service in 2006 raised a HUGE PUBLIC OUTCRY against such an action.
3. Mrs. Ethel May Bishop died March 2006. She conveyed a deed to the United States National Park in 1968. That parcel, known at Number 6 Estate Catherineberg, consists of fifty-five (55) acres of land more or less and is not subject to any reversionary clause. The NPS noted that this is just one of several land parcels managed be the National Park Service that has this condition. However based on location this parcel seems to be the best location for the project we are now considering. (Death certificate and deed of conveyance attachment)
4. This opportunity will provide to me the most educational venture in the NPS and Virgin Islands and Congress. St. John needs are truly unique and this joint venture will enable the National Park Service and the department of Education to construct a school complex that adds marine biology, botany, National Park Service Mid-island Visitor's Center and educational complex all under one environmental friendly environment.

Overview:

It is my belief that this request for a lease will enhance the overall position on the National Park Service and The Virgin Islands. With the goal of incorporation NPS programs with the Educational programs the possibilities are limitless. And investigations on leasing NPS land now exist in the Park system.

Preservation of the Bishop home, educating the student with NPS programs, advising the visitors to St. John how this co-adoption enhances the knowledge power of kids learning both inside and outside of the classroom

The bill, H.R. 53, is an excellent solution to the educational goals. I have a few suggestions that might enhance the bill: 1. that the Secretary Interior request that a volunteer school board be set up to work along with the NPS on this plan. 2. Design of the school is done by a certified school design group with environmental friendly design. 3. Clear request of 55 acres of the land. 4. It was the intent with the formation of the NPS that an area be designated for such a purpose.

In conclusion, I know that this bill will become a reality. We are ready to forge ahead to make this a reality.

Thanking you again for having this hearing respectfully yours Lorelei Monsanto

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Ms. Monsanto. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Jones for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF RONNIE JONES, UNITY DAY GROUP

Mr. JONES. Good evening. My name is Ronnie Jones. I am honored to be here today. Thank you, Congresswoman Donna Christensen, and all the Committee members and everyone else that's here with us today listening. Again, I am honored to be a witness in regard to H.R. 53.

I was born on the island of St. John and I've seen many changes take place. Most of these changes have been positive, mainly because they relate to population growth.

I come from a very large family. My grandfather was Halvor Richards, born on April 15, 1896, on the island of St. John. He had 18 children. My grandfather had brothers and sisters, but the most prominent was Julius E. Sprauve.

Halvor was a foreman with the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1938 on St. John. The CCC Program or Civilian Conservation Corps Program, employed many St. Johnians and helped to maintain the structure of the island, especially our roads. He eventually purchased Estate Susannaberg in 1945 and ended his time on this earth on St. John in 1970 as a successful farmer.

Julius C. Sprauve was an advocate for the people of St. John. He was a Councilman and eventually the first Senator of St. John. Julius helped St. Johnians get their first bank, better roads and much needed employment opportunities in the 1930's. Julius left the legacy of community service, but his most, far-reaching accomplishment was helping Laurance Rockefeller convince the Department of Interior that the National Park was a good thing for everyone involved.

This collaboration happened before I was born, and the results are evident today as over 5,000 acres is still preserved for our future. The 3,000 acres that was left for the families and friends of Julius, and the friendly inhabitants encountered by Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Stit (phon.) has greatly diminished in the past 71 years.

Families have continued to grow and many visitors have decided to stay. I attended Julius C. Sprauve School 43 years ago, and today our island has outgrown it.

The acquisition of the National Park in 1936 has reduced the exploitation of St. John. The families connected to that era are pleased, but the children of this era have little options in regard to land space. We need a secured and safe area for which conducive learning could be produced and provide opportunities for vocational and athletic programs.

Julius C. Sprauve convinced the Department of Interior and the local people to present their lands for preservation in 1936. We, today in 2007, have our Delegate to Congress, Donna Christensen, and her constituents trying to convince the Department of Interior that to allow the Virgin Islands to lease land for a school would be in the best interest of the entire island and its inhabitants.

In 1936, the people and the Department of Interior even after some opposition, did what was right for the future good of the Virgin Islands and the people that come here.

We are asking the Department of Interior to consider the needs of our children, and just as in 1936, there will be opposition, but be aware that the people of St. John will be following this bill and with deep conviction of the right and wrong, Bill H.R. 53 works for our children. Thank you for your consideration.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jones follows:]

Statement of Ronnie Jones, Unity Day Group

I am honored to be a witness in regard to bill H.R.53. I was born on the Island of St. John and I have seen many changes take place. Most of these changes have been positive, mainly because they relate to population growth. I come from a very large family. My grandfather was Halvor Neptune Richards, born on April 15, 1896 and he had 18 children.

My grandfather had brothers and sisters but the most prominent was Julius E. Sprauve. Halvor was a foreman with the Civilian Conservation Corps. in 1938 on St. John. The C.C.C. program employed many St. Johnians and helped to maintain the structure of the Island especially our roads. He eventually purchased, Estate of Susannaberg in 1945 and ended his time on earth in 1978 as a successful farmer.

Julius E. Sprauve was an advocate for the people of St. John. He was a Councilman and eventually the first Senator of St. John. Julius help St. Johnian's get their first bank, better roads and much needed employment opportunities in the 1930's. Julius E. Sprauve left a legacy of Community Service but his most far reaching accomplishment was helping Laurence Rockefeller and Frank Stick convince the Department of Interior that a National Park was a good thing for everyone evolved.

This collaboration happened four years before I was born in 1936, and the results are evident today as over 5000 acres is still preserved for our future. The 3000 acres that was left for the family and friends of Julius, and the friendly inhabitants in countered by Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Stick, has greatly diminished in the past 71 years. (1936-2007 Families have continued to grow and many visitors have decided to stay. I attended Julius E. Sprauve School 48 years ago and today our island has out grown it.

The acquisition of the National Park in 1936 has reduced the exploitation of St. John. The families connected to that era are pleased, but the children of this era have little options in regards to land space. We need to secure a safe area of which would be conducive to learning and provide opportunities for vocational and athletic programs.

Julius E. Sprauve convinced the Department of Interior and the local people to present their land for preservation in 1936, we today in 2007, have our Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen and her constituents trying to convince the department of Interior, that to allow Virgin Islanders to lease land for a school would be in the best interest for the entire island and its inhabitants. In 1936 the people and the Department of Interior (even after some opposition), did what was right for the future good of the Virgin Islands and the people that come here.

We are asking the Department of Interior to consider the needs of our children and just as in 1936 there will be opposition, but be aware that the people of St. John will be following this bill with deep conviction of right and wrong. Bill H.R.53 works for our children.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Jones. And the Chair now recognizes Ms. Cox for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF KRISTEN COX, ONE CAMPUS GROUP

Ms. COX. Good evening to the House of Representatives' Committee on Natural Resources, Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen, and members of the panel. I am Kristen Cox, Co-Chairperson of the One Campus Group on St. John.

The 14 years that I have been residing on St. John, I have watched the schools become deplorable. I have heard, read and been told about our local government being involved in ongoing negotiations to work on finding, locating, and obtaining land to build a new public school for the community of St. John.

The conditions that our children are being taught and the intrusive environment of that of our teaching staff, have surrendered to noise pollution, and the dilapidating, unsafe conditions of the building is simply just unjust. We have made do with the situation because we have not had any choice in the matter, and it's time that we make a safe, comfortable environment for our children, staff and the community in our schools.

I am asking the panel to bring the bill, H.R. 53, forth in the House of Representatives on behalf of the Virgin Islands with the Virgin Islands National Park's signing a lease with the Virgin Islands Government to obtain and be part of a team network, building a new state-of-the-art K-12 school, with a vocational center that will be utilized by the children of St. John, community organizations, and offer opportunities for any persons wanting to further education is very important.

We want to assist and provide, through this complex, and incorporate the National Park Service, in educating and mentoring the children of St. John, the community and tourists from abroad.

We live in the 21st Century and our children need to be technologically competitive in this growing world we live in. Unless all of our children are all born naturally A-plus students and excel in every subject while attending grades K-12, the rate we are going, we are falling behind in the competitive world and we do not want to revert to functional illiteracy in the Virgin Islands. Our children are being left behind and are continuing to regress and the community is now becoming filled with criminals and are not being educated in a competitive level as the Iowa test results demonstrate each year, as does our drop-out rate at 40 percent this year.

The island of St. John resident children are about 1,000 students plus or minus, divided between public, private schools and home school students from grades K-12. Our drop-out rate is increasing yearly, as our crime rate and our homicide rate between the ages of 16 and 25, obtained through the Daily News.

My vision for St. John's future school is three separate buildings, elementary, middle and high school, computers in each classroom, one central library, an athletic park with ball field, track and field, soccer, football, swimming pool, basketball court, tennis court, gymnasium with gymnastics, exercise gym equipment, a vocational learning center that combines existing facilities elsewhere with the United States, and the skills of teachers, researchers, the National Park Service, to educate, share information on marine biology, ecology, farming, science, communications, business management, auto mechanic, EMT, FEMA, Red Cross, Public Works. There is a long list where we can go with this.

I now want to work together and be as successful as a team and Leave No Child Behind, all the sentiments that we've expressed, the deed, conveyance, death certificates, what the National Park has given us as reasons why this land in Catherineberg will work for a school, we are asking for 55 acres. We need 55 acres to be competitive in today's world for a state-of-the-art complex.

I hope that you will push this bill through the House of Representatives so this lease can be procured, and remember, we Leave No Children Left Behind.

I thank all of you for hearing our testimony this evening.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cox follows:]

Statement of Kristen Cox, Co-Chair, One Campus Group

Good Evening:

To The U.S. House of Representatives on the Committee on Natural Resources, Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen, and Members of the panel.

I am, Kristen Cox, Co-Chair person of the One Campus Group on St John, I am a mother, an aunt, a cousin, a friend, and I am someone who cares about our chil-

dren and the future of our community and opportunity for the local residents of St John.

I am here before you today to testify why St John needs a new K through 12 School on St John.

The Fourteen years that I have been residing on St John I have watched the schools become deplorable. I have also heard, read and have been told that our local Government has been involved in ongoing negotiations to work on finding a location and obtaining land to build a new public school for the community of St John.

The conditions our children are being taught and the intrusive environment that our teaching staff has surrendered to noise pollution and dilapidating unsafe conditions of our buildings is simply unjust. We have made due with what we have because we have not had a choice in the matter. It is time the Virgin Islands Department of Education is held accountable for the lack of follow through and responsibility to our local Government to make sure our schools are safe and comfortable for our children, staff and the community.

I am asking for your panel to bring this bill forth in the House of Representatives. The Virgin Islands National Park signing a lease with the Virgin Islands Government to obtain and be part of a Team network, building a new state of the art K through 12 school with a vocational center that will be utilized by the children of St John, Community organizations and offer opportunities for any persons wanting to further their education.

We want to assist and/or provide through this complex and incorporate the National Park Service in Educating and mentoring the St John children, our community and tourists from abroad.

We live in the 21st Century and our children need to be technologically competitive in this growing world we live in. Unless ALL of our children are born naturally A+ students that excel in every subject, while attending grades K through 12, the rate we are going the U.S. Virgin Islands will revert to adult functional illiteracy. Our children are being left behind and are continuing to regress and the community is now becoming filled with delinquents and criminals because they are not being educated at a competitive level as the Iowa test results demonstrate each year as does our drop out rate.

The island of St. John resident children are about 1,000 students +/- divided up between public and private schools in grades K through 12. Our drop out rate is increasing yearly as is our crime rate and our homicide rate of ages 16 through 25. The poverty and low income level residents and our population is growing. We need change and the foundation for any change begins with education.

We have an opportunity to change history and make the difference we have been waiting for. The One Campus Group wants to work together to accomplish a common goal of well educated students for a positive future, join hands with those who have, will and want to make a difference in the future of; the National Park Service of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Friends of the National Park of the Virgin Islands, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Jackson Hole Preserve, the Government of the Virgin Islands, the Department of Education of the Virgin Islands and incorporate the following in a State of the Art Education Complex far superior to any other in the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean abroad.

My Vision of what St John's future School needs are as follows:

1. 3 Separate buildings on One Campus for Elementary, Middle and High school.
*Computers in each class room (1 for each student) OR each building be equipped with a Computer Lab.
2. One central Library
3. Athletic Park with Ball field (base ball, Track & Field, Soccer, Football, etc), Swimming pool, Basket ball court, Tennis court, Gymnastics, Gym with exercise equipment, etc.
4. A Vocational Learning Center that combines existing facilities elsewhere in the United States with the skills of teachers, researchers and the National Park Service to educate and share information on: marine biology, ecology, farming, science, communications, business management, wood working, auto mechanics and restoration, port authority, coast guard, EMT, FEMA, Red Cross, public works, etc.

I know we can work together and will be successful as a team and No Child will be Left Behind. Refer to: Exhibit A, Exhibit B, Exhibit C, Exhibit D, Exhibit E and Exhibit F why we can start building our new future together today.

I hope that you will push this bill through the House of Representatives so this Lease can be procured and remember we leave No Child Behind.

Thank you for your time.

[NOTE: The exhibits submitted for the record have been retained in the Committee's official files.]

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Ms. Cox, and I will now recognize Mr. Kessler for five minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JOE KESSLER, PRESIDENT,
FRIENDS OF VI NATIONAL PARK**

Mr. KESSLER. Thank you. The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park welcome the esteemed members of the Subcommittee to St. John. You honor our island and our park by your presence. We are pleased that you are holding these field hearings here so that you have the opportunity to hear from the entire community on the proposed legislation. We hope these hearings and ensuing discussions will move resolution of this important issue forward.

The Friends is a non-profit membership based organization that is dedicated to the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park and promotes the responsible enjoyment of this national treasure.

Concerning the proposed Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act, H.R. 53, the Friends, along with nearly everyone else as you've heard today, recognize the absolute need to relocate the current schools from their cramped, inappropriate and dangerous locations, and to expand the facilities to include 10-12 so that the island's children do not have to leave St. John to attend public high school.

The need for new educational facilities is not in question. It is real, it is urgent, and it must be made a high priority for the territorial government and this community. However, where to locate the new facility, what it should realistically include, how to build it, how to finance it, how to maintain it, and how to staff it are the real questions. These hearings address the key issue of the first question: How the required land for the new facility is to be acquired. We trust that the other issues will be dealt with in due course.

Prior to the introduction of H.R. 53, three alternatives to acquire land for a new facility were being considered: The V.I. Government would either allocate land that it already owned; purchase sufficient land; or swap land with the National Park Services.

However, as the territorial government does not own sufficient land on St. John and large parcels are generally difficult to find and prohibitively expensive if they were to be located, discussion centered on a land swap between the territorial government and the National Park Service.

The Friends has strongly supported the concept of the swap and believe that we have played a key role in urging the National Park Service to be open and flexible in considering this possibility. This contributed to the NPS in February 2003, providing the V.I. Government with a list of properties which is comprised of land on St. John, small uninhabited offshore islands and even submerged lands that in some combination can be considered in exchange for land for a school within Virgin Islands National Park. The list was not exclusive and was meant to initiate concrete discussions on the issue. The proposal has languished since then.

While we support swapping land, we have fundamental concerns and misgivings about providing V.I. National Park land to some sort of long-term lease arrangement as proposed by this legislation.

Let's be frank. Depending on the terms and conditions of the lease, the arrangement is the de facto sale or gift of the property to the V.I. Government. It will result in the net loss of National Park property and resources. Clearly, this land will never revert to being park land.

The National Park Service is in the forever business. It is legally mandated to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and value of the National Park System. In this case, Virgin Islands National Park is for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. Without question, this legislation would diminish, and therefore impair the natural and cultural resources of the Virgin Islands National Park.

Furthermore, and perhaps more troubling, it will set a precedent that would in turn threaten national parks throughout the country. We wouldn't dream of selling off or giving away parts of Yosemite or Grand Canyon National Parks, nor should we sell or give away a part of Virgin Islands National Park, especially since it's a viable and preferable alternative.

An exchange or swap of land remains, in our view, the most viable alternative. And in addition, an exchange could happen in a relatively short time if there is the institutional and political will to make it a reality.

We appreciate and understand the concerns of some members of the community toward what is perceived as giving up additional lands to the National Park Service. Land is always an emotional issue, and passion about land does not run any deeper than it does here in the Virgin Islands. However, the underlying principle of a land exchange, or a swap, is that there is a give and there is a get. When two pieces or parcels of equally valued land are exchanged, both parties give up something and both parties get an equal share back in return.

While the National Park Service is willing to exchange land for the benefit of St. John's children, we must be clear, it is not a win-win situation. Aside from perhaps garnering some community goodwill and the satisfaction accrued from helping solve a community problem, the NPS has nothing whatsoever to gain from a land swap. The only beneficiaries of the land exchange that will provide for a new school are the children of St. John.

In conclusion, we reiterate our position that H.R. 53 is not in the best interest of the people of St. John, the American public in general, nor the National Park Service. H.R. 53 will diminish, and therefore impair the natural and cultural resources of this beautiful National Park. And because of the precedent it sets, H.R. 53 threatens all national parks and Americans enjoyment of these natural, cultural and historic treasures.

Further, we ask this subcommittee, and particularly it's Chairwoman, to use your influence to encourage the V.I. Territorial Government and the National Park Service, to enter into serious deliberations to exchange land for a school. The children of St. John deserve an immediate and concerted effort to resolve this impasse.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to offer this testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kessler follows:]

**Statement of Joe Kessler, President,
Friends of Virgin Islands National Park**

The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park (Friends) welcomes these field hearings on the proposed Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act (H.R. 53) and we are pleased that you are here to hear from this community on the proposed legislation. We hope that these hearings and the ensuing discussions will help move resolution of this important issue forward.

As President of the Friends I testify before you representing the 3,612 members of this organization. About 20% of our members are from the Virgin Islands and we are also proud to have members hailing from all 50 states, as well as twelve foreign countries. Members of the Friends are bound together by our love for Virgin Islands National Park, our commitment to the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources of the Park, and our appreciation of what the Park means for St. John and all of the Virgin Islands.

Our appreciation is based on the conviction that because of VI National Park St. John is a world class tourist destination, a unique and safe place to live, and it enjoys considerable prosperity. St. John is a prosperous little island. Prosperous in the context of the Virgin Islands and prosperous in the context of the Caribbean:

- St. John has one of the highest per capita incomes in the Caribbean;
- St. John has the highest rate of private home ownership in the Caribbean; and,
- Just about anyone on St. John who wants a job can find one—particularly in the hospitality industry, with retail businesses, or in the building trades. Just witness the hundreds of people who arrive every morning from St. Thomas to work here.

We really have the Park to thank for this. In addition to the people of St. John—it is the Park that makes this island so special! Furthermore, the Park is what drives the prosperity of this island; a 2004 study demonstrated that VI National Park generated more than \$127 million in annual sales and 2,500 jobs in the Virgin Islands.

Concerning the proposed Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act (H.R. 53):

The Friends, along with nearly everyone on St. John, recognizes the absolute need to relocate the current schools from their current cramped, inappropriate and dangerous locations; and expand the facilities to include grades 10-12 so that the island's children do not have to leave St. John to attend public high school.

The need for new educational facilities is not in question—it is real, it is urgent, and must be made a high priority for the territorial government and this community. However, where to locate the new facility, what it should realistically include, how to build it, how to maintain it, and how to staff it are the real questions. These hearings address the key issue of the first question: how the required land for a new facility is to be acquired. We trust that the other issues will be dealt with in due course.

Prior to the introduction of H.R. 53, three alternatives to acquire land for a new educational facility were being considered:

- The VI Territorial Government would allocate land that it already owned;
- The VI Territorial Government would purchase sufficient land; and/or,
- The VI Territorial Government would swap land with the National Park Service.

However, as the territorial government does not own sufficient land on St. John and large parcels are generally difficult to find and prohibitively expensive if they were to be located, discussion centered on a land swap between the territorial government and the National Park Service.

The Friends has strongly supported the concept of the swap and we have played a key role in urging the National Park Service to be open and flexible in considering this possibility. This contributed to the NPS, in February 2003, providing the VI Government a list of properties (comprised of land on St. John, small uninhabited offshore islands and submerged lands) that in some combination could be considered in an exchange for land for a school within VI National Park. This list was not exclusive and was meant to initiate concrete discussions on the issue. This proposal has languished since then.

While we support swapping land we have fundamental concerns and misgivings about providing VI National Park land through some sort of long-term lease arrangement as proposed by this legislation.

Let's be frank; depending on the terms and conditions of a long-term lease, the arrangement is the de facto sale or gift of this property to the VI government and will result in the net loss of National Park property and resources. Clearly, this land will never revert to being parkland.

The National Park Service is in the “forever business”. It is legally mandated to: **“preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system [in this case, Virgin Islands National Park] for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations”**. Without question, this legislation would diminish, and therefore impair, the natural and cultural resources of VI National Park.

Furthermore, it will set a precedent that would in turn threaten national parks throughout the country. We wouldn’t dream of selling off or giving away parts of Yosemite or Grand Canyon national parks, nor should we sell or give away a part of VI National Park. This should not be given serious consideration, since there is a viable and preferable alternative.

An exchange, or swap, of land remains the most viable option as it is allowable under existing NPS policy and does not require any new authorizing legislation, and there are properties that the NPS would accept in such an exchange. In addition, an exchange could happen in a relatively short time, if there is the institutional and political will to make it a reality.

We appreciate and understand the concerns of some members of the community towards what is perceived as giving up additional lands to the NPS. Land is always an emotional issue and passion about land does not run any deeper than here in the Virgin Islands. However, the underlying principle of a land exchange, or swap, is that there is a “give” and a “get”—two pieces (or combination of pieces) of equally valued land are exchanged. Both parties give up something and both get an equal share back in return.

However, we must be clear: this is not a “win-win” situation. Aside from perhaps garnering some community goodwill and the satisfaction accrued from helping solve a community problem, the NPS has nothing to gain from a land swap—yet they are willing to go ahead with it. The only beneficiaries of a land exchange that will provide for a new school are the children of St. John. I suggest that we all look at the bigger picture and envision this island’s children growing up, learning, and playing in a modern educational facility located in a peaceful environment conducive to learning.

In conclusion, we reiterate our position that H.R. 53 is not in the best interests of the people of St. John, the American public in general, nor the National Park Service. H.R. 53 will diminish, and therefore impair, the natural and cultural resources of this beautiful national park; and, because of the precedent it sets, H.R. 53 threatens all national parks and Americans’ enjoyment of these natural, cultural and historic treasures.

Further we ask this subcommittee, and particularly it’s Chairwoman, to use your influence to encourage the VI Territorial Government and the National Park Service to enter into serious deliberations to exchange land for a school. The children of St. John deserve immediate and concerted efforts to resolve this impasse.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to offer this testimony.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Kessler. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Sprauve for his testimony.

STATEMENT OF GAYLORD SPRAUVE

Mr. SPRAUVE. First of all, good evening. I am Gaylord A. Sprauve. I’m a resident of the U.S. Virgin Islands with long established family relationships on the island of St. John.

As a youngster and later as a teenager, I was privileged to be in the company of my siblings and other relatives as we roamed across the landscape hunting and collecting bait for fishing around the islands and cays that surround the main island of St. John. We enjoyed the land and we enjoyed the sea that was all around us. We did this before there was ever a National Park in our midst and we enjoyed our experiences without restrictions other than those that were self-imposed.

Though not schooled in the science or art of conservation or preservation, we employed our own sense of what amounted to appropriate behavior in the treatment and care of our ecology. We did so keeping in mind that others will follow in our footsteps who would want to enjoy the same precious experiences that were ours.

Those happy, joyful, pleasant memories remain in my consciousness today.

It was in the mid-1950's when we realized a National Park would come to St. John. With limited or no experience with such an endeavor, many of us witnessed, while standing silently on the sideline, as our cultural upbringing dictated, while senior heads of our families sold off their lands for the purpose of what would become the Virgin Islands National Park. Little did senior heads of our families, and even those of us coming of age realize that we knew very little about what was entailed in having a National Park on St. John and what it meant for the future of the homeland. As the park developed, St. John was rediscovered, and over time was transformed forever into what it is today, with the scarcity of affordable land for the resident population, to build individual homes or adequate land reserved by the government for important public programs and services. H.R. 53, as proposed by Delegate Christensen, is an acknowledgement of the contention that our leaders failed to plan adequately for the future needs of our school-aged population and the larger St. John community. H.R. 53 attempts to address the most vexing problem of acquiring a site upon which to construct an educational, cultural and recreational complex that would satisfy not only the immediate need of moving the school or schools, but also the future needs of St. John as envisioned by the people of St. John, in consultation with their government leaders.

Conceptually, I support this major step by the Delegate. The land lease that H.R. 53 proposes is the third option of those that I suggested in an August 7, 2006 guest opinion in our local Daily News, following a public announcement that the then, Governor Charles Turnbull, was proposing a land swap with the Virgin Islands National Park that included several of St. John cays.

In my rebuttal to the Governor's proposed land swap, I called his announcement premature and suggested that we seek congressional assistance with our plight in the form of an outright grant of the acreage required to accomplish the desired public purposes of such a grant. Alternatively, I suggested a use permit for a number of years and possibly into perpetuity. The lease option, the subject of H.R. 53 was my third option. I hope that whichever option is approved by Congress will be one that is negotiated for no more than a nominal fee and, therefore, economically feasible for the local government.

Once again, I take this opportunity to commend Delegate Christensen for her leadership and vision in this matter. I hope that she is successful in having this legislation adopted. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sprauve follows:]

**Statement of Gaylord A. Sprauve,
Resident of the U.S. Virgin Islands**

I am Gaylord A Sprauve. I am a resident of the U.S. Virgin Islands with long established family relationships on the island of St. John. As a youngster and later as a teenager, I was privileged to be in the company of my siblings and other relatives as we roamed across the landscape hunting and collecting bait for fishing around the islands and cays that surround the main island of St. John. We enjoyed the land and we enjoyed the sea. We did this before there was ever a National Park in our midst and we enjoyed our experiences without restrictions other than those

that were self-imposed. Though not schooled in the science or art of conservation or preservation, we employed our own sense of what amounted to appropriate behavior in the treatment and care, of our ecology. We did so keeping in mind that others would follow in our footsteps who would want to enjoy the same precious experiences that were ours. Those happy, joyful, pleasant memories remain in my consciousness today!

In the mid-1950s, we realized that a National Park would come to St. John. With limited or no experience with the introduction of such an endeavor, many of us witnessed, while standing silently on the sideline as our cultural upbringing dictated, as senior heads of our families sold off their lands for the purpose of what would become the Virgin Islands National Park. Little did the senior heads of our families and even those of us coming of age realized what the creation of a National Park on St. John entailed and what it meant for the future of the homeland. St. John was soon rediscovered and over time was transformed forever into what it is today—with a scarcity of affordable land for the resident population to build individual homes or adequate land reserves by the government for important public programs and services.

H.R. 53 as proposed by Delegate Christensen is an acknowledgement of the contention that our leaders failed to plan adequately for the future needs of our school-aged population and the larger St. John community. H.R. 53 attempts to address the most vexing problem of acquiring a site upon which to construct an educational and cultural complex that would satisfy not only the immediate need of moving the school or schools, but also, the future needs of St. John as envisioned by the people of St. John, in consultation with their government leaders.

Conceptually, I support this major step by the Delegate. The land lease that H.R. 53 proposes is the third option of those that I suggested in an August 7, 2006 Guest Opinion in our local Daily News, following a public announcement that the then, Governor Charles Turnbull was proposing a land swap with the Virgin Islands National Park that included several of St. John cays.

In my rebuttal to the Governor's proposed land swap, I called his announcement premature and suggested that we seek congressional assistance with our plight in the form of an outright grant of the acreage required to accomplish the desired purposes of such a grant. Secondly, I suggested a use permit for a number of years and possibly on into perpetuity. The lease option, the subject of H.R. 53 was my third option. I hope that the option approved by Congress will be one for no more than a nominal fee and therefore, economically practical for the local government.

Once again, I take this opportunity to commend Delegate Christensen for her leadership and vision on this matter.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Sprauve for that very moving testimony.

Our last person to testify on this panel is former Senator Craig Barshinger. And we recognize you for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF CRAIG BARSHINGER, FORMER SENATOR

Mr. BARSHINGER. Thank you, Delegate Christensen. Welcome to the members of the Committee, all those who are here to support, and the many St. Johnians of our beloved and beautiful, diverse St. Thomas community.

Delegate, you asked a little while ago about legislation. Senator Hill has in place a bill that provides for the Virgin Islands Government to interface with this. Anticipating this, I introduced legislation in the 26th Legislature for drafting, and turned it over to Senator Hill when I left on January 8th. It's all there. We were hoping that the previous administration would work on it and it seems that it's now in this administration under your leadership that we're really going to go forward.

I would like to tell the Committee something about St. John. St. John and the Virgin Islands National Park is, indeed, a beautiful place. But when you think of St. John, you have to realize it's not the blue waters and green hills that make it valuable. It's the people who live here, and the history, the story that goes with it.

From back in the 1700's we have a rich history and a culture. There is nothing you can do as stewards of the National Park that is a greater investment than to partner with us in educating our youths.

By our very success as the National Park, our community is beleaguered. You have heard that you cannot really buy land on St. John. Let me put that into perspective. A young man or woman growing up on St. John today cannot reasonably hope to purchase a home. It's about \$1 million for the home. We are in trouble and we need some help from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and ultimately the Congress.

So, although I'm a businessman at heart and believe in a quid pro quo, if we are to have a lease, and that lease was to be for \$1.00 a year for 15 acres or 100 acres, it would be a good deal for the people of the United States, because in return, they would get an opportunity to strengthen the culture of St. John, which, as I said, is what makes this such a valuable park.

It's not just the land, but it's the way we use the land, the way we interact, the way we sail, the way we go fishing for yellow-tail. All the things that we do in this park, the history. And if we don't have a good educational system, we are not able to offer that vital communication to those people who visit this park.

As far as exchanging, I'm a little dismayed that there has been some talk about an even exchange of land. While I cannot say that it's not appropriate to exchange things of equal value, I have to ask you, what is the comparison between some generally featureless land, as the Acting Superintendent Martha Bogle has pointed out, and maybe an exchange of stewardship for something on Congo Cay where the park could get petroglyphs. Isn't it true that just one small highly important historical site might be worth many acres of flat land where we could build a school? Think about that in your negotiations. Don't allow yourself to miss the opportunity to partner with St. John in our educational quest by insisting on unreasonable exchanges.

We have so much to offer in terms of our people, our culture, and also certain sites where perhaps you would like to be in the business of being stewards for them. But certainly we cannot find 55 or 100 acres, but we can find intensely valuable sites that if you would be willing to be custodians, that certainly would be something that is reasonable to discuss, but please don't be unreasonable. We don't want to be back here five years from now, ten years. We want to invite you five years from now for the big party as we cut the ribbon on our new educational complex.

My time is coming to an end, so I'll just tell you that students sense how serious we, as adults are, about their education and future.

Right now, I hope you have a chance to tour what we have on St. John. It's insufficient. Many of our social problems will be healed if we can show the students that we are fighting for them as we are beleaguered by the 1.2-plus million visitors to our shores every years.

We need your help in making sure that St. John can deal with the changes. And the way you can help us best is to help us by giving us the land we need in order to make a school complex which

is state-of-the-art. Not 10 acres, not 20 acres, but enough in the range of 50 acres will allow us to do it right. Architecturally we can make it something you will be very proud of, but we need your help, and I ask the Delegate and all from the committee to assist us. Thank you very much.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I want to thank all of the panelists for their testimony. And now, I would like to recognize Mr. Grijalva for such questions that he might have.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I will be brief. Let me begin with Ms. Monsanto. Can you just for background again, can you give me a breakdown of the 700 students roughly from John, roughly grade level? I'm also interested in how that separates, as you mentioned it, between public students and private students.

Ms. MONSANTO. What I did is I incorporated public and private school students who live on St. John and traverse back and forth and also attend school on St. John. So you're not only looking at students who go to the public school right now. You have to look at those high school students who go to St. Thomas. You have to look at the private sector who also goes to St. Thomas for school for educational benefits. So, we encompassed that number. That's the number we came up with roughly.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Do you then see this campus that we're talking about to serve both populations?

Ms. MONSANTO. Yes, because ultimately the population on the east end of St. Thomas is also saturated. That school is full to capacity.

Mr. GRIJALVA. The assumption being that the private school students would then come back to a public school.

Ms. MONSANTO. Hopefully, yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Because it would be a public facility.

Ms. MONSANTO. Correct.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And Mr. Kessler, you mentioned—Mr. Jones, if I may. Mr. Jones, if I may, thank you for the historical context in which—the background that you gave us.

When Mr. Rockefeller made the decision the two-thirds of the land on St. John will be given as a National Park, but correspondently as you mentioned, there was also a commitment to the people of St. John as part of that process. And to answer some of the issues of precedence, which I think is a question that needs to be dealt with, is there any, in that historical record or in that historical contents, educational opportunities for children of St. John? Was that part of the consideration in that transfer?

Mr. JONES. Sir, the specifics of it, we have here in front of us from a letter to Senator Anderson from L.S. Rockefeller, September 13, 1962, which speaks specifically to the Jackson Hope, consideration and acreage that were laid out. We have Estate Bellevue, 101 acres; Estate Beverthouberg, 265.6 acres. These are the properties that were spoken about to be used for the betterment of the island, for the people. But as Ms. Monsanto discussed earlier, when she went back to Jackson Hope Preserve, they said that that land was no longer in existence.

So, more specific as to what Mr. Rockefeller meant when he said for the betterment of the community, frankly, I personally never

envisioned the need for condemnation from the earliest days of acquiring the land of the Virgin Islands, as well as throughout the discussions leading to the Park in 1956. I have felt and I have said I was not in favor of condemnation. I don't have the specifics as to what he meant broadly, but I understand that when the Senator, which is Mr. Julius C. Sprauve, my great uncle, when he looked at the island, he was looking at the island at that time as what would be a good deal for—as his relative, another cousin of mine on the table stated, that we didn't have the bigger vision.

When I was 18 years old, I always said that one day as we continue to grow, without not understanding how the National Park worked, I always said, one day the National Park would have to give us pieces and pieces of its land, because as our people grew and our population grew, what do we do? Do we just pack up and leave and then say only tourists can come and look at an island that people used to inhabit? So, at some point I always figured that it would be a reasonable thing as population grew. And these were the people who are from here, that you would make room for us to grow and to live on the same island.

And to add to that, when people come here, people come here to talk to the people. They come to talk to us. They want to hear me say, "Hey mon, fry fish and johnny cake today." They don't come to see some deers running around in some bush. They come to see that, plus hear me speak or hear my family speak. Other than that, they tell us all the time, if I want to get an American experience, I stay in America. They come here for us.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And your point is well-taken, because the tradition where I come from is that there is a deep and abiding historical and cultural bond between the land and the people, and the originators of that land. So, yes, I couldn't agree with you more.

Mr. KESSLER, you mentioned the issue of the swap and the precedence, which I think, as we go through this process, that needs to be dealt with. But given the parcel that we talked about, that is being talked about today, is there specific concerns that the Friends have related to that parcel and the leasing of that parcel? How would that impact the Park?

And maybe, if I could for the record, Madam Chair, we've been dealing with a 10-acre discussion here, but also repeatedly from the witnesses, we are dealing with a 55 acre discussion, and we could reconcile that by information as to why the Park Service is dealing with 10, when consistently we've heard of 55. Maybe we can get that from the Park Service, OK?

Mr. KESSLER. OK. To your first question, Friends has no problem at all with the land that's been proposed for a swap, the land that's been proposed as being suitable for some sort of interaction to provide for an educational facility.

If I could on the issue of the 10 versus 55 or whatever, and this is more of a personal observation, there hasn't been any sort of consensus as to what this facility would actually include, what the land would actually be used for other than a school. And certainly, as part of the process of determining, one, how much land is really required, is the process of planning out whatever this facility will be, and whatever other ancillary services or structures or activities that would happen on there, and also what's feasible, we have to

look, one, how much land is potentially available; how much it will cost to develop that into some sort of facility; how much money is going to be available to do it. And then we have to also deal with all of the other problems that the current education services in the Virgin Islands has to face, which is how do you maintain it? How do you staff the facility?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Mr. KESSLER. Those issues need to be dealt with, and I have every confidence they will be dealt with within the community, with extra assistance. Those things need to be determined. You just can't pull out a figure and say, well, we need 55 acres or even we need 10 acres.

And again, the Friends has been supportive of the swap, and think that the land that has been identified is appropriate in terms of a location.

Mr. GRIJALVA. The issue to you is the mechanism.

Mr. KESSLER. The issue to us is the lease. The lease is a de facto sale or gift to the property, a precedent that was set for National Parks throughout the country.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And let me just follow up with a hypothetical. I don't know how to phrase this question, but I was asking Mr. Jones and the One Campus representatives about the history of the Rockefeller, the context, the historical context. And as I understand from them, from their testimony and from answering the question, there was an intent on the part of Rockefeller to, as part of the process, there would be a net public benefit for the people of St. John and your point regarding the precedence of a lease and what effect that could have across the National Park Service system nationally in the territory.

So, is that an either/or proposition, giving the intent and giving the issue of the precedence.

Mr. KESSLER. Well, the intent was also—the Jackson Hall Preserve owned lots of land on St. John, in addition to the land that was donated to the Department of the Interior for the creation of Virgin Islands National Park, and over time, they sold off that property.

I have no further information than what was provided by the other testifiers, and I'm certainly happy to accept their understanding of it, but we do have Virgin Islands National Park created initially from the 5,000 acres donated by Jackson Hall Preserve. Another 2,800 acres have been acquired and added in the last 50 years. So, we have some—or 1,800 acres.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I appreciate it, Mr. Kessler. Thank you for responding to my question. Sir, you wanted to respond, Mr Jones.

Mr. JONES. In relation to helping you get the perspective on the 10 acres, the administration before under Governor Turnbull, we had an administrator by the name of Julien Harley, and he had gathered a group of people together when the first options were coming up of the swap and so forth. And at the time, given the size of the island and the population, they came up with—and they weren't looking at a full complex. They were looking at a basic school. And they came up—that's why 10 acres came up and that's what the National Park had started moving with.

But as we look at the school now, the potential for a school now, and as the school administrator spoke a minute ago, and she talked about a full campus, that's not throwing something out of the hat. You can look at any school in the United States and know what a full campus is. And a full campus is more than 10 acres. And we have groups here now who have already started the process of identifying the cost, the exact size. They are not throwing out 55 acres like throwing it out of a hat. It's just that our organization on St. John hasn't all yet come together to get the consensus, but we know the average of a full campus with a gymnasium and all the other avenues, and we're also asking the National Park to participate, because they have programs that can help our culture in educating people that come here, that they can use that facility to benefit the community also. But still, we haven't all come together on what we're trying to do. That's why we're honoring the Delegate on what she's doing, because the first thing we have to do is get the land.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Madam Chair, I have no further questions, thank you. I yield back.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Grijalva. And if you do have a question as we go along, I will yield to you again. Thank you.

Let me begin with—I'll ask Ms. Monsanto, because you first raised the issue of the 55 acres. Can you speak to the typography of those 55 acres? I assumed that 10 were singled out because the land is suitable. It is flat. It is more easily—it could more easily accommodate the school and all of the other parts of the complex that have been mentioned, but could you speak to the typography of the 55 acres?

Ms. MONSANTO. In reference to the 55 acres, we submitted information to your office before testimony. We gave a map the National Park gave us of the property. The property is basically flat. No, we have not had a surveyor to go out there. We do know there are a lot of guts and stuff like that that will have to be worked on. However, we do want to build an environmental friendly environment there. So, these are things that we can work together to make this campus an excellent campus for everyone to be happy with.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I'm glad you raised up the map, because I was going to ask Mr. Jones if he would like to submit the document you were reading from for the record.

Ms. MONSANTO. I submitted that already.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. That's part of the testimony and your map is part of the testimony too, OK.

Ms. MONSANTO. Yes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. OK. And I know Ms. Monsanto, too, that you, Ms. Cox and others have done extensive research on properties. For the record, have you identified alternative properties or any local government property on St. John?

Ms. MONSANTO. The local government does not have enough property to match the school that we're speaking of.

I do want to make a very important comment.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Yes.

Ms. MONSANTO. The children of this community, and I have a child that's being raised in this community, they are diamonds. And they are pure diamonds. They have to be polished. So, they

need this school. And they are not going to be put on the sideline to protect lands. Because some of this land—some of the lands that the National Park has is not theirs. So, if you really want to talk about history, we could go have a history class tonight, but we don't have the time, OK.

So, the National Park, I have asked for years, show me your survey, show me your bounds. You own land that is not yours. We are asking for 55 acres to educate the diamonds of this environment and it's a problem. The National Park is acquiring land in Mahoe Bay Estate. They are amassing more lands from family members. How much more blood must we give them? How much more should we cry?

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I think you—well, let me just say for the record to that, I asked the question to have on the record that there is no other available—

Ms. MONSANTO. There is no other available land. It's important to the record, OK, there is no other available land. Our founding fathers, like Gaylord Sprauve eluded to, we live a simple life. Their vision was not the vision of today. Times have changed. We have new visionaries in our environment. Here we are at the table. Here we are all around here. We have youngsters sitting in this audience today who are going to be running this government and doing things that we never dreamed of. So, we have to make sure that they are educated correctly in the right environment, that they have everything everybody else is afforded.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. That's true. We don't disagree, but we want to make sure that the record shows that really that there is no alternatives.

Ms. MONSANTO. There is no alternative.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. And Mr. Jones, we talked about the 55 acres verses 10. Is there a minimum acreage that the group, that—because I even think that I remember Mr. Harley talking about more than 10 acres at one point also. Was there a minimum that was identified, acreage that was identified? And if you can't answer, if anyone else can answer.

Ms. COX. Our group did a study. We researched it on the internet, and elementary schools are starting anywhere between 10 and 12 acres. Middle schools start at 15 to 20. High schools start at 25 and up.

So, we're talking about a condensed location with what our needs and what our vision is for St. John, and 55 acres would probably just do it for us.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you. Thank you, for the research. Did you want to respond to, Mr. Sprauve?

Mr. SPRAUVE. I want to say something.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Yes, go right ahead, sir.

Mr. SPRAUVE. I think we've heard two speakers here this evening speak about the precedent that would be set with National Parks nationally. I'm am not a lawyer, so I am not speaking on any legal basis. The issue might be a legal one. We are an unincorporated territory of the United States. As such, the Congress of the United States determines what we get, what we don't get, how we get it. And it has nothing to do with national issues. It is we are property of the United States, and the Congress has the right to do what

it wishes with us, including disposing of us. They can also do all needful rules and regulations to govern us, and I don't see why we keep raising this issue. If Congress determined that that 55 acres that is not now caught up with the reversionary clause, even though I would raise the question about that, has anyone approached, anyone in authority approached the Rockefeller Foundation on easing that provision so that we can do what we need to do here on St. John?

That's the kind of comments that I have here. I want to know Congress' role, since it is a congressional hearing, Congress' role in governing these territories. And if Congress feels that this is what they need to do, notwithstanding any other argument about the national concerns, it seems to me the lawyers in the audience should be the ones to be talking this talk. They should be the ones to be helping us clarify this. But I think this is an important consideration.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you. And it applies in other areas as well. So, thank you for that comment.

Ms. Cox, you mentioned the different types of students we have, including home school. Do you believe that if we had the school that we are envisioning here this evening, that some of those home school children—some of the parents would stop home school and send them to a preferred school in a better educational environment and a safe environment?

Ms. COX. Absolutely, without a doubt.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Jones, you wanted to answer.

Mr. JONES. I am one of those home schooling parents. As I came home with my children and I started at the Julius C. Sprauve School, I was teaching there for one year. The school was deplorable. It's way too old. It's out-sized. There were too many things that created a hostile environment for the teachers, a hostile environment for the children, and the need for a new school was there. Then I decided to go to the private school. The private school, even with scholarships I pay \$8,000 per child per year. They told me this last school year you would have to pay \$9,000 per child. So, I'm now home schooling.

And I know from many of the parents, because I was one of the PTA persons at both schools, the private school and the public, many of those parents who are making those payments right now, they might be Caucasians but they are not wealthy. And they would love for us to get one great school that they feel that their kids would be safe in and the education would be top notch, and we would have a beautiful school, just like St. John has always been the melting pot of all races of people and all cultures. So, it will be the ideal thing. And many parents would take their kids out and put them in there.

And also to add a little touch to that, many of the parents are hoping that we could put all the schools together, but it wouldn't be under a public only status. It would be under a public/private status, which is something we have going on now in the states—

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. The charter schools.

Mr. JONES. The charter schools. A lot of parents have said, yes, I will bring my kids over if we could have that combination. Now, we have a lot to do in learning how that works and if it would ben-

enefit the Virgin Islands. But yes, many parents in private school would bring their kids to the public school if they felt it was safe and it produced an excellent learning environment.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you. Mr. Kessler, the parcel of land that's in question here was not a part of the original park, and the park existed up until '68 without this particular parcel. So, could you then explain to me why you think that leasing a portion or all of that particular parcel would diminish the park since it was not part of the original land set aside for the park.

Mr. KESSLER. Well, since that time, it has been a part of the park. It is currently a part of the park. And by taking that out of the park, it would diminish both the natural and cultural resources that contributes to the overall inventory of the Virgin Islands National Park.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. OK. And if I recall correctly from looking and hearing the testimony of the Acting Superintendent, the reason that this particular parcel was chosen was that there is not any historical or cultural resources or very limited cultural and historical resources on this particular parcel of land.

Mr. KESSLER. I believe she said there hasn't been an inventory of the cultural resources there. If you look elsewhere in that area of Catherineberg, I mean you have the windmill, you have the historic buildings, you have the historic walls. I think it will be fairly safe to assume that within neighboring properties, you have some similar historic structures. I mean, with the Virgin Islands National Park, there is some 500 to 600 historically significant structures in various states of repair and disrepair. And so it's safe to say that you would find resources there.

Again, apparently the park has never inventoried that area. But I think it would be safe to say so.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Well, in any case, I would just imagine that based on the testimony and the criteria that is used, that the park would not have ventured to offer a particular parcel of land if it had significant value to the park. And so that's why I raised that question.

Mr. KESSLER. No, I understand that. And I think, at least from my understanding, obviously I don't speak for the park, my understanding from conversations is one of the reasons or part of the reasons why the park offer that was, one, it was a convenient location to put a school. It was between Cruz Bay and Coral Bay. It was on the main road to ease transportation. It was a relatively flat area, which is obviously a premium on St. John. It also abuts developed areas. So, you're not like carving something out in the middle of park land. But on the edge of the park, there is also a ridge to the north that would then shield the campus from view from the north shore or from sea so as not to impair the visual aspect of the park. And those are just some of the reasons that they chose that area.

Also, obviously, as has been discussed by many of the panel, it wasn't included within—it was a later acquisition and, therefore, not included within the reversionary conditions.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Right. But it just seems to me that it could be exchanged, that it met certain criteria that would also apply to the lease.

Go ahead, you wanted to add a response?

Mr. SPRAUVE. Thank you, Delegate Christensen. I just wanted to comment on your question, because I see it a little differently than Mr. Kessler does. The land which is presently within the boundaries of the National Park are not part of the National Park. And I asked the Committee to look at St. John because there is something very unique that gives you a broad brush to create something new that wouldn't apply to other parks, and that is that we are one of the only parks that does not have the right of condemnation.

People from the Virgin Islands went to Washington in the 50's, and we rode on donkey backs in Washington protesting the concept that they might have right of condemnation. And for those in the audience who don't know, that means that almost all of the other units of the National Park Service have the ability to condemn the land and pay fair market value, and put that land into the park.

We do not. There is a reason for it. We're special and we ask you to use that special dispensation to give us land. Make it available to us to create an educational campus.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you. Thank you for adding that piece of information. And Mr. Sprauve, I know your first, second and third alternatives in order of preference, but there has also been some talk on exchanging land maybe from St. Croix for the land for the school in St. John. And if that was possible—of course we would have to discuss it with others—I will let you answer also after Mr. Sprauve answers.

I want to just point out that the reason for this hearing is to get as much information on the record so that when we go back to Washington, we would have that information with which to continue our deliberations and make our decisions. So, I'm trying to get as much as possible on the record because that discussion has been taking place.

Would you consider such an exchange as being—where would you consider that exchange in terms of your first, second and third?

Mr. SPRAUVE. I'm happy to respond. I think everything that I have said over the past couple of years is that any available public lands that is government owned, you can't do this with a private individual. A private individual wishes to sell his land, he can do that. But I do not believe that we should enlarge the park with any more Virgin Islands' public lands, period.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. OK, got it. That's not something that I was proposing, but it has been proposed and brought to my attention that there are some discussions. So, that response is very helpful.

Do you still want to respond or do you think that took care of it, Ms. Monsanto?

Ms. MONSANTO. Since we're putting things on the record, I also want to confer that I am in total agreement. Why should we swap precious land on St. Croix for land on St. John? We have to be fair. And I think if we're going to speak partnerships, I think—the major problem that has always been on St. John, we have always said, and I'm going to say it so this could be on the record, Friends of the Park, enemy of the state.

So, place that on the record. We have to work together to make sure that we are tangible partners in the management of everything that goes on in this park. The National Park was set up for

the people of St. John. When the Park was set up, they thought the Park was being here for all of their generations to enjoy. We no longer enjoy the Park.

How many people in this room pay \$4.00 to go to Trunk Bay? When do we enjoy the Park? People who live here, we do not enjoy this Park. It is a constant fight every day with this Park. And we're saying, we're putting out the olive branch now and we're saying, yes, the Delegate has brought something to the table. It is a feasible thing. We all can understand the lease. Let's work together. We don't want to be adversarial. We want to work together. The olive branch has been extended, but we, too, want everyone to respect us, and we don't want to take anything from anybody else. Our sister islands, they also have things that they need, and it would be unjust and unfair. Thank you.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you. Mr. Grijalva, did you have any further questions?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair, and let me thank all the witnesses today. I appreciate it very much. And if I may say, Madam Chair, I think one of the important points here, and I appreciate all the testimony, one of the important points here is the community of St. John and their needs for the future. And I appreciated all the testimony today about that, particularly education.

The concept of the land that was donated to the Federal government, there was—we need to be consistent with that donation. And yes, part of the donation was for the preservation and the conservation of valuable, beautiful land on St. John. But also, as I understand the testimony and the record, also part of that consistency of that donation was the derived benefit and public use for the people of St. John, and with that, Madam Chair, I think, as we work through this legislation. And thank you very much for bringing this to all of us. It's keeping that consistency and what the purpose of the donation was to preserve and keep a special place for everybody else to enjoy, but at the same time, to derive some benefit for the people of St. John. Thank you.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. And I really want to just again before we close, to thank you for taking the time. I know it was not easy, to come here and be a part of this hearing as Chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, as well as a valuable committee member on the Committee on Education and Labor.

As I said in my opening statement, we have gone through this over the last ten years moving from one point to the other. We started out with working toward an administrative exchange of lands between the V.I. Government and the Park. We went from there to try to legislate such an exchange. But in listening to the people of St. John, all of the people of St. John, we have really left the exchange issue behind at this point.

And that's why in this Congress, we really looked at what was the most feasible thing that we could introduce. And as we began, as we ended the last Congress and began this one, and discussed it with Mr. Frederick, the past Superintendent, we thought that perhaps this lease was the most feasible way to move forward.

I would say that we have not totally written out the possibility of a conveyance, and we are continuing to research that. We under-

stand that that is the preference for the people of St. John and we want to be responsive not just to one group, but to the other group. But we want to be responsive in a way that is to the benefit of all of the people on St. John and most especially our children, because the issue here is providing a safe and nurturing and supportive educational environment for our children. And obviously the schools that we have now and the locations that they are in now are not providing that kind of an environment for our children.

So, we need to find a way to move this as quickly as possible. Thirty years is too long, and I think we've gone through the exchange issue. So, we are not going to deal with that.

The testimony that has been given here from all of our panels has been very, very helpful, as well as those that have been submitted in writing.

Again, I would want to invite anyone who continues to want to provide written testimony, that for the next ten business days, the Committee's record is open, and we would welcome any written testimony that would come forward.

I want to thank our panelists, but I also want to thank the community for the strong showing. Not having heard testimony from all of you, your presence here, though, is a very loud and very significant testimony in itself, and we thank you all for being here.

The Committee now stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

NOTE: Although the following individuals were unable to personally testify, their statements submitted for the record have been retained in the Committee's official files.

- Steve Black
- Theodore Chouiniere
- Alvis Christian
- Elsa Emily Hall
- Crystal Fortwangler, Ph.D.
- Richard P. Decker
- Owen Sewer, Sr., Virgin Islands Board of Education
- Christophena Todman
- Donald J. Willey

