



Statement of Senator Feinstein on Angel Island Bill
For National Parks Subcommittee Hearing
April 28, 2005

Washington, DC – The National Parks Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee today held a hearing on several bills including one sponsored by U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii) and Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) that would help preserve and restore the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay.

U.S. Representative Lynn Woolsey (D-Petaluma) has introduced identical legislation in the House that has 34 cosponsors including House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) and House Resources Committee member Mark Souder (R-Ind.).

Following is Senator Feinstein's prepared statement:

"I would like to welcome a witness from my hometown of San Francisco, Felicia Lowe, the Vice President of the Board of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation. Felicia, I am proud to sponsor this legislation that you are supporting today to restore the Angel Island Immigration Station.

It is hard to think of a more American story than that of hard-working immigrants, risking travel to a foreign land to make a better life for their families.

The federal government has dedicated its resources to commemorate the eastern gateway for this county, Ellis Island.

It is time to make an equal commitment to our Western port of entry, Angel Island. Mr. Chairman, I understand that the old hospital structure that this bill would protect is on the verge of literally falling down. In 2000, the Immigration Station was placed on 'America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places' list.

The State of California and the local community have banded together to save this site. We as the federal government should help.

I look forward to the day when the descendants of the one million immigrants who came through Angel Island, including approximately 175,000 Chinese-Americans, can revisit the spot where their ancestors made such great sacrifices for them.

There are few more intimate and personal reminders of our history as immigrants than the poems carved on the walls of the Detention Barracks by those who awaited word on whether they would be admitted into this country.

Mr. Chairman, it's an accident of circumstance that we don't have many monuments to early generations of Chinese-Americans. I can't think of a better place to start to remedy this situation than Angel Island. I hope you will support this bill. Thank you."

Background

The Angel Island Immigration Station Preservation and Restoration Act would authorize \$15 million of federal funds for the Angel Island Immigration Station preservation project and has a 50/50 match requirement of state and private funding for the project. Similar legislation passed the House of Representative in the 108th Congress, but was not taken up by the Senate before it adjourned.

Current estimates to restore and preserve the Angel Island Immigration Station total over \$30 million. To date, the Immigration Station has secured \$16 million for the preservation efforts from private foundations, federal and state government sources. However, because the Immigration Station is located in a California State Park, without this legislation it is unable to receive additional federal dollars beyond the grants for which it has already qualified.

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