**City of Oak Ridge Testimony Before the House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation, April 12, 2013**

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijaula and Members of the Committee, I thank you for inviting me to testify on HR. 1208, a bill to Establish the Manhattan Project National Park in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Hanford Washington, and for other purposes. I would also like to thank the co-sponsors of this bill: Representative Hastings, Representative Fleischmann and Representative Ben Ray Luján. I have provided the committee with a copy of my written comments. I am Tom Beehan, the Mayor of the City of Oak Ridge, Tennessee and the Chairman of the Energy Communities Alliance. Our members include local governments and other community organizations from the Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and Tri-Cities areas. The testimony I will present to you today is on behalf of the City of Oak Ridge in conjunction with the Energy Communities Alliance.

First, and most importantly, I would like to stress that all three of our communities are united in our support for the passage of this bill to establish a 3-unit National Historical Park in Tennessee, New Mexico and Washington. There is also bi-partisan support for this bill in the House and Senate. Our communities have been working for many years to preserve the history of the Manhattan Project at our sites, and we feel that now is the time to pass a bill that will lead to the establishment of a National Historical Park.

It is easy for those of us who live in the communities of Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and the Tri-Cities to say that the Manhattan Project changed the world. The Manhattan Project began in great secrecy in 1942, and the original mission was essentially completed by August of 1945 when the Japanese surrendered. The Manhattan Project is an incredible story that deserves to be preserved and told.

Let me be clear, interpretation at these sites will be about giving current and future generations an understanding of this indisputable turning point in American, and indeed world history. Despite what some detractors may claim, this is not a Park about weapons. I believe this Historical Park is about scientific and engineering accomplishments at a time when our country was defending itself, both during World War II and the Cold War. This Historic Park will tell all sides of the story of what occurred at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and the Tri-cities, as has been identified in the National Park Service Special Resource Study. The National Park Service interprets all sites and attempts to address all viewpoints to give a full and fair picture, and we support such actions.

According to the National Park Service study, “Cultural resources associated with the Manhattan Project are not currently represented in the national park system, and comparably managed areas are not protected.” Further, “including Manhattan Project-related sites in the national park system will provide for comprehensive interpretation and public understanding of this nationally significant story.”

Last year, on an ECA sponsored trip to the Hanford Site, our group toured the B Reactor, the world’s first full scale production nuclear reactor. When visiting the B Reactor, one really gets an appreciation for the potential of the site to attract thousands of visitors a year. Already the few public tours that are available for the B Reactor fill up almost as soon as they become available. Last year, more than 8,000 seats were filled in less than 5 hours. This year more than 10,000 people will go on the tour.

In Oak Ridge we also have many assets that are open to visitors who want get a glimpse of what life was like “behind the gate”. In 2011, around eight thousand people visited the Graphite Reactor at ORNL and close to five thousand people came through the Y-12 New Hope Center. Additional special tours are held each year during the “Secret City Festival,” which attracts between 20-30 thousand people.

In Los Alamos, the industrial work at the laboratory, such as the Gun Site, where the work on Little Boy was done, and at the V Site, where work on the "Gadget" was completed, visitors get a sense of the "can-do" spirit of the scientists who worked in make-shift buildings with some rather creative equipment. In the Los Alamos historic center, visitors can walk the same paths as the Manhattan Project physicists, and see the homes where J. Robert Oppenheimer, Hans Bethe, and other talented scientists once lived.

The Manhattan Project National Historical Park is needed to preserve the history of the most significant event of the 20th Century. As you proceed, we ask that you consider the following recommendations:

* ***Establish the Park Now to Honor Our Manhattan Project Veterans***.
* ***Protect ongoing Missions of DOE***.
* ***Authorize User/Entrance Fees***.
* ***Donations authority should be broad.***
* ***Allow inclusion of Nationally Significant Sites.*** We need flexibility to permit the NPS to work with communities to be able to add sites that are nationally significant and suitable for inclusion in the Park.

The City of Oak Ridge supports H.R. 1208. We thank you and the full committee for your leadership and support.