

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**1882 Foundation Supports the Passing of the Great American Outdoors (GAOA) Act in Congress [H.R. 7092 (Cunningham D-SC-1)]**

Washington, D.C. August 4, 2020 — The 1882 Foundation applauds the signing of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Act into law from the President. According to the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), the National Park System has, for years, experienced severe underfunding, causing a reduction in staffing and a growing backlog of nearly \$12 billion in needed repairs. This has made it extremely difficult for employees to preserve our national parks, and has prevented a growing number of visitors from having the park experiences they deserve. The GAOA provides up to \$9.5 billion in funds over five years to address priority repairs in more than 400 national parks and other public lands. In addition, the act will provide permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

More importantly, efforts to preserve the United States' national parks and historic landmarks are inseparable from the fight to remember and honor Asian American contributions to the development of our nation. Sites such as Alaska's Kake Cannery, where Asian American migrant workers struggled against early forms of discrimination and segregation, and California's Forty Acres, where Filipino farm workers protested alongside Cesar Chavez for better working conditions, honor the enduring legacy that Asian Americans have left on the greater American story through our national parks and national landmarks system. And places such as the Heart Mountain Relocation Center — where 13,397 Japanese Americans were interned during WWII — offer remembrance for the enduring struggle for Asian American equality. Put simply, the GAOA not only supports the funding of the National Parks System, but provides much-needed support to Asian American heritage sites to repair and rebuild. Without such support, places such as Kake Cannery, which reopened for tourism in 2018 only after substantial financial support from the federal government, would have not been preserved.

According to a survey conducted by the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center at the University of Wyoming, only 5% of national park visitors in 2010 were Asian-American. The continual preservation and upkeep of these sites will attract and sustain the growing number of national park visitors, and the 1882 Foundation hopes that this press

release will help increase the number of Asian Americans that visit our national parks and historic landmarks. As huge a victory as this is for protecting our public lands and enhancing our ability to tell our cultural stories, the large task ahead for us is to remain actively engaged to ensure that Asian and Chinese American heritage sites and educational programs receive their fair share.

Lastly, funding from this act will ensure these places are safe and accessible for all, continue fueling local economies, and offer education and inspiration for generations to come. The USDA Forest Service recently released a video “Legacy”, which tells the story of Chinese railroad workers' contribution to completing the Transcontinental Railroad, acknowledging that the preservation of Chinese-American history is a project for all Americans. Funding and support from the GAOA will thus not only protect Chinese American legacies — such as pilgrimages to Sing Peak in Yosemite National Park — but will help make these events and resources accessible to wider audiences, helping preserve both Chinese-American and American history for generations to come.

Outline:

First paragraph: Summarize bill

Second paragraph: Mention several AA NPS sites

Shasta Route Railroad

the Forty Acres in California

Kake Cannery in Alaska

Butte-Anaconda Historic District in Montana

Heart Mountain Relocation Center

“There are also a few locations within national parks, such as Chinese Arch at Golden Spike National Historic Site, the Jun Fujita Cabin at Voyageurs National Park, and Sing Peak in Yosemite National Park that honor the profound impact the Asian people have had on the development of our nation and of our national parks.”

Third paragraph: Stress that NPS AA sites need more awareness, need to be prioritized (or at least given more than the bare minimum) from this funding, also stress that very few minority communities visit national parks and heritage sites, talk about why this bill is significant to APIDA community

**Take II: GAOA Act**

“The letter doesn’t quite make the point as to how this act would aid in the maintenance and preservation of Asian Pacific Islander American history and culture. At least not for non-policy geek types.

1. I would suggest you cite the provision or the funding allocation that covers APIA preservation. No need to go long but it will help make it clearer for folks who are newer to this work. As they begin to advocate for this act they should be prepared to answer the basic question “How does INVEST support APIA preservation?” It’s also worth noting that the preservation portion of this act is nowhere to be found in the official talking points, at least not the abbreviated ones that I’ve just reviewed.

2. A mild edit... It seems odd that in a letter meant to support historic preservation that the phrase “lost to history” would be used to describe a negative occurrence. Maybe “lost to incompatible development.”
3. I’d add the bill numbers (House and Senate) as well as the bill sponsors – not the cosponsors but the person who introduced the legislation (Rep. Defazio D-OR-4). The bill number will be critical here as my legislative tracker has H.R. 3791 – Investing in America (Massie), H.R. 2210 – Invest in America (Larson) and H.R. 7095 - INVEST in America (Defazio).
4. The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) H.R. 7092 (Cunningham D-SC-1) is the bill that will tackle the NPS deferred maintenance backlog. The Senate passed its version of the bill three weeks ago and the House will get its turn on either 7/21 or 7/28. The INVEST Act isn’t known or regarded as a DM bill (I’m pretty sure) and it’s possible you might confuse people by stressing how Defazio’s bill would aid in the reduction of NPS deferred maintenance.”

#### **Key Questions:**

- How would INVEST in America support APIA preservation?
- **In what ways does current underinvestment (to infrastructure, etc) threaten APIA preservation?**
  - Sites are undermaintained — **how? Is this related to INVEST at all?**
- **Add bill numbers??**
- GAOA will cover maintenance backlog — is this the act to focus on?

### **Summary of INVEST in America Act:**

1. Infrastructure investments in surface and rail transportation
2. Uses \$ from Highway Trust Fund for highway, transit, safety, and research programs
3. **Most investments here fall under categories of:**
  - a. COVID-19 Relief (most immediate) — saving / preserving jobs, etc
  - b. “Surface Transportation Authorization”
    - i. Federal-Aid Highways
    - ii. Public Transportation
    - iii. Highway Traffic Safety
    - iv. Motor Carrier Safety
    - v. Innovation
    - vi. Multimodal Transportation
    - vii. Transportation Infrastructure and Finance Act
  - c. Improving Hazardous Materials Safety Act of 2020
  - d. Transforming Rail by Accelerating Investment Nationwide Act
    - i. Not related to railroad / heritage site maintenance, etc; think AmTrak

### **Summary of Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA)**

1. This bill establishes the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to support deferred maintenance projects on federal lands.

For FY2021-FY2025, there shall be deposited into the fund an amount equal to 50% of all federal revenues from the development of oil, gas, coal, or alternative or renewable energy on federal lands and waters. Additionally, the bill makes funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) permanent.

The fund must be used for priority deferred maintenance projects in specified systems that are administered by the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Indian Education.

2. Wait it just passed today! From Natural Resources Defense Council  
<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/sharon-buccino/good-news-congress-passes-great-american-outdoors-act>

**Basic Details:**

- Name of legislation is INVEST in America Act
  - Bill would create an official, permanent National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to support deferred maintenance projects on federal lands
- National Park Service would receive priority under INVEST
  - This is really big b/c a bunch of APIDA heritage sites — **especially** those having to do w/ railroad workers — fall on federally owned land

**Key Talking Points:**

- By directing funding to the NPS, the Great American Outdoors Act would also help with the preservation, maintenance, and restoration of APIDA history b/c many APIDA historic sites fall on federally-owned land (such as the Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery)
- (as mentioned above) better transportation/infrastructure can also bring more people to visit APIDA sites
- More opportunities to increase the visibility of the legacy of railroad workers: [exploreapaheritage.com](http://exploreapaheritage.com) has a list of places (almost all on federal land covered by the GAOA) which would likely receive money for funding, restoration.

Sabrina's notes:

I have a good source from NPS relating to APIDA heritage sites/memorials/parks:

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/aapiheritage/places.htm>

I think we could look at this and this can help bridge NPS transportation and Asian Americans together since without good transportation/infrastructure, people can't see these NPS sites relating to APIDA culture/history. Add what you have too of course

Kyle's notes:

Basically I think like you said, NPS infrastructure funding can make these sites preserving APIDA culture/history more accessible. Additionally, the GAOA would also create funding for the preservation of the legacy of railroad workers — a goal which aligns closely with 1882's core mission — and also the broader history of APIDA immigration in general, since many APIDA heritage sites also fall on federally-owned land. → yes and Forest Service created a youtube video called "Legacy" about this

Sample position letter:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ocacvcweb/announcements/ocanationalpositionpaper-office-liang>

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**Draft:**

**1882 Foundation Calls for Asian-American Support of the INVEST in America Act**

**18 June 2020**

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**To OCA, UCA, C.A.C.A., and members of the Asian-American community**

The 1882 Foundation supports the passage of the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act (INVEST in America Act) and urges its partners to co-sign this letter. By increasing funds to improve transportation and infrastructure on federally-stewarded land, the INVEST in America Act supports the vital task of maintaining heritage sites that are critical for the preservation of Asian-American history.

Since its founding in 2009, the 1882 Foundation has been dedicated to promoting public awareness of the history and continued impact of the Chinese Exclusion Laws. Heritage sites across the country — from the Shasta Route Railroad and the Forty Acres in California to Kake Cannery in Alaska, as well as the Butte-Anaconda Historic District in Montana — have inspired and informed our work. Unfortunately, many of these sites are in danger of being lost to history.

Many of these heritage sites lie on federally-managed land whose maintenance would be funded by the INVEST in America Act. Currently, the National Park Service faces a maintenance backlog estimated to be \$11.9 billion. Not only does this backlog spell trouble for *all* National Parks seeking reconstruction and repair, but it also poses a unique threat to efforts to preserve historical Asian-American heritage sites.

The INVEST in America Act provides increased financial support for historic preservation projects. Support for the repair and maintenance of heritage sites key to Asian-American and American history enables organizations like the 1882 Foundation to continue our work of promoting awareness of our shared history.

We urge our partners to co-sign this letter in supporting the passage of INVEST in America Act.

Thank you for your joint support,

## 1882 Foundation

~~Our work also would not be possible without the preservation of places such as Kake Cannery in Alaska. There, contracted laborers from China, Japan, and the Philippines fought segregation and discrimination while making significant contributions to American labor history. And it was at The Forty Acres in Delano, California, where Filipino laborers struggled alongside Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers for equitable pay and humane working conditions. And our work is enriched by the preservation of the Butte-Anaconda Historic District in Montana, where in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a booming mining industry attracted Chinese immigrants to settle and form a Chinatown, even when facing racial prejudice.~~

### **Letter from NPCA**

Dear Members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee,

We, the members of the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition, write in support of the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act (INVEST in America Act), especially the increased funding levels for federal lands to help address the aging transportation assets in our national parks.

The 100+ year-old National Park Service (NPS) is challenged by aging infrastructure, visitation pressures, and decades of inconsistent funding for maintenance needs. As a result, the agency cannot keep pace with repairs at its more than 400 park units across the country, which has led to a maintenance backlog estimated at \$11.9 billion. Transportation assets within the National Park System—paved roads, parking lots, tunnels, and bridges—account for over half of the total backlog, or \$6.15 billion.

We support funding increases in the INVEST in America Act to the National Park Service through the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) and Federal Lands

and Major Tribal Projects Program (FLMTPP). The FLTP provides funds to improve roads, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure in parks. The FLMTPP provides funding for exceptionally large repair projects in our parks, such as the reconstruction of the Grand Loop Road in Yellowstone or the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia. The proposed mandatory funding under this program is a welcome addition to the surface transportation bill and will help park managers better plan for these megaprojects.

Our national parks and public lands generate billions of dollars for local economies in tourism dollars, jobs and tax revenue. Repairing and maintaining them is a smart investment, and will create additional infrastructure-related jobs, as well as preserve visitor access and resources.

Thank you for considering our views,