

Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, Congressman Larson spoke in favor of his legislation, ***HR 5131, The Coltsville National Historical Park Act.***

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## **LARSON TESTIFIES IN SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION TO DESIGNATE COLTSVILLE AS A NATIONAL PARK**

***Washington, DC-*** Today in testimony during a House Subcommittee hearing, U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) urged for the passage of his legislation to designate the Coltsville Historic District in Hartford as a National Park.

Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, Congressman Larson spoke in favor of his legislation, ***HR 5131, The Coltsville National Historical Park Act.*** Congressman Larson was joined by Hartford Courant Columnist Tom Condon who echoed support for Larson's legislation and highlighted the involvement of the community to make this dream for Coltsville a reality.

During his testimony, Congressman Larson emphasized the national historical significance of Colt's Patent Firearms and the legacies of Sam and Elizabeth Colt as well as the economic impact the National Park designation will have for Connecticut. He also detailed how the legislation is specifically designed to address the National Park Service's concerns over the project's feasibility by requiring the city, state and the developer to meet certain criteria before final designation as a National Park.

Congressman Larson said, ***"Establishing Coltsville as a National Historical Park will not only preserve our unique history for future generations, but it will also boost the local economy by creating jobs and attracting more cultural tourism to the region."*** According

***to the United Arts, a Greater Hartford Arts Council Campaign, over 5 million people visit the cultural attractions in Greater Hartford each year, supporting 7,400 full-time jobs and generating an annual economic impact of \$244 million.□ Adding Coltsville National Historical Park to the list of attractions would obviously have a great positive impact on the region.”***

In addition to his oral testimony, Congressman Larson submitted to the subcommittee letters from various non-profits, elected officials and city organizations, including two letters signed by over 70 property owners from the Sheldon/Charter Oak neighborhood, in support of his legislation.

Located in the Sheldon/Charter Oak neighborhood in Hartford, The Coltsville Historic District is a 260-acre site which includes Samuel and Elizabeth Colt’s house “Armsmear”, the Colt armory’s 10 historic industrial buildings, the Church of the Good Shepherd and Parish House, Colt Park, and several other structures associated with the history of the company and the Colt family.

Below are Congressman Larson’s remarks as prepared for delivery:

***“Thank you, Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop and members of the Committee for holding this hearing today.***

***“The Coltsville National Historical Park Act is the result of over a decade of hard work and commitment by the communities in Hartford, Connecticut.□ The passage of this legislation is the realization of the vision to see Coltsville transformed into an organized cultural and educational experience for the state, region and the nation.***

***“In 2008, Coltsville was designated a National Historic Landmark District and passage of this bill is the next step. It gives the Secretary of the Interior authority to establish the Coltsville as a National Historical Park.***

***“In the 1800’s Samuel Colt and his wife Elizabeth founded Colt’s Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company known as Colt Fire Arms Company. Coltsville flourished during the Industrial Revolution spurring innovation not only in the production of firearms, but also with the development of technology that led to changes in the American way of life. Coltsville set the standard of excellence during the Industrial Revolution and continues to be significant as a place where Americans learn the importance of that period in history.***

***“Samuel Colt is most renowned for developing a revolver design, which revolutionized personal firearms by eliminating the need to reload until five or six shots had been expended. His company drew upon the technological innovations of the firearms industry in New England to achieve a high level of mechanization and production. The Colt Fire Arms Company was a highly influential national source of innovation in precision manufacturing and firearms design well into the 21st century.***

***“During every war since World War I, the Colt Fire Arms Company has acted as the nation’s leading small arms producers and made a vital contribution to the US war effort. Even today, tens of thousands of our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq are using M4 rifles produced by Colt.***

***“It is important to emphasize that the Colt legacy is not just about firearms, but also about his role in creating a unique industrial community life. Samuel Colt became the first individual in the United States to open a manufacturing plant overseas. He also created a unique sense of community around the industry, planning Coltsville as a fully integrated industrial district that includes manufacturing facilities, Victorian mansions, an open green area, botanical gardens, and even a deer park. He built housing for the workers, a church, and even a local bar.*”**

***“When you think about the industrial revolution and where it all began, Colt manufacturing was at the heart of it. Henry Ford came here to study the practices of manufacturing and the jet engine pioneers Francis Pratt and Amos Whitney served as apprentices. Samuel Colt also worked with Samuel Morse in the development of the telegraph.*”**

***“Also of note are the contributions of Elizabeth Colt, who, after her husband’s death, owned and operated the factory for another 39 years. She was a leading philanthropist and art patron in Hartford and developed many of the structures in Coltsville.*”**

***“The National Park Service will testify today that the Coltsville Historic District meets the agency’s criteria for national significance and suitability to become a unit of the national park system. They will also testify that it does not meet the feasibility requirements at this time. While I understand their concerns, I believe the legislation is written to address them.*”**

***“The bill is written so that the Interior Secretary may only establish a National Historical Park once certain conditions are met. Those conditions include the donation of at least 10,000 square feet in the East Armory to be used for a Colt museum and the donation of the land within the proposed Park boundaries. The bill gives the Secretary authority to enter into written cooperative agreements with the various land owners living in Coltsville as well as with various museums in order to acquire different artifacts for display in the Colt museum.***

***“I am confident that these conditions will be met. From the beginning, this project has been a true partnership between federal, state and local government as well with universities and non profits. The communities and stakeholders affected by this bill helped frame the idea and are committed to making this park a reality.□ The fundamental economic demand for this rejuvenation of downtown Hartford is there.□ The apartments are always 90 to 95% full and the major tenants, which include Lexis Nexis and the state funded Capitol Region Education Council, aren’t going anywhere soon.***

***“The East Armory will be available to the National Park Service soon, in fact, as we sit here today; the historic tax credit investor is in final negotiations with the current failed lender and will then be in control of the mortgage and East Armory.***

***“The bill is supported by not only the entire Connecticut delegation, but also the Governor of Connecticut, the Mayor of Hartford and the residents and property owners within Coltsville who are fully prepared to enter cooperative agreements with the Secretary of the Interior.***

***“I would like to submit these letters for the record in addition to a dozen more letters of support from organizations like the Metro Hartford Alliance, Trinity College and Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.***

***“Establishing Coltsville as a National Historical Park will not only preserve our unique history for future generations, but it will also boost the local economy by creating jobs and attracting more cultural tourism to the region.□ According to the United Arts, a Greater Hartford Arts Council Campaign, over 5 million people visit the cultural attractions in Greater Hartford each year, supporting 7,400 full-time jobs and generating an annual economic impact of \$244 million.□ Adding Coltsville National Historical Park to the list of attractions would obviously have a great positive impact on the region.***

***“During this hearing, you will hear from Connecticut’s esteemed Hartford Courant editor, Tom Condon, who will discuss in further detail Coltsville and the incredible community involvement.□ The Hartford Courant has been a leading advocate of the Park since the inception of the idea and Tom will be able to provide great insight.***

***“I urge you to support this legislation and help the people of Hartford and Connecticut see the fruits of their labor become a reality, one that our whole country can enjoy.”***

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