

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 4228, TO REDESIGNATE THE COTTONWOOD VISITOR CENTER AT JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK AS THE “SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN VISITOR CENTER”.**

May 15, 2024

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Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior’s views on S. 4228, to redesignate the Cottonwood Visitor Center at Joshua Tree National Park as the “Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center”.

The Cottonwood Visitor Center is located in the southern part of Joshua Tree National Park, just seven miles north of Interstate 10, and serves as the first contact station for visitors entering the park from the Interstate. The visitor center is the gateway to many hiking trails, including the Cottonwood Springs area. Visitors can learn about the park, plan their visit, purchase park passes, and obtain information on trail conditions, camping availability, and more.

Senator Dianne Feinstein served the state of California in the U.S. Senate from 1992 to 2023. She was the longest-serving female senator in U.S. history. She also served as the mayor of San Francisco from 1978 to 1988. During her time in Congress, Senator Feinstein authored the California Desert Protection Act that created Mojave National Preserve, expanded and redesignated Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Monuments as national parks, and designated over 7 million acres of California desert as Wilderness. She sponsored many pieces of legislation and advocated for the protection of natural areas and the creation of national monuments in California, including the Castle Mountains National Monument, a unit of the National Park System.

S. 4228 would designate Cottonwood Visitor Center as the “Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center.” The NPS generally discourages the naming of park features except when there is a compelling justification and at least five years have elapsed since the death of the person. However, we recognize that Congress may also specifically authorize the placement of such recognition. In this instance, the Department defers to Congress and does not object to S. 4228.

The NPS plans to construct a new visitor center at Cottonwood in future years. If Congress chooses to proceed with S. 4228, the Department recommends the bill be amended to include language noting that any successor visitor center at that location would also be named for Senator Feinstein.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.