

Statement of Howell A. Breedlove, Trustee of the National Museum of Wildlife Art
before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
of the House Committee on Natural Resources on H.R. 754, To designate the National Museum
of Wildlife Art, located at 2820 Rungius Road, Jackson, Wyoming, as the National Museum of
Wildlife Art of the United States.
March 15, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of H.R. 754, to designate the National Museum of Wildlife Art, located at 2820 Rungius Road, Jackson, Wyoming, as the National Museum of Wildlife Art of the United States. I am Howell A. Breedlove, a member of the Board of Trustees since the year 2000.

I would like to thank Representative Barbara Cubin of Wyoming for introducing this bill in the House and Representative Carolyn Maloney of New York for co-sponsoring. I would also like to thank Senators Mike Enzi and Craig Thomas of Wyoming for introducing the companion legislation in the Senate, and finally I would like to acknowledge the leadership of Board member and past President of the National Museum of Wildlife Art, Margaret Webster (Maggie) Scarlett, for suggesting the national designation.

The Mission of the National Museum of Wildlife Art is to enrich and inspire international appreciation and knowledge of fine art and humanity's relationship with nature through our collections, exhibitions, research, educational programs, and publications. The founders of the Museum donated a private collection of wildlife art to create the Museum in 1987. The subject of wildlife has interested people from time immemorial, particularly in the United States. Our national identity developed in the context of extensive wilderness and the wildlife in it.

The Museum's collection now includes over 3,000 works of art representing efforts by the finest historical and contemporary artists, including George Catlin, Edward Hicks, John J. Audubon, Anna Hyatt Huntington, Charles M. Russell, William Merritt Chase, and Alexander Calder, as well as contemporary American artists Steve Kestrel, Bob Kuhn, Bart Walter, Nancy Howe, John Nieto, Jamie Wyeth, and many others.

The role the National Museum of Wildlife Art seeks to fill is borne out by the high quality of its facility and the recognition of its sister institutions. The Museum is housed in an award-winning and architecturally significant 51,000 square foot building overlooking the National Elk Refuge in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, adjacent to Grand Teton National Park. It is also one of the 10% of museums in the United States that are accredited by the American Association of Museums, and is the *only* accredited museum that focuses on wildlife art.

The Museum welcomes some 92,000 visitors annually, many of whom have undertaken pilgrimages to witness the wildlife and natural wonders of our country in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. A recent special exhibition at the Museum featured the original watercolor sketches made by Thomas Moran in 1872 that led to the Congressional creation of the parks. Visitors' experiences at the Museum help them connect with wildlife and nature through art. The Museum makes that art available to them through books, traveling exhibits, the Internet, and other sources, long after they visit the parks. The Museum serves some 10,000

schoolchildren annually. Its award-winning website, www.wildlifeart.org, garners some 635,000 page hits per year.

Last year the Museum presented an exhibition of seventy-seven works of art at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in my home town of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They were received with great enthusiasm. Similar exhibitions will travel to the Art Museum in Vero Beach, Florida and the Rockwell Museum in Corning, New York in the coming year. The Museum has sent educational materials to individual classrooms across the nation, including California, Florida, New York, and Texas.

The Museum's growth and the breadth of its mission reflect the dedication that has gone into its creation and also the national constituencies that it serves. Trustees and Board members of the Museum represent states across the country, including Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wyoming.

Senator Mike Enzi recently observed the uniqueness of the National Museum of Wildlife Art: "Wildlife museums are not unusual in the United States. Art museums are not unusual in the United States. This museum, however, sets itself apart from all the others as it focuses on wildlife art. This interdisciplinary approach fosters education as the museum uses art to teach people about wildlife and encourages wildlife lovers to explore art."

A national designation for the museum is not an attempt to acquire federal funding. It is, however, an attempt to secure a national reputation and awareness of the museum. Then the Museum can proceed to explore humanity's relationship with nature through art, and provide access to that wealth for a diverse spectrum of Americans.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, a national designation for our museum represents a Congressional endorsement for uniting the highest accomplishments in the arts and sciences with an acknowledgement of the importance of our natural resources and the environment, particularly wildlife and the habitats that sustain them. Through the collections, exhibitions, programs, and outreach of the National Museum of Wildlife Art, we strive to fulfill the most significant role of museums, to answer the increasing demand of Americans for information and education about how to conserve the world we inhabit. With *your support* of this Resolution, we will move in the right direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Subcommittee today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.