

**Testimony of O. James Lighthizer, President
Civil War Trust**

**Before the Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives**

April 17, 2013

Introduction

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is James Lighthizer, and I am the president of the Civil War Trust. I come before you today to respectfully request that the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies fund the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program (CWBPP) at its authorized amount of \$10 million.

The Civil War Trust is a 55,000-member nonprofit organization — the only national one of its kind — dedicated to preserving America’s remaining Civil War battlefields. To date, the Trust has permanently protected more than 35,000 acres of hallowed ground in 20 states.

CWBPP is an authorized competitive matching grants program that requires a 1 to 1 federal/non-federal match, although on most occasions the federal dollars are leveraged much more than 1 to 1. The program has successfully promoted cooperative partnerships between state and local governments and the private sector to protect targeted, high priority Civil War battlegrounds outside National Park Service boundaries.

Battlefield Lands are Our Shared American Heritage

Civil War battlefield lands are an irreplaceable part of our shared national heritage. Preserving these hallowed grounds not only keeps our history alive, but honors the soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice to create the country we are today.

However, the living history that these sacred sites represent is shrinking fast due to development, and we estimate that 30 acres of battlefield land are lost every day.

When preserved, battlefields serve as outdoor classrooms to educate current and future generations of Americans about this defining moment in America’s history. Preserved battlefields are also economic drivers for communities, bringing in tourism dollars that are extremely important to state and local economies. When these hallowed grounds are lost, they are lost forever.

This hearing is especially timely because of the ongoing sesquicentennial commemoration of the Civil War, in which millions will learn about our nation’s unique history by visiting Civil War sites around the country.

Origins of the Program

Since its inception, the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program has focused on only the most historically significant battlefield sites, as determined by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission's (CWSAC) 1993 "Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields." Congressionally authorized funding is for acquisition of properties outside NPS boundaries from willing sellers only; there is — and never has been — any eminent domain authority.

Since the program was first funded in FY1999, grants have been used to protect 19,000 acres of hallowed ground in 16 states. Among the many battlefields that have benefited from this program are: Antietam, Maryland; Aversboro, North Carolina; Chancellorsville, Virginia; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Harpers Ferry, West Virginia; Mill Springs, Kentucky; and Prairie Grove, Arkansas.

Urgent Need for Funding

We thank the Subcommittee for its previous support for this valuable program. These funds have enabled private sector groups like the Civil War Trust to preserve many significant sites that would have been otherwise lost to history. We recognize that these are difficult economic times and appreciate the constraints on this Subcommittee. However, the current 150th anniversary of the conflict is the most opportune time to provide robust funding for the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program.

We estimate that in the next decade, most unpreserved Civil War battlefield lands will be either developed or protected. With time rapidly running out to save these hallowed grounds, full appropriation of the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program will enable us protect as many key battlefield lands as possible in the limited time remaining.

Conclusion

The Civil War was a defining moment in our country's history. For four long years, North and South clashed in hundreds of battles that reunited our nation and sounded the death knell for slavery. More than 625,000 soldiers and 50,000 civilians perished as a result of the war.

Protected battlefields not only honor the memory of our predecessors, but all of our nation's brave men and women in uniform.

Mr. Chairman, I sincerely hope you and your subcommittee will consider our request to provide funding of the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program at its authorized level of \$10 million. We look forward to working with you and other subcommittee members on battlefield protection. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.