



*Saving America's
Civil War Battlefields*
Civilwar.org

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
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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, administered by the National Park Service, at its authorized amount of \$10 million.

The Civil War Trust is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving America's remaining Civil War battlefields. Thanks to the generosity of our 200,000 members and supporters, the Civil War Trust has protected more than 38,500 acres of hallowed ground in 20 states.

The Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program 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 promotes cooperative partnerships between state and local governments and the private sector to protect 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. When preserved, battlefields serve as outdoor classrooms to educate current and future generations about this defining moment in America's history. They are living monuments, not just to the men in blue and gray who fought there, but to all who have proudly worn our nation's uniform. 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 are learning about our nation's unique history by visiting Civil War battlefields and historic sites throughout the country.

Origins of the Program

In 1990, Congress created the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (CWSAC), a blue-ribbon panel composed of lawmakers, historians and preservationists, to examine the status of America's Civil War battlefields. Three years later, the Commission released a report identifying the most important Civil War battlegrounds, prioritizing them according to preservation status and historic significance. In addition, the Commission also recommended that Congress establish a federal matching grant program to encourage the private sector to

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invest in battlefield preservation. The Commission's proposal for a federal matching grant program was the genesis of the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program.

Since the program was first funded in FY1999, grants have been used to protect 21,000 acres of hallowed ground in 16 states. Among the many battlefields that have benefited from this program are: Antietam, Maryland; Bentonville, North Carolina; Champion Hill, Mississippi; Chancellorsville, Virginia; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Harpers Ferry, West Virginia; Mill Springs, Kentucky; Prairie Grove, Arkansas; and Wilson's Creek, Missouri. It is important to note that grants are awarded for acquisition of lands from willing sellers only; there is — and never has been — any eminent domain authority.

Urgent Need for Funding

The Civil War Trust wishes to thank the Subcommittee for its previous support for this valuable program. We recognize that these are difficult economic times and appreciate the constraints on this Subcommittee.

We also want to emphasize that the clock is ticking on the remaining battlefields of the Civil War. The Civil War Trust estimates that, in the next decade, most unprotect battlefield land will be either developed or preserved. Full funding for the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program at its authorized level of \$10 million a year will enable nonprofit groups like the Trust to protect as many key battlefield lands as possible in the limited time remaining. The ongoing 150th anniversary commemoration of the Civil War is the most opportune time to provide robust funding for the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program.

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. Preserved battlefields help insure that the sacrifices of that turbulent period of our nation's history are never forgotten

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 closely with you as we continue our important work to preserve our sacred Civil War battlefields. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.