

**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  
*March 18, 2015***

**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 National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program at its authorized amount of \$10 million.

The Civil War Trust is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving America's remaining Civil War, Revolutionary War, and War of 1812 battlefields. Thanks to the generosity of our 200,000 members and supporters, the Civil War Trust has protected more than 40,000 acres of critically important battlefield land in 20 states.

The American Battlefield Protection Program's land acquisition grants 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 battlegrounds outside National Park Service boundaries.

**Battlefield Lands are Our Shared American Heritage**

America's battlefields are an irreplaceable part of our shared national heritage. When preserved, these battlefields serve as outdoor classrooms to educate current and future generations about the defining moment in our country's history. They are living monuments, not just to the men who fought and sacrificed 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.

**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 exam 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 invest in battlefield preservation. The Commission's proposal for federal matching grants was the genesis of today's American Battlefield Protection Program's land acquisition grants program.

The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2015 (P.L. 113-291) reauthorized the battlefield acquisition grants program and expanded its eligibility to include Revolutionary War and War of 1812 battlefields, in addition to Civil War battlefields. Similar to the Civil War grants, which are awarded for priority battlefield land identified in the CWSAC report, funding for Revolutionary War and War of 1812

battlefields will target sites listed in a 2007 study by the National Park Service. Among the battlefields that could potentially benefit from the expanded program are: Bennington, N.Y. and Vt.; Brandywine, Pa.; Cowpens, S.C.; Caulk's Field, Md.; Guilford Courthouse, N.C.; Princeton, N.J.; River Raisin, Mich.; Saratoga, N.Y.; and Yorktown, Va.

Since the program was first funded in FY1999, grants have been used to protect 24,000 acres of hallowed ground in 17 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. However, we must point out that the clock is ticking on the remaining battlefields of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and 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 American Battlefield Protection 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.

### **Conclusion**

The Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War were defining moments in our country's history. Our forbearers secured our independence from Great Britain and forged our democratic ideals during the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. During the Civil War, the great armies of the North and South clashed in hundreds of battles that reunited our union and sounded the death knell for slavery. Preserved battlefields help insure that the sacrifices of these turbulent periods in our nation's history are never forgotten

Mr. Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum, I sincerely hope you and your subcommittee will consider our request to provide funding of the American Battlefield Protection Program's land acquisition program at its authorized level of \$10 million. We look forward to working closely with you as we continue our important work to preserve America's sacred battlefield lands. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.