

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman
Mark-Up Memorandum

April 24, 2017

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff, Terry Camp
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x 6-7736)

Mark-Up: **H.R. 1715 (Rep. Bennie Thompson)**, To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Medgar Evers House, located in Jackson, Mississippi, and for other purposes.
April 26 & 27, 2017; 1324 Longworth HOB.

H.R. 1715 (Rep. Bennie Thompson), “*Medgar Evers House Study Act*”

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 1715, introduced by Congressman Bennie Thompson, (D-MS-02), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Medgar Evers House, located in Jackson, Mississippi.

The special resource study authorized by this act will require the Secretary of Interior to determine the national significance of the Evers home; determine the feasibility of designating the site as a unit of the National Park Service; consider other alternatives for preservation, protection, and interpretation; consult with interested federal, state, or local governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, and individuals; and identify costs and estimates for acquisition, development, and maintenance of the site.

Background

Medgar Wiley Evers was born in Decatur, Mississippi, on July 2, 1925. Medgar served in the army in France and Germany during World War II and following his military service attended Alcorn State University, where he met his future wife, Myrlie.¹

In February of 1954, Evers applied to the then-segregated University of Mississippi Law School. When his application was rejected, Evers became the focus of an NAACP campaign to

¹ “Medgar Evers,” The Biography.com website, <http://www.biography.com/people/medgar-evers-9542324> (accessed Apr 7, 2017).

desegregate the school. In December of that year, Evers became the NAACP's first field officer in Mississippi.²

On June 12, 1963, as he returned home from a NAACP planning meeting, Medgar was shot in the back by Byron De La Beckwith, a member of the White Citizens' Council. He died at a local hospital less than an hour later. Medgar was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.³

Mrs. Evers and her children continued to live in the house for a year after the murder of her husband, but she decided that she could not remain there and moved her family to California. Subsequently, she donated the house to Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi. The home, now a museum operated by Tougaloo College, contains period furnishings, exhibits, and family photographs that honor Medgar Evers' legacy as one of the icons of the Civil Rights movement in America.⁴

Representative Thompson introduced H.R. 959, a bill nearly identical to H.R. 1715 in the 114th Congress. On June 16, 2015, the Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on the bill, and on July 9, 2015, the Committee on Natural Resources voted to report the bill to the full House. The bill later passed in the House, with amendments, by voice vote on September 16, 2015.

Major Provisions

- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Medgar Evers House, located in Jackson, Mississippi.

Cost

In the 114th Congress, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the cost to carry out the special resource study authorized by H.R. 959, a bill nearly identical to H.R. 1715, would be about \$200,000.⁵

Administration Position

In testimony provided to the Subcommittee on Federal lands on June 16, 2015, the National Park Service expressed support for H.R. 959, a bill nearly identical to H.R. 1715.⁶

² "NAACP History: Medgar Evers" NAACP.org website, <http://www.naacp.org/oldest-and-boldest/naacp-history-medgar-evers/> (accessed Apr 7, 2017).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Statement for the Record, National Park Service, on H.R. 295, Subcommittee on Federal Lands Legislative Hearing on June, 16, 2015, <http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/mouritsentestimony.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/50688>.

⁶ *Id.*

Anticipated Amendments

None.

Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)

H.R. 1715 does not affect current law.