

**Statement of Congressman Bennie Thompson
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
1324 Longworth House Office Building**

**Tuesday, February 6, 2018
10:00 a.m.**

- Thank you, Chairman McClintock, for holding today's hearing to consider H.R. 4895, a bipartisan bill to designate the home of Civil Rights Leader Medgar Evers as a National Monument.
- Located in Jackson, Mississippi, the Evers family home, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2017, is hallowed ground for those of us who lived through the struggle for racial equality and desegregation.

- That single-story ranch-style house bore witness to one of the most consequential moments in the civil rights era—the assassination of Medgar Wiley Evers, a son of Mississippi who was assassinated in his driveway by those who saw his efforts at making America a more perfect and just union as a threat.
- Through his work for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Medgar Evers earned an indelible place in the annals of American History and the Civil Rights Movement.
- Mr. Evers was a hero for change, resistance and equal rights for African American citizens.

- I am honored to, in my capacity as Congressman of the Second Congressional District of Mississippi, author this legislation to honor the sacrifice of not just Civil Rights Icon Medgar Evers but his widow, Myrlie, by designating their home as a National Monument.

- Medgar Evers had a vision to defeat injustice for African Americans in the State of Mississippi as well as throughout the United States.

- Born in Decatur, Mississippi, Mr. Evers lived through the Jim Crow South and wrangled with the overwhelming plight of racial discrimination head on.
- Mr. Evers was a 1952 graduate of what is now known as Alcorn State University, a great institution situated in my district.
- After graduating Evers worked on the Regional Council of Negro Leadership which provided him with crucial training in activism.
- Then, in 1954, he applied to the University of Mississippi School of Law.

- When despite the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, his application was rejected, Mr. Evers accepted the position of State field secretary for the NAACP.
- Over a nine year period, Mr. Evers crisscrossed the state, working to get African Americans to get involved in the civil right activism and to register to vote.
- Even though racial discrimination and oppression had polluted the minds of an overwhelming majority of whites in Mississippi and throughout the South, Mr. Evers led many more fights against injustice.

- His dogged pursuit for justice made him a target for hate and on June 12, 1963, Mr. Evers was gunned down in the driveway of his home and later died at a local hospital.
- Designating the home of Medgar Evers a National Monument will be an everlasting tribute to his legacy and journey that countless Americans undertook for equality.
- This legislation is of great personal importance to me, because I like many others was inspired by the magnitude of the determination of Mr. Evers to dedicate himself to others and fight against adversity.
- I am honored to walk the path paved by such a civil rights icon.

- H.R. 4895 is a bipartisan measure; Representative Rob Bishop of Utah is an original cosponsor.
- Additionally, it has significant support from stakeholders.
- I have received letters of support of H.R. 4895 from: Tougaloo College, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the Jackson Historic Preservation Commission.
- Mr. Chairman, I ask that all of the letters of support be entered into the record.
- Again, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to participate in today's proceedings.

- I urge you to support this legislation and would welcome your questions about it.
- With that, I yield back the balance of my time.