

# Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman  
Hearing Memorandum

May 11, 2018

To: All Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

From: Majority Committee Staff— Terry Camp and Holly Baker  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x67736)

Hearing: Legislative hearing on **H.R. 5023 (Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton)**, To designate the Civil War Defenses of Washington National Historical Park comprised of certain National Park System lands, and by affiliation and cooperative agreements, other historically significant resources located in the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland, that were part of the Civil War defenses of Washington and related to the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, to study ways in which the Civil War history of both the North and South can be assembled, arrayed, and conveyed for the benefit of the public, and for other purposes.  
**May 17, 2017, 2:00 PM; 1324 Longworth House Office Building**

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## **H.R. 5023, “Civil War Defenses of Washington National Historical Park Act”**

### **Summary of the Bill**

H.R. 5023, introduced by Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), designates the Civil War Defenses of Washington National Historical Park. The Park would be comprised of 21 historic civil war fortifications that are currently administered by the National Park Service (NPS). The sites would be consolidated into one NPS unit and designated a Historical Park. The bill allows for the designation of non-federally owned sites as affiliated areas of the Park, pursuant to a cooperative agreement.

### **Witnesses**

*The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton*  
Member of Congress, Washington, DC At-Large

### **Background**

During the Civil War, many Americans were mindful of the British attack on the nation's capital during the War of 1812 that resulted in the burning of the White House and U.S. Capitol. After the defeat at Manassas in 1861, the Union army realized that the war would be a long struggle and that the fortification of the nation's capital needed to be extended and expedited.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service. Department of the Interior. 2004. “*Final Management Plan: Fort Circle Parks.*”  
[https://home.nps.gov/cwdw/learn/management/upload/final\\_gmp\\_1.pdf](https://home.nps.gov/cwdw/learn/management/upload/final_gmp_1.pdf)

By 1865, the defenses of Washington included 68 forts, supported by 93 batteries for field guns, 20 miles of rifle pits, over 800 cannons, wooden blockhouses at three key points, 32 miles of military roads, and several stockade bridgeheads. The defenseless city of 1860 had become one of the most heavily fortified cities of the world.<sup>2</sup>

One of the sites, Fort Stevens, is notable for being the only occasion a sitting President came under fire. President Lincoln was observing the battle at Fort Stevens on July 11-12, 1864. The Union fort and forces held to push back the Confederate troops.<sup>3</sup>

Efforts to preserve these civil war fortifications and connect them as a “Fort Circle” date back to the early 1900s.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, NPS took over the care and management of many of the sites. Today, the multitude of historic forts are on private, municipal, county, and federal property. Of those administered by NPS, there is one Program Manager who oversees the Civil War defenses of Washington sites, though the individual forts are in three different administrative areas of the National Capital Parks Region.

### **Major Provisions of H.R. 5023**

- Redesignates the collection of Civil War defenses in the Washington D.C. area that are currently under NPS management as a National Historical Park.
  - Battery Kemble, Fort Bayard, Fort Bunker Hill, Fort (Battery) Carroll, Fort Chaplin, Fort Davis, Fort DuRussy, Fort Dupont, Fort Foote, Fort Greble, Fort Mahan, Fort Marcy, Fort Reno, Fort Ricketts, Fort Slocum, Fort Stanton, Fort Stevens, Fort Totten, Fort Circle Drive, Battleground National Cemetery, Fort Washington, Oxon Park and Oxon Hill Farm
- Authorizes the inclusion of forts under the ownership of local governments as affiliated areas.
  - Fort Ward (City of Alexandria, Virginia); Fort Smith and Fort Ethan Allen (Arlington County, Virginia); Fort Willard (Fairfax County, Virginia); and Battery Bailey (Montgomery County, Maryland)
- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior, with the consent of the owner, to include, as an affiliated area, any site associated with the Civil War defenses of Washington owned by a private individual, organization, or unit of a local government and authorizes the

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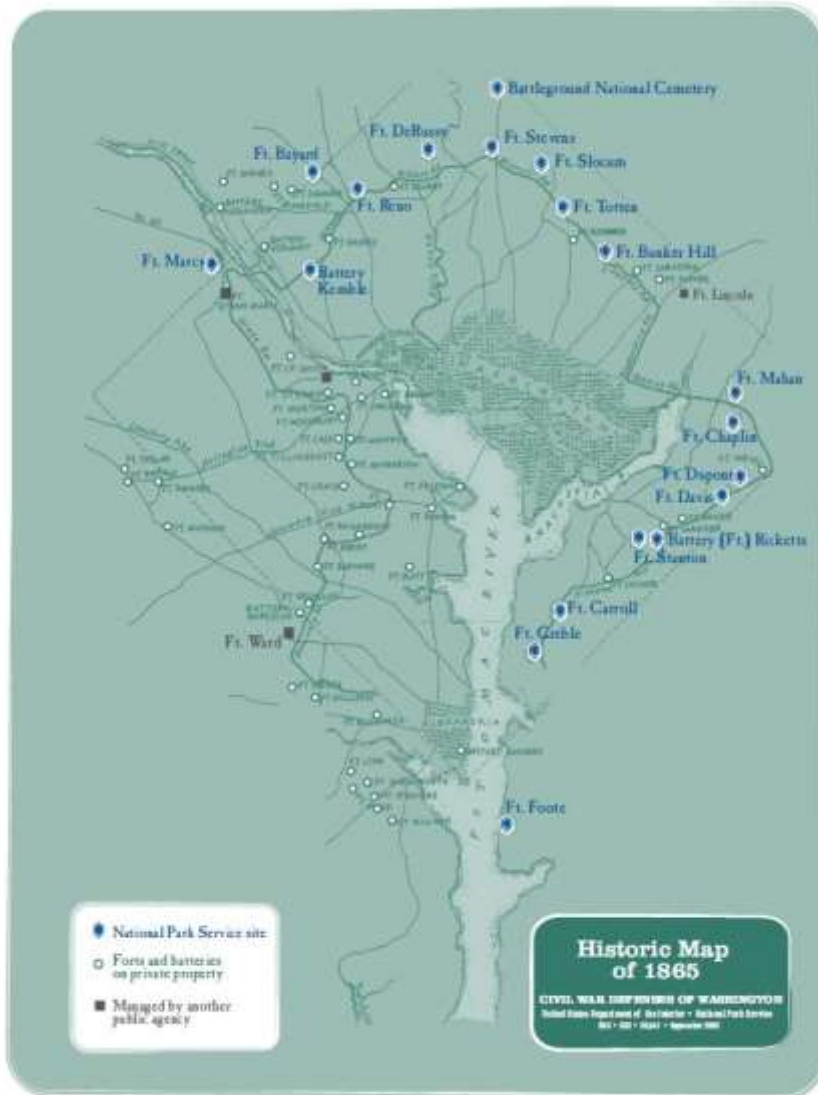
<sup>2</sup> Cooling, Dr. B. Franklin. “*Washington’s Civil War Defenses and the Battle of Fort Stevens.*” American Battlefield Trust. <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/washingtons-civil-war-defenses-and-battle-fort-stevens>

<sup>3</sup> “*Fort Stevens.*” Civil War Defenses of Washington. National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/places/fort-stevens.htm>

<sup>4</sup> “*National Capital Park and Planning Commission.*” In H.S. Wagner and Charles G. Sauer, *Study of the Organization of the National Capital Parks.* 1939. National Park Service. p. 40

Secretary to purchase such properties from willing sellers using donated or appropriated funds.

- Requires the Secretary to study the best methods to interpret and preserve the Civil War defenses of Washington and the Shenandoah Valley Campaigns of 1864.



### Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

### Administration Position

The Administration's position is currently unknown.

**Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)**

None