

**REMARKS OF SENATOR
MAMIE E. LOCKE**

July 13, 2020

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, my name is Mamie Locke and I am a member of the Senate of Virginia and a member of the Board of Directors of the Fort Monroe Authority, where I have served since its inception as an organization. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Fort Monroe is a special, historic place. It is the site of the first landing of Africans in America in 1619. A young first lieutenant and engineer, Robert E. Lee, was stationed at Fort Monroe from 1831 to 1834. Following the 1832 Black Hawk War, the Army briefly detained Chief Black Hawk at the Fort. In 1861, Fort Monroe became known as Freedom's Fortress, as General Benjamin Butler made his famous contraband decision, and the Great Contraband Camp was built for the thousands of slaves who escaped to the fort. And the great Underground Railroad conductor, Harriet Tubman, worked there as a nurse and cook for a time in 1861. Following the Civil War, former Confederate President Jefferson Davis was imprisoned at the fort at what is now the Casemate Museum. So, this is the place, with its history and many stories to tell, that I am here to talk about today.

As a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Fort Monroe was deeded to the state by the U. S. Army following the closure and decommissioning of the installation. Under the Antiquities Act of 1906, President Barack Obama proclaimed Fort Monroe a national monument on November 1, 2011, establishing it as a unit of the national park system, consisting of cultural landscapes and outdoor recreation open spaces along the Chesapeake shoreline, three historic buildings, the historic parade ground, and an easement over and inside the moated historic fortress. Additionally, the Commonwealth transferred ownership of two parcels of land inside the stone fortress, 9 acres known as the Inner Fort, along with 112 acres known as North Beach to the United States, while providing historic preservation and access easement for nearly 93 acres around and including the historic stone fortress. Since the establishment of the Monument, the FMA and NPS have worked collaboratively to optimize efficient and effective preservation and adaptive management of the nationally significant structures and landscapes, having mutually adopted the overarching management theme of “*One Fort Monroe*. Since the establishment of the Monument, it has become clear to both parties that the significant separation between the 92-acre easement boundary and the 112-acre North Beach parcel, diminishes the functionality and the cohesion being sought for a *One Fort Monroe*, and that the

closure of the physical gap separating elements of the Monument is highly desirable. In 2016, NPS indicated it could accept a donation of 44 acres of land that would provide a physical connection between the two divided sections of the Monument to achieve an unbroken coastline along the Chesapeake Bay, from Old Point Comfort north to the end of the property. Consequently, in 2016, the FMA Board unanimously approved a Resolution to support transfer of the 44-acre parcel from the Commonwealth to the United States in order to buttress the partnership between NPS and the Commonwealth by completing the long planned connection to better balance and rationalize the respective responsibilities of the partners for properties at Fort Monroe. Now, it is critically important that we move forward with the state-federal unification plan, making *One Fort Monroe* a reality.

Thank you for your time and attention. I welcome any questions you may have.