



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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The Honorable Tom Tiffany
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Tiffany:

Enclosed are responses to the follow-up questions addressed to Mr. Mike Reynolds, Deputy Director for External and Congressional Affairs at the National Park Service, following his appearance at the July 13, 2023, legislative hearing before your subcommittee. These responses were prepared by the National Park Service.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on these matters.

Sincerely,

Pamela L. Barkin
Acting Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Joe Neguse
Ranking Member

Questions for the Record
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Legislative Hearing on *H.R. 386, H.R. 1318, H.R. 2717, H.R. 3448, H.R. 4377*
July 13, 2023

Questions from Rep. Westerman

Question 1: America is set to celebrate our 250th anniversary in three years; in 2026. How is the National Park Service (NPS) planning for these celebrations? What role could our nation's battlefields will [sic] play in America 250 events?

Response: The NPS is investing heavily in facility and staffing preparations for the Semiquincentennial in 2026 and beyond. Current and planned projects at Saratoga National Historical Park, Minute Man National Historical Park, Boston National Historical Park, Independence National Historical Park and other National Park Service managed sites will ensure that our Revolutionary era battlefields and other sites provide safe and accessible opportunities for all visitors. The NPS is working with the Federal Commission on the Semiquincentennial to bury a time capsule at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia.

In addition, the NPS has distributed \$20M in grants to states through the Semiquincentennial Grant Program. The latest round of funding includes projects in 14 states and sites such as Yorktown and the Old Barracks in New Jersey. Another \$10 Million in preservation grants will be distributed in FY24. The National Park Service has also received \$16M from the Mellon Foundation to support research fellows to fill gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the founding era and the development of American democracy in the intervening 250 years. The NPS is collaborating with the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration on a special project to transcribe the Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant Application Files containing the memories and experiences of Revolutionary War veterans.

Question 2: There are over 40 protected battlefield sites throughout Arkansas, primarily associated with the Civil War. Many of these sites have been protected through the American Battlefield Protection Program, which is a great example of the conservation work that can occur through public-private partnerships. Would this work have been possible without private partners? Can these partnerships serve as a model for other NPS programs?

Response: Since its inception in 1998, the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) has awarded eleven grant awards totaling over \$2.6 million to the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism. These awards have supported both the creation and expansion of state parks associated with Civil War battlefields and exemplify the intent of the program to encourage state and local governments, often joining with other preservation partners such as the American Battlefield Trust, to provide for the protection of battlefields in perpetuity. While the National Park Service (NPS) cannot speak to whether this would have been possible without support from the ABPP, the availability of Federal funds to cover 50% of the acquisition costs has proven to be a valuable incentive for successful public/private partnerships. While the best model for any program is often unique to the specific circumstances of that program, the

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National Park Service is continually working towards improvements in our programs and processes.

Question 3: This Committee has heard numerous concerns about the lengthy and cumbersome appraisal process and its effect on acquiring battlefield lands. How long do these appraisals typically take? Is NPS evaluating any internal processes that could be streamlined to help speed up the appraisal process?

Response: The Department has established a DOI-wide Land Acquisition Working Group of realty specialists, appraisers, attorneys, and program officers, focused on making improvements in key areas impacting federal land acquisition and appraisal processes. A key focus of the workgroup is improving land acquisition efficiency and effectiveness, including Appraisal and Valuation Service Office (AVSO) and bureau realty processes. AVSO and the bureaus are working together to identify potential improvements in the land acquisition process.

AVSO leverages technology to closely track service delivery timeframes for every appraisal and is committed to achieving an average delivery timeframe of 180 days which includes multiple processes, some of which are outside the actual appraisal and appraisal review. The Department's Appraisal and Valuation Information System (AVIS) uses data analytics to monitor and track specific segments of the appraisal process to better identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies. A specific improvement to the system is the ability to flag cases that are funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This gives the ability to look closely at acquisition cases in support of bureau acquisition activities.

Generally speaking, simple assignments are completed faster (median of 140 days), and complex assignments take longer (median of 260 days). The median timeframe for all federal land acquisition appraisals at Interior from March 2018 to present is 200 calendar days, measured from receipt of an appraisal request to delivery of an approved appraisal report. This metric varies by bureau and is something AVSO strives to continuously improve in collaboration with the bureaus. Since March of 2022 AVSO's delivery time has improved approximately 9.5%.

As noted above, through the DOI Land Acquisition Working Group, NPS is working closely with the AVSO and other Departmental bureaus and offices to identify opportunities to streamline and expedite the appraisal services.

Question 4: NPS testified against locating both the Women's Suffrage National Monument and the Medal of Honor National Monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. These are both bipartisan bills, collectively cosponsored by at least 29 Republicans and 29 Democrats.

- a. Why does the Biden administration believe monuments to some of our nation's bravest veterans and the women's suffrage movement are undeserving of prominent locations in our nation's capital?**

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Response: The National Park Service fully supports establishing the Women’s Suffrage National Monument and the Medal of Honor National Monument in prominent locations in the Nation’s capital, using the site selection process outlined in the Commemorative Works Act of 1986 (CWA).

b. If these groups don't rise to the level of garnering support for a location on the National Mall from the NPS and the administration, who would?

Response: The NPS fully supports establishing these memorials in prominent locations in the Nation’s capital, following the site selection process laid out in the CWA.

c. Last Congress, the National Park Service also testified in opposition to locating the Global War on Terrorism Memorial on the National Mall. Thankfully, Congress authorized this location anyway for the Monument in the National Defense Authorization Act. What message do you think it sends to our active military service members when the NPS is telling them that any future conflict they serve in will be undeserving of a memorial placed on the National Mall?

Response: The NPS proudly manages iconic memorials that recognize the contributions of past servicemembers to this Nation. These include, but are not limited to, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, U.S. Marine Corps Memorial, World War II Memorial, and the World War I Memorial. We are privileged to work daily with veterans, family members, and supporters to honor the dedication and sacrifice that our servicemembers have made for this Nation. The NPS will continue to support the establishment of commemorative works that represent military service members in future conflicts in the Nation’s capital.

d. The NPS has testified that the National Mall is a "completed work of civic art." Can you please tell us how many women are featured in this "completed" work of art?

Response: Congress deemed “the great cross-axis of the Mall in the District of Columbia,” extending from the United States Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, and from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial, “a substantially completed work of civic art.” (PL 108-126)

The Department’s testimony in support of authorizing the Women’s Suffrage National Monument recognized the importance of commemorating the women’s suffrage story in our Nation’s capital. Currently, the Vietnam Women’s Memorial, dedicated in 1993, is the only established memorial solely to women on the National Mall. However, within the Nation’s capital on NPS lands and on lands managed by others, there are sites that celebrate and honor women’s history in prominent locations. These include Eleanor Roosevelt (at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial-NPS), Mary McLeod Bethune

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(Lincoln Park and Vermont Ave. NW-NPS), Sarah Rittenhouse (Montrose Park-NPS), and Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument (Constitution Ave. NW- NPS). Authorized in 2022, a new memorial honoring the contributions of women who worked on the home front during World War II has started the site selection process, in accordance with the CWA.