

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS, REGARDING H.R. 8012 TO ESTABLISH THE JACKIE ROBINSON BALLPARK NATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE SITE IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**July 9, 2024**

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Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 8012, a bill to establish Jackie Robinson Ballpark National Commemorative Site in the state of Florida, and for other purposes.

The Department views the achievements and legacy of Jackie Robinson as an important and inspiring story in our nation's history and supports authorizing a special resource study of the Jackie Robinson Ballpark in Daytona Beach, Florida, as provided for in H.R. 8012. The Department recommends deferring action on designating the ballpark as a national commemorative site until after the special resource study is completed and recommendations for preservation and interpretation of the site are submitted to Congress. We also recommend pursuing inclusion of the site on the African American Civil Rights Network through the previously authorized administrative process, rather than adding it through H.R. 8012.

H.R. 8012 would designate Jackie Robinson Ballpark as a national commemorative site. The bill would also add the site to the African American Civil Rights Network, a program managed by the National Park Service (NPS). Additionally, the bill would authorize a special resource study of the Jackie Robinson Ballpark to assess its national significance, suitability, and feasibility for establishment as a unit of the National Park System, and consider alternatives for preservation, protection, and interpretation of the Site by Federal, State, or local government entities, or private and nonprofit organizations.

Jackie Robinson, the son of South Georgia sharecroppers, made history by breaking the race barrier in Major League Baseball (MLB) as the first African American to play in a regularly scheduled MLB professional game in the modern era. On March 17, 1946, he played his first exhibition game at Daytona Beach's City Island Ball Park in Florida. His remarkable performance, including a stolen base and a run scored, captured the nation's attention. Robinson challenged segregation in both presence and performance and paved the way for racial integration in the national sport of baseball. He went on to win the National League's pennant and Rookie of the Year honors and became the first African American player inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. His legacy transcended the sport of baseball, and he continued to serve as an ardent civil rights activist until his death in 1972.

In 1990, the City Island Ball Park, along with the associated ball field and grandstand, was renamed Jackie Robinson Ball Park – a tribute to his impact on baseball and the nation's fight for racial equality.

The special resource study authorized by H.R. 8012 would provide an opportunity for the NPS to evaluate the Jackie Robinson Ballpark for its potential for inclusion in the National Park System, consider alternatives for preservation, protection, and interpretation of the site by federal, state, or local government entities, or private and nonprofit organizations, and report these findings to Congress. Designating the site as a national commemorative site prior to completing the study would be premature. A special resource study would provide valuable information in determining how best to designate and manage the ballpark to recognize Jackie Robinson and his legacy.

Furthermore, the Department has concerns about the use of the term, “national commemorative site,” since the term has no definition by law or custom and the public may be confused about its significance. The NPS is aware of only three examples where Congress has used this designation: the Quindaro Townsite National Commemorative Site in Kansas, the Kennedy-King National Commemorative Site in Indiana, and the Charleston High School National Commemorative Site in Arkansas. The NPS recommends that Congress define the term along with a programmatic context prior to designating any new national commemorative sites.

Additionally, legislative designation of the Jackie Robinson Ballpark as part of the African American Civil Rights Network would circumvent an established administrative process that ensures that all nominated properties meet the network’s criteria.

The Department recommends amending H.R. 8012 to authorize a special resource study to be completed within three years of funding being made available, rather than two. We would be happy to work with the Committee and the sponsor on amendment language.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or other members of the Committee might have.

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PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S.  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 7976, THE CIVIL WAR  
DEFENSES OF WASHINGTON NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ACT**

**JULY 9, 2024**

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Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 7976, the Civil War Defenses of Washington National Historical Park Act.

The Department recognizes the important contribution to America's story that is represented by the Civil War Defenses of Washington sites and supports the bill's goal to expand the public's understanding of the significance of the Defenses of Washington and the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864. However, rather than designating the sites as a stand-alone unit of the National Park System, the Department supports maintaining the existing comprehensive system of parks that interpret the historic forts and also provide recreation opportunities, preserve substantial tracts of forests, and protect water resources in and around the Nation's Capital.

H.R. 7976 would redesignate the Civil War Defenses of Washington as the Civil War Defenses of Washington National Historical Park. The park would include the National Park Service (NPS) sites that are currently associated with the Civil War Defenses of Washington. H.R. 7976 would also allow the NPS to affiliate with any site in the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland that is associated with the Civil War Defenses of Washington for possible inclusion in the park; it would further provide the NPS with the option to purchase these properties from willing sellers. The bill would also direct a study and report of the history of the Civil War to consider what ways these stories could be conveyed for the benefit of the public.

The Civil War Defenses of Washington are historically significant to the Nation for being instrumental to the protection of Washington, D.C., during the Civil War. At that time, a ring of forts and buttresses encircled the capital city as a safeguard from invasion by Confederate troops. It was composed of 68 forts supported by 93 detached batteries and 20 miles of rifle pits. In record time, the Union built a fort system that made Washington, D.C., the most heavily fortified city in the world.

The remaining federally owned sites originally were to have been connected by a Fort Circle Drive in accordance with the 1902 McMillan Commission Report. The drive was not completed, and the forts and parcels of land purchased for the drive were divided among Rock Creek Park, National Capital Parks - East, and the George Washington Memorial Parkway to manage. Today, the NPS manages 19 Civil War fort sites in the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland. Other sites are managed by local governments in Maryland and Virginia while the rest have been torn down or lost to other purposes. The NPS preserves the historical integrity of the fort remnants that are an important part of the Capital's rich Civil War history, and these sites also

function as community parks and a greenbelt of open space for outdoor recreation for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Because the Civil War defenses are spread across three NPS units, the NPS has developed a management system to coordinate across park boundaries within our existing staffing and funding capacity. A Civil War Defenses of Washington program manager and two rangers provide education, interpretation, event planning, and program coordination for all 19 NPS sites. The Department believes this management system effectively protects the existing resources while affording interpretive, education, interpretive, and other opportunities across the sites. The NPS continuously seeks ways to collaborate with local governments and stakeholder groups to elevate public awareness and appreciation of these special places.

If the Committee decides to act on this legislation, we would like to work with the bill sponsor and the Committee on amendments that would align the bill's language with that Congress typically uses for other legislation authorizing new units of the National Park System, including referencing a legislative map. We would also like to discuss whether the study that would be authorized by this bill could be tailored to meet more specific goals.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the other members of the Subcommittee have.