

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and Members of the Federal Lands Subcommittee:

Ft. Pillow is a national treasure of historical significance. Like many similar locations, Ft Pillow was a Civil War battle site. It does not have the notoriety of other major engagements such as Gettysburg, Antietam, or Vicksburg. Its prominence in the history of the Civil War is reflected in the particular sacrifices made by its Union defenders and its aftermath.

Colored Troops made up half of the garrison's forces. Of the approximate number of Union troops, 284 were Black Artillery troops and 294 were white, including a total of 19 white officers. Disciplined and heroically, they made a stand against three times their number. At the conclusion of the battle, the Black Flag of no quarter replaced any semblance of protecting surrendering troops or attending to the wounded.

The casualty figures are as follows: 66% or 170 blacks were killed outright, 35% or 80 whites; many would later die from their wounds. Some 168 white troops were marched off to Andersonville prison where almost all perished from disease and hunger. All 58 black prisoners were re-enslaved.

Although other battles incurred larger casualties, no engagement reflected the animus and hatred depicted at Fort Pillow. Ft Pillow is not to be remembered just for the injustice of racial bias. The gallantry of Americans, both white and black, together fighting for the preservation of their country. Fighting for freedom, for the validity that all persons are created equal.

The Federal Government is in a better position to financially guarantee that Ft Pillow and its immediate environs are restored to its prior existence in order to give a better sense of what it was like on that fateful day in April. The National Parks Service has the resources to clear up to 50 yards of timber in front of the fort; it can build a few of the small log barracks that existed outside the fort; construct the flagpole that was inside the fort proper; erect pup tents within the fort; restore some of the Confederate gun emplacements to the rear of the fort facing the Mississippi River. All these items would give greater authenticity to the site as well as honor the Americans who fought, died and suffered at Ft. Pillow.

The heritage of Ft Pillow, like the other great battle sites of the Civil War, belongs to all Americans and should be preserved as a national treasure. The ground at Ft Pillow is as hallowed

and as consecrated as other more memorable places of Civil War remembrance. It needs the preservation

that only the National Parks Service can provide. We may long forget the names of those who fought there, but those who visit should feel the spirit of those who served there. In the words of one of the survivors, Lt. Mark J. Leaming, "Among the stories of the stormy days of the Republic, few will be longer remembered than the heroic defense and almost utter annihilation of the garrison of Fort Pillow."

Thank you and respectfully submitted,

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