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2ND DISTRICT, ARKANSAS

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE
1533 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-2506
FAX: (202) 225-5903

LITTLE ROCK DISTRICT OFFICE
1501 NORTH UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SUITE 630
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72207
PHONE: (501) 324-5941
FAX: (501) 324-6029

CONWAY DISTRICT OFFICE
900 OAK STREET
CONWAY, AR 72032
PHONE: (501) 902-5733
FAX: (501) 324-6029

The Honorable French Hill
Arkansas's 2nd Congressional District
Statement for the Record
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
U.S. House of Representatives
September 16, 2026

Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this Statement for the Record regarding today's hearing and my bill, H.R. 9148, the Scipio Jones House Assessment Act.

Arkansas has a strong civil rights history. Knowing our history is essential in understanding how our state and nation have developed. In learning about history and the people connected to it, additionally, we can also help ensure future generations learn about those who came before them. Among the many men and women who played a key role in Arkansas's civil rights history, Scipio Africanus Jones stands out as an especially important figure.

Jones was a prominent Arkansas lawyer best known for defending the Elaine Twelve. The Elaine Twelve were twelve Black men who were wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death following the Elaine Race Massacre. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) retained Jones to represent the men, and he successfully appealed their case to the U.S. Supreme Court in *Moore v. Dempsey*.

In this 1923 decision, the Supreme Court overturned the lower court's ruling, finding that the men's trials had been dominated by a mob and had deprived them of their constitutional right to due process. The decision established an important precedent affirming the federal courts' ability to review *state* criminal proceedings when constitutional rights have been violated.

Years later, Little Rock Central High School, located in my district and just down the street from Jone's home, became a national focal point for the integration of public schools following the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. *Moore* served as a key factor in the Supreme Court's decision for *Brown*.

As an important lawyer in Arkansas history and a significant figure in the nation's civil rights history, I have supported efforts to honor him throughout my Congressional career.

In 2017, I was proud to play a critical role to honor Jones with a portrait at the Little Rock post office that bears his name. My law, H.R. 3317, the Scipio Jones Post Office Portrait Act, requires that post office displays a portrait of Jones to ensure that those who visit have an opportunity to learn about his contributions to Arkansas and our nation.

In my most recent bill, H.R. 9148, I direct the Department of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to evaluate the potential inclusion of the Scipio A. Jones House as an affiliated area of the National Park Service. Built in 1928, the elaborate Craftsman-style home features brick, stucco, tile, granite, and a clipped gable. Jones's home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999, though it was unfortunately further damaged by a fire in 2020.

Unfortunately, Jones's historic Little Rock home, known as the Scipio A. Jones House, has fallen into significant disrepair. This study would allow the Department of Interior to study potential ways they could support the home and Jones's legacy at the local level while also providing access to the National Park Service's technical expertise and assistance, as appropriate.

This legislation is the product of local support and collaboration. I appreciate the members of the Little Rock community and the Jones family who have worked to preserve and share his legacy and who have supported efforts to protect this important piece of Arkansas history. H.R. 9148 reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that the Scipio A. Jones House remains a place where Arkansans and visitors can learn about his life, his accomplishments, and the broader history of the civil rights movement within Arkansas.

Preserving the Scipio A. Jones House is critical to protecting an important piece of Arkansas history and honoring the remarkable legacy of a man who played a pivotal role in advancing constitutional rights and justice in our nation. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 9148 and help ensure that this important site and the story of Scipio Jones are preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

French Hill
Member of Congress