

Union Calendar No.

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4706

[Report No. 117-]

To establish the Blackwell School National Historic Site in Marfa, Texas,
and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 27, 2021

Mr. TONY GONZALES of Texas (for himself and Mr. VELA) introduced the
following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

NOVEMBER --, 2021

Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union,
and ordered to be printed

A BILL

To establish the Blackwell School National Historic Site in
Marfa, Texas, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Blackwell School Na-
5 tional Historic Site Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE.—The term “na-
9 tional historic site” means the Blackwell School, in
10 Marfa, Texas.

11 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
12 the Secretary of the Interior.

13 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

14 Congress finds as follows:

15 (1) The Blackwell School, located at 501 South
16 Abbott Street, in Marfa, Presidio County, Texas, is
17 associated with the period of racial segregation in
18 Marfa public schools and is the sole extant property
19 directly associated with Hispanic education in the
20 community, the remaining buildings having been
21 torn down after the school closed in 1965.

22 (2) The Blackwell School is a tangible reminder
23 of a time when the practice of “separate but equal”
24 dominated education and social systems. Despite
25 being categorized as “white” by Texas law, Mexican

1 Americans were regularly excluded from commin-
2 gling with Anglos at barbershops, restaurants, fu-
3 neral homes, theaters, churches, and schools.

4 (3) The spectrum of experiences of students
5 and teachers at the Blackwell School constitute an
6 important record of life in a segregated school in the
7 context of the history of Texas and America.

8 (4) Mexican and Mexican American culture and
9 history in Marfa is tied to the Blackwell School,
10 which for more than 50 years served as a leading
11 feature of the Hispanic community, illustrating the
12 challenge of maintaining cultural identity in a domi-
13 nant Anglo society. Yet today, Hispanic influences
14 are seen in Marfa's social and religious organiza-
15 tions, business and government institutions, and
16 shared experiences of language, food, and music.

17 (5) The historic Blackwell School building is a
18 physical record of the longevity and beauty of the
19 distinctive design and craftsmanship informed by
20 both traditional techniques and materials, and the
21 transition from purely the vernacular to the period
22 of materials, design, and workmanship made avail-
23 able after the arrival of the railroad. The original
24 historic school building and grounds on which it

1 stands provide an authentic setting to commemorate
2 and interpret the history of the Blackwell School.

3 (6) The Blackwell School is closely associated
4 with the broad patterns of local, State, and national
5 history in the area of school segregation. Mexicans
6 and other members of the Latin American diaspora
7 have placed a high value upon education as a means
8 of economic, social, and political advancement.

9 (7) Mexican Americans and other members of
10 the Latin American diaspora have placed a high
11 value upon education as a means of economic, social,
12 and political advancement. However, Hispanics and
13 Latinos have not always had equitable opportunities
14 and access to quality educational facilities in the
15 United States.

16 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BLACKWELL SCHOOL NA-**
17 **TIONAL HISTORIC SITE.**

18 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2),
20 there is established the Blackwell School National
21 Historic Site in the State of Texas as a unit of the
22 National Park System to preserve, protect and inter-
23 pret for the benefit of present and future genera-
24 tions the Blackwell School, its role as both an aca-
25 demic and cultural cornerstone in the community in

1 Marfa, Texas, and its function within a segregated
2 system of education in Texas and the United States
3 from 1885 through 1965.

4 (2) CONDITIONS.—The national historic site
5 shall not be established until the date on which the
6 Secretary has—

7 (A) entered into a written agreement with
8 the Marfa Unified School District providing
9 that the Blackwell School shall be donated to or
10 placed by agreement into co-management with
11 the United States for inclusion in a national
12 historic site to be managed consistently with the
13 purposes of a national historic site; and

14 (B) acquired sufficient land or interests in
15 land within the boundaries of the national his-
16 toric site to constitute a manageable unit.

17 (b) BOUNDARIES.—The boundaries of the national
18 historic site shall be the boundaries generally depicted on
19 the map.

20 (c) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—The map shall be on file
21 and available for public inspection in the appropriate of-
22 fices of the National Park Service.

23 (d) ACQUISITION OF AUTHORITY.—The Secretary
24 may only acquire any land or interest in land located with-
25 in the boundary of the national historic site by—

1 (1) donation;

2 (2) purchase with donated funds; or

3 (3) exchange.

4 (e) ADMINISTRATION.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall admin-
6 ister this national historic site in accordance with—

7 (A) this Act; and

8 (B) the laws generally applicable to units
9 of the National Park System.

10 (2) MANAGEMENT PLAN.—

11 (A) Not later than 3 years after the date
12 on which funds are first made available to the
13 Secretary for this purpose, the Secretary shall
14 prepare a general management plan for the na-
15 tional historic site in accordance with section
16 100502 of title 54, United States Code.

17 (B) Upon completion, the Secretary shall
18 submit the general management plan prepared
19 pursuant to subparagraph (A) to the Com-
20 mittee on Natural Resources of the House of
21 Representatives and the Committee on Energy
22 and Natural Resources of the Senate.

23 (f) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary
24 shall enter into cooperative agreements with the Blackwell
25 School Alliance (and other local, regional, State, academic

1 and nonprofit partners) for interpretive and educational
2 programming, technical assistance, and rehabilitation re-
3 lated to the national historic site.

4 (g) WRITTEN CONSENT OF OWNER.—No private
5 property or non-Federal public property shall be included
6 within the boundaries of the national historic site or man-
7 aged as part of the national historic site without the writ-
8 ten consent of the owner of such property.