

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop, Chairman
Mark-up Memorandum

July 24, 2017

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff, Terry Camp
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Mark-up: **H.R. 2611 (Rep. French Hill)**, To modify the boundary of the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, and for other purposes.
July 25 & 26, 2017; 1324 Longworth HOB

H.R. 2611 (Rep. Hill), “Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site Boundary Modification Act”

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 2611, introduced by Representative French Hill (R-AR-2), amends Public Law 105-356 to modify the boundary of the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site in Arkansas to include seven residences on South Park Street in Little Rock, which consist of approximately 1.47 acres. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to enter into separate cooperative agreements with the owners of such residences to mark, interpret, improve, restore, and provide technical assistance for the preservation and interpretation of their properties.

Background

In a key event of the American Civil Rights Movement, nine black students enrolled at formerly all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September 1957, testing the landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional. The admission of the “Little Rock Nine”, as they came to be known, drew national and international attention, and was the first important test of our nation’s resolve to enforce black civil rights in the face of significant public defiance.



In recognition of the importance of Little Rock Central High School in the history of the United States, the site was designated by the Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark in 1982, and was later designated as a national historic site in 1998 through Public Law 105-356.

In 1996, the neighborhood surrounding the high school, including seven privately owned residences on South Park Street, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as Central High School Neighborhood Historic District. The residences on South Park Street across from the high school are inextricably connected with the significant events of 1957, as images of the Little Rock Nine, crowds of protestors, public, and National Guardsmen appeared in newspapers across the nation and were broadcast live through the emerging media of television.

H.R. 2611 would authorize the National Park Service (NPS) to enter into cooperative agreements with private property owners of the South Street properties. This authority would allow the NPS to use the park's operational funds to mark, interpret, improve, restore, and provide technical assistance for the preservation and interpretation of the properties. It would also allow the NPS to assist the homeowners in applying for federal grants.

All the property owners and several community members have expressed their support for this proposal, including the Central High Neighborhood, Inc., and Preserve Arkansas.



Major Provisions

- Adjusts the boundary of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site to include seven private residences on South Park Street.
- Authorizes the Department of the Interior to enter into separate cooperative agreements with the owners of such residences to mark, interpret, improve, restore, and provide technical assistance for the preservation and interpretation of their properties.

Cost

The CBO has not completed a cost estimate of this bill.

Administration Position

The Administration position is unknown at this time. However, the National Park Service testified in support of identical legislation introduced this Congress as S. 1202 by Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR).¹

Anticipated Amendments

None.

Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)

Showing Current Law as Amended by H.R. 2611

[new text highlighted in yellow; text to be deleted bracketed and highlighted in blue]

Public Law 105-356 (112 Stat. 3268)

SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds that—

(1) the 1954 United States Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which mandated an end to the segregation of public schools, was one of the most significant Court decisions in the history of the United States.

(2) the admission of nine African-American students, known as the "Little Rock Nine", to Little Rock's Central High School as a result of the *Brown* decision, was the most prominent national example of the implementation of the *Brown* decision, and served as a catalyst for the integration of other, previously segregated public schools in the United States;

(3) 1997 marked the 70th anniversary of the construction of Central High School, which has been named by the American Institute of architects as "the most beautiful high school building in America";

¹ Statement of Robert Vogel before the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks. July 19, 2017. https://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=02F317B0-F78F-40F7-94FB-FCDCB3E76640

(4) Central High School was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 and designated by the Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark in 1982 in recognition of its national significance in the development of the Civil Rights movement in the United States; and

(5) the designation of Little Rock Central High School as a unit of the National Park System will recognize the significant role the school played in the desegregation of public schools in the South and will interpret for future generations the events associated with early desegregation of southern schools.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to preserve, protect, and interpret for the benefit, education, and inspiration of present and future generations. Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and its role in the integration of public schools and the development of the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site in the State of Arkansas (hereinafter referred to as the "historic site") is hereby established as a unit of the National Park System. The historic site shall consist of lands and interests therein comprising the Central High School campus and adjacent properties in Little Rock, Arkansas, as generally depicted on a map entitled "Proposed Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site", numbered LIRO-20,000 and dated July, 1998. Such map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service.

(b) BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.— The boundary of the historic site is modified to include the 7 residences on South Park Street in Little Rock, Arkansas, consisting of 1.47 acres, as generally depicted on the map entitled "Central High School National Historic Site Proposed Boundary", numbered 037/80,001, and dated August, 2004.

(b) **(c)** ADMINISTRATION OF HISTORIC SITE.—The Secretary of the Interior (hereinafter referred to as the "Secretary") shall administer the historic site in accordance with this Act. Only those lands under the direct jurisdiction of the Secretary shall be administered in accordance with the provisions of law generally applicable to units of the National Park System including the Act of August 25, 1916 (16 U.S.C. 1, 2-4) and the Act of August 21, 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467). Nothing in this Act shall affect the authority of the Little Rock School District to administer Little Rock Central High School nor shall this Act affect the authorities of the City of Little Rock in the neighborhood surrounding the school.

(c) **(d)** COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—**(1) The Secretary** **(1) IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with appropriate public and private agencies, organizations, and institutions (including, but not limited to, the State of Arkansas, the City of Little Rock, the Little Rock School District, Central High Museum, Inc., Central High Neighborhood, Inc., or the University of Arkansas) in furtherance of the purposes of this Act.

(2) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PRESERVATION AND INTERPRETATION OF CERTAIN PROPERTIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with the owners of the 7 residences referred to in subsection (b) pursuant to which the Secretary may use appropriated funds to mark, interpret, improve, restore, and provide technical assistance with respect to the preservation and interpretation of properties.

(B) INCLUSIONS.—An agreement entered into under subparagraph (A) shall include a provision specifying that no changes or alteration shall be made to the exterior of the properties subject to the agreement, except by the mutual agreement of the parties to the agreement.

[(2) The Secretary] (3) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall coordinate visitor interpretation of the historic site with the Little Rock School District and the Central High School Museum, Inc.

[(d)] (e) GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN.—Within three years after the date funds are made available, the Secretary shall prepare a general management plan for the historic site. The plan shall be prepared in consultation and coordination with the Little Rock School District, the City of Little Rock, Central High Museum, Inc., and with other appropriate organizations and agencies. The plan shall identify specific roles and responsibilities for the National Park Service in administering the historic site, and shall identify lands or property, if any, that might be necessary for the National Park Service to acquire in order to carry out its responsibilities. The plan shall also identify the roles and responsibilities of other entities in administering the historic site and its programs. The plan shall include a management framework that ensures the administration of the historic site does not interfere with the continuing use of Central High School as an educational institution.

[(e)] (f) ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY.—The Secretary is authorized to acquire by purchase with donated or appropriated funds by exchange, or donation the lands and interests therein located within the boundaries of the historic site: Provided, That the Secretary may only acquire lands or interests therein within the consent of the owner thereof: Provided further. That lands or interests therein owned by the State of Arkansas or a political subdivision thereof, may only be acquired by donation or exchange.

SEC. 3. DESEGREGATION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION THEME STUDY.

(a) THEME STUDY.—Within two years after the date funds are made available, the Secretary shall prepare and transmit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives a National Historic Landmark Theme Study (hereinafter referred to as the "theme study") on the history of desegregation in public education. The purpose of the theme study shall be to identify sites, districts, buildings, structures, and landscapes that best illustrate or commemorate key events or decisions in the historical movement to provide for racial desegregation in public education. On the basis of the theme study, the Secretary shall identify possible new national historic landmarks appropriate to this theme and prepare a list in order of importance or merit of the most appropriate sites for national historic landmark designation.

(b) OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH.—The theme study shall identify appropriate means to establish linkages between sites identified in subsection (a) and between those sites and the Central High School National Historic Site established in section 2, and with other existing units of the National Park System to maximize opportunities for public education

and scholarly research on desegregation in public education. The theme study also shall recommend opportunities for cooperative arrangements with State and local governments, educational institutions, local historical organizations, and other appropriate entities to preserve and interpret key sites in the history of desegregation in public education.

(c) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with one or more educational institutions, public history organizations, or civil rights organizations knowledgeable about desegregation in public education to prepare the theme study and to ensure that the theme study meets scholarly standards.

(d) THEME STUDY COORDINATION WITH GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN.—The theme study shall be prepared as part of the preparation and development of the general management plan for the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site established in section 2.

SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this Act.