

STATEMENT OF P DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 307, A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR PARTNERSHIPS AMONG STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, REGIONAL ENTITIES, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO PRESERVE, CONSERVE, AND ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE AT NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT BATTLEFIELDS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, WAR OF 1812, AND CIVIL WAR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 22, 2019

Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 307, a bill to provide for partnerships among State and local governments, regional entities, and the private sector to preserve, conserve, and enhance the visitor experience at nationally significant battlefields of the American Revolution, War of 1812, and Civil War, and for other purposes.

The Department recognizes the need to proactively preserve and protect nationally significant battlefields of the American Revolution, War of 1812, and Civil War. The National Park Service successfully achieves these goals through the American Battlefield Protection Program, which H.R. 307 would expand.

H.R. 307 would authorize appropriations of \$20,000,000 to the Secretary for each fiscal year through 2028 to provide funding to State and local governments to acquire interests in eligible sites for their preservation and protection. The legislation would allow the use of up to ten percent of the annual appropriation for projects other than land acquisition. These projects include up to \$1,000,000 awarded through a competitive grant process to non-profit organizations for programs and projects that improve battlefield interpretive and educational assets and technologies, and up to \$1,000,000 awarded through a competitive grant process to non-profit organizations for the restoration of land preserved through the Battlefield Land Acquisition Program to its historic appearance. The Department supports these additional uses of the acquisition program funds, but recommends amending H.R. 307 to ensure that any restoration is performed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's standards for historic preservation.

The American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) was authorized by Congress in 1996 and directed the Secretary to encourage, support, assist, recognize, and work in partnership with citizens, Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, other public entities, educational institutions, and private nonprofit organizations in identifying, researching, evaluating, interpreting, and protecting historic battlefields. The law authorized annual appropriations of \$3,000,000 to carry out this purpose as part of the national historic preservation program through a variety of financial assistance mechanisms.

The program was amended in 2002 to direct the Secretary to establish a battlefield land acquisition grant program, and authorized an annual appropriation of \$10,000,000 to provide grants to state and local governments to acquire interests in eligible Civil War battlefields for their preservation and protection. This program is authorized through FY 2021. Additionally, in 2014, Congress expanded eligibility for the established battlefield land acquisition program to qualifying sites identified in the National Park Service's report on the Revolutionary War and War of 1812.

The ABPP annually awards Battlefield Preservation Planning Grants to Federal, state, tribal, and local governments and nonprofit/educational institutions to support planning and preservation projects, including interpretation and education programs, at historic battlefields. Any battlefield on American soil is eligible for this grant source. Approximately 18 to 25 planning grants are awarded each fiscal year. Since 1993, ABPP has awarded more than 625 Battlefield Preservation Grants, totaling close to \$22 million, for the preservation and interpretation of more than 300 battlefields in nearly every state and in four U.S. territories.

ABPP also awards money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for Battlefield Land Acquisition grants to assist state and local governments in preserving threatened battlefields. Qualified grants, which require a dollar-for-dollar non-Federal match, are awarded on a rolling basis and prioritize significant and/or threatened properties. The program works with State Historic Preservation Officers to ensure that appropriate protections are legally executed to ensure the preservation of historic resources in perpetuity. Approximately 25 to 30 grants are awarded each fiscal year. The ABPP has awarded nearly 400 grants to date, totaling over \$125 million. Through these successful preservation partnerships, the program has leveraged approximately \$159 million in matching funds resulting in the protection of over 31,000 acres at 120 battlefields in 19 states.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee on amending the bill as described earlier in this statement.

Ms. Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.