



October 29, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer:

As organizations devoted to the promotion of America's commitment to historic preservation, we write to express our support for three bills that were recently reported out favorably by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee: S. 384, the Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument Act; S. 507, the Ralph David Abernathy, Sr., National Historic Site Act; and S. 1097, the César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park Act. Each of these bills is supported by the National Park Service. They would preserve critically important histories of the struggle for equal rights in America.

***Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument Act***

S. 384, the 1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument Act would establish a national monument to preserve, protect and interpret the resources associated with the Springfield Race Riot of 1908 in Illinois. The race riots were led by a mob of white residents who murdered African Americans in their town, looted businesses, and committed arson. Evidence of these hate crimes was unearthed during excavations for a planned high-speed rail project.

The attacks in Springfield were a catalyst for the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Creation of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument would commemorate both the horrific violence that occurred and honor the legacy of the NAACP's ongoing work to ensure equality before the law.

***Ralph David Abernathy, Sr., National Historic Site Act***

S. 507 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Ralph David Abernathy, Sr. National Historic Site at the West Hunter Street Baptist Church in Atlanta as a unit of the National Park System. The historic significance of West Hunter Street Baptist Church has already been recognized in the findings of the National Park Service's (NPS) special resource study.

Rev. Abernathy was a lifelong champion of justice. He devoted himself to promoting civil rights, voting rights, and care for the poor. Preserving and protecting the historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church Site will give the public an opportunity to learn more about his service to this nation and the important events that occurred at the church.

As Martin Luther King, Jr.'s co-president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Rev. Abernathy was a key organizer of the modern civil rights movement. The church where he served as pastor was the location of many meetings of civil rights leaders, training events for activists, and a school for the teaching of nonviolence. Designating the church as a National Historic Site would facilitate appreciation of the crucial role that churches and their congregations played in the civil rights movement.

***César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park Act***

S. 1097 would redesignate the existing César E. Chávez National Monument in Keene, California as the César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park. The historical park would include The Forty Acres in Delano, California; the Santa Rita Center in Phoenix, Arizona; and McDonnell Hall in San Jose, California. S. 1097 would also authorize a study to determine the feasibility of designating the approximately 300-mile march taken by farmworkers between Delano and Sacramento, California, in 1966, as the Farmworker Peregrinación National Historic Trail.

Recognizing additional sites associated with César E. Chávez and the farmworker movement is crucial to telling the story of the civil rights movement, the history of nonviolent civil disobedience, and American labor relations. These sites speak to cooperation between Filipino and Chicano laborers, which resulted in a powerful, long-lasting advocacy on behalf of America's most impoverished workers. Likewise, the Peregrinación National Historic Trail would preserve an iconic American moment, when 10,000 marchers arrived at the state capitol in Sacramento on Easter morning to hear Chávez announce the success of the grape boycott.

Designating these sites as units of the National Park Service will help our nation's public lands to better reflect the diversity of our people. We urge you to bring these bills up for consideration in the U.S. Senate as expeditiously as possible.

Sincerely,

American Anthropological Association

Coalition for American Heritage

Society for California Archaeology

Society for Historical Archaeology