

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 384, TO ESTABLISH THE SPRINGFIELD 1908 RACE RIOT NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

JUNE 21, 2023

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 384, a bill to establish the Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument in the State of Illinois, and for other purposes.

The Department strongly supports S. 384 with technical amendments.

S. 384 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to establish the Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument as a unit of the National Park System after meeting specified requirements. The bill includes authorities for land acquisition and administration that are commonly included in legislation establishing a unit of the National Park System. S. 384 would also authorize the Secretary to establish a memorial within the national monument, and it would establish an advisory commission to advise the Secretary with respect to the management and development of the National Monument.

The establishment of this site as a unit of the National Park System would reflect the National Park Service's (NPS) recently completed special resource study of the race riot site, which concluded that the site meets all criteria necessary to be eligible for designation as a new unit. The Springfield Race Riot site contains the foundations of five of the dozens of homes that were destroyed during the 1908 riot that engulfed the city. The riot was a multi-day affair, started by a White mob, directed primarily against African American residents. The riot resulted in the lynching of two Black men, assaults on many more, damage to Black-owned and Jewish-owned businesses, and the destruction of whole neighborhoods. The riot, trials, and aftermath of the events in Springfield drew national attention to racial violence and sparked direct action by many civil rights leaders.

The events in Springfield occurred in Abraham Lincoln's hometown, a few months before the centennial of his birth, and highlighted the lack of progress on race relations in America. In February 1909, civil rights leaders, in direct reaction to the Springfield riot, formed the National Negro Committee, which would later become the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The Springfield Race Riot site is important for its association with the creation of the NAACP and its contributions to civil rights in America.

In 2019, the NPS completed a reconnaissance survey of the site which provided a preliminary assessment of its national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management, concluding that the site was likely to meet the NPS criteria for inclusion in the National Park System. Subsequently, pursuant to Public Law 116-139, the NPS conducted a full special resource study of the site confirming those findings.

The special resource study found that the archeological site near the 10th & Madison rail corridor meets all criteria necessary to be considered eligible for designation as a new unit of the national park system. The landowners, the City of Springfield, the NAACP, and local community organizations have expressed strong support for a national park designation and for future partnerships with the NPS to protect and manage the site.

The study concluded that there are two options, a smaller and a larger boundary, in which the NPS could reasonably manage the site and meet resource protection and visitor experience objectives. The larger boundary would likely be the most effective and efficient alternative if the site were managed in a collaborative manner with a robust group of partners. A smaller boundary would likely be the most effective and efficient alternative if partnerships were less viable or if it was determined that most visitor services and experiences could be addressed off-site. Given these variables, along with the City of Springfield's plans for the use of lands within the vicinity of the site, the Department would appreciate having the opportunity to give further consideration to whether any changes should be recommended to the boundary that would be established by S. 384 as introduced.

S. 384 includes a provision requiring the Secretary to construct a memorial on the site, using donated or appropriated funds. The Department is aware that stakeholders have completed designs for a memorial and have identified preferred entities for construction. For purposes of consistency with the terms on which Congress has authorized other proposals for the design and establishment of memorials on NPS lands, the Department recommends that the bill be amended to authorize the Secretary to accept the donation of a memorial, provided that the design and location of the memorial is approved by the Secretary and the donation includes sufficient funds to provide for the memorial's installation and ongoing maintenance. This proposed change would include a prohibition on using Federal funds for the design and establishment of the memorial.

The Department looks forward to working with the Committee to add the important story of the Springfield 1908 Race Riot to the assemblage of sites that the NPS administers. We would be pleased to provide recommended language and a revised boundary map, if necessary, to address the issues described in this statement.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

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