

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, 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. 3251, TO MODIFY THE BOUNDARY OF LINCOLN HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS.**

**May 15, 2024**

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Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 3251, a bill to modify the boundary of Lincoln Home National Historic Site in the State of Illinois.

The Department supports the goal of S. 3251 to improve accessibility at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. However, we have some concerns with specific accessibility requirements in the bill that would be extremely difficult and costly to implement and would like to work with the bill sponsor and Subcommittee on critical amendments that would still achieve the overall goal of improving accessibility.

S. 3251 would amend the park's enabling legislation, Public Law 92-127, to include certain lands totaling less than one acre within the boundary. The bill would also require the Secretary of the Interior to modify the intersection at 8th Street and Jackson Street and the area in front of the Lincoln home to provide universal design and accessibility without the use of sloped surfaces.

The Lincoln Home National Historic Site was authorized on August 18, 1971, and formally established on October 9, 1972, to preserve and protect the only home ever owned by President Abraham Lincoln. In total, the buildings included in the park make up four-and-a-half square blocks on 12 acres. The Lincoln Home still stands today with much of the original structure, walls, and foundations remaining.

The National Park Service (NPS) is committed to improving accessibility at Lincoln Home National Historic Site and is presently engaged in a planning effort which takes a holistic approach to accessibility. The plan will address the visitor experience and accessibility of the park, including all walkways and streets and the connections between all visitor destinations. In addition, the project will assess the potential cost of options to the government and the impact to the park's historic resources. In contrast, S. 3251 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to provide universal design and accessibility without the use of sloped surfaces in two park locations. This would require the park to raise the height of certain streets to match the height of the sidewalk. Our planning process thus far has chosen not to pursue this action, as preliminary analysis shows that elevating the street would be a costly undertaking, would not fit with a park-wide approach, and would likely have negative impacts on the historic fabric of the park.

In addition to specifying accessibility requirements for the Lincoln Home, S. 3251 would modify the park's boundary to include the historic Elijah Isles home, an undeveloped lot, and an alley

connecting these properties to the Lincoln Home. The Elijah Isles home was built in 1837 for Elijah Isles, one of the four individuals who founded Springfield, Illinois; while it is an excellent example of Greek revival historic architecture, it does not directly contribute to the Lincoln home story or to the park's mission, it lacks historic context because it is no longer in its original location, and placing it under park management would result in additional deferred maintenance burdens to the park. The NPS also has no need for the undeveloped lot or the alley.

The Department would be happy to work with the bill sponsor and the Subcommittee on amendments that would exclude the boundary expansion and reinforce the bill's intent to improve accessibility at Lincoln Home National Historic Site. We would be pleased to offer language to require a holistic, cost-efficient, and resource-friendly approach, consistent with the plans for the park that the NPS is currently pursuing.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer questions that you or other members of the Subcommittee might have.