

March 3, 2009

I rise as the sponsor of H.R. 146, the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Battlefield Protection Act, which I introduced for myself and a number of other Members. I would like to thank Chairman Rahall and Chairman Grijalva for their help in bringing this legislation to the floor.

From the shot heard around the world in Lexington to the beginning of the winning, when Washington and his soldiers crossed the Delaware, on to the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, the stories of the American Revolution bring to life the ideals of liberty and democracy fostered by our Nation's founders.

As noted historian, David Hackett Fischer, testified before the Natural Resources Committee last year, "from long experience I can testify that one of the best ways to learn about history is to go to sites, and get on the ground." I could not agree more.

While one can read about the American Revolution and the values that were fought for and established at that time, or read about the War of 1812 when the fledgling country fought to maintain its independence, history is best experienced, however, not by reading but by feeling, touching and living what was experienced in those trying times. There is no better way to experience the history of the founding of our great Nation than on the hallowed ground where the epic struggle for our Nation's independence took place.

Preserving these American historic treasures is essential to remembering the sacrifices that our forefathers made to secure our freedom and our independence, and it is vital for educating the current generations and future generations and about our rich cultural heritage. Unfortunately, urbanization, suburban sprawl and unplanned development continually encroach on many of the significant battlefields of that period. This encroachment poses a severe and growing risk to the preservation of these historic significant sites.

Last spring, the National Park Service published its report to Congress on the status of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 sites in the United States. This report demonstrates that there is a great need to act and to act quickly to preserve many of these sites. Out of the 677 naturally significant battlefields and associated sites of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, 99, according to the National Park Service, are lost forever already; 234 are fragmented or in poor condition; an additional 170 are in danger of being destroyed within the

next decade.

H.R. 146 would help State and local governments and non-profits protect and preserve these battlefields and historic sites by authorizing the use of money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to provide up to 50 percent of the costs of purchasing battlefield land threatened by sprawl and commercial development. This legislation is patterned after the successful Civil War Battlefield Protection Program that has been in effect for quite some time now.

I might add, it was an oversight, I would say, that decades ago, these battlefields and sites of the War of 1812 and the Revolutionary War were not included under the same umbrella. Now is the time to do it. Now is past the time to do it.

My home State of New Jersey played a unique role in the American Revolution. I was pleased when, a couple of years ago, Congress took action to protect the battlefields in historic sites where this conflict took place. We passed legislation that created the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area linking hundreds of sites across 14 counties in New Jersey where more military engagements took place than in any other States. New Jersey was truly the crossroads of the American Revolution for a number of reasons, and I'm pleased we're taking steps to preserve the record of those engagements.

There's a fundamental misconception that the American Revolution and War of 1812 took place only in the Northeast. In truth, the story of the American Revolution and the War of 1812 crisscrosses 33 States, from New York to Louisiana, from Georgia to Oregon. Enacting this legislation would allow each of these States to preserve better their history and their role in the War of 1812 and the American Revolution.

Soon, I will be introducing legislation that will provide additional funding for the program created in this legislation, H.R. 149. That legislation, the American Revolution and War of 1812 Commemorative Coin Act, is modeled after the Civil War Battlefield Commemorative Coin Act of 1992, which has raised over \$6 million for battlefield preservation.

Enacting that bill will allow many more historic battlefields to be preserved. Enacting this bill will

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make it possible for our children and their children and other generations to enjoy and learn. We want to give Americans the opportunity to learn history, to feel history, to experience history so that they understand the principles on which this country was founded. People who know history can be better citizens, more engaged in current civic affairs and more cognizant of their place in history.

I urge my colleagues to support and vote for this important legislation.