



## Bull Run Civil War Round Table

P.O. Box 2147  
Centreville, Virginia 20120

July 22, 2020

Congressman Gerry Connelly  
Virginia's 11<sup>th</sup> District  
2238 Rayburn HDB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject: House Appropriations Committee - Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
FY 2021 Appropriation Bill, H.R. 7612, July 14, 2020, [Rpt. 116-448], Sections 442 and  
443.

Congressman Connelly,

I am writing you on behalf of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table (BRCWRT), which is very appreciative of your long-term interest in and support for the rich history heritage we enjoy in the local area. Your support for local historical preservation efforts, including your participation in many signage dedications, has also been duly noted by many of our members over the years.

Since its formation in 1991 the BRCWRT has been recognized as a respected 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a record of successfully enhancing the understanding of America's Civil War and its nuances by both its members and the general public.

The members of the BRCWRT are concerned about two sections contained in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies FY 2021 Appropriation Bill, H.R. 7612 ordered reported by the House Appropriations Committee on July 14, 2020. These provisions are Sections 442 and 443. As currently written, these sections direct the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to:

- 1) Section 442 - within 180 days of enactment of this Act, the National Park Service shall remove from display all physical Confederate commemorative works, such as statues, monuments, sculptures, memorials, and plaques, as defined by NPS, Management Policies 2006, §9.6.1; and
- 2) Section 443 - Within 90 days of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior shall submit to the Committee on Appropriations an inventory of all assets under the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior with Confederate names.



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We strongly oppose these two sections as emotion-based provisions that reflect a lack of knowledge and understanding of our Nation's Civil War history and the history of our Civil War Battlefield Parks and Historic Sites.

The language used in Section 442 implies that "Confederate commemorative works" are defined in NPS Management Policy 9.6.1 - an implication that is incorrect. NPS Policy 9.6.1 establishes policy for Commemorative Works and Plaques and includes no differentiation between, or mention of, Confederate, State, Federal or Union commemorative works and plaques. By not defining "Confederate commemorative works," Section 442 implies that any statue monument, sculpture, memorial, or plaque that includes a name, unit, location, etc. associated with the South or the Confederacy would be targeted for removal - an overly-broad and ill-advised proposal.

Likewise, Section 443's directive to submit "an inventory of all assets under the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior with Confederate names" fails to define what is meant by "Confederate names." Once again, the language used implies that any statue, monument, sculpture, memorial, or plaque that includes a name, unit, location, etc. associated with the South or the Confederacy would be included on the inventory and potentially targeted for removal.

Implementing the actions directed in these sections would have significant negative impact on the historical value of our Civil War Battlefield Parks and Historical Sites managed by the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service. These parks and sites are among the most visited "outdoor museums and classrooms" in the United States and perhaps in the world - people visit them and spend hours exploring their visitor centers and kiosks, grounds and trails and studying the monuments, memorials, plaques and interpretive markers in order to enrich their personal understanding of America's Civil War. While indeed a horrific chapter in our Nation's history in which Americans fought against and killed fellow Americans, the Civil War was also a defining chapter in our history. It forever changed the fabric and evolution of our Nation from these United States to the United States and led to the elimination of slavery and the slave economy within our Nation.

Civil War battlefield park development and battlefield memorialization was primarily planned, overseen and supervised by Federal Government commissions. These commissions were comprised primarily of Federal and Confederate veterans, most of whom participated in the respective battle(s). Civil War battlefield monuments, markers and tablets were erected by these commission and veterans specifically so future generations could learn and understand who did what, where and when on those respective battlefields. Today and for generations past, schools and military organizations from around the world use the



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National Park Service's battlefield parks and their monuments, markers and plaques to enhance understanding of how and where a battle unfolded, why specific decisions were made and the battlefield lessons learned.

Civil War battlefield monuments, markers and tablets serve numerous purposes - some denote military unit positions and movements, some highlight geography and topographic features, while others depict heroic deeds of common men and women who were witnesses to, participants in and victims of Civil War skirmishes, battles, guerilla raids and actions, medical care and recovery, as well as emancipation, reconstruction and reunification. Above all, the monuments, markers and tablets serve as reminders of the sacrifices made and injustices endured by Americans before, during and after the Civil War.

The history of America's Civil War is complex, multi-faceted, often unpleasant and sometimes very messy. But, history is always messy. One learns from history by knowing and understanding facts, events and personal stories. Removing portions of those facts, events and personal stories would so negatively impact the historical and learning value of these battlefields and sites as to make them virtually useless other than as parks and sites for hiking, exercise and walking family pets.

We strongly urge you to use your considerable authority and influence to seek removal of the current Sections 442 and 443 from FY 2021 Appropriation Bill, H.R. 7612, July 14, 2020 [Rpt. 116-448]. Enactment of these provisions would be a travesty and a grave disservice to today's and future generations of Americans of all cultures, races and backgrounds.

Mark Whitenton  
President  
Bull Run Civil War Round Table

CC: Jim Lighthizer, President, American Battlefield Trust