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Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives

Mr. Chairman and members of this Committee:

I am honored to be present today in support of House Resolution 5978 which concerns the First and Second Battlefields of Newtonia, Missouri.

There are multiple reasons for placing these battlefields under the supervision and protection of the National Park Service, but perhaps the most important reason is because such an act will give honor and greater meaning to the men who fought, bled and died on those fields.

A few years ago, a visitor who came to Newtonia on a Smithsonian Civil War tour made an interesting remark. The visitor was a Civil War scholar who was happy to finally visit Newtonia. The remark that still rings in my ear was, "And Gettysburg only had one battle." It was a remark made in jest, but it made a serious point about a small town that witnessed two battles.

Both Newtonia battles are significant in Civil War history. The Second Battle of Newtonia, on October 30, 1864, was the final major Civil War battle west of the Mississippi River. The First Battle of Newtonia is nationally significant because it is believed to be the only Civil War battle in which full Native American units fought on both sides of the conflict. While Native American soldiers fought in many battles, it was unprecedented to have Native American units on both sides, led by Native American officers such as the great General Stan Waitie. At Newtonia this happened, and these units actually met in hand-to-hand combat on the battlefield.

In my humble opinion, this alone makes Newtonia one of the most significant Civil War sites in this country. It is clearly THE site best suited to tell the story of Native American participation in the Civil War.

For some 12 years, the battlefields of Newtonia have been cared for by a small band of volunteers who have donated thousands of their own dollars and many thousands of volunteer hours. Our greatest dream has been to see the land and property we own transferred to the National Park Service. That dream could come closer to reality with the passage of H. R. 5978.

I sincerely hope this committee believes in dreams and feels that the Newtonia dream deserves to come true.

Each day, as a historian, newspaper editor and citizen, I see the greatness of this country. I also understand that when a nation honors its past, it makes for a better future. I hope you will help us honor the past as it relates to the small village of Newtonia, Missouri. In this small village an important page in our history was written and a race of people proved that they truly were Native Americans.

If I may add one final comment, I want to tell you that the greatest Civil War historian in America is supporting our efforts at Newtonia and fully supports passage of this resolution. Mr. Ed Bearss, Historian Emeritus for the National Park Service, was in Newtonia just last week and gave me his strongest endorsement.

Thank you for the honor of being in this seat today.