

# Committee on Resources

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**STATEMENT OF SUE MASICA  
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 4579, A BILL TO MODIFY THE BOUNDARY OF THE HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

JULY 15, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 4579, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to modify the boundaries of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site in the State of Missouri. The Department strongly supports enactment of H.R. 4579. The Administration transmitted a similar proposal to Congress on June 2.

Harry S Truman National Historic Site is comprised of two separate units within the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan area in Missouri. The current acreage is 6.67 acres with the 1.41-acre portion in Independence divided between four residential properties including the Truman Home. The 5.26-acre portion in Grandview includes the Truman Farm Home. H.R. 4579 would add approximately 5 acres of the original 600-acre Truman Farm that abut the Grandview unit. These two contiguous parcels are the only undeveloped land that remains of the original Truman Farm. This additional acreage would preserve the historic integrity of the Grandview site, provide improved on-site visitor amenities and interpretation, permit vegetative screening of existing development, and prevent additional commercial encroachment to the Truman Farm.

This expansion is included in the park's approved 1999 General Management Plan. It is the only land acquisition priority for the park. Both property owners are willing to sell their land to the National Park Service for the purposes defined in the park's General Management Plan and Long-Range Interpretive Plan. Public Law 103-184 authorized the addition of the Truman Farm Home by donation from Jackson County, Missouri, and directs the Secretary to provide appropriate means to minimize the adverse effects of development and use of adjacent lands.

The proposed 5-acre strip of land is basically undeveloped (3.82 acres) except for the small retail paint store (.95 acre) located at the west end and fronting on Blue Ridge Boulevard. The strip separates the park boundary on the south from a five-story retirement housing facility. The paint store is connected to all utilities (water, sewer, electricity, and telephone) and has a paved parking area in front. The total land acquisition cost for both parcels is estimated at about \$900,000, with a current economic price escalation factor of 3 percent per year.

H.R. 4579 would allow the park to remove non-historic items, such as the existing paved parking area, the paved entrance road, temporary park maintenance shed, portable toilet, and flag pole from the historic scene and relocate them to the new visitor contact center in the renovated existing paint store and paved parking area. The historic earthen entrance lane would then be re-established and used by visitors as the walk-in entrance to the site.

The use of the existing paint store as a visitor contact center would permit the park to eliminate the use of the Truman Farm Home's screened-in side porch as a visitor welcome point and cooperating association sales area, which is not sheltered from inclement weather. This would restore the historic integrity to the home, remove the impact of the wear and tear on the historic structure, and provide visitors with a sheltered staging area for tours. In addition, indoor handicapped accessible restroom facilities and drinking water would be available to visitors.

Passage of H.R. 4579 would have minimal impact on the park's current budget. In order to convert the paint

store building into a visitor contact center, the park would request a one time nonrecurring project sum estimated at \$530,000 after acquisition of the 5 acres. The project would include minor remodeling of the paint store, development of an audiovisual program, and the construction of exhibits as well as restoration of the historic scene. The request for funds would be subject to National Park Service prioritization procedures for non-recurring project funding, so a specific timeframe cannot be identified for completion of this work. To operate the visitor contact center at current visitation levels from May 1 to October 15 would require an annual operating increase estimated at \$103,000. This figure includes all staff, maintenance, and utility costs.

Upon acquisition of the two parcels, the park would be able to increase the visitor's experience, understanding, and appreciation of how Harry S Truman's time spent as a farmer helped develop his character and principles. This would be done through restoring the historic scene and utilizing interpretive exhibits and audiovisual programs in the visitor contact center. The interpretive media in this center would help the visitor understand what it must have been like to work on and manage a 600-acre Missouri farm during the turn of the 20th century, before they go out to tour the farm home.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared remarks and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members might have.