

# Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman  
Hearing Memorandum

February 9, 2016

**To:** All Subcommittee Federal Lands Members

**From:** Majority Committee Staff -- Aniela Butler and Terry Camp  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x 6-7736)

**Hearing:** Legislative hearing on H.R. 1621 (Rep. J. Randy Forbes), To modify the boundary of Petersburg National Battlefield in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and for other purposes  
**February 11, 2016 at 10:00 AM; 1324 Longworth HOB.**

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## **H.R. 1621 (Rep. J. Randy Forbes), To modify the boundary of Petersburg National Battlefield in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and for other purposes**

### **Bill Summary**

H.R. 1621, introduced by Congressman J. Randy Forbes (R-VA-04), is a bipartisan bill that authorizes the National Park Service (NPS) to acquire approximately 7,200 acres from willing sellers to expand the Petersburg National Battlefield in Petersburg, Virginia. The bill also exchanges administrative jurisdiction over two small parcels of land between the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior.

### **Invited Witnesses**

*The Honorable J. Randy Forbes* (R-VA-04)  
Member of Congress

*Mr. Tom Gilmore*, Real Estate Director  
The Civil War Trust  
Washington, D.C.

### **Background**

The Petersburg Campaign consisted of 26 major battles during which the Union Army attempted to capture the city of Petersburg, Virginia during the Civil War. From June 15, 1864 to April 2, 1865, the Union and Confederate armies battled across 576 square miles to secure access to five railroads that connected Petersburg to the Confederate capital, Richmond.<sup>1</sup> Petersburg served as the Confederate's main supply base and control of the railroads meant the Union could isolate Richmond and severely weaken the Confederacy. The eventual Union

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<sup>1</sup> Civil War Trust, "10 Facts about the Petersburg Campaign," <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/petersburg/10-facts-about-the-petersburg.html>

victory on April 2 lead General Robert E. Lee to abandon Richmond and head to Appomattox Court House where the Confederacy would surrender one week later on April 9, 1865.<sup>2</sup>

H.R. 1621 allows for the expansion of the Petersburg National Battlefield to include 7,238 new acres across 12 different battle areas. After the site's creation in 1926, the official boundaries only included a small portion of the battles fought during the Campaign.<sup>3</sup> Residential and commercial development near the park increased NPS concerns that the integrity of many battle sites would be compromised in the future. After assessing the significance, integrity, and interpretability of several battle sites, NPS recommended that 12 new battle sites be included in the park's boundaries. These battles were all either decisive or major and had a "direct, observable impact on the direction, duration, conduct, or outcome" on the Campaign or War.<sup>4</sup>

A second provision of the bill transfers an equal amount of acreage between the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior near the Battlefield. The Department of the Army will acquire 1.17 acres of land that includes a gated entrance to Fort Lee in exchange for transferring 1.17 acres of land historically relevant to the Battlefield to NPS.

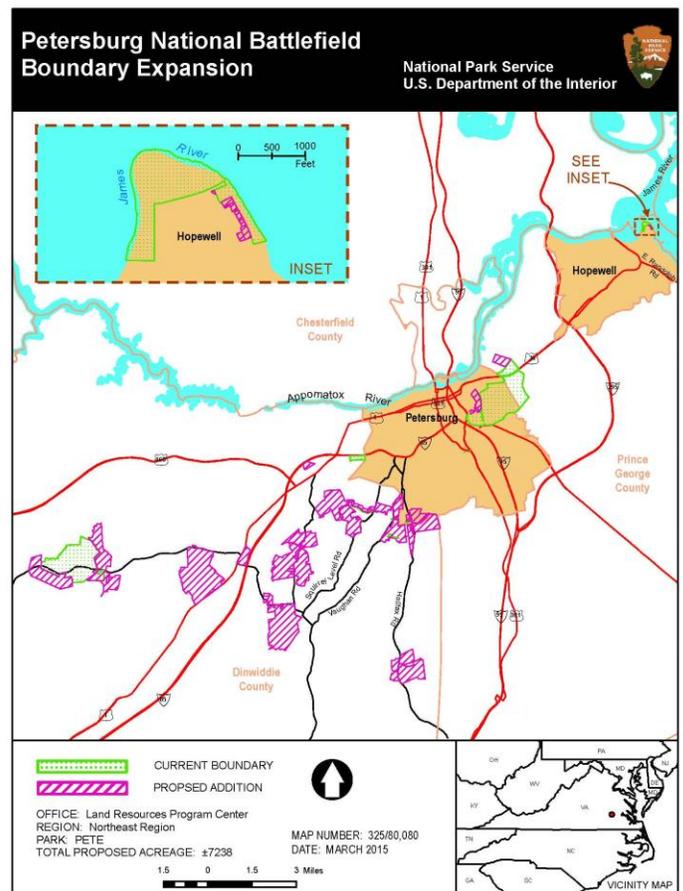
A version of this bill passed the House by unanimous consent in 2009 during the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. A Senate companion bill, S. 718, is currently sponsored by both Virginia United States Senators.

### **Administration Position**

The administration testified in support of a similar bill in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress during a Senate Energy and Natural Resources hearing.<sup>5</sup>

### **Cost**

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.



<sup>2</sup> Calkins, Chris, "Petersburg, The Wearing Down of Lee's Army," Civil War Trust, <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/petersburg/petersburg-history-articles/petersburgcalkins.html>

<sup>3</sup> NPS, "General Management Plan for the Petersburg National Battlefield," p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Decisive battles are defined as having a direct, observable impact on the direction, duration, conduct, or outcome of the war. Major battles are defined as having a direct, observable impact on the direction, duration, conduct, or outcome of the campaign. Ibid., p. 22

<sup>5</sup> Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks, S. Hrg. 113-493, July 23, 2014, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113shrg91555/pdf/CHRG-113shrg91555.pdf>