

# Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman  
Markup Memo

July 6, 2015

To: Natural Resources Committee Members  
From: Terry Camp, Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)  
Hearing: Full Committee Markup on H.R. 959, "Medgar Evers House Study Act"

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## **H.R. 959, "Medgar Evers House Study Act"**

### **Summary of the Bill**

H.R. 959, introduced by Congressman Bennie Thompson, (D-MS), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Medgar Evers House, located in Jackson, Mississippi.

The special resource study authorized by this act will require the Secretary of Interior to determine the national significance of the Evers home; determine the feasibility of designating the site as a unit of the National Park Service; consider other alternatives for preservation, protection, and interpretation; consult with interested federal, state, or local governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, and individuals; and identify costs and estimates for acquisition, development, and maintenance of the site.

### **Background**

Medgar Wiley Evers was born in Decatur, Mississippi, on July 2, 1925. Medgar served in the army in France and Germany during World War II and following his military service attended Alcorn State University, where he met his future wife, Myrlie.<sup>1</sup>

In February of 1954, Evers applied to the then-segregated University of Mississippi Law School. When his application was rejected, Evers became the focus of an NAACP campaign to desegregate the school. In December of that year, Evers became the NAACP's first field officer in Mississippi.<sup>2</sup>

On June 12, 1963, as he returned home from a NAACP planning meeting, Medgar was shot in the back by Byron De La Beckwith, a member of the White Citizens' Council. He died at

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<sup>1</sup> "Medgar Evers," The Biography.com website, <http://www.biography.com/people/medgar-ever-9542324> (accessed Jul 02 2015).

<sup>2</sup> "NAACP History: Medgar Evers" NAACP.org website, <http://www.naacp.org/pages/naacp-history-medgar-ever> (accessed Jul 02 2015).

a local hospital less than an hour later. Medgar was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Evers and her children continued to live in the house for a year after the murder of her husband, but she decided that she could not remain there and moved her family to California. Subsequently, she donated the house to Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi. The home, now a museum operated by Tougaloo College, contains period furnishings, exhibits, and family photographs that honor Medgar Evers' legacy as one of the icons of the Civil Rights movement in America.<sup>4</sup>

On June 16, 2015, the Subcommittee on Federal Lands heard testimony on H.R. 959. In written testimony, the Department of the Interior expressed support for the special resource study authorized by H.R. 959, noting, however, that priority should be given to the 33 previously authorized studies for potential units of the National Park System, potential new National Heritage Areas, and potential additions to the National Trails System and National Wild and Scenic River System that have not yet been transmitted to Congress.<sup>5</sup>

### **Effect on Current Law**

H.R. 979 does not affect current law

### **Cost**

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill, however, the Department of the Interior estimates the study will cost between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

### **Administration Position**

Supports

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Legislative Hearing on H.R. 959 Before the Subcommittee on Federal Lands, United States House of Representatives, 114th Cong. (2015) (statement of Karen E. Mouritsen, Deputy Assistant Director, Energy, Minerals, and Realty Management – BLM).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*