

# Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman

## Hearing Memorandum

February 2, 2018

**To:** All Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

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

**Hearing:** Legislative hearing on **H.R. 4895 (Rep. Bennie G. Thompson)**, To establish the Medgar Evers National Monument in the State of Mississippi, and for other purposes.  
**February 6, 2018, at 10:00 AM; 1324 Longworth House Office Building**

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### **H.R. 4895, “*Medgar Evers National Monument Act*”**

#### **Bill Summary**

H.R. 4895, introduced by Representative Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS-02), would establish the Medgar Evers National Monument in the city of Jackson, Mississippi as a unit of the National Park System and authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire property for the monument by donation, purchase with donated funds, or exchange.

#### **Cosponsors**

Rob Bishop (R-UT)

#### **Invited Witnesses:**

*The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson*  
Member of Congress, Mississippi’s 2<sup>nd</sup> District

#### **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

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<sup>1</sup> "Medgar Evers." Biography.com. January 24, 2018. Accessed February 01, 2018. <http://www.biography.com/people/medgar-evers-9542324>.

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

The widowed Mrs. Evers and her children continued to live in their home in Jackson, Mississippi for a year after the murder of her husband, but Mrs. Evers decided that she and her family 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> The home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000 and in 2017 was designated as a National Historic Landmark.<sup>5</sup> The Medgar Evers Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.<sup>6</sup>



(Photo Credit: Jennifer Baughn, Mississippi Department of Archives and History)

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<sup>2</sup> "NAACP History: Medgar Evers." NAACP.com. Accessed February 1, 2018. <http://www.naacp.org/oldest-and-boldest/naACP-history-medgar-evers/>.

<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> "Interior Department Announces 24 New National Historic Landmarks." DOI.gov. January 11, 2017. Accessed February 1, 2018. <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-department-announces-24-new-national-historic-landmarks>.

<sup>6</sup> "Medgar Evers Historic District." National Parks Service. Accessed February 01, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/13000737.htm>.

The Board of Trustees of Tougaloo College is interested in donating the Evers home to the National Park Service and has written in support of this legislation. Last year, through Public Law 115-31, Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to conduct special resource studies of significant civil rights sites in the State of Mississippi, one of which was the Medgar Evers home.

### **Major Provisions**

- Establishes the Medgar Evers National Monument in Jackson, Mississippi as a unit of the National Park System.
- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land or interest in land located in the monument boundary by donation, purchase with donated fund, or exchange.
- Provides that the monument will not be established until an agreement has been entered into between Tougaloo College and the Secretary of the Interior providing for donation of the Medgar Evers home and sufficient land has been acquired to constitute a manageable unit.
- Requires the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a cooperative agreement with Tougaloo College for interpretive and educational programming related to the Monument.
- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to enter into cooperative agreements for preservation and interpretation with the owner of a national significant property within the historic district.

### **Cost:**

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

### **Administration Position:**

The Administration's position is currently unknown.

### **Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)**

N/A