

**TESTIMONY OF LANG SHEFFIELD, PRESIDENT, FRIENDS OF ANDERSONVILLE
BEFORE THE HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS**

September 5, 2002

Mr. Chairman and members of the House of National Parks Subcommittee.....It is indeed an honor to represent the Friends of Andersonville and offer testimony today on behalf of House Bill 4692. This is not my first trip to Washington to ask for congressional support regarding the Andersonville National Historic Site. In the 1960s, I came to Washington with a number of other distinguished individuals including our local State Senator, Jimmy Carter, to ask for Congress to pass legislation that would create the Andersonville National Historic Site. We met with Senators Russell and Talmedge along with Secretary of the Interior Udall to press for the site's inclusion in the National Park Service. That bill was passed and that legislation designated Andersonville to be the memorial for all prisoners of war in American history. My second trip to Washington on behalf of Andersonville was in the mid 1990s. I then asked for congressional support to build a Visitor Center and Museum to honor all prisoners of war in American history that would tell their story to this and future generations. My organization, the Friends of Andersonville along with the American Ex-Prisoners of War, raised a substantial share of the construction funds for that museum. The Friends of Andersonville is made up of 210 members across the country. The museum was opened in 1998 and Senator John McCain of Arizona came and dedicated this wonderful facility. Since that time, over a million visitors have come to this powerful place to learn its remarkable story. In 1996, our organization under the leadership of my good friend, Carl Runge, created an endowment fund that would support in perpetuity Andersonville National Historic Site and the National Prisoner of War Museum. We called this fund the Andersonville Trust. Since 1996, we have raised over \$800,000 in the corpus of this fund. We have conservatively invested those funds and used only the interest and not the corpus in benefiting the park. Shortly after the National Prisoner of War Museum opened, the National Park Service approached the Friends of Andersonville for help on a specific issue. A county road bisected the new park's entrance road presenting a security and safety issue that was unacceptable. The only way that this problem could be solved would be through acquiring a parcel of land that would allow the road to be re-routed; thus, providing access to Georgia Highway 49 for the residents living near the park's boundary. The Friends of Andersonville purchased 20-acres of land for \$50,000

from the landowner. This was a lengthy and complex process. The Friends have owned the land for approximately one-year. Through the Macon County Board of Commissioners, the Friends requested that the county road be re-routed so that it would not bisect the park entrance road. This was accomplished less than a month ago. Also, we asked area Boy Scouts to help landscape this new land so that it would match with other adjacent park land. Through a local Eagle Scout project, 100 trees were planted all of which were donated by former-POWs.

Mr. Chairman, the Friends of Andersonville and the people of Sumter and Macon County, Georgia are extremely proud of our relationship with the National Park Service at Andersonville National Historic Site. Also, we are proud of the wonderful story that is told of how captive Americans serving in our nations military have persevered for the sake of freedom despite the most horrible conditions and circumstances. For this reason, our organization continues to support the efforts of the National Park Service and urge the speedy passage of this legislation to allow the Friends of Andersonville to donate this land to the government for the purposes of the National Park Service.

Mr. Chairman....Again, I thank you for the opportunity to speak and to represent our organization in sharing our unwavering support for Congressman Bishop's important legislation. Thank you.