

Scott Garrett, Member of Congress  
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In Support of H.R. 1096, The Act Commemorating the "LITE" – The Lifetime Innovations of Thomas Edison

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Christensen, Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Subcommittee on legislation I have introduced, H.R. 1096, a bill to benefit an important historic landmark for my home-state of New Jersey and the Nation – the Thomas Edison National Historic Site. I also want to thank my New Jersey colleagues for their support of this effort, particularly Bill Pascrell, who have joined me in sponsoring this legislation and who is here with me today to express his support for the bill.

I also want to take this opportunity to introduce George Keegan, Executive Director of the Edison Preservation Foundation, who will testify later this morning to his organization's important work on behalf of the Edison site. Since 1997, the Edison Preservation Foundation has successfully partnered with the National Park Service to provide resources for the restoration of the site's historic buildings and artifacts, with plans to also establish an endowment to support the future operation of the site, including ongoing educational programs for children. This partnership is a great example of the public and private sectors working together to address a pressing need and could serve as a model for other similar partnerships in this time of scarce federal resources. I applaud George, as well as the Edison Foundation's Chairman and President, John Keegan, for their good work.

Thomas Edison's technological contributions – most notably the incandescent light bulb, the motion picture camera and the phonograph - have had a profound effect on the way of life for people around the world, a fact that led Life Magazine to recently honor Edison as the most important individual of the last 1,000 years.

The Thomas Edison National Historic Site in West Orange, New Jersey is a national treasure, encompassing Edison's home of 45 years, his laboratories and offices, and a vast collection of artifacts and historic documents.

Unfortunately, both the historic structures where Edison lived and worked and the irreplaceable treasures they now hold, are at serious risk due to extensive water damage and age-related decay. Although the site historically has been a major educational destination for students from around the region, the need for renovations has led to the temporary closure of the site to visitors.

While private support through the efforts of the Edison Preservation Foundation is crucial to efforts to restore the site, a long-term commitment from the federal government is also necessary to the future success of this National Park Service site.

To ensure this long-term commitment is realized, I introduced H.R. 1096, the LITE Act, which commemorates Thomas Edison's lifetime accomplishments, redesignates - consistent with National Park Service guidelines - the Edison historic site as a "national historic park," and authorizes appropriations for the support of the site. This legislation will enable the Edison site to more effectively compete for scarce federal funds and would also strengthen the Edison Preservation Foundation's ability to raise private dollars as part of its successful partnership with the National Park Service.

Thomas Edison's legacy is an important component of the history of the United States and the State of New Jersey. It is incredibly important that the Congress affirm its support for the Edison site by advancing the legislation that is the subject of this hearing today.

Thank you again for taking the time today to review this legislation important to the state of New Jersey and for allowing me the opportunity to address you.