

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman
Mark-Up Memorandum

February 9, 2018

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Terry Camp
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Mark-Up: **H.R. 4895 (Rep. Bennie G. Thompson)**, To establish the Medgar Evers National Monument in the State of Mississippi, and for other purposes.
February 14, 2018, at 10:15 AM; 1324 Longworth House Office Building

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

Summary of the Bill

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-01]

Background

Medgar Wiley Evers was born in Decatur, Mississippi, on July 2, 1925. Medgar served in the U.S. Army in France and Germany during World War II. Following his military service, he attended Alcorn State University where he met his future wife, Myrlie.¹

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.²

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

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

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

local hospital less than an hour later and was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.³

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 given continued social unrest, Mrs. Evers decided that she and her family could not remain and relocated 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.⁴ The home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000 and in 2017 was designated as a National Historic Landmark.⁵ The Medgar Evers Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.⁶



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

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.

³ *Id.*

⁴ 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).

⁵ "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>.

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

The Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a legislative hearing on H.R. 4895 on February 6, 2018. The bill is supported by Tougaloo College, the Jackson Historic Preservation Commission, and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

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.

Anticipated Amendments

- Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) will offer an amendment to add a map provided by the National Park Service.

Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)

None.