

Committee on Resources,
Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands
parks - - Rep. Joel Hefley, Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6207 - - (202) 226-7736

Witness Statement

**STATEMENT OF JOHN ROBBINS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP
AND PARTNERSHIPS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES,
CONCERNING H.R. 1518, TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO INCLUDE ON THE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES THE AVERY POINT LIGHTHOUSE IN GROTON,
CONNECTICUT, AND PROVIDE \$200,000 FOR THE RESTORATION OF THAT LIGHTHOUSE.**

July 17, 2001

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 1518, to require the Secretary of the Interior to include on the National Register of Historic Places the Avery Point Lighthouse in Groton, Connecticut, and provide \$200,000 for the restoration of that lighthouse.

The Department appreciates the efforts to protect this historic lighthouse. This site could be an excellent candidate for funding through the Save America's Treasures program, for which the President's FY 2002 Budget proposed \$30 million and the House and Senate have both supported. We would be happy to provide the local sponsors with more information on how to apply for these grants to protect the historic buildings, sites, artifacts, and collections that represent significant achievements in American culture.

The Department, however, has concerns with the concept of earmarking limited National Park Service funds for specific non-park facilities. Although the amount in this bill is small, it nevertheless diverts funds away from the President's initiatives to take care of current responsibilities by addressing deferred maintenance backlogs. The Department supports the principle that States – not the Federal Government – are best suited to determine the highest priorities for using grant funding, including Historic Preservation Fund funds, which would be allocated in this bill for a specific project. We are concerned that legislative earmarks could effectively take funding away from grants to States and Indian tribes nationwide and dictate how those funds should be spent.

We support efforts to preserve significant historic lighthouses, which are important national historic treasures worthy of our care and attention. We note that this Committee took the lead in passing legislation to facilitate the transfer of historic lighthouses to non-government organizations willing to help preserve them. We stand ready to help the owners of this lighthouse to recognize this historic structure by nominating it for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Long-standing procedures, however, require that the owners work through the State's Historic Preservation Officer, and we understand that such coordination on an application has not been completed. If needed, we can help the owners, working with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer, on the documentation necessary to evaluate the property's eligibility for listing.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared remarks and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members might have.

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