

Statement of Senator Rick Santorum

House Resources Committee

Hearing on Gettysburg National Military Park

March 21, 2002

Chairman Radanovich and members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today regarding the approved General Management Plan that outlines the parameters for design and construction of a new visitors center and museum at the Gettysburg National Military Park (GNMP). Over the course of several years, I have been involved with, and strongly supportive of, the effort to preserve the historic battlefield landscape and surrounding park resources, in order to continue sharing the story of the Battle of Gettysburg. Undoubtedly, that battle is one of the most significant events in our nation's history.

Not unlike the many battlefields that reflect our nation's history, Gettysburg NMP faced the daunting task of how to preserve the many associated aspects of the park - artifacts, buildings, the battlefield, and the Soldiers' National Cemetery. To that end, the National Park Service initiated a process in 1995 that led to the development of a new general management plan. After an exhaustive process whereby dozens of public meetings were held; comments solicited on various preservation options; and an environmental impact study performed - a conclusion was reached as to how this comprehensive preservation effort would proceed.

The end result would come in the form of a collaborative and cooperative partnership between the Gettysburg National Military Park and a non-profit organization - the Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation. Through their combined efforts, a new world-class visitors center will be built, in addition to a new museum that will house a permanent collection of Civil War artifacts and documents, and the battlefield will be restored to its historic condition preserving the battle lines of July 2 and 3, 1863.

It's my understanding that the committee wants to explore the cost increase of the project, and look at the progress-to-date on implementation of the General Management Plan. I firmly believe the fundraising goals, while significant, will be met in a timely manner, and that given a chance to succeed - it will. I'm sure the committee will be satisfied with the answers provided today, and will be presented with the progress that has already been achieved.

The Gettysburg National Military Park is truly a national treasure, and sacred ground. The battlefield is a sobering and tangible reminder of the sacrifice and courage of thousands of men whose convictions and actions determined the fate of this country. On the site where more than 51,000 men were killed, wounded or captured our obligation is clear: we must thoughtfully, thoroughly, and accurately present the Battle of Gettysburg and its significance in the context of the Civil War. I firmly believe the approved General Management Plan takes appropriate and meaningful steps to ensure that park visitors will be guaranteed that experience.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to our continued dialogue on this worthy and important undertaking, and appreciate the opportunity to highlight the unique partnership, and unwavering commitment, that will ensure this project's success.

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