

U.S. Civil Rights Trails Special Resource Study Act of 2009 (H.R. 685/S. 1802)

October 20, 2009

Our Request

The National Trust supports and endorses H.R. 685, a bill that proposes an authorization for a special resource study to be conducted by the National Park Service, to study and analyze the opportunities for preservation and interpretation of specific sites related to the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

Background Information

TITLE: “U.S. Civil Rights Trail Special Resource Study Act of 2009”.

SPONSORS: Rep. William Lacy Clay (D-MO); Sen. Roland Burris (D-IL).

SUMMARY: There are a large number of sites, scattered across many states, associated with historic events of the civil rights movement in the United States. At least 49 of these sites have been nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Many are managed by state or local agencies and organizations committed to their preservation and interpretation.

H.R. 685, as introduced, proposes a study of the feasibility of establishing a National Civil Rights Trail System to link sites like these with common signage, maps, and educational materials to improve public awareness and facilitate the study of their importance in United States history. The legislation originally envisioned the study being conducted by the Archivist of the United States, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, in the same manner as those done under the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1241 et seq.) for National Historic Trails. The bill also mandates the Secretary of the Interior to establish and maintain at least one trail in each state where a significant civil rights event occurred and to establish at least six trails as soon as practical after enactment.

STATUS: H.R. 685 was introduced on January 26, 2009. The House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest and Public Lands held a hearing on the bill on July 8, 2009. The bill was reported out of the House Committee on Natural Resources with amendments and passed the House on September 29th. The bill currently has 33 co-sponsors in the House. S. 1802 was introduced on Sen. Roland Burris (D-IL) on October 20th and referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources to a national network of people, organizations, and local communities committed to saving places, connecting us to our history, and collectively shaping the future of America's stories. For more information, please visit www.PreservationNation.org.