

**NATIONAL
TRUST
FOR
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION®**

Richard Moe
PRESIDENT

January 8, 2010

The Honorable Mark Udall
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20051

Dear Mark:

I am writing in support of a bill that is of great importance to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and I urge you to schedule a hearing on it as early as possible when the Senate returns for the second session.

The United States Civil Rights Trail bill – S. 1802 introduced by Senator Burris – would direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study for the protection and interpretation of American civil rights sites across the country. These sites are of tremendous value to our history as a nation, and the first step in assessing this inventory's importance as a collection is for the National Park Service to conduct this study. The National Trust is particularly interested in the potential addition of some or all of the sites to a National Civil Right Trail System and the study would provide Congress with recommendations regarding the route.

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

The bill would direct the Secretary to identify the resources and historic themes associated with the fight to secure equal rights for African-Americans and focus on the period from 1954 through 1968. The Interior Department would review existing studies and reports, such as the Civil Rights Framework Study, to produce a report to complement, not duplicate, other research in this field. The Secretary would also make alternative recommendations, with cost estimates, for their preservation by the National Park Service, other federal, state, or local governmental entities, or private and nonprofit organizations. This bill would help establish needed connections with agencies, organizations, and partnerships already engaged in civil rights site preservation and the protection of historically significant landscapes, districts and structures.

In addition to Senator Burris' legislation, a companion measure, H.R. 685, sponsored by Rep. Clay from Missouri passed the House on September 29th and has been received in the Senate as well. It was referred to your full committee.

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Establishing a National Civil Rights Trail System to link sites with common signage, maps, and educational materials; improve public awareness; and facilitate the study of their importance in history would be an invaluable asset in chronicling the movement's watershed role in the American story. I urge your support for S. 1802 and ask that you begin to move this measure by scheduling a hearing when the Senate reconvenes.

Warmest regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Moe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "M".

Richard Moe

RM:pl