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For more information, contact:
Jim Campi, CWPT, (202) 367-1861 x7205
Mary Koik, CWPT, (202) 367-1861 x7231

CONGRESS ALLOCATES \$9 MILLION TO PRESERVE AMERICA'S ENDANGERED CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELDS

CWPT praises Congress for its unprecedented commitment to protecting America's hallowed grounds

(Washington, D.C.) - The Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) today applauded members of the U.S. House and Senate for including the largest ever single-year allocation for the federal Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Interior Appropriations Act Conference Report (H Rept 111-316).

The conference report, scheduled for a final vote in both chambers later this week, includes \$9 million for the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program, a mechanism that utilizes government matching grants and private funds to permanently protect historic Civil War battlefields throughout the nation.

"This is tremendous news that could not come at a more critical time," said CWPT President James Lighthizer. Each day 30 acres of hallowed Civil War battlefield ground are paved over and lost forever. This money will allow us to preserve historic land that would otherwise be lost to development and urban sprawl."

The Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program targets priority unprotected Civil War sites outside National Park Service boundaries. The program's matching grants formula encourages state and private sector investment in historic land preservation. For example, in 2008 the Virginia General Assembly set aside \$5.2 million to match federal Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program monies. Grants from the program are competitively awarded by the American Battlefield Protection Program, an arm of the National Park Service.

Since its creation in 1999, the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program has been used to protect more than 15,000 acres of hallowed ground at 60 battlefields in 14 states. Among the sites saved as a result of this program are historic properties at Antietam and South Mountain, Md.; Champion Hill, Miss.; Chancellorsville, Fredericksburg, and Manassas, Va.; Chattanooga and Fort Donelson, Tenn.; and Harpers Ferry, W.Va. The program is funded through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Although numerous members of the House and Senate have played important roles in ensuring the program's continued success, the following individuals were pivotal in securing this year's unprecedented federal commitment to battlefield preservation: Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairs Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Norm Dicks (D-WA); Senators Jim Webb (D-VA), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), and Jeff Sessions (R-AL); and Congressmen, Bart Gordon (D-TN), Steve Israel (D-NY), Gary Miller (R-CA) and C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger (D-MD). In addition, 16 Senators and 29 Member of Congress signed letters of support for the program earlier this year.

"It is welcome news that our \$9 million funding request for battlefield preservation was accepted in the Interior Appropriations bill," said Senator Webb. "As America prepares for the 150th anniversary commemoration of the Civil War, it is more important than ever that we preserve these landmarks for future generations to learn about the history of our nation."

Senator Alexander concurred, saying, "The Civil War was a heartbreaking time in our history that we should never forget. Protecting our Civil War battlefields and historic sites is important both to honor the thousands who fought and to allow future generations to learn their heritage by visiting sites like Shiloh, Lookout Mountain, Fort Donelson and Parker's Crossroads. I'm glad to see that this funding was included to support this important program."

"America's Civil War battlefields are part of our nation's rich heritage, but sadly thousands of acres of battlefields are being lost every year. It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to visit these sacred grounds and experience part of history," remarked Congressman Ruppertsberger.

This vision was also shared by Congressman Miller, who first introduced legislation authorizing the program in 2002. Miller noted, "I have been a long time advocate for preservation of our nation's historic battlefields. These battlefields offer a porthole to the past. The vivid imagery of an epic conflict can remind visitors of the struggles our country has gone through to preserve the banner of liberty and justice for all."

Like Senator Webb, Lighthizer also stressed that the upcoming 150th anniversary of the Civil War presents an ideal time to redouble efforts to protect this hallowed ground. "I can think of no more fitting - and lasting - tribute during this sesquicentennial commemoration than to preserve the places where these brave soldiers fought and bled."

The Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program was reauthorized in March 2009 as part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (PL 111-11). The legislation, introduced in the Senate by Senators Webb and Sessions and in the House by Congressmen Miller, Israel and Gordon, reauthorized the program for \$10 million a year for five years. The popular bill enjoyed considerable bipartisan support, earning 33 cosponsors in the Senate and 108 cosponsors in the House.

With 55,000 members, CWPT is the largest nonprofit battlefield preservation organization in the United States. Its mission is to preserve our nation's remaining Civil War battlefields and to promote appreciation of these hallowed grounds through education and heritage tourism. The CWPT website is located at www.civilwar.org.

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For more information about the program's congressional supporters, visit CWPT online at www.civilwar.org/aboutus/news/news-releases/2009-news/congress-allocates-9-million.html.