

those discussions will continue. If any efforts are made to make the legislation better and more inclusive of the goal of the legislation, we will support that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK), who is the lead sponsor of this bill.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chair for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my legislation, the American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act. I take the time to thank our chairman, BRUCE WESTERMAN, and the ranking member for their support throughout this process both in committee but also in visiting with so many communities that understand the importance of preserving and protecting these most hallowed grounds.

I introduced this bipartisan legislation with my Congressional Battlefield Caucus co-chair, Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia, to preserve and improve the American Battlefield Protection Program, one of the most successful land preservation programs managed by the National Park Service. Since its inception, the American Battlefield Protection Program has helped protect more than 100 battlefields in 42 States, including Fort Ann in my district in upstate New York.

New York's 21st District is truly the cradle of the American Revolution, home to Fort Ticonderoga, Fort Ann, and the Bennington Battlefield. However, as people across upstate New York and the North Country will proudly tell you, Mr. Speaker, our deep military history extends beyond the American Revolution and incorporates many important battlefields from the French and Indian War through the War of 1812.

I, myself, grew up going to these historic sites, and I consider them part of the classroom of my childhood education. For years, I have been proud to lead the charge to preserve these historic battlefields in the Congress as the co-chair of the Congressional Battlefield Caucus. It is critical that we preserve and honor the places Americans gave their last full measure of devotion in order to ensure future generations of Americans learn the lessons of those sacrifices on these very hallowed grounds.

This bill also allows nonprofits and Tribes to apply to the program directly, instead of having to go through a government sponsor. Removing this burdensome hurdle cuts through bureaucracy allowing these entities to be more efficient and effective in preserving our endangered battlefields.

This legislation also clarifies the eligibility of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 sites for battlefield land acquisition grants to ensure the program is used to preserve battlefield land, while

also creating a process for the National Park Service to expand and update battlefield boundaries.

With emerging archeological technologies, historical boundaries of various battlefields have shifted as we learn more. Without the program improvements in my bill, portions of battlefields with newly discovered historic importance stand to be lost. We must not allow this to happen and, instead, strive to ensure these critical pieces of our history—our most hallowed history—are preserved for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of the bipartisan American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act to ensure these battlefields continue to be preserved for years and generations to come.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for her excellent bipartisan work on this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in honor of Veterans Day and in honor of the hallowed history that we have, I urge adoption of this bill which will protect the sites of sacrifice and struggle that allow us to be here today in this Chamber, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of the American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act, a vital piece of legislation that I had the privilege of introducing with my fellow Congressional Battlefield Caucus co-chair Congresswoman ELISE STEFANIK. This bill builds upon the success of the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP), which has played a crucial role in preserving our Nation's hallowed battlefields associated with the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. Since its inception in 2002, the ABPP has helped conserve over 35,000 acres of historic battlefield land across 42 States.

The American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act proposes several important improvements to further enhance the effectiveness of ABPP.

It would allow non-profit organizations and tribes to apply for ABPP grants directly. Currently, only government entities are eligible to seek these grants. This change will expedite the preservation of endangered battlefields by broadening the pool of eligible applicants and harnessing the commitment and expertise of nonprofit organizations and tribal nations.

Additionally, the bill clarifies the scope of ABPP's restoration grants. Currently, these grants can only be utilized on land preserved using ABPP program funding. This proposed change will extend the use of restoration grants to other priority battlefields identified in the 1993 Civil War Sites Advisory Commission Report and in the 2007 Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites. This will ensure that their historical significance can be maintained and restored.

This legislation also clarifies the eligibility of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 sites for Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants. By codifying that these grants are solely intended for battlefield sites as identified in the Congressionally authorized reports on these two conflicts, we will uphold the original intent of

ABPP and ensure the protection of these historic battlegrounds.

Finally, the bill introduces a much-needed process for updating battlefield boundaries. Despite decades of new research and archaeological discoveries, the National Park Service currently lacks a method to modify and update the battlefield maps they use. Without a systematic process for modifying boundaries, we risk losing portions of battlefields whose importance has been revealed through ongoing research. Our bill would require the National Park Service to periodically update the battlefield reports to Congress.

The American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act is a critical step in our ongoing efforts to protect our Nation's heritage by building a rich educational experience for students and visitors alike. By allowing nonprofits and tribes to apply for ABPP grants, clarifying the scope of restoration grants, ensuring eligibility for Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites, and creating a process for updating battlefield boundaries, we will better preserve and honor the memories of those who fought for our Nation's independence and unity.

I urge my esteemed colleagues to support the passage of this bill, which will strengthen the ABPP and contribute to the lasting preservation of our Nation's most storied battlefields. By doing so, we will continue to pay homage to our history and ensure that future generations can learn from the sacrifices made on these sacred grounds.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3448, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FORT SAN GERONIMO PRESERVATION ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 359) to establish Fort San Geronimo del Boqueron in Puerto Rico as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 359

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Fort San Gerónimo Preservation Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) FORT SAN GERÓNIMO DEL BOQUERÓN.—The term "Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón" (also known as "Fortín de San Gerónimo del Boquerón") means the fort and grounds listed on the National Register of Historic Places and located near Old San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(2) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF AFFILIATED AREA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón in Puerto Rico is established as an affiliated area of the National Park System.

(b) DESCRIPTION OF AFFILIATED AREA.—The affiliated area shall consist of the area generally depicted on the map titled “Fort San Gerónimo Proposed Affiliated Area”, numbered 910/176698, and dated July 2021.

(c) ADMINISTRATION.—The affiliated area shall be managed in accordance with—

(1) this Act; and

(2) any law generally applicable to units of the National Park System.

(d) MANAGEMENT ENTITY.—The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture shall be the management entity for the affiliated area.

(e) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary may provide technical assistance and enter into cooperative agreements with the management entity for the purpose of providing financial assistance for the marketing, marking, interpretation, and preservation of the affiliated area.

(f) LIMITED ROLE OF THE SECRETARY.—Nothing in this section authorizes the Secretary to acquire property at the affiliated area or to assume managerial or financial responsibility for the operation, maintenance, or management of the affiliated area.

(g) MANAGEMENT PLAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with the management entity, shall develop a management plan for the affiliated area.

(2) TRANSMITTAL.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are first made available to carry out this section, the Secretary shall submit the management plan developed under paragraph (1) to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate.

(h) PRIVATE PROPERTY PROTECTION.—Nothing in this Act affects the land use rights of private property owners adjacent to Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón.

(i) NO BUFFER ZONES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to create buffer zones outside of Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón.

(2) ACTIVITY OR USE OUTSIDE FORT SAN GERÓNIMO DEL BOQUERÓN.—The fact that an activity or use can be seen, heard, or detected from within Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón shall not preclude, limit, control, regulate, or determine the conduct or management of activities or uses outside of Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 359, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support Resident Commissioner GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN's bill, the Fort San Geronimo Preservation Act. This legislation would establish Fort San Geronimo del Boqueron as an affiliated area of the National Park System. I applaud Resident Commissioner GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN's leadership on this effort.

Fort San Geronimo is a small, two-level, stone masonry fort located at the easternmost point of the islet of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Part of the massive fortification system built by Spanish military engineers between the 16th and 19th centuries to protect San Juan from foreign invasions, Fort San Geronimo became a centerpiece of the city's defenses and played a crucial role in the 1797 Battle of San Juan. The fort was rebuilt in 1799, largely to its original design, and continued to be used as a Spanish military post in the 19th century. After Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory in 1898, the U.S. Navy used Fort San Geronimo as a military post until 1921. Today, Fort San Geronimo is owned and managed by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, an agency of the Puerto Rican Government.

Establishing Fort San Geronimo as a national affiliated area is a cost-effective way to conserve this important historic and cultural site without placing it under Federal ownership or management. Under H.R. 359, the fort will continue to be managed by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, although the National Park Service will be able to provide assistance for the marketing, interpretation, and protection of the site.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 359, the Fort San Geronimo Preservation Act, introduced by my colleague from Puerto Rico, Resident Commissioner JENNIFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN.

The Fort San Geronimo del Boqueron, located in Puerto Rico, was built as part of the fortification system to protect San Juan from invasions. Today, it is the sole surviving fortification on the island, representing the successful defense from a siege by the British military in 1797, the Battle of San Juan.

The bill before us today would establish the Fort San Geronimo del Boqueron in Puerto Rico as an affiliated area of the National Park System to ensure the fort is maintained and preserved as an important historic site.

I am pleased to support the legislation and congratulate my colleague, Resident Commissioner GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN, for her fine work on the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN), the lead sponsor of this bill.

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN and Ranking Member GRIJALVA for supporting this bill, which is really wanted by the people of Puerto Rico.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 359, the Fort San Geronimo

Preservation Act, legislation that will establish Fort San Geronimo del Boqueron as an affiliated area of the National Park System.

Fort San Geronimo is a small, two-level, stone masonry fort located at the mouth of the Condado Lagoon in San Juan. Many who have visited San Juan will see it from all the hotels in the area. It is part of the massive system of fortification built by the Spanish military engineers between the 16th and 19th centuries to protect the cities, specifically 1500.

Three of the forts that were part of this defense system—Fort San Felipe del Morro, Fort San Cristobal, and Fort San Juan de la Cruz—are currently included within the San Juan National Historic Site, which is the sole National Park Service unit in Puerto Rico. Fort San Geronimo, however, is managed, as the chairman said, by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, a state government agency.

Despite its small size, this fort became a centerpiece of San Juan's first line of defense. It played a crucial role in the 1797 Battle of San Juan when a squadron of British ships led by Sir Ralph Abercromby attacked and attempted to invade the city for 13 days. Fort San Geronimo bore the brunt of this assault. Although severely damaged, it stood up against the firepower and successfully thwarted the British invasion, which retreated in defeat.

The 1797 British siege of San Juan would be the last attack on Puerto Rico by a major European power, underscoring Fort San Geronimo's historic significance and key strategic role.

The fort was rebuilt largely in its original design in 1799 and continued to be used as a Spanish military post throughout the 19th century. After Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory in 1898, the U.S. Navy, as the chairman mentioned, used it as a military post until 1921. It was then transferred into private property and eventually acquired by the government of Puerto Rico in 1949.

Today, this fort is the sole surviving site in Puerto Rico representing the 1797 Battle of San Juan. It was listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 and again in 1997 as a contributing resource of the Advanced Defense Line historic district.

Yet, despite the significance of this fort, preserving Fort San Geronimo has been a challenging task due to age, weathering, and limited resources.

Over the last couple of years, entities like the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and nonprofit organizations like Amigos del Fortin San Jeronimo have taken important steps to rehabilitate and protect the site, but it is clear that more can be done.

In 2020, the National Park Service released a study that found that Fort San Geronimo is nationally significant and met suitability criteria that there was strong local support for the agency to become involved in the site's interpretation and preservation. The study

concluded that there was the potential for the fort to be considered as an affiliated area of the National Park System.

This bill, H.R. 359, would achieve just that, designating Fort San Geronimo as the first affiliated area in Puerto Rico. The National Park Service would be authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture to provide technical and financial assistance for the fort's preservation. This would support and strengthen ongoing efforts to rehabilitate the site without placing it under Federal ownership.

Affiliated area designation would also bring national recognition to Fort San Geronimo's role in our military history. It would help us better interpret and tell the full story of the San Juan National Historic Site and that of the oldest and largest Spanish fortification system in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN and Ranking Member GRIJALVA for their support. I look forward to continuing working together to get this legislation across the finish line and to help protect Fort San Geronimo for future generations.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I urge support of the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, as the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN) stated, this is a commonsense bill that will improve the conservation and protection of a key historical site. It does so while avoiding unnecessary Federal involvement. I thank the gentlewoman again for her leadership on this effort.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the adoption of this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 359.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HERSHEL "WOODY" WILLIAMS NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MONUMENT LOCATION ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2717) to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work on the National Mall to honor the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2717

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Hershel 'Woody' Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Congress in 2021 unanimously passed, and the President signed, Public Law 117–80 (40 U.S.C. 8903 note), which authorized the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish on Federal land in the District of Columbia a commemorative work to honor the acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients.

(2) The Medal of Honor was established by President Abraham Lincoln and first awarded 160 years ago on March 25, 1863, and is part of Lincoln's lasting and living legacy.

(3) In 1991, during the administration of President George H.W. Bush, this legacy was extended further when National Medal of Honor Day was established as March 25th of each year.

(4) The Medal of Honor is awarded to all branches of the United States Armed Forces as our nation's highest recognition for valor in combat.

(5) The number of living Medal of Honor recipients has been steadily declining, making it even more crucial to honor and recognize their heroic sacrifices and inspire future generations.

(6) Hershel "Woody" Williams, the last World War II Medal of Honor recipient, passed away in 2022 and laid in honor at the United States Capitol.

(7) The Medal of Honor represents the very best of our Nation—ordinary citizens, who took extraordinary action above and beyond the call of duty and became heroes of our Republic.

(8) These examples inspire all citizens and ignite within us the very spirit of America.

(9) The Medal of Honor rises to the level of supreme national and historical importance necessary to warrant representation on the National Mall.

(10) Locating the National Medal of Honor Monument in close proximity to the Lincoln Memorial within the Reserve would be a respectful extension of his enduring legacy and recognition of what ordinary people can accomplish when working for the greater good.

SEC. 3. NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MONUMENT LOCATION.

(a) *SITE.*—Notwithstanding section 8908(c) of title 40, United States Code, the commemorative work authorized by section 1(a) of Public Law 117–80 (40 U.S.C. 8903 note) shall be located within the Reserve (as defined in section 8902(a) of title 40, United States Code).

(b) *APPLICABILITY OF COMMEMORATIVE WORKS ACT.*—Except as provided in subsection (a), chapter 89 of title 40, United States Code (commonly known as the "Commemorative Works Act"), shall apply to the commemorative work.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2717, as amended, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this Saturday is Veterans Day. There is perhaps no greater way to celebrate this day than passing H.R. 2717, which seeks to honor the valor and sacrifice of some of our Nation's bravest heroes, Medal of Honor recipients.

Mr. Speaker, 160 years ago, President Abraham Lincoln awarded the first Medal of Honor in the midst of the Civil War. It is our Nation's highest honor awarded to members of the Armed Forces and is bestowed sparingly to only those who have demonstrated the highest acts of valor. Less than 100 Medal of Honor recipients are alive today out of the more than 3,500 medals that have been awarded.

As the highest and most prestigious military decoration in the United States, it symbolizes exceptional acts of bravery, selflessness, and sacrifice beyond the call of duty. Through the recognition of these remarkable individuals, the Medal of Honor inspires a sense of national pride, honors the memory of fallen heroes, and motivates future generations to embody the values of courage and honor. Inspired by the Victoria Cross, the Medal of Honor continues to instill a profound sense of respect and gratitude for the sacrifices made in the defense of freedom and justice.

Congressman MOORE's bill, the Hershel "Woody" Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act, would ensure that the monument honoring these brave heroes can be placed on what is known as the Reserve but is commonly referred to as The National Mall here in Washington, D.C.

A monument honoring our most exceptional citizens should be reflected in the location of the memorial. Millions of Americans and visitors from across the world travel every year to our Nation's Capital to learn about the history of our great Nation. According to National Park Service data, The National Mall receives upward of 25 million visitors each year. The monuments and memorials located on The National Mall are the centerpiece of this history, and it is appropriate to include a new monument honoring veterans who have displayed the most courageous acts of valor recognized by our country.

In my home State of Arkansas, our State capital also has a memorial dedicated to Medal of Honor recipients on its grounds. I hope this monument in D.C., like the one in Arkansas, can inspire reflection, patriotism, and gratitude for our Nation's military heroes.

Earlier this year, the Committee on Natural Resources had the privilege of hearing from 1 of the 65 living Medal of Honor recipients, Master Chief Special Warfare Operator Britt Slabinski. In