

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sen. Cardin writes periodic columns for Maryland publications. The following column is about his proposal to honor the life of Harriet Tubman. Please contact Susan Sullam at susan_sullam@cardin.senate.gov if you have any questions.

PRECEDENCE: Senator Cardin is a member of five committees: Foreign Relations, Judiciary, Environment and Public Works, Budget and Small Business. His web site is: cardin.senate.gov

A NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK WOULD HONOR LEGACY OF HARRIET TUBMAN, A LEADER OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

By U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

Maryland played an important role in our nation's early history – from the American Revolution to the Civil War, and beyond. One of the most important Marylanders to shape our nation's history was Harriet Ross Tubman, an African-American woman who was a leader of the anti-slavery resistance network known as the Underground Railroad.

I am committed to honoring the life of this outstanding woman and I have introduced legislation to establish two parks, one in Maryland and one in New York, to honor her legacy. In Maryland, The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park will trace her early life on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where she was born and later escaped from slavery to become a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad. The Harriet Tubman National Historical Park in New York will be located in Auburn and will focus on her later years where she was active in the suffrage movement and in providing for the welfare of aged African Americans.

Harriet Tubman was born in Dorchester County, Maryland, where she spent nearly 30 years as a slave. She escaped slavery in 1849, but returned for more than 10 years to Dorchester and Caroline counties where she led hundreds of African Americans to freedom. Known as “Moses” by African-American and white abolitionists, she reportedly never lost a “passenger” on the Underground Railroad.

Harriet Tubman was a true American patriot, for whom liberty and freedom were not just concepts. She lived those principles and shared that freedom with hundreds of others. These two parks will make it possible for Marylanders and the entire nation to trace her life's work and remember all that she accomplished.

In Maryland, The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park would include historically important landscapes in Dorchester, Caroline and Talbot counties that are evocative of the life of Harriet Tubman. The Maryland properties include about 2,200 acres in Caroline County that comprise the Poplar Neck plantation that Tubman escaped from in 1849. The 725 acres of viewshed across the Choptank River in Talbot County would also be included in the Park. In Dorchester County, the parcels would not be contiguous, but would include about 2,775 acres. All of them are included within the

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge boundaries or abut that resource land. The National Park Service would not own any of these lands.

In New York, The Harriet Tubman National Historical Park would include important historical structures in Auburn, New York. They include Tubman's home, the Home for the Aged that she established, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church, and the Fort Hill Cemetery where she is buried.

The bill authorizes \$11 million in grants for the Maryland section. Funds can be used for the construction of the Harriet Tubman State Park Visitors Center and for easements or acquisition of properties inside or adjacent to the Historical Park boundaries. In New York, the bill authorizes \$7.5 million in grants for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of the Auburn properties.

Finally, the bill also authorizes a new grants program. Under the program, the National Park Service would award competitive grants to historically Black colleges and universities, predominately Black institutions, and minority serving institutions for research into the life of Harriet Tubman and the African-American experience during the years that coincide with the life of Harriet Tubman.

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