Protecting America’s Heritage Areas

117th Congress

Sponsors: Paul Tonko (D-NY), David McKinley (R-WV)

“We are all trustees for the American people, custodians of the American heritage.”

❖ John F. Kennedy, 1962 State of the Union

Heritage Areas Tell America’s Stories

- America’s 55 National Heritage Areas are sites of cultural, historical or natural significance supported by public-private partnerships preserving and celebrating these local treasures.
- Supporting partnerships bring local, state & private stakeholders together in Congressional districts across the U.S. to share previously untold stories & bring new voices to the fore
- The process for establishing, funding and managing National Heritage Areas is haphazard. As a result, areas of great local importance are often underutilized and can even fall into disrepair.

Major Economic & Social Benefits

- Cultural heritage tourism adds more than $192 billion to the U.S. economy every year
- Public & private partners match an avg. $5.50 for every $1 in federal funding – a nearly 6:1 return on investment for taxpayers
- Sites support more than 148,000 jobs every year, and that’s not all:
  - 53,000 volunteers engage with 55 established heritage areas
  - 200 education programs that reach more than 600,000 people a year
  - 880 miles of new trails & nearly 200 miles of preserved waterways & historic canals
  - Water and air quality improvements through restoration projects

Congress Can Do Better!

The National Heritage Area Act

- Establishes, for the first time, standard criteria for designating new National Heritage Areas and creates a rigorous process for evaluating and maintaining existing National Heritage Areas
- Modernizes the program to allow for long-term sustainability and strong accountability
- Defines an oversight structure that will effectively allow these popular public-private partnerships to better preserve the nation’s heritage and spur economic growth with more consistent federal support for these important natural, scenic, historic, cultural, and recreational resources

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