

Testimony for HR 5853
Rep. Niki Tsongas
July 15, 2008

Rep. Tsongas: Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Bishop for conducting today's hearing.

H.R. 5853, the Minute Man National Historical Park Act, extends the Minute Man Park to include Barrett's Farm.

The bill is a simple non-controversial boundary adjustment of 67 acres to the current National Park. The expansion does not involve a federal taking of private property.

It allows the Park Service to purchase private properties from a willing seller, the local, non-profit organization Save Our Heritage, which now owns Barrett's Farm.

It may seem like a small change, but the preservation of such a significant site is monumentally important to the history of this country.

Barrett's Farm is the former home of Colonel James Barrett, the commander of the Middlesex militia during the Revolutionary war. It was also used to store the militia's munitions in the weeks preceding the Battle of Concord and Lexington.

On April 19, 1775, General Thomas Gage - the commander of all British Forces in North America - ordered 700 of his troops to march to Barrett's Farm and destroy these supplies.

Our colonial militia learned of the British plot in advance, and Paul Revere made his famous ride calling his fellow countrymen to arms. By the time the British reached Barrett's Farm, the colonial militia's guns were safely hidden, and Colonel Barrett had strategically positioned the militia to strike the British Army. Barrett's militia confronted British soldiers at the North Bridge, where the "shot heard 'round the world" was fired - launching our war for independence.

Through the hard work and ongoing efforts of the nonprofit group, "Save Our Heritage," Barrett's Farm has been kept in excellent condition. Private donations through out the years have been used for its upkeep and restoration. Our country is indebted to these committed people for preserving this national historical site.

It is time for this important location to be part of the larger Minute Man National Park so that the considerable resources and expertise of the National Park Service can be put towards the restoration and permanent preservation of this important piece of Massachusetts' rich revolutionary history. It will also enable Park visitors to have a more complete understanding of how and where our American Revolution began.

I urge the committee to pass this bill to protect Colonel James Barrett's Farm so that current and future generations can learn about the role this site played in the birth of our nation.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing.