

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gettysburg National Military Park

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Gettysburg Park Media Statement

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Statement regarding the Ku Klux Klan's permitted First Amendment Activity at Gettysburg National Military Park

By Park Superintendent John A. Latschar

An organization known as the World Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) has applied for and received a special use permit to conduct a protest and demonstration at Gettysburg National Military Park on September 2, 2006 between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Activities will take place on the east lawn area of the Cyclorama Center.

The KKK requested the permit under the first amendment of the United States Constitution which grants all citizens the rights to freedom of speech. The group's activities are inflammatory, controversial, and will undoubtedly create an emotional response in many of the park visitors and our community.

However, it is important to note that the National Park Service mission in preserving and protecting the historic resources at Gettysburg includes making them available to all Americans, even those whose views are contrary to the majority of the American public. The United States Constitution guarantees *everyone* the right to speak freely and to assemble peaceably, regardless of the content of their message. As custodians of land owned by the American people, the National Park Service has a responsibility to make that land available for exercising those rights.

National parks host hundreds of first amendment activities each year, the majority of which take place in our nation's capital. Some, like Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial, reflected the prevailing mood of the American people, while others deliver a more controversial message whose validity is ultimately judged by the American people. The one constant of all of these assemblies is the professionalism of National Park Service and its staff in administering these activities.

The Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 2.51), the Director's Orders on Special Park Use, and the Management Policies of the National Park Service all provide clear guidance on First Amendment activities in the parks. Gettysburg NMP staff will be working to ensure that park resources and visitors will not be adversely affected by this event or by activities that may be conducted by counter-demonstrations under additional permits. Additional law enforcement agencies will assist the park to make certain that demonstrators, visitors, and staff experience a safe atmosphere on the day of the event.

For more information contact the park's Public Affairs Office at 717/ 334-1124 x452, or by email at Katie_Lawhon@nps.gov

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