

Statement by Congressman Ray LaHood
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1625

June 14, 2007

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you, Ranking Member Bishop, and the rest of the Members of the Committee for holding this hearing today on H.R. 1625, a bill to establish the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. I would also like to thank Nicky Stratton, Executive Director of the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition, for coming to Washington, DC this morning to testify on behalf of this bill.

I am proud to introduce this bill on behalf of the Illinois delegation. I serve, along with Senator Durbin, as co-chair of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, which is tasked with planning the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. In addition, I have the unique honor of representing the 9 counties that originally formed Abraham Lincoln's Congressional District when he served one term in the House of Representatives.

The purpose of this legislation is to create a National Heritage Area in Illinois in order to manage, study, and promote Lincoln related historical sites. Scattered throughout the central Illinois landscape are countless places where Lincoln traveled and lived. As children, we are taught the basic history of our country, including the basic facts of President Lincoln's life and legacy. What the history books usually don't teach are the experiences and events that shaped President Lincoln, and made him into the man he was. By designating this heritage area, we can tie these many Lincoln sites together in order to create a tapestry that will allow us to better understand the influences that shaped President Lincoln life.

As a former school teacher, I believe very strongly in the need to study the past in order to understand how we got to where we are today. Many of the issues that have shaped President Lincoln's legacy are still relevant today, and it is worthwhile to continue to explore these issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Bishop for inviting me to testify on behalf of H.R. 1625.