

# What People Are Saying about National Heritage Areas

## What Local Government Leaders Are Saying...

“National Heritage Areas are a threat to property rights and local government. If you own a business or residence in the designated area, you will be dealing with another layer of government that you have no control over. You cannot vote them out or their program out. They have plans for you whether you like it or not...”

*-Beth Machens, Board of Aldermen, City of West Alton, Missouri*

“...Journey Through Hallowed Ground Heritage Area is... just another means of stopping development in this area. Route 15 is a busy State Highway that needs safety improvements.... [The] Journey Through Hallowed Ground project will cause delays or stoppage of these critical highway improvements. While I am a strong supporter of preserving our history, people’s rights need to be preserved also.”

*-Jim Clem, Supervisor, Loudoun County, Virginia*

## What Seniors Are Saying...

“Many folks, and seniors in particular, rely substantially on their investments in their homes and property. When government restricts the rights of property owners, oftentimes it devalues this investment. Rather than creating programs that restrict property rights, the federal government should be strengthening those rights. When government meddles, prices for seniors always go one way – up – the wrong way.”

*-Jim Martin, President, 60 Plus*

## What Sportsmen Are Saying...

“As a hunter, I want to be able to get on land to hunt, but I’m an American first who respects the property rights of landowners. This isn’t a government issue. We shouldn’t advocate for the federal government to take away the rights of others in the name of appeasing special interest groups.”

*-Thomas K. Remington, Managing Editor, U.S. Hunting Today*

## What Property Rights Advocates Are Saying...

“If the investigations into earmarking abuse tell us anything, it is that we need greater accountability, not less. National Heritage Areas push us toward less government accountability. Committees composed of unelected and unaccountable individuals – some of whom have a financial stake in local land use decisions – are given substantial influence over these very decisions through National Heritage Area designation. If you think power corrupts elected officials, just wait and see what it does to unelected ones.”

*-David A. Ridenour, Vice President, The National Center for Public Policy Research*

“The Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area Act is badly flawed and would serve little purpose beyond using federal power and resources to assist a relatively

small number of wealthy households in their efforts to exclude middle-income and moderate-income families and certain commercial activities from a large area spanning four states.”

*-Dr. Ronald D. Utt, Senior Research Fellow, The Heritage Foundation*

### **What Congressional Leaders Are Saying...**

“[Once] a federal line is drawn around property for a heritage area, the door for annual federal earmarks and grants is opened. 24 of these heritage areas were listed in the FY 2007 Interior Appropriations bill as line items, each receiving hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars. In addition, a new White House federal grant initiative entitled ‘Preserve America’ doled out nine federal grants to projects in National Heritage Areas... I challenge any member of the committee to ask themselves if \$700,000 for the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area sounds like a rationale expenditure of federal tax dollars when we have a huge deficit and vast maintenance backlogs in our parks and forests, not to mention ongoing conflicts abroad to fund.”

*-U.S. Representative Jeff Flake (R-AZ)*

### **What Minority Leaders Are Saying...**

“National Heritage Areas are nothing more than government sanctioned looting of private property rights, and in many instances, minorities and lower income folks bear the biggest brunt of this theft. Property rights, the hallmark of liberty, are being eroded by special interest groups and their government allies who promote National Heritage Areas.”

*-Deneen Borelli, Fellow, Project 21*

### **What Legal Scholars Are Saying...**

“With the influx of federal funding [for the National Heritage Area], the regulatory pressure on landowners to sell will, in many cases, be insurmountable. The legacy we will leave to future generations will not be the preservation of our history, but of the preservation of a facade masquerading as our history subverted by the erosion of the rights that animated our history for the first two centuries of the Republic.”

*-James Burling, Principal Property Rights Attorney, Pacific Legal Foundation*

“The bill [The Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area Act] before Congress has nothing to do with a ‘heritage trail’ but will result in a ‘trail of tears’ for those least able to stand up for their property rights. This is no more than an effort to over reach by the federal Government with regulations that will restrict homeowners, farmers and small business people in the use of their property... Traditionally the elderly, minorities and the poor are most impacted by regulatory measures that restrict property owners in the use of their land. Protecting our heritage is a noble ambition, however these matters need to be handled at the local level by those closest to the issues at hand. It is important that the fundamental right of private property not be threatened by more misguided federal legislation.”

*-Joseph T. Waldo, President, The Law Firm of Waldo and Lyle, P.C.*

### **What Taxpayer Groups Are Saying...**

“[W]e’re convinced that National Heritage Areas are bad news for taxpayers. Contrary to their original claims, heritage area boosters in Congress keep extending the life spans and funding for what were supposed to be finite, self-reliant programs... Congress should respect our nation’s heritage of limited government and put an end to taxpayer-funded heritage areas.”

*-Kristina Rasmussen, Director of Government Affairs, National Taxpayers Union*

### **What Citizens Within Heritage Area Boundaries Are Saying...**

“The big government-sponsored scheme to preserve natural and cultural resources through heritage tourism pork-barrel and land designations does not work. It has destroyed both cultural and natural heritage around the world. Land speculation destroys the local economies, making independent farmers into a temporary labor pool for absentee owners... In our own area, we have seen demands for more strict zoning and land use to make us appeal more to the tourists. As government-sponsored advertising for arts, scenery, and travel has advertised the area, land speculation has increased rampantly, while wages have not.”

*-Brad VanDyke, Representative, Rural Utahns for Local Solutions*

“The community was told not to worry as the Heritage Act would not restrict other property owners' rights and would bring in federal funds... Almost immediately, Yuma citizens started to see restrictions - from the type of building allowed to the color of paint... Even areas outside the boundaries were affected... Others will try to use Heritage Area boundaries to limit property rights.”

*-Harold Maxwell, “Lessons Learned from Heritage Act,” Tucson Citizen, Letters to the Editor, April 12, 2007*