

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8735

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Lower Presidio Historic Park in Monterey, California.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 12, 2026

Mr. PANETTA introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Lower Presidio Historic Park in Monterey, California.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “American Sovereignty
5 and Monterey Historic Military Site Study Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Lower Presidio Historic Park was a center
9 of indigenous culture and a hub for trading through-

1 out the Americas for thousands of years prior to Eu-
2 ropean and American exploration.

3 (2) The Esselen were the first peoples of the
4 land, followed by the Rumsen, who collectively
5 stewarded the land for over 12,000 years.

6 (3) Middens from the indigenous Esselen and
7 Rumsen peoples represent the earliest fisheries of
8 abalone, collected and traded across the continent
9 for food, decoration, clothing, and cultural identity.

10 (4) The Lower Presidio Historic Park hill was
11 a Tribal Village and present Monterey was the Trib-
12 al Area of Achasta.

13 (5) The site served as burial grounds for the
14 Esselen and Rumsen people who continue to cele-
15 brate and host cultural gatherings at the park today.

16 (6) Lower Presidio Historic Park was originally
17 explored in 1542 by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo and
18 the Monterey Bay was named as Bay of Pines and
19 claimed for New Spain.

20 (7) The site was explored by Sebastián Vizcaíno
21 in 1602 and renamed Monterey Bay after Gaspar de
22 Zúñiga Acevedo y Fonseca, the Viceroy of New
23 Spain and Count of Monterrey.

24 (8) Lower Presidio Historic Park was the site
25 of the first Catholic Mass by Father Junípero Serra

1 and Don Gaspar de Portolá y Rovira on June 3,
2 1770, marking the founding of the Presidio of Mon-
3 terey and the beginning of the Spanish occupation of
4 Alta California.

5 (9) From 1777 to 1849, Monterey served as the
6 capital of Alta California, with the Royal Presidio of
7 Monterey serving as the seat of government.

8 (10) Beginning in 1792, the Spanish fort “El
9 Castillo de Monterey” was built at Lower Presidio
10 Historic Park to prevent intrusion from European,
11 Russian, British, and Indigenous forces.

12 (11) The site was the location of the only land
13 and sea battle on the west coast when Argentinian
14 Privateer Hippolyte Bouchard, sailing for Argentina,
15 landed in 1818 and raided Monterey.

16 (12) El Castillo de Monterey assisted in the
17 1836 overthrow of Mexican Governor Nicolás
18 Rodríguez by American Isaac Graham and
19 Californio Juan Bautista Alvarado, which led to the
20 “Graham Affair” of 1840.

21 (13) The site was the location of the attempted
22 1842 seizure of Alta California for the United States
23 by Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones, the Com-
24 mander of the United States Navy Pacific Squadron,

1 aboard USS United States, USS Cyane, USS York-
2 town, USS Dale, and USS Shark.

3 (14) On July 7, 1846, Commodore John Drake
4 Sloat of the United States Navy, along with 165
5 sailors and 85 marines, seized Alta California for
6 the United States from USS Savannah, USS Cyane,
7 and USS Levant. The brave soldiers, sailors, and
8 marines who raised the American flag at Monterey
9 opened California to American settlement, enter-
10 prise, and prosperity.

11 (15) The site was home to the first major
12 United States Army fort on the west coast, initially
13 called the Monterey Redoubt, then Fort Stockton,
14 and later Fort Mervine. The fort was built by the
15 United States Army, and among those involved in its
16 construction were future Civil War generals Edward
17 Otho Cresap Ord, William Tecumseh Sherman, and
18 Henry Wager Halleck.

19 (16) The site was later designated as the Mon-
20 terey Military Reservation and selected as the loca-
21 tion for an expanded military base following the an-
22 nexation of the Philippine Islands in 1901. The site
23 was renamed Ord Barracks in 1903.

24 (17) The segregated 9th Cavalry Regiment, bet-
25 ter known as the Buffalo Soldiers, served at Ord

1 Barracks between 1902 and 1904. The Buffalo Sol-
2 diers arrived after service in Cuba and the Phil-
3ippines and departed Monterey in 1904 to become
4 the first park rangers at Sequoia and Yosemite Na-
5 tional Parks, marking the site as a starting point
6 along the historic California Buffalo Soldiers Trail.

7 (18) In 1904, War Department General Order
8 142 redesignated Ord Barracks, including Lower
9 Presidio Historic Park, as the Presidio of Monterey
10 to preserve the memory of the original Spanish
11 Royal Presidio of Monterey.

12 (19) In 1910, veterans of the Mexican-Amer-
13 ican War unveiled the Sloat Monument at Lower
14 Presidio Historic Park to recognize their contribu-
15 tions.

16 (20) In 1924, the United States Army assisted
17 to fight the Associated Oil fire that threatened to
18 burn down fisheries industries at Cannery Row and
19 Fisherman's Wharf. Private Eustace Watkins of
20 Battery E., 76th Field Artillery Regiment and Pri-
21 vate John Bolio of Headquarter Troop, 11th Cavalry
22 Regiment from the Presidio lost their lives putting
23 out the fire.

24 (21) In 1946, the Military Intelligence Service
25 Language School was established at the Presidio. It

1 was renamed the Defense Language Institute in
2 1963. The Defense Language Institute trains Amer-
3 ican military personnel in critical foreign languages,
4 directly supporting United States national security,
5 military superiority, and the protection of American
6 interests worldwide.

7 (22) In 1992, the Monterey Bay National Ma-
8 rine Sanctuary was established and protects nation-
9 ally significant cultural, archeological, and historic
10 resources. Hundreds of shipwrecks have occurred in
11 the sanctuary and were a result of the significant
12 maritime exploration and commerce that historically
13 occurred in the region, including at Lower Presidio
14 Historic Park.

15 (23) Lower Presidio Historic Park is located
16 within the U.S. Army Garrison Presidio of Mon-
17 terey, which has operated as an active United States
18 military installation since 1846, and has been open
19 to the public under a lease agreement with the City
20 of Monterey since 1996.

21 (24) This site deserves to be designated as a
22 unit of the National Park System as a National His-
23 toric Park due to its unparalleled significance in rec-
24 ognizing the contributions of Indigenous cultures,
25 establishing American sovereignty on the west coast,

1 demonstrating American military strength, and pre-
2 serving the legacy of the brave American patriots
3 who secured California for the United States of
4 America.

5 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

6 In this Act:

7 (1) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
8 the Secretary of the Interior.

9 (2) STUDY AREA.—The term “study area”
10 means Lower Presidio Historic Park in Monterey,
11 California.

12 **SEC. 4. LOWER PRESIDIO HISTORIC PARK SPECIAL RE-**
13 **SOURCE STUDY.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct a
15 special resource study of the study area.

16 (b) CONTENTS.—In conducting the study under sub-
17 section (a), the Secretary shall—

18 (1) evaluate the national significance of the
19 study area;

20 (2) determine the suitability and feasibility of
21 designating the study area as a unit of the National
22 Park System;

23 (3) consider other alternatives for preservation,
24 protection, and interpretation of the study area by
25 the Federal Government, State or local government

1 entities, Tribes, or private and nonprofit organiza-
2 tions;

3 (4) consult with interested Federal agencies,
4 State or local governmental entities, Tribes, private
5 and nonprofit organizations, or any other interested
6 individuals; and

7 (5) identify cost estimates for any Federal ac-
8 quisition, development, interpretation, operation, and
9 maintenance associated with the alternatives de-
10 scribed in paragraphs (2) and (3).

11 (c) APPLICABLE LAW.—The study required under
12 subsection (a) shall be conducted in accordance with sec-
13 tion 100507 of title 54, United States Code.

14 (d) REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the date
15 on which funds are first made available to carry out the
16 study under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to
17 the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Rep-
18 resentatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural
19 Resources of the Senate a report that describes—

20 (1) the results of the study; and

21 (2) any conclusions and recommendations of the
22 Secretary.

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