

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3925

To establish the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To establish the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park, and for other purposes.

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 “Julius Rosenwald and
5 Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSES.**

7 The purposes of this Act are—

8 (1) to establish a unit of the National Park
9 System—

1 (A) to commemorate the life and legacy of
2 Julius Rosenwald, who—

3 (i) was the son of German-Jewish im-
4 migrants;

5 (ii) helped make Sears, Roebuck and
6 Co. the leading retailer in the United
7 States for many years;

8 (iii) used his enormous fortune to be-
9 come a visionary philanthropist; and

10 (iv) partnered with Booker T. Wash-
11 ington and approximately 5,000 African
12 American communities in the segregated
13 South to build schools for children who
14 had few or no educational opportunities;

15 (B) to recognize the impact of the Rosen-
16 wald Schools, which—

17 (i) were constructed between 1912
18 and 1932 in 15 States; and

19 (ii) educated more than 600,000 Afri-
20 can American children, including a number
21 of graduates who became leaders in the
22 civil rights movement, such as—

23 (I) Representative John Lewis;

24 (II) Maya Angelou;

25 (III) Medgar Evers;

1 (IV) Nina Simone; and

2 (V) Carlotta Walls LaNier; and

3 (C) to honor other important parts of the
4 legacy of Julius Rosenwald, including—

5 (i) the Julius Rosenwald Fund,
6 which—

7 (I) between 1928 and 1948,
8 awarded fellowships to nearly 900 tal-
9 ented men and women—

10 (aa) $\frac{2}{3}$ of whom were Afri-
11 can Americans; and

12 (bb) including—

13 (AA) Marian Anderson;

14 (BB) Langston

15 Hughes;

16 (CC) Ralph Bunche;

17 (DD) James Baldwin;

18 (EE) Dr. Charles

19 Drew;

20 (FF) Drs. Kenneth and

21 Mamie Phipps Clark;

22 (GG) Ralph Ellison;

23 and

24 (HH) Woody Guthrie;

1 (II) supported early legal cases of
 2 the National Association for the Ad-
 3 vancement of Colored People that led
 4 to the Supreme Court opinion in
 5 Brown v. Board of Education of To-
 6 peka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954); and

7 (III) provided support for a sig-
 8 nificant number of historically Black
 9 colleges and universities, particularly
 10 to train teachers;

11 (ii) the founding, and service as the
 12 first president of, the Jewish Federation of
 13 Metropolitan Chicago;

14 (iii) service as a member of the board
 15 of Jane Addams' Hull House for 20 years;

16 (iv) being the founding donor of the
 17 Chicago Museum of Science and Industry;
 18 and

19 (v) otherwise embodying social justice;

20 (2) to preserve a small number of representa-
 21 tive sites of the Rosenwald Schools (including the
 22 San Domingo School in Sharptown, Maryland, a 3-
 23 teacher restored school built during the Tuskegee
 24 phase of the Rosenwald School program, the Saint
 25 George Rosenwald School in Saint George, South

1 Carolina, a 6-teacher restored school built during
 2 the Julius Rosenwald Fund phase of the Rosenwald
 3 School program, and the Woodville Rosenwald
 4 School in Gloucester County, Virginia, a restored 2-
 5 teacher school built during the Julius Rosenwald
 6 Fund phase of the Rosenwald School program) and
 7 to establish a headquarters and visitor center for the
 8 Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National
 9 Historical Park within or near the former Sears
 10 Merchandising Complex in North Lawndale in the
 11 city of Chicago, Illinois, to enlighten visitors on—

12 (A) the overall life and legacy of Julius
 13 Rosenwald; and

14 (B) the ways in which the Rosenwald
 15 Schools—

16 (i) significantly improved African
 17 American education in the South; and

18 (ii) helped to make the United States
 19 a more democratic society; and

20 (3) to establish a network in the National Park
 21 Service to connect the remaining Rosenwald Schools
 22 to disseminate more fully the story of the Rosenwald
 23 Schools throughout the United States.

24 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

25 In this Act:

1 (1) MAP.—The term “Map” means the map
2 prepared under section 4(b)(2)(A).

3 (2) NETWORK.—The term “Network” means
4 the Rosenwald Schools National Network established
5 under section 5(a)(1).

6 (3) PARK.—The term “Park” means the Julius
7 Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Histor-
8 ical Park established by section 4(a)(1).

9 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
10 the Secretary of the Interior.

11 **SEC. 4. JULIUS ROSENWALD AND ROSENWALD SCHOOLS**

12 **NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK.**

13 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2),
15 there is established as a unit of the National Park
16 System the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald
17 Schools National Historical Park.

18 (2) DETERMINATION BY THE SECRETARY.—

19 (A) DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT.—The Park
20 shall not be established until the date on which
21 the Secretary determines that a sufficient quan-
22 tity of land or interests in land within the
23 boundary of the Park has been acquired to con-
24 stitute a manageable unit.

1 (B) FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE.—The
2 Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register
3 notice of a determination under subparagraph
4 (A).

5 (b) BOUNDARY; MAP.—

6 (1) BOUNDARY.—The Park shall consist of the
7 following:

8 (A) The 40-acre site selected for the Sears
9 merchandising complex constructed in 1905–
10 1906, which includes the original Sears Admin-
11 istration Building, the catalog building, the
12 power plant, and the Nichols Tower, which now
13 comprise the Sears Roebuck and Company
14 Complex National Historic Landmark, and the
15 Sears Sunken Garden directly across the street
16 from the Sears Administration Building.

17 (B) The San Domingo Rosenwald School
18 in Sharptown, Maryland, as generally depicted
19 on the Map.

20 (C) The Saint George Rosenwald School in
21 Saint George, South Carolina, as generally de-
22 picted on the Map.

23 (D) The Woodville Rosenwald School in
24 Gloucester County, Virginia, as generally de-
25 picted on the Map.

1 (E) Any Rosenwald School or other area
 2 designated by Congress to be included in the
 3 Park after the date of enactment of this Act.

4 (2) MAP.—

5 (A) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable
 6 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Sec-
 7 retary shall prepare a map of the boundary of
 8 the Park.

9 (B) AVAILABILITY.—The Map shall be on
 10 file and available for public inspection in the
 11 appropriate offices of the National Park Serv-
 12 ice.

13 (c) ADMINISTRATION.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall admin-
 15 ister land within the boundary of the Park in ac-
 16 cordance with—

17 (A) this section; and

18 (B) the laws generally applicable to units
 19 of the National Park System, including—

20 (i) sections 100101(a), 100751(a),
 21 100752, 100753, and 102101 of title 54,
 22 United States Code; and

23 (ii) chapters 1003 and 3201 of title
 24 54, United States Code.

(2) CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES.—For the purposes of establishing the Park, the following properties shall be associated with the Park but shall not be transferred to, or directly managed by, the National Park Service:

(A) The Saint George Rosenwald School in Saint George, South Carolina.

(B) The Woodville Rosenwald School in Gloucester County, Virginia.

(3) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—To further the purposes of this section and notwithstanding chapter 63 of title 31, United States Code, the Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with the State of Illinois, the city of Chicago, the States of Maryland, South Carolina, and Virginia, other appropriate State and local government officials, and public and nonpublic entities, subject to subparagraph (B)—

(i) to support collaborative interpretive and educational programs at non-Federal historic properties within the boundary of the Park; and

(ii) to identify, interpret, and provide assistance for the preservation of non-

1 Federal land within the boundary of the
2 Park and at sites related to the Park but
3 located outside the boundaries of the Park,
4 including providing for—

5 (I) the placement of directional
6 and interpretive signage;

7 (II) exhibits; and

8 (III) technology-based and other
9 interpretive devices.

10 (B) PUBLIC ACCESS.—A cooperative agree-
11 ment entered into under this paragraph shall
12 provide for reasonable public access to any
13 property subject to the cooperative agreement.

14 (4) USE OF FUNDS.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may use
16 appropriated funds to carry out a project to
17 mark, interpret, improve, restore, or provide
18 technical assistance with respect to the preser-
19 vation and interpretation of any property that
20 is subject to a cooperative agreement under
21 paragraph (3).

22 (B) INCONSISTENT PURPOSES.—Any pay-
23 ment made by the Secretary under this section
24 shall be subject to an agreement that the con-
25 version, use, or disposal of a project carried out

1 under subparagraph (A) for purposes that are
 2 inconsistent with the purposes of this section,
 3 as determined by the Secretary, shall result in
 4 a right of the United States to reimbursement
 5 in an amount that is the greater of—

6 (i) the amount provided by the Sec-
 7 retary to the project; and

8 (ii) an amount equal to the increase in
 9 the value of the project that is attributable
 10 to the funds, as determined by the Sec-
 11 retary as of the date of the conversion,
 12 use, or disposal.

13 (5) ACQUISITION OF LAND.—

14 (A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subpara-
 15 graph (B), the Secretary may, within the Na-
 16 tional Historic Landmark District in Chicago,
 17 Illinois—

18 (i) acquire a facade or other easement
 19 interest on the Nichols Tower; and

20 (ii) enter into a lease or other agree-
 21 ment for purposes of providing for admin-
 22 istration of the Park and appropriate vis-
 23 itor services.

24 (B) OUTSIDE OF PARK BOUNDARY.—If the
 25 Secretary is unable to identify appropriate

1 space for administration and visitor services in
 2 accordance with subparagraph (A)(ii), the Sec-
 3 retary may acquire the appropriate land or in-
 4 terests in land, or enter into other appropriate
 5 agreements, in the vicinity of, but outside the
 6 boundary of the Park, for administration and
 7 visitor services.

8 (C) LIMITATION.—The San Domingo
 9 School in Sharptown, Maryland, may only be
 10 acquired by the Secretary under this section
 11 by—

12 (i) donation;

13 (ii) purchase with donated funds; or

14 (iii) exchange.

15 (6) INTERPRETATION.—To further the dissemi-
 16 nation of information about the life and legacy of
 17 Julius Rosenwald, with an emphasis on the partner-
 18 ship of Julius Rosenwald with Booker T. Wash-
 19 ington and the approximately 5,000 communities in
 20 the South that led to the establishment and success
 21 of the Rosenwald Schools, the Secretary shall in-
 22 clude interpretation of the story of Julius Rosenwald
 23 at—

24 (A) the Lincoln Home National Historic
 25 Site in the State of Illinois, within the boundary

1 of which is located the childhood home of Julius
 2 Rosenwald; and

3 (B) the Tuskegee Institute National His-
 4 toric Site in the State of Alabama, which was
 5 founded by Booker T. Washington for the edu-
 6 cation of African Americans and at which archi-
 7 tects designed the early Rosenwald Schools.

8 (7) MANAGEMENT PLAN.—Not later than 3 fis-
 9 cal years after the date on which funds are first
 10 made available to carry out this section, the Sec-
 11 retary shall complete a general management plan for
 12 the Park in accordance with—

13 (A) section 100502 of title 54, United
 14 States Code; and

15 (B) any other applicable laws.

16 **SEC. 5. ROSENWALD SCHOOLS NATIONAL NETWORK.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall—

18 (1) establish, within the National Park Service,
 19 a program to be known as the “Rosenwald Schools
 20 National Network”;

21 (2) as soon as practicable after the date of en-
 22 actment of this Act, solicit proposals from sites, fa-
 23 cilities, and programs interested in being a part of
 24 the Network; and

25 (3) administer the Network.

1 (b) DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY.—In carrying out
2 the Network, the Secretary shall—

3 (1) review studies and reports to complement
4 and not duplicate studies of the historical impor-
5 tance of the Rosenwald Schools;

6 (2) produce and disseminate appropriate edu-
7 cational and promotional materials relating to the
8 life and work of Julius Rosenwald and the Rosen-
9 wald Schools that are part of the Network, such as
10 handbooks, maps, interpretive guides, or electronic
11 information;

12 (3) enter into appropriate cooperative agree-
13 ments and memoranda of understanding to provide
14 assistance, as appropriate;

15 (4)(A) create and adopt an official, uniform
16 symbol or device for the Network; and

17 (B) issue regulations for the use of the symbol
18 or device adopted under this paragraph;

19 (5) conduct research relating to the Rosenwald
20 Schools;

21 (6) make recommendations for any additional
22 Rosenwald School sites that should be considered for
23 inclusion within the Park due to the significance, in-
24 tegrity, and need for management by the National
25 Park Service of the sites; and

1 (7) have the authority to provide grants to Net-
2 work elements described in subsection (c).

3 (c) ELEMENTS.—The Network shall encompass the
4 following elements:

5 (1) All units and programs of the National
6 Park Service that are determined by the Secretary
7 to relate to the story of Julius Rosenwald and the
8 Rosenwald Schools.

9 (2) Other Federal, State, local, and privately
10 owned properties that the Secretary determines—

11 (A) relate to Julius Rosenwald and the
12 Rosenwald Schools; and

13 (B) are included, or determined by the
14 Secretary to be eligible for inclusion, in the Na-
15 tional Register of Historic Places.

16 (3) Other governmental and nongovernmental
17 sites, facilities, and programs of an educational, re-
18 search, or interpretive nature that are directly re-
19 lated to Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald
20 Schools.

21 (d) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AND MEMORANDA
22 OF UNDERSTANDING.—To achieve the purposes of this
23 section and to ensure effective coordination of the Federal
24 and non-Federal elements of the Network and units and
25 programs of the National Park Service, the Secretary may

1 enter into cooperative agreements and memoranda of un-
2 derstanding with, and provide technical assistance to, the
3 heads of other Federal agencies, States, units of local gov-
4 ernment, regional governmental bodies, and private enti-
5 ties.

