

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 332

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to study certain sites in the historic district of Beaufort, South Carolina, relating to the Reconstruction Era to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a unit of the National Park System.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 8, 2003

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Resources

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to study certain sites in the historic district of Beaufort, South Carolina, relating to the Reconstruction Era to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a unit of the National Park System.

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 “National Reconstruc-
5 tion Study Area Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The Reconstruction Era, during which Con-
2 gress adopted the 13th amendment ending slavery,
3 the 14th amendment guaranteeing civil rights, and
4 the 15th amendment guaranteeing voting rights to
5 all citizens of the United States, saw the occurrence
6 of a transforming series of events in the history of
7 the United States.

8 (2) Beaufort, South Carolina, and the sur-
9 rounding sea islands—

10 (A) contain significant historical and ar-
11 chaeological sites associated with the Recon-
12 struction Era; and

13 (B) offer a unique opportunity for pre-
14 serving and interpreting the Reconstruction
15 Era.

16 (3) The first African-Americans to hear the
17 reading of Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Procla-
18 mation assembled on January 1, 1863, at the Old
19 Fort Plantation on the Beaufort River in the State
20 of South Carolina.

21 (4) The Penn School, a national historic land-
22 mark located on St. Helena Island, South Caro-
23 lina—

1 (A) was the first educational experiment of
2 the Reconstruction Era and the eventual end of
3 chattel slavery; and

4 (B) remains 1 of the most significant Afri-
5 can-American cultural and educational institu-
6 tions in the United States.

7 (5) The Freedmen’s Bureau, located in the re-
8 stored Beaufort College, served as the chief policy
9 arm of the Federal Government for matters related
10 to emancipated slaves during the Reconstruction
11 Era.

12 (6) Beaufort County, South Carolina, and the
13 surrounding sea islands have many other noteworthy
14 historic buildings and archaeological sites, includ-
15 ing—

16 (A) buildings and sites associated with
17 Robert Smalls, a former slave who—

18 (i) became a hero to the Union cause
19 when he and several slaves seized control
20 of the armed Confederate ship on which
21 they served and then turned the ship over
22 to the Union navy; and

23 (ii) represented the State of South
24 Carolina in the House of Representatives
25 during the Reconstruction Era;

1 (B) the first Freedmen’s Village of
2 Mitchellville on Hilton Head Island, South
3 Carolina;

4 (C) Camp Sexton, the site of the first Afri-
5 can-American regiment mustered in the United
6 States Army; and

7 (D) Penn School and Beaufort College.

8 (7) The National Park System does not have a
9 park or historic site that focuses primarily on the
10 preservation and interpretation of the Reconstruc-
11 tion Era.

12 (8) The Reconstruction Era was a period of
13 deep cultural, political, and economic division in the
14 United States, and it is necessary to better under-
15 stand this complex period of history and the con-
16 tinuing impact of this period on the United States.

17 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

18 In this Act:

19 (1) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
20 the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Di-
21 rector of the National Park Service.

22 (2) STUDY AREA.—

23 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “study area”
24 means the area comprised of historical sites in

1 the historic district of Beaufort, South Caro-
2 lina, relating to the Reconstruction Era.

3 (B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “study area”
4 includes the following:

5 (i) The Penn School.

6 (ii) The Old Fort Plantation on the
7 Beaufort River.

8 (iii) The Freedmen’s Bureau in Beau-
9 fort College.

10 (iv) The First Freedmen’s Village of
11 Mitchellville on Hilton Head Island.

12 (v) Various historic buildings and ar-
13 chaeological sites associated with Robert
14 Smalls.

15 (vi) The Beaufort Arsenal.

16 (vii) other significant sites relating to
17 the Reconstruction Era.

18 **SEC. 4. STUDY.**

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall complete a
20 study of the study area to assess the suitability and feasi-
21 bility of designating the study area as a unit of the Na-
22 tional Park System.

23 (b) APPLICABLE LAW.—The study required under
24 subsection (a) shall be conducted in accordance with Pub-
25 lic Law 91–383 (16 U.S.C. 1a–1 et seq.).

1 **SEC. 5. REPORT.**

2 As soon as practicable after the study under section
3 4 is completed, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-
4 mittee on Resources of the House of Representatives and
5 the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the
6 Senate a report that describes the findings of the study
7 and any conclusions and recommendations of the Sec-
8 retary.

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