

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

KAY IVEY
GOVERNOR

(334) 242-7100
FAX: (334) 242-0937

STATE OF ALABAMA

March 23, 2021

The Honorable Terri Sewell
United States House of Representatives
2201 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Terri Sewell,

As Governor, I would like to voice my strong support for a Black Belt National Heritage Area for the state of Alabama. I was born and raised in the heart of the Black Belt of Alabama. In my hometown of Camden, folks help one another. Neighbors are neighbors, and you're taught by parents and teachers alike to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Growing up in Wilcox County prepared me to be the leader I am today by instilling in me the value of hard work and the golden rule.

When we invest in our Black Belt, we're making an important investment in the future of Alabama. The establishment of a Black Belt National Heritage Area will bring even wider attention to the rich history and culture of the area in a way that compliments the recent establishment of civil rights sites championed by the state. I understand that there is broad bipartisan backing for the legislation in the House and the Senate and I offer my support and encouragement of the legislation to be introduced in the coming months.

Understanding the Black Belt and recognizing how the footsteps of diverse human experience have tracked the natural diversity of this basin for millennia, is essential to understanding the American experience. Important cultural and heritage sites, such as the Lowndesboro School, Tent City, Freedom House, and Holy Ground will receive further attention and recognition through a Black Belt National Heritage Area.

As a daughter of the Black Belt, I urge you to help make this special place I call home a Black Belt National Heritage Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ivey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kay Ivey
Governor

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The Honorable Richard Shelby
United States Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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STATE OF ALABAMA

March 23, 2021

The Honorable Thomas Tuberville
United States Senate
B40A Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Tuberville,

As Governor, I would like to voice my strong support for a Black Belt National Heritage Area for the state of Alabama. I was born and raised in the heart of the Black Belt of Alabama. In my hometown of Camden, folks help one another. Neighbors are neighbors, and you're taught by parents and teachers alike to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Growing up in Wilcox County prepared me to be the leader I am today by instilling in me the value of hard work and the golden rule.

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Kay Ivey
Governor



Carolyn M. Barske Crawford, Ph.D.
Director, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area
University of North Alabama
Florence, AL 35632

March 30, 2021

The Honorable Terri Sewell
United States House of Representatives
2201 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area Legislation

Congresswoman Sewell,

I am writing today in support of the Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area Legislation. As the director of the only other National Heritage Area (NHA) in the State of Alabama, the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area (MSNHA), I am keenly interested in seeing the designation of another NHA. I know first-hand the enormous benefit such designation can bring to communities. The stories of Indian Removal, the cotton economy, and Civil Rights are writ large across the landscape of the Black Belt. Preserving, protecting and interpreting the cultural, historical, and natural resources connected to these stories is of utmost importance, both to the residents of the region and citizens of our country as a whole.

The work of many organizations has made the pursuit of designation for NHA status possible. These partners, which include the Alabama Department of Tourism, the Alabama Historical Commission, the Center for the Study of the Black Belt at the University of West Alabama Division of Economic and Workforce Development, Conservation Alabama, Elmore Bolling Foundation, the Lowndes County Friends of the Civil Rights Movement, the Muscogee Creek Nation, the National Parks Conservation Association, The Nature Conservancy, the University of Alabama, and the University of South Alabama Honors College, are dedicated to the success of the program. Having such a diverse group of partners even before the designation of the ABBNHA will help ensure a strong start for the program.

The Black Belt region of Alabama and the rivers that flow through it represent one of North America's great centers of biological and cultural diversity. The region embraces the centers of forest and aquatic biodiversity in the United States, and its famously rich soils and landscapes had a profound impact on the culture, history and politics of this country. It supported grand cities built by Native Americans long before Europeans arrived. One of the largest battles between Europeans and Natives fought east of the Mississippi River took place in the Black Belt when DeSoto encountered the powerful Mabila people. The enslavement and expulsion of Native Americans from Eastern North America was sealed in this basin, as Andrew Jackson led the effort to open up these notoriously rich lands for modern agriculture. It is no coincidence, therefore, that:

effort to open up these notoriously rich lands for modern agriculture. It is no coincidence, therefore, that:

- Martin Luther King marched from Selma to Montgomery on the same paths where the the Red Stick Creeks made their last stand;
- The first great explosion of modern agriculture here fed the industrial expansion of Europe and New England;
- The wealth of the nineteenth-century Cotton Kingdom here created the political center of the southern Confederacy;
- And Stokely Carmichael and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee tested black power and voting rights here alongside thousands of unsung heroes of the Civil Rights movement.

Understanding the Black Belt, and recognizing how the footsteps of diverse human experience have tracked the natural diversity of this basin for millennia, is essential to understanding the American experience. Important cultural and heritage sites, such as the Lowndesboro School, Tent City, Freedom House, and Holy Ground will receive further attention, recognition and support through a Black Belt National Heritage Area.

It is the hope of the MSNHA that with the establishment of a Black Belt National Heritage Area, we will bring even wider attention to the rich history and culture of the area in a way that complements the recent establishment of civil rights sites championed by the state. The NHA designation can help to increase tourism to those sites and communities. The area covered in this legislation is in significant need of economic development. As you well know, we have seen the benefits a NHA can bring to this problem first hand in the MSNHA. The small amount of federal investment can make an enormous difference to the community, helping to push projects forward and provide job opportunities to local residents.

Seeing another NHA in Alabama, which will bring much needed resources to our state, would be very exciting. I want to thank you for your support of the NHA program over the years and hope that you will support the designation of the ABBNHA.

Best,



Carolyn Barske Crawford, Ph.D.
Director, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area

cc: Rob Nuttall, Legislative Director



Carolyn M. Barske Crawford, Ph.D.
Director, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area
University of North Alabama
Florence, AL 35632

March 30, 2021

The Honorable Richard Shelby
United States Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
cc: Clay Armentrout, Legislative Director
Michael Ciamarra, Legislative Assistant

Re: Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area Legislation

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Seeing another NHA in Alabama, which will bring much needed resources to our state, would be very exciting. I want to thank you for your support of the NHA program over the years and hope that you will support the designation of the ABBNHA.

Best,



Carolyn Barske Crawford, Ph.D.
Director, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area

cc: Rob Nuttall, Legislative Director

March 30, 2021

The Honorable Terri Sewell
U.S. House of Representatives
2201 Rayburn House Office
Building Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Sewell:

The University of West Alabama wishes to thank you for your continued efforts to have Alabama's Black Belt designated as a National Heritage Area. The project is significant to our mission as a regional institution.

UWA fully supports the Center for the Study of the Black Belt for its role as management entity for the Black Belt Heritage Area Task Force that encompasses 19 counties in Alabama and their efforts to attain National Heritage Area designation through the United States Congress and the National Park Service. Since its inception, the Center, housed in the Division of Economic & Workforce Development, has taken on several projects to help others realize the richness of the cultural, natural & historical resources in the Black Belt awaiting to enrich the lives of not only its residents, but visitors to the region.

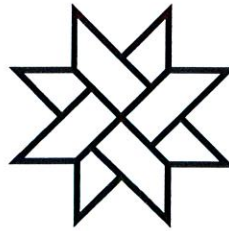
As University president, I am excited by the benefits (listed below) that national designation offers.

- Exposes students to programs that build stewardship to sustain important cultural, historical, and natural resources of the region
- Gives University staff opportunities to build capacity of businesses and organizations in the region through skill development and quality improvement programs
- Promotes an integrated forward-thinking vision for the region
- Builds future community, business, and educational leaders that have a sense of ownership and pride in the significance of the Black Belt region, since a large majority of students return to Black Belt communities after graduation
- Strengthens reciprocal partnerships with other organizations and programs by uniting eastern and western points of the Black Belt
- Offers students the chance for real-world job experience as volunteers and interns
- Leverages financial resources in a resource-constrained environment
- Provides an established solid foundation for operations and expertise in preservation, conservation, interpretive design, grant writing, educational, business, and economic development.

Thank you for all you do for the state of Alabama and its people. We are grateful for your support of our state, and the protection of our natural, cultural and historical resources and the people who depend upon them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Tucker".

Ken Tucker, Ph.D.
President



Black Belt Treasures

CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

April 6, 2021

The Honorable Terri Sewell
U.S. House of Representatives
2201 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Sewell,

It was a pleasure seeing you in Camden this afternoon. The work you accomplish in Congress on behalf of the 7th Congressional District is greatly appreciated!

Since October 2005, Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center (BBTCAC) has been engaged in educating residents and visitors about the arts and rich cultural heritage of Alabama's Black Belt region. On behalf of BBTCAC Board of Directors, more than 500 Black Belt artists, Guild members, staff and volunteers, I write today to express strong support for the proposed Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area Act. This legislation will establish a National Heritage Area consisting of natural, historic and cultural sites within BBTCAC's service area, which are also the counties of Alabama's Black Belt: Bibb, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, Washington, and Wilcox.

BBTCAC is pleased to be a member of a diverse group of organizations from the local, regional, state and national level who have come together to pursue support of a Black Belt National Heritage Area for the State of Alabama. We have worked alongside these partners for many years, most specifically with the Center for the Study of the Black Belt at the University of West Alabama Division of Economic and Workforce Development. It is our hope that the establishment of a Black Belt National Heritage Area will bring broader attention to the rich history and culture of the area in a way that complements the recent establishment of civil rights sites championed by the state, increasing tourism to those sites and the Selma to Montgomery Trail, an area that sorely needs economic development.

We understand you, with support from the Center for the Study of the Black Belt, have introduced such legislation in the past with co-sponsors from the Alabama Congressional Delegation and have renewed focus on introducing and passing the legislation this year. We are pleased to learn of the broad bipartisan backing for the legislation in the House and the Senate and offer our support and encouragement for your sponsorship or co-sponsorship of the legislation to be introduced this month. It is our hope to see swift passage of this legislation into law. The timing of this legislation could not be more strategic as the State of Alabama is celebrating its bicentennial.

Thank you for your support of this legislation and the economic development impact the heritage area designation potentially will have on Alabama's Black Belt region.

Most sincerely,

Sulynn Creswell
Executive Director

Cc: Dr. Tina Jones
Hillary Beard, Chief of Staff
Rob Nuttall, Legislative Director



April 9, 2021

The Honorable Terri Sewell
United States House of Representatives
2201 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

President

Thomas Harris

Secretary

Alfred Padilla, Jr.

Treasurer

Tim Gothard

Board Members

Commissioner
Chris Blankenship

Mayor Dexter
McLendon

**Advisory
Committee**

KeAndre Cole

William Crawford

Bee Frederick

Casey Rogers

Hunter Smith

Ellis Terry

Taylor Williams

Dear Representative Sewell:

On behalf of the Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association's Board of Directors, I want to commend you for dedication to Black Belt region of Alabama and for staying the course to reintroduce legislation creating the Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area. This will bring much needed resources to enhance and further promote our natural, cultural and historic assets.

As a regional tourism marketing organization, we are committed to our mission of fostering economic development and growth through the promotion of our outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities as well as working together in partnership with regional universities, chambers and tourism councils to collectively promote the cultural assets found in the Black Belt region. The distinction as a National Heritage Area will strengthen our position and recognition as a prime destination among the traveling public, therefore, increasing much needed revenues for this rural area of Alabama.

We have stood firm over the years in our support of the University of West Alabama's persistence in working with you to bring about this extremely important designation for Alabama's Black Belt region. Your sponsorship of the House bill, the introduction of a companion bill in the Senate by Senator Shelby and the bipartisan support in both chambers is sincerely appreciated. The honor of having the Black Belt region named a National Heritage Area will instill pride among the residents and bring economic benefits to the communities and all of Alabama.

We look forward to receiving great news of its passage into law.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela Swanner, Director



April 9, 2021

The Honorable Richard Shelby
United States Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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