

Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman
Hearing Memorandum

June 18, 2018

To: All Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

From: Majority Committee Staff— Terry Camp and Holly Baker
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Hearing: Legislative hearing on **H.R. 5613 (Rep. Kevin Yoder)**, To designate the Quindaro Townsite in Kansas City, Kansas, as a National Historic Landmark, and for other purposes
June 21, 2018, 10:00 AM; 1324 Longworth House Office Building

H.R. 5613, “Quindaro Townsite National Historic Landmark Act”

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 5613, introduced by Representative Kevin Yoder (R-KS-03), would designate the Quindaro Townsite in Kansas City, Kansas, as a National Historic Landmark.

Cosponsors

Rep. Lacy Wm. Clay [D-MO-01]
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver [D-MO-05]
Rep. Ron Estes [R-KS-04]
Rep. Lynn Jenkins [R-KS-02]
Rep. Roger W. Marshall [R-KS-01]

Witnesses

The Honorable Kevin Yoder
Member of Congress, Kansas’s 3rd district

Mr. Marvin Robinson II
Independent Volunteer Researcher
Quindaro Ruins/Underground Railroad-Exercise 2019
Kansas City, KS

Background

H.R. 5613 would designate the Quindaro Townsite in Kansas City, Kansas, as a National Historic Landmark. The Quindaro Townsite is on the National Register of Historic Places (listed in 2002), and is part of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. The site preserves the ruins of a frontier town on the Missouri River, which was founded in 1857 to be a

free-state port of entry during the Kansas Territory's fight over the question of slavery. Other prominent river towns in the Territory at that time were pro-slavery. The town's residents included euro-Americans, freed African Americans, and members of the Wyandot Tribe.¹

The Quindaro area was the location of an African American refugee settlement that began during the Civil War, and the town probably played a minor role in the Underground Railroad. It was also the site of the Freedman's University and its successor institution, Western University, the first black university in Kansas.²

National Historic Landmarks are the most renowned historic properties in our nation and possess the highest integrity of all properties on the National Register of Historic Places. National Historic Landmarks must meet specific criteria and the nomination process relies on the extensive expertise of specialists in the field to verify the integrity and national significance of proposed sites.³ Nominations of potential Landmarks are evaluated by the National Park Service Landmarks Committee and the National Park System Advisory Board with recommendations made to the Secretary of the Interior for final determination. The nomination process includes public comment periods and informing local stakeholders about the effects of designation. Property owners must agree to the designation.⁴

In 2017, in response to an inquiry letter from a local stakeholder regarding potential National Historic Landmark status, the National Park Service recommended that Quindaro supporters expand research of the site to identify possible national significance and then submit a comprehensive National Historic Landmark nomination package. The Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area secured a contractor to prepare such a nomination for submission to the National Historic Landmarks Committee and National Park System Advisory Board.

It is rare for National Historic Landmarks to be designated by Congress. The most recent example came in 2004 through enactment of Public Law 108-209, which established Fort Bayard as an National Historic Landmark. More frequently, Congress has directed the Secretary of the Interior to study a site's eligibility for designation as an National Historic Landmark.

A companion bill, S. 2895 has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Roberts (R-KS).

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

Administration Position

The Administration's position is currently unknown.

¹ National Register of Historic Place Registration Form for Quindaro Townsite. April 5, 2002. https://www.kshs.org/resource/national_register/nominationsNRDB/WyandotteCounty_QuindaroTownsiteNR.pdf

² *Id.*

³ *National Historic Landmarks Program* website, National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/nhl/>

⁴ "Designation of National Historic Landmarks" 36 CFR § 65.5

Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)

None.