

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5505

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of designating the study area as the Black Metropolis District National Heritage Area in the State of Illinois, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 27, 2008

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

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of designating the study area as the Black Metropolis District National Heritage Area in the State of Illinois, 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 “Black Metropolis Dis-
5 trict National Heritage Area Study Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The Black Metropolis district on Chicago,
2 Illinois' South Side has a cohesive and distinctive
3 history as well as an important streetscape that dis-
4 tinguishes the area as worthy of designation as a
5 National Heritage Area.

6 (2) The historic features of Chicago's Black
7 Metropolis District predate the Great Migration of
8 1916–1919 and illustrate its influence on African-
9 American life in Chicago and the Nation as a result
10 of this demographic phenomenon in which 500,000
11 African-Americans migrated to the North in search
12 of work and other opportunities, with 50,000 of that
13 aggregate relocating in Chicago.

14 (3) The Black Metropolis, as a setting, wit-
15 nessed some of the finest accomplishments in Afri-
16 can-American contributions to Chicago, the State of
17 Illinois, and the Nation, while its legally and socially
18 proscribed citizens challenged their environment and
19 their Nation to fulfill its promise as a place of op-
20 portunity for all.

21 (4) These contributions and accomplishments
22 fall into the following main categories:

23 (A) BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL
24 PURSUITS.—With State Street developing as
25 the Black Metropolis District's "Wall Street",

1 the area produced two of the largest Black
2 banking operations in the Nation in the Binga
3 State and Douglass National Banks and scores
4 of smaller businesses ranging from print shops
5 to restaurants to clothing stores to hair salons
6 and barbershops.

7 (B) CULTURE AND AESTHETICS.—The
8 area emerged as a musical mecca ranging from
9 jazz to gospel to delta and urban blues to
10 rhythm and blues and was home for institutions
11 such as the George Cleveland Hall Branch Li-
12 brary, which nurtured literary giants such as
13 Langston Hughes, the South Side Community
14 Arts Center, and the DuSable Museum of Afri-
15 can American History and Culture.

16 (C) EDUCATION.—The area includes the
17 first public secondary school in the State of Illi-
18 nois built specifically to accommodate the edu-
19 cational needs of African-American students,
20 which opened in 1934 at 4934 South Wabash
21 Avenue and was named in honor of Chicago's
22 first non-native inhabitant and trader, Jean
23 Baptiste Pointe du Sable, a Black man from
24 Haiti, and whose illustrious graduates include

1 Nat “King” Cole and Chicago Mayor Harold
2 Washington.

3 (D) GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS.—From
4 its political bases in the area’s Second Ward
5 and the First Congressional District, Chicago’s
6 Black Metropolis proved itself a political center
7 for all African-Americans, producing the first
8 African-American to sit in Congress in the 20th
9 Century, the Honorable Oscar DePriest, as well
10 as the first African-American Democratic con-
11 gressman, the Honorable Arthur W. Mitchell,
12 succeeded by Honorable William L. Dawson,
13 the Honorable Ralph H. Metcalfe, the Honor-
14 able Bennett M. Stewart, and the Honorable
15 Harold Washington, later the city’s first elected
16 African-American mayor, and the Honorable
17 Charles A. Hayes.

18 (E) HEALTH CARE.—The area includes
19 Provident Hospital, founded in 1891 by the
20 brilliant African-American surgeon Dr. Daniel
21 Hale Williams and site of the first successful
22 suturing of the human heart by Dr. Williams in
23 1893.

24 (F) LABOR.—The area was home to mil-
25 lions of unskilled and semi-skilled African-

1 American workers, including the packinghouse
2 workers who arrived during the Great Migra-
3 tion and constituted 25 percent of the stock-
4 yards work force during World War I, and the
5 Pullman porters who represented a full 20 per-
6 cent of the Nation’s African-American work-
7 force during the early 1900s.

8 (G) MILITARY LIFE AND PATRIOTISM.—Af-
9 rican-American men enlisted in the Union Army
10 on the grounds of Camp Douglass within the
11 Black Metropolis District as part of the 29th
12 Infantry Regiment of the United States Colored
13 Troops, and a generation later trained at the
14 Eighth Regiment Armory nearby before em-
15 barking for France as part of what President
16 Wilson referred to as the great crusade to
17 “make the world safe for democracy” during
18 the World War I.

19 (H) RECREATION AND COMPETITIVE
20 SPORTS.—Early on, the Nation’s most popular
21 sports: baseball, boxing, football, track and bas-
22 ketball, enjoyed support from the Black Me-
23 tropolis’ population and drew participants who
24 earned widespread recognition such as Rube
25 Foster, a native Chicagoan, who founded the

1 Negro Baseball League and its local team, the
2 American Giants.

3 (I) RELIGION AND CHURCH ACTIVISM.—

4 The area includes Quinn Chapel African Meth-
5 odist Episcopal (A.M.E) Church, an antebellum
6 center of abolitionist activity, and a major sta-
7 tion on the Underground Railroad, and with
8 emancipation, there was another religious move-
9 ment to provide and protect the civil rights of
10 all citizens led by Black Metropolis churches
11 such as Quinn Chapel and Bethel A.M.E.

12 (J) SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS.—

13 It was from within the Black Metropolis Dis-
14 trict in the early 20th century that Ida B.
15 Wells-Barnett waged her crusade for justice for
16 African-Americans and women and worked to
17 establish the first National Association for the
18 Advancement of Colored People branch in that
19 group's national network in 1912.

20 (K) STREETS CAPES.—The area includes

21 many historic locations, including those along
22 State Street and 35th Street, ranging from the
23 Overton Hygienic Manufacturing Building at
24 3617 South State Street and the Chicago Bee
25 Building at 3647 South State Street (both des-

1 ignated as Chicago City Landmarks) to Liberty
2 Life Insurance Company at 3501 South Park-
3 way and a monument and park dedicated to
4 United States Senator Stephen Douglas (des-
5 ignated as a State Landmark) at Lake Park
6 Avenue and 35th Street, green and public
7 spaces, stretching from Chicago’s lakefront to
8 historic park and boulevard systems to the
9 West, and is now the proposed site for the 2016
10 Olympics in the City of Chicago’s bid to host
11 this event.

12 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

13 In this Act:

14 (1) **HERITAGE AREA.**—The term “Heritage
15 Area” means the Black Metropolis District National
16 Heritage Area.

17 (2) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means
18 the Secretary of the Interior.

19 (3) **STUDY AREA.**—The term “study area”
20 means the region bounded as follows:

21 (A) 18th Street on the North and 22nd
22 Street on the South, from Lake Michigan on
23 the East to Wentworth Avenue to the West.

24 (B) 22nd Street on the North to 35th
25 Street on the South, from Lake Michigan on

1 the East to the Dan Ryan Expressway on the
2 West.

3 (C) 35th Street on the North and 47th
4 Street on the South, from Lake Michigan on
5 the East to the B&O Railroad (Stewart Ave-
6 nue) on the West.

7 (D) 47th Street on the North to 55th
8 Street on the South, from Cottage Grove Ave-
9 nue on the East to the Dan Ryan Expressway
10 on the West).

11 (E) 55th Street on the North to 71st
12 Street on the South, from State Street on the
13 West to Cottage Grove Avenue/South Chicago
14 Avenue on the East.

15 **SEC. 4. BLACK METROPOLIS DISTRICT NATIONAL HERIT-**
16 **AGE AREA STUDY.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation
18 with the managers of any Federal land within the Herit-
19 age Area, appropriate State and local governmental agen-
20 cies, and any interested organizations, shall conduct a
21 study to determine the feasibility of designating the study
22 area as the Black Metropolis District National Heritage
23 Area.

24 (b) REQUIREMENTS.—The study shall include anal-
25 ysis, documentation, and determinations on whether—

1 (1) the study area—

2 (A) has an assemblage of natural, historic,
3 cultural, educational, scenic, or recreational re-
4 sources that together are nationally important
5 to the heritage of the United States;

6 (B) represents distinctive aspects of the
7 heritage of the United States worthy of recogni-
8 tion, conservation, interpretation, and con-
9 tinuing use;

10 (C) is best managed through agreements
11 between public and private entities at the local
12 or regional level;

13 (D) reflects traditions, customs, beliefs,
14 and folklife that are a valuable part of the her-
15 itage of the United States;

16 (E) provides outstanding opportunities to
17 conserve natural, historical, cultural, or scenic
18 features;

19 (F) provides outstanding recreational and
20 educational opportunities; and

21 (G) has resources and traditional uses that
22 have national importance;

23 (2) residents, business interests, nonprofit orga-
24 nizations, the Federal Government (including rel-
25 evant Federal land management agencies), and

1 State, local, and tribal governments within the study
2 area—

3 (A) are involved in the planning; and

4 (B) have demonstrated significant support
5 through letters and other means for designation
6 and management of the Heritage Area; and

7 (3) the study area has been identified and sup-
8 ported by the public, private business, and local and
9 State agencies.

10 **SEC. 5. REPORT.**

11 Not later than 3 fiscal years after the date on which
12 funds are made available to carry out the this Act, the
13 Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Natural Re-
14 sources of the House of Representatives and the Com-
15 mittee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate
16 a report that describes the findings, conclusions, and rec-
17 ommendations of the Secretary with respect to the study.

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