

STATEMENT OF SUE MASICA, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 305, TO ESTABLISH THE KATE MULLANY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 14, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 305, a bill to establish the Kate Mullany National Historic Site in the State of New York. The Department opposes enactment of this legislation.

The bill proposes establishment of a Kate Mullany National Historic Site as a new unit of the National Park System. The site would comprise approximately 1/20 of an acre at 350 Eighth Street, in Troy, New York, and would include the southern half of a three-story brick apartment house now designated as the Kate Mullany House National Historic Landmark. The bill would authorize the Secretary to acquire the site and additional real and personal property, to administer the site, and to enter into cooperative agreements with the Hudson-Mohawk Urban Cultural Park Commission and other public and private entities to facilitate preservation and interpretation of the site and related historic resources.

The Department opposes enactment of this bill for three main reasons. First, there are already authorities and mechanisms in place, at the federal, state, and local level, to

support the preservation and interpretation of the Kate Mullany House National Historic Landmark. Second, the National Park Service Organic Act (16 U.S.C. 1a-5) and *National Park Service Management Policies 2001* state that areas should not be added to the National Park System if preservation and management alternatives exist. And third, to meet the President's Initiative to eliminate the deferred maintenance backlog, we need to continue to focus our resources on caring for existing areas in the National Park System.

The building at 350-352 Eighth Street is the only surviving structure known to be associated with Catherine A. (Kate) Mullany – an immigrant laundry worker who organized and led Troy's Collar Laundry Union from 1864 through 1870. The Collar Laundry Union was one of the first all-female unions in the United States to operate over a sustained period. Mullany was recognized in 1868 and 1869 at the meetings of the newly formed National Labor Union both for her work with the Collar Laundry Union and for that union's support and financial contributions to striking union iron molders in Troy and bricklayers in New York City. Kate Mullany lived with her widowed mother and sister in an apartment on the top floor of 350 Eighth Street from 1869-75, inherited the house when her mother died in 1876, moved away, returned in 1903, and died there in 1906.

The southern half of 350-352 Eighth Street was designated as the Kate Mullany House National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1998. The building remained in private ownership until the spring of 2003 when the southern half (the NHL portion) was purchased by the

New York AFL-CIO on behalf of the newly established American Labor Studies Center, a 501(c)(3) educational corporation.

The 1997 National Park Service (NPS) theme study on American Labor History noted that the Mullany House should be considered further for inclusion in the National Park System because it illustrated previously underrepresented stories, and Congress subsequently authorized a special resource study of the site. A draft study by the Northeast Region of the National Park Service suggests that while the Mullany House is nationally significant, there are questions regarding the suitability and the need for NPS management. Additionally, the cost to operate the site and to provide adequate visitor services would be more than if the site was near an existing NPS unit where administrative functions could be shared.

Section 8 of the National Park Service Organic Act (16 U.S.C. 1a-5) and NPS Management Policies (*Management Policies 2001*) state that studies evaluating the suitability and feasibility of areas proposed for inclusion in the National Park System “shall consider whether direct National Park Service management or alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector is appropriate for the area” and “identify what alternative or combination of alternatives would be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing for public enjoyment.” In this instance, several authorities and mechanisms already exist for the protection of the Kate Mullany House and the public interpretation of her work and the larger story of the labor movement in the Hudson-Mohawk region and the nation as a whole. Given the

overlapping local, state, and federal designations and active interest by a non-profit organization, establishing the site as a unit of the National Park System would be redundant.

NPS acquisition or management of the Kate Mullany House is not recommended because funding and technical support for its preservation and interpretation are already available through the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, New York State's Hudson-Mohawk Heritage Area (RiverSpark), grant programs administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, and existing non-profit organizations – particularly the New York AFL-CIO and its American Labor Studies Center. The site has also received assistance and funding from the National Historic Landmarks and Save America's Treasures programs.

Given the funding and personnel needs of existing units of the National Park System, the fact that the site has been purchased by the AFL-CIO, the existence of established authorities and mechanisms to support the preservation and interpretation of the Kate Mullany House National Historic Landmark, and direction from the NPS Organic Act and *Management Policies* that areas not be added to the system if preservation and management alternatives exist, we respectfully oppose designating the Kate Mullany House as a unit of the National Park System.

Finally, we want to note that the Department presented similar testimony to the Senate in October, 2003, on S. 1241, a companion bill to H.R. 305. The Senate Energy and Natural

Resources Committee amended S. 1241 to designate the Kate Mullany House as an affiliated area of the National Park System. As an affiliated area, this site would not be owned or managed by the National Park Service, but it would be administered in a manner consistent with the way in which units of the National Park System are managed, and it could draw on technical or financial assistance provided by the National Park Service.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared remarks and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members might have.