



January 24, 2024

The Honorable Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Warner:

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Our mission is to achieve equity, political rights, and social inclusion by advancing policies and practices that expand human and civil rights, eliminate discrimination, and accelerate the well-being, education, and economic security of Black people and all persons of color.

NAACP Arlington Branch strongly supports legislation to redesignate "Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial" as "Arlington House National Historic Site."

Descendants of the Branham, Custis, Gray, Henry, Lee, Norris, Parks, and Syphax families who lived enslaved and free at Arlington House Plantation are leading the effort to redesignate the site. Many of the descendent family members live in Arlington County to this day. NAACP Arlington Branch firmly stands with them to support legislation to redesignate the site. The new name will focus on a more holistic history of Arlington House and bring recognition to all who lived there.

The site's current name focuses on one person who lived at Arlington House and diminishes everyone else who played a role there, both enslaved and free. A more inclusive and wide-ranging history includes stories of at least 100 African Americans who lived and worked at Arlington House while enslaved by the Lee and Custis families. It also includes the history of Freedman's Village, a community established on the former Arlington House Plantation by thousands of African Americans who emancipated themselves from slavery.

Arlington House has a rich history and extensive narrative that is overshadowed by the current name's emphasis on one man. Redesignating "Robert E. Lee Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery" as "Arlington House National Historic Site" honors a more complete history and opens space for learning and healing.

The National Park Service does not have the authority to change the name of this site. Only Congress has the authority to change it through legislation. Rep. Don Beyer and Sen. Tim Kaine have sponsored legislation to redesignate the site. We ask you to lend your support to pass this important legislation, and sign on to Senator Kaine's legislation, S.J. Res. 35, as a co-sponsor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Hemminger". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Michael D. Hemminger
President, NAACP Arlington Branch

c: NAACP Arlington Branch Executive Committee