

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 24, 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Manchin:

As the Energy and Natural Resources Committee begins the second session of the 116th Congress, we strongly encourage the Committee to hold a hearing on the African American Burial Grounds Network Act (S.2827). This bipartisan, bicameral legislation helps fill an important gap in protecting and preserving African American cemeteries and promotes partnerships between the National Park Service (NPS), non-profits, and the private sector to ensure that the legacy of these historic sites is not forgotten.

Under the stain of slavery, Jim Crow, and racism, generations of African Americans were barred from burying their loved ones on the same land as their neighbors. Because of these restrictions, many of these burial grounds were located in rural areas, on undesirable land far from their communities' centers, and were otherwise denied the same level of support as other community cemeteries. As a result, many of these final resting grounds are now unknown, unmarked, or in serious disrepair. Many of these burial grounds face further damage or destruction due to development.

S.2827 will help prevent continued damage or destruction of these sites by authorizing NPS to create a voluntary, nationwide network of African American cemeteries. NPS would also be directed to develop a program to assist stakeholders in identifying, safeguarding, and restoring these historic places. NPS's expertise would ensure that communities of all sizes, regardless of their location, would have access to the tools and information necessary to protect these sites.

As the Committee develops its hearing schedule for the year, we urge you to include S.2827 so that the Senate can take up and pass this legislation into law.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



Lamar Alexander
U.S. Senator