

## Castle Testifies in Support of Reauthorizing the Underground Railroad Network To Freedom -- May 15, 2007

Washington D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, lead Republican cosponsor of H.R. 1239, "The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2007", today testified in front of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands in support of the legislation and highlighted the importance of the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of the Underground Railroad history through the National Parks Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. With nine Network to Freedom sites throughout Delaware and reports that more passengers came through Wilmington on the Underground Railroad than any other place, Congressman Castle also highlighted the local significance of the program.

Recent National Park Service financial projections show the Network to Freedom budget reducing by 72 percent by the year 2011. Without continued and adequate funding, efforts to disseminate this critical history and build on the program's successes will be greatly diminished. H.R. 1239 reauthorizes the "National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act" by increasing funding to cover needed operations costs for the National Parks Service to carry out the provisions of the program, and by increasing the availability of grant funding to support Underground Railroad preservation and interpretative projects throughout the United States.

"The Network to Freedom has served as a tremendous historical resource throughout our national parks since its establishment in 1998. Encompassing over 250 programs, sites, and partners in over 27 states and the District of Columbia, it is the only national program dedicated to the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of Underground Railroad history. By playing a critical role in helping local communities to effectively share the stories of the men and women who resisted slavery through escape and flight in the Underground Railroad, this program highlights the rich history of Delaware and many other states in the Underground Railroad and is an asset to our National Parks System. The Network to Freedom has been extremely successful and it is my hope that Congress will renew its commitment to its continued success. I fully support this legislation because I believe promoting programs and partnerships to commemorate this time in history and educating the public about the historical significance of the Underground Railroad is vital," said Congressman Castle.

Underground Railroad stations were operated by a few very effective people throughout Delaware in Blackbird, Camden, Middletown, New Castle, Hockessin and Wilmington. Thomas Garrett, for example, is known as Delaware's greatest station master. Spending the greater part of his lifetime working in the Underground Railroad, Thomas Garrett is credited with helping 2,700 slaves reach freedom.

The nine participating Network to Freedom sites in Delaware include: the Delaware Statehouse; Star Hill Historical Society Museum; The Rocks-Fort Christina State Park; New Castle Courthouse; Historical Society of Delaware; Long Road to Freedom education program; Thomas Garrett Home; Tubman-Garrett Riverfront Park and Market Street Bridge; Wilmington Friends Meeting House and Cemetery.

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