

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4706

To establish the Blackwell School National Historic Site in Marfa, Texas,
and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 27, 2021

Mr. TONY GONZALES of Texas (for himself and Mr. VELA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To establish the Blackwell School National Historic Site in
Marfa, Texas, 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 “Blackwell School Na-
5 tional Historic Site Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE.—The term “na-
9 tional historic site” means the Blackwell School, in
10 Marfa, Texas.

1 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
2 the Secretary of the Interior.

3 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds as follows:

5 (1) The Blackwell School, located at 501 South
6 Abbott Street, in Marfa, Presidio County, Texas, is
7 associated with the period of racial segregation in
8 Marfa public schools and is the sole extant property
9 directly associated with Hispanic education in the
10 community, the remaining buildings having been
11 torn down after the school closed in 1965.

12 (2) The Blackwell School is a tangible reminder
13 of a time when the practice of “separate but equal”
14 dominated education and social systems. Despite
15 being categorized as “white” by Texas law, Mexican
16 Americans were regularly excluded from commin-
17 gling with Anglos at barbershops, restaurants, fu-
18 neral homes, theaters, churches, and schools.

19 (3) The spectrum of experiences of students
20 and teachers at the Blackwell School constitute an
21 important record of life in a segregated school in the
22 context of the history of Texas and America.

23 (4) Mexican and Mexican American culture and
24 history in Marfa is tied to the Blackwell School,
25 which for more than 50 years served as a leading

1 feature of the Hispanic community, illustrating the
2 challenge of maintaining cultural identity in a domi-
3 nant Anglo society. Yet today, Hispanic influences
4 are seen in Marfa's social and religious organiza-
5 tions, business and government institutions, and
6 shared experiences of language, food, and music.

7 (5) The historic Blackwell School building is a
8 physical record of the longevity and beauty of the
9 distinctive design and craftsmanship informed by
10 both traditional techniques and materials, and the
11 transition from purely the vernacular to the period
12 of materials, design, and workmanship made avail-
13 able after the arrival of the railroad. The original
14 historic school building and grounds on which it
15 stands provide an authentic setting to commemorate
16 and interpret the history of the Blackwell School.

17 (6) The Blackwell School is closely associated
18 with the broad patterns of local, State, and national
19 history in the area of school segregation. Mexicans
20 and other members of the Latin American diaspora
21 have placed a high value upon education as a means
22 of economic, social, and political advancement.

23 (7) Mexican Americans and other members of
24 the Latin American diaspora have placed a high
25 value upon education as a means of economic, social,

1 and political advancement. However, Hispanics and
2 Latinos have not always had equitable opportunities
3 and access to quality educational facilities in the
4 United States.

5 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BLACKWELL SCHOOL NA-**
6 **TIONAL HISTORIC SITE.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2),
9 there is established the Blackwell School National
10 Historic Site in the State of Texas as a unit of the
11 National Park System to preserve, protect and inter-
12 pret for the benefit of present and future genera-
13 tions the Blackwell School, its role as both an aca-
14 demic and cultural cornerstone in the community in
15 Marfa, Texas, and its function within a segregated
16 system of education in Texas and the United States
17 from 1885 through 1965.

18 (2) CONDITIONS.—The national historic site
19 shall not be established until the date on which the
20 Secretary has—

21 (A) entered into a written agreement with
22 the Marfa Unified School District providing
23 that the Blackwell School shall be donated to or
24 placed by agreement into co-management with
25 the United States for inclusion in a national

1 historic site to be managed consistently with the
2 purposes of a national historic site; and

3 (B) acquired sufficient land or interests in
4 land within the boundaries of the national his-
5 toric site to constitute a manageable unit.

6 (b) BOUNDARIES.—The boundaries of the national
7 historic site shall be the boundaries generally depicted on
8 the map.

9 (c) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—The map shall be on file
10 and available for public inspection in the appropriate of-
11 fices of the National Park Service.

12 (d) ACQUISITION OF AUTHORITY.—The Secretary
13 may only acquire any land or interest in land located with-
14 in the boundary of the national historic site by—

15 (1) donation;

16 (2) purchase with donated funds; or

17 (3) exchange.

18 (e) ADMINISTRATION.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall admin-
20 ister this national historic site in accordance with—

21 (A) this Act; and

22 (B) the laws generally applicable to units
23 of the National Park System.

24 (2) MANAGEMENT PLAN.—

1 (A) Not later than 3 years after the date
2 on which funds are first made available to the
3 Secretary for this purpose, the Secretary shall
4 prepare a general management plan for the na-
5 tional historic site in accordance with section
6 100502 of title 54, United States Code.

7 (B) Upon completion, the Secretary shall
8 submit the general management plan prepared
9 pursuant to subparagraph (A) to the Com-
10 mittee on Natural Resources of the House of
11 Representatives and the Committee on Energy
12 and Natural Resources of the Senate.

13 (f) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary
14 shall enter into cooperative agreements with the Blackwell
15 School Alliance (and other local, regional, State, academic
16 and nonprofit partners) for interpretive and educational
17 programming, technical assistance, and rehabilitation re-
18 lated to the national historic site.

19 (g) WRITTEN CONSENT OF OWNER.—No private
20 property or non-Federal public property shall be included
21 within the boundaries of the national historic site or man-
22 aged as part of the national historic site without the writ-
23 ten consent of the owner of such property.

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