

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1664, H.R. 1931, H.R. 2278, and H.R. 2444
National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee
1:00 PM, Thursday, May 27
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)

Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing and allowing me to highlight my bill, H.R. 2278, the *September 11th National Memorial Trail Act*.

This legislation, which I introduced with Congressmen Fitzpatrick and Beyer, would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to designate the September 11th National Memorial Trail Route. Currently, this trail is a 1,300-mile system of trails and roadways that connects all three sites attacked on September 11, 2001—the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and the Flight 93 Memorial near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

This trail is a tribute to the family members and loved ones we lost and the bravery of the heroes that responded. It also offers an opportunity to reflect and learn about our nation's resilience and perseverance following the attacks on September 11, 2001 and throughout our history. In addition to the three 9/11 memorials anchoring this trail, travelers can learn about our founding with stops at Valley Forge National Historical Park and Independence Hall or visit Antietam National Battlefield or Gettysburg National Military Park to reflect on the darkest period in our nation's history. The trail connects travelers with these points in our history and majestic landscapes, while driving further tourism and recreation along its route.

It starts at the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, and extends northwest to the Flight 93 National Memorial. It continues east to New York City's National September 11th Memorial and Museum. The trail then heads south following the East Coast Greenway connecting to the 9/11 Memorial Garden of Reflection. It then connects to the National Mall in Washington D.C. and ultimately returns to the Pentagon Memorial. It extends through six states and the District of Columbia.

It is a multi-use trail with more than 50 percent of the route off-road. The idea for this trail was born in the wake of September 11, 2001 at the Mid-Atlantic Governors Conference on Greenways, Blueways and Green Infrastructure. Conference Chair and then-Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, David Brickley presented the vision for a trail route connecting the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, the site of Flight 93's crash near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and the Twin Towers in New York City. David then founded the September 11th National Memorial Trail Alliance the following year to develop the September 11th National Memorial Trail.

Last Congress, I introduced a resolution "Recognizing the September 11th National Memorial Trail as an important trail and greenway to be enjoyed by all in honor of the heroes of September 11th" (H.Res. 384). Senators Warner and Toomey introduced identical legislation which passed through unanimous consent.

I want to note for the Committee that H.R. 2278 would not create a new unit of the National Park Service (NPS), or require NPS to manage a 1,300-mile trail system. It would allow the administration of the trail route through the Flight 93 Memorial. The Secretary would be authorized to designate new stops on the trail, produce and disseminate educational materials, and create a trail marker. This framework is similar to legislation that designated the Votes for Women History Trail Route. Section 7111 of H.R.146, the *Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009* authorized designation of that trail route and administration through its existing park unit, the Women's Rights National Historical Park.

Designating the September 11th National Memorial Trail route will serve as a natural embodiment of our pledge to never forget the heroes and victims of that day. Thank you again for this opportunity and I look forward to working with this committee and NPS to make this a reality on the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001.