

HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Mr.

Speaker, I make remarks today to honor 2000 heroic men - men who fought for freedom and justice and a stronger, united America. These men made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. They gave their lives so that their children and grandchildren and generations to come would know an America where hopes for a better life would be a dream for all to share.

The

2000 men I honor today were members of the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. They are buried at the rear of the Nashville National Cemetery, their service and their sacrifice too often overlooked by visitors to that hallowed ground.

This

weekend, Tennessee will take an important step in saluting, and thanking, African-American soldiers for their important service during the Civil War. Tennessee will become the first state in the U.S. to erect a statue to recognize the bravery of these 2000 men, and all of the 180,000 African-American soldiers who fought in the Civil War. The statue is more than an historic monument. It will be a permanent and powerful reminder for all Americans and the world that the strength of our great Nation comes from the belief laid down by our founding fathers that "all men are created equal....."

It

was a desire to transform that belief into reality that these men took up arms. They believed in a new vision of America and they knew it was an America worth fighting for. And now, during Black History Month, we come together to unveil this statue and to offer the praise and appreciation that has been so long overdue.

The

life-size bronze is the result of years of hard work on the part of many. The African American Cultural Alliance and its founder and executive director, Kwame Leo Lillard, led this effort. But many individuals and organizations throughout the community also dedicated themselves to the task. Creative Artists of Tennessee, the Black Veterans Association, the 13th U.S.C.T. Regiment, the Tennessee Historical Commission, Tennessee State University Department of History, and One Point Solutions, along with federal, state and local governments have all been involved in this campaign.

I
am proud and honored that Nashville
will be home to this important memorial to all those who served in the U.S.
Colored Troops during the Civil War. Unlike the battle in so many other cities,
the Battle of Nashville did not take place on one battlefield. It was fought in
the city itself and at locations scattered around the edges of town. No portion
of the city has been preserved as a park to commemorate those who fought and
died in this battle. They are quietly honored at the Nashville National
Cemetery. And now, with
the addition of this statue, all of the troops who sacrificed so much to
preserve our great Nation, will receive the special recognition they deserve.

Jim Cooper

Member of Congress