



County of Bucks

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DIANE M. ELLIS-MARSEGLIA, LCSW

March 4, 2009

The Honorable Robert P. Casey
383 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Casey:

There are few sites as significant to American history as the place where General George Washington crossed the Delaware River on Christmas night, 1776, to surprise Hessian troops in Trenton and change the course of the American Revolution. This victory came at one of the lowest points of the American Revolution and gave the patriots new hope after a succession of staggering defeats.

We are writing to alert you that the visitors' center at this iconic historic site is now in danger of closing. The closing of the Washington Crossing State Park Visitors' Center due to disrepair is tragic and deprives Americans of the opportunity to learn about and experience this meaningful event. More than half a million visitors from around the world stop here to see the assemblage of 13 historic buildings, Durham boat replicas, and the assembly area and embarkation point. The re-enactment of the crossing each Christmas Day brings 12,000 visitors to the site.

The Washington Crossing State Park Visitors' Center was built in the 1950s. A building addition was completed in 1976 for the Bicentennial, but a lack of repairs since that time has left the building with leaks, failing heating systems, non-compliant bathrooms, and general deterioration. Some repairs, such as asbestos removal, have been completed, but that work has stopped, and the Commonwealth has not committed funding for its continuation. Additional funding is needed to complete repairs to keep the building, as well as the surrounding grounds, outbuildings, and historic sites, open to the public.

Washington Crossing is as significant to American history as Independence Hall, Gettysburg, and Valley Forge, all National Historical Parks. Washington Crossing's national importance warrants national support and recognition. With the recent establishment of the Veterans' Cemetery at Washington Crossing, we know that the Crossing Park will attract even more people who will want to see this historic place.

We urge you to find a way to sustain this place, either through funding or through establishing it as part of the National Park Service.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Martin
Chairman

James F. Cawley, Esq.

Diane M. Ellis-Marseglia, LCSW