

# The Coltsville National Historical Park Act – S. 615/H.R. 1259

**What is Coltsville?** Coltsville was the home of Samuel Colt's industrial enterprise, the Colt Fire Arms Company, located in Hartford, CT. This is where Colt manufactured his iconic revolver that not only transformed the firearm industry but was a major contributor to the industrial revolution by pioneering the use of interchangeable parts and precision manufacturing. The 260 acre site is was a fully-integrated industrial community that contained the armories where manufacturing took place, worker housing, the home of Samuel & Elizabeth Colt, and community amenities such as a church, a public park, botanical gardens, a social hall, a beer garden, and a library. Coltsville was active as a site for manufacturing from 1855 up until 1994. Most of the structures, including the iconic blue dome of the East Armory, remain intact. The site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2008.

**What does the legislation do?** H.R. 1259/S.615 would authorize the establishment of a new unit of the National Park System within the Coltsville Historic District. The bill sets a number of conditions that must be met before the Secretary of Interior can certify a park designation.

**Why should this be a National Park?** Coltsville is a part of our nation's manufacturing DNA. It is a readily identifiable and cohesive 260 acre site that is worthy of preservation, interpretation, and management by the National Park Service.

No unit that is presently in the National Park System fully interprets the type precision manufacturing that was pioneered at Coltsville. Samuel Colt developed the use of interchangeable parts, the assembly line, and highly mechanized techniques that set the stage for mass production of the bicycle, the typewriter, the automobile, and the jet engine. This legislation has support from all levels including the Governor of Connecticut, the Mayor of Hartford, neighborhood organizations, the business community, the state's Congressional delegation, and the National Park Service. It is also important as an economic development tool for a city with significant poverty. Finally, Connecticut is notably underrepresented in the National Park System, having only one small National Historic Site.

**Where did this idea come from?** For years, the Coltsville Ad Hoc Committee, a group of government, nonprofit, and private sector stakeholders, have been working to develop support for a unit of the National Park System at Coltsville. Senator Dodd and Representative Larson introduced the Coltsville Study Act, which was signed into law in 2003 and authorized the National Park Service to study whether it should be included as a unit in the National Park System. With the help of state funding, a Visitor Experience Study was commissioned that developed detailed scenarios of how the site could be managed as an NPS unit. In 2009, the National Park Service releases the Special Resource Study and determined that Coltsville is both nationally significant and is suitable for National Park designation. In subsequent Congressional testimony in 2011, the National Park Service testified in favor of designating Coltsville a National Historical Park.

**What is the legislative history behind efforts to designate Coltsville as a National Park?** In 2010, Senator Dodd and Representative Larson first introduced the National Historical Park Act. The bill was voted on in the full House, receiving a majority of the votes, but failed to reach the two-thirds necessary to pass under suspension of the rules. The bill was reintroduced in 2011; however no new National Park designations occurred during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. This year, Representative Larson and Senator Blumenthal have reintroduced the bill. H.R. 1259 was favorably reported out of the House Natural Resources Committee by unanimous consent on February 27, 2014. Additionally, the Senate ENR Committee has held a hearing on S. 615.