

Wiggins

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## House passes bill to preserve Indian massacre site of 1864



*Musgraves bill establishes 1,400 acre trust for Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes.*

**Washington, DC:** In 1864, an event occurred on the Great Plains of Colorado, long forgotten by most, but not by all. The Sand Creek Massacre was remembered today in the halls of Congress. Today the U.S. House passed a bill introduced by Representative Marilyn Musgrave (CO-04) that helps set-aside over 1,400 acres where Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians were killed while encamped peacefully and believing to be under the protection of the U.S. military.

On November 29, 1864, 700 Colorado Volunteers under the command of Col. John Chivington attacked the village of Cheyenne Chiefs Black Kettle and White Antelope who were camped in what is now Kiowa County, Colorado. Although Black Kettle had reportedly raised an American flag and white truce flag as a sign of peace, more than 150 Indian people were killed by mountain howitzers and rifle fire. The majority killed were women, children, and the elderly.

"Though descendants of those killed have passed along stories of what took place, no permanent memorial has been established," said Musgrave. "To some looking at the land today it might not seem like much on the surface, however, this massacre is seared into the history of the American frontier. It also serves as a poignant point in our government's relationship with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. I am encouraged with today's vote because the Tribes are much closer to preserving this solemn place."

"I want to commend Rep. Musgrave for her work on behalf of the families and tribes associated with the Sand Creek Massacre and on this important bill," said House Resources Committee Chairman Richard W. Pombo. "It was a dark day in America's history and today the House remembered and commemorated the victims by passing this bill that makes the creation of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site possible."

Two months before the Sand Creek Massacre, Black Kettle spoke to U.S. Army officers during a council at Camp Weld in the

give all the chiefs of the soldiers here to understand that we are for peace, and that we have made peace, that we may not be mistaken by them for enemies. I have not come with a little wolf's bark, but have come to talk plain with you... [W]hen I go home and tell my people that I have taken your hand and the hands of all the chiefs here in Denver, they will feel well."

Still holding a Peace and Friendship medal given to him by the President of the United States, White Antelope laid slain and scalped. He had previously signed the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and Fort Wise Treaty of 1861, promising peace and friendship with the United States government.

Specifically, Musgrave's bill, H.R. 481, furthers the creation of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site by establishing the National Park Service as the managers of 1,465 acres of land known as 'Dawson's Ranch', which will be given to the Tribes in a trust by the federal government. The trust property can only be used for historic, religious, or cultural uses that are compatible with the use of the land as a national historic site. Musgrave's legislation is a companion bill to Colorado Senator Wayne Allard.

The previously enacted P.L. 105-243 directed the National Park Service to precisely locate the site of the Sand Creek Massacre and determine its feasibility for inclusion in the National Park System.

In May 2000 field survey, the first artifact found on site was a piece of cannon ball shrapnel from a mountain howitzer. There were no other incidents where similar weaponry was used by the U.S. military at anytime in that area. Thus, confirming unequivocally that this was indeed the Sand Creek Massacre Site.

From 1999 to 2000, the National Park Service, together with the State of Colorado, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, the Northern Cheyenne and the Northern Arapaho Tribes conducted a multidisciplinary study that used archeology, historical research, oral history, geomorphology, aerial photography, and tribal traditional methods to identify the site of the Sand Creek Massacre.