

## Harriet Tubman visitor cen good first step

**Our view: State will build a visitors center to ho  
Tubman, but a national park should be added**

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Harriet Tubman was one tough lady. She escaped slavery, in the Underground Railroad, traveling at night under the cover of darkness, hiding at safe houses along the path to freedom. During the Civil War, she led forces that raided plantations and freed slaves along the coast.

Tubman played an outsized role in American history, a contribution widely recognized. This week, the state of Maryland announced that it plans to build the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center. If completed two years from now, the visitor center will house exhibits, walking trails and a garden on the grounds.

This project was a long time in getting off the ground. An early effort by state officials pieced together a variety of funding sources, including the state's Enhancement Program, to come up with the \$21 million needed for the visitor center. The center is expected to attract tourists and pump dollars into the local economy, slated to create about 225 jobs, and the center is expected to be open in 2013.

All of this is work well done, but there is more to do to properly honor Tubman.

The next task is creating a historic national park in her name. One site is in Dorchester County and one each in Talbot and Caroline counties. Tubman was born and toiled as a slave, and a safe house where she hid. This park would enable visitors to walk in Tubman's footsteps and gain a deeper understanding of a period of American history and Maryland native. A smaller national park is also projected for the women's suffrage movement and establishing a home for her.

Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, backed by his fellow Maryland Democrats, Democratic Sens. Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, have introduced legislation to add Maryland and New York sites into the National Park Service. A national park would cost an estimated \$15 billion.

In the past, there had been no comparable effort in the House. U.S. Rep. Andy Harris, whose district includes the Eastern Shore, has introduced legislation. Republican New York Rep. Richard Hanna to designate the site. Given the tough fiscal climate in Washington and the need to move this effort forward will require considerable skill. We will continue to support this effort.

As this page has stated, even in the hard times, we cannot ignore the need for sites, such as the Appomattox Courthouse, were established.

Building a Harriet Tubman visitor center is a welcome first step in honoring this remarkable woman and bring jobs to an area with some economic challenges. Establishing the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park is the next step.