

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 12, 1983

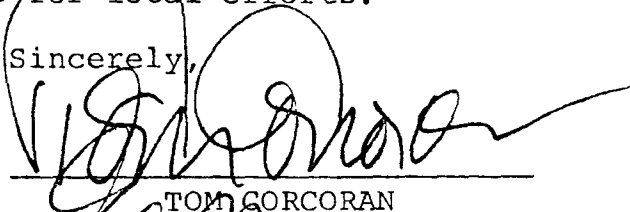
Dear Colleague:

Because you serve on the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, we especially commend the enclosed letter to your attention. The proposal it discusses is a unique approach to providing limited federal assistance toward preserving and enhancing natural and historic assets for this and future generations.

Briefly, a federal commission with limited life and a \$250,000 annual authorization would help coordinate efforts to improve the resources in a 100-mile "national heritage corridor" so that visitors can more fully appreciate them. No land may be acquired by the federal government under the legislation, nor would federal environmental standards applying to the area be altered by it. A copy of the legislation is enclosed.

Support for this innovative plan is universal, as evidenced by the introduction of the bill by all members of the Illinois congressional delegation as well as by strong words of support from the Governor and, by resolution, the Illinois legislature. We trust that your Committee will favorably consider and advance this legislation, and we hope that you will have an opportunity in coming years to view the results of this modest but important source of leadership for local efforts.

Sincerely,

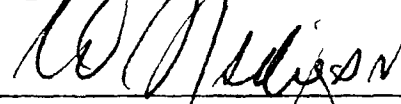


WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

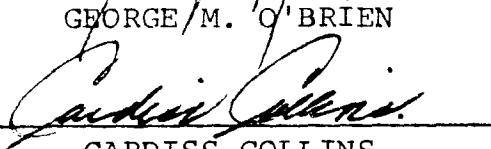
TOM CORCORAN



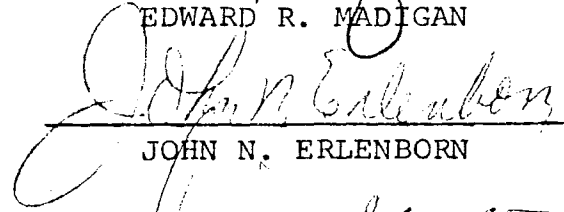
GEORGE M. O'BRIEN



EDWARD R. MADIGAN

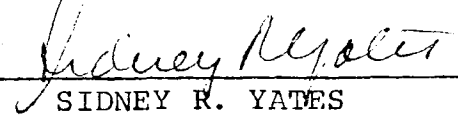


CARDISS COLLINS



JOHN N. ERLNBORN

GUS SAVAGE



SIDNEY R. YATES

Robert H. Michel
ROBERT H. MICHEL

Dan Rostenkowski
DAN ROSTENKOWSKI

PAUL SIMON

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NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR IN ILLINOIS -- A NOVEL CONCEPT H.R. 2014

Dear Colleague:

While the proposed Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor lies wholly in our State of Illinois, we think you will find to be of interest a plan which enjoys the support of the Sierra Club, historic preservation groups, Audubon Society, sporting enthusiasts and Isaac Walton League along with that of the entire Illinois congressional delegation, local businesses and the Office of Management and Budget.

Based on a concept plan developed by a National Park Service survey team, legislation establishing the Corridor (H.R. 2014) would create a federal commission to assist non-federal governmental and private entities in preserving and enhancing the natural and historic assets of the 100-mile stretch in northern Illinois and in making them available to the public. The commission is to be dominated by local governmental officials and public members representing recreation, business, archeology, conservation and historic preservation. Its life is limited to 10 years (15 if approved by the Secretary and the Governor), and not more than \$250,000 may be appropriated to the commission by Congress each year. No land or property would be acquired by the federal government, nor would federal environmental standards be altered.

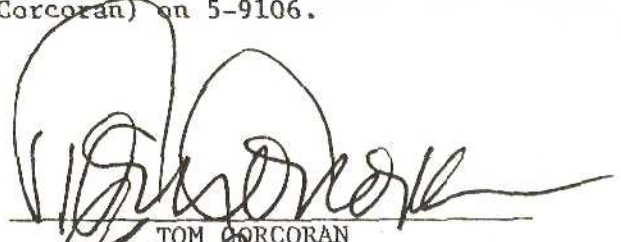
As illustrated on the reverse, the Corridor is to run from Chicago's lakefront southwest along the Chicago and Des Plaines Rivers to the Illinois River and westward along it to the twin cities of LaSalle and Peru. This route encompasses the abandoned Illinois and Michigan Canal, so named because it was built largely on the urgings of Abraham Lincoln to enable water transport between Lake Michigan and the Illinois River, a major Mississippi River tributary. From the mid-1800s to early in this century, the Canal contributed to the growth of Chicago into inland North America's largest city. Probably second only to the Erie Canal in historical importance, it opened the West to trade and settlement. How the industrial revolution transpired in the Midwest -- now an untold story -- can be related through adequate interpretation of buildings and other structures. The Canal was completely abandoned for navigation in 1933.

The water-related resources of the Corridor include the most of the original Canal, with locks, towpath and aqueducts carrying it over sizable streams; good canoeing, and recreational boating on adjacent rivers; and observation of both commercial water transport and the environment of 41 wetland areas. Other natural highlights are Starved Rock of Indian lore, remaining namesakes of The Prairie State and, in contrast to our State's general flatness, steep bluffs and narrow canyons in undisturbed settings.

A trail to connect all of the Corridor's resources is to be a very important result of the Commission's work, as it is expected that many visitors will prefer hiking and biking to using the nearby Interstates. To be found along the way are historic homes and other buildings, museums, forest preserves, state parks, historic sites, towns which were intimately linked to the canal culture and reflect that connection. The Corridor includes an abundance of historic places; Joliet alone, with 111 historic structures, has a National Register historic district, and the ruins of one of the first Bessemer furnaces are at U.S. Steel's plant there. Abandoned quarries, early grain elevators used in loading barges, stone and swinging railroad bridges and other examples of American engineering and technological achievements are all present. Of course, Chicago and other contemporary communities offer points of interest, and many of today's local industries will be explained to visitors of the Corridor.


Residents of northeastern Illinois in general, and of Chicago in particular, need more recreation areas. The Corridor can be an opportunity for others from elsewhere in the Midwest and across the country as well. Illinois has but the Lincoln Home as a National Park Service facility and no federal recreation areas apart from the Shawnee National Forest, and our State ranks near last in the proportion of returned federal tax dollars. Together with State, local and private assistance, the commission we propose will greatly enhance the Corridor, improving the quality of life of those in the area and revitalizing the historic canal towns. There is tremendous support for this legislation and no opposition to it. Your support of it would be appreciated, and your cosponsorship of H.R. 2014 is most welcome. If you are interested in cosponsoring it, please have your staff contact Scott McMurray (Corcoran) on 5-9106.

Sincerely,



TOM CORCORAN

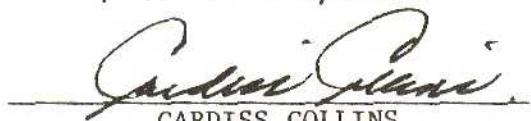
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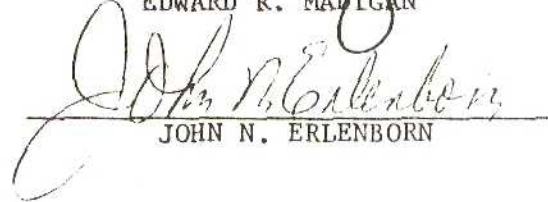
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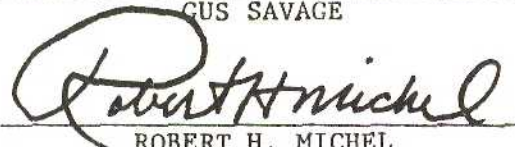


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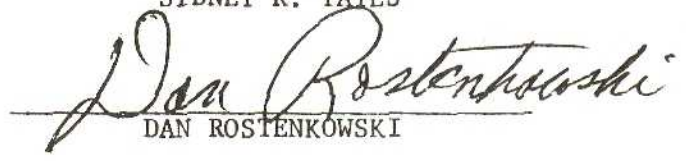
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