

Roger Sharpe Capitol Hill, 309 9th Street, NE Washington, DC 20002-6115

February 24, 2015

Dr. Gregory A. Bohach  
Vice President, Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine  
Mississippi State University  
PO Box 9800  
203 Bost Building  
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9800



Dear Dr. Bohach:

I write you to request respectfully that you and your colleagues at APLU might consider facilitating an *ad hoc* committee of relevant publics who would have an interest in memorializing US Senator Justin Smith Morrill with the Congressional Gold Medal. In recent days I have hand-carried individually-addressed letters to the Majority and Minority Leadership of both the House and Senate recommending that they give their favorable consideration to Senator Morrill for this award.

Beyond Morrill's vision to establish land-grant institutions for the higher learning of all--an extraordinary legacy which standing alone is to be heralded by a grateful nation--his lasting contributions to our nation's capital are many. He was instrumental in securing funds for the completion of the Washington monument, and he was a steadfast supporter of the Smithsonian Institution. He was a principal advocate in the construction of the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. He was responsible for bringing in Frederick Law Olmstead to design and landscape the United States Capitol grounds. It was his advocacy and legislation that led to the renaming of the old Hall of the House of Representatives as National Statuary Hall and the invitation from Congress to the states to contribute two statues each in a collection known as the National Statuary Hall Collection, now placed throughout the Capitol and the new Capitol Visitor's Center. Regrettably, Justin Smith Morrill has not been given the status and honor commensurate to his contributions: only a small portrait exists outside the Senate Chamber. A statute of him, although merited, does not seem to be forthcoming.

It would please me very much to work with APLU on this project. My contributions would be *pro bono*. I began much of my own research on Senator Morrill's life and legislative contributions when I first attended Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and studied the history of American education under Professor Patricia A. Graham, who became Harvard University's first woman dean. I continued this research through my doctoral studies at Harvard, and in more recent years I read from Morrill's letters and papers in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress. It was my privilege to have given three significant addresses on Justin Morrill in the past two years: (1) "US Senator Justin Smith Morrill and His Contributions to Democratizing Higher Education in the United States" for the 150th Anniversary Symposium of the United States Department of Agriculture, August 16, 2012, and (2) the 125th annual national conference of public and land grant universities, APLU, meeting in Denver, CO, November 12, 2012; and (3) the 150th Anniversary Commemoration of National Statuary Hall, US Capitol (assembly of staff and guides), July 2, 2014.

Thanks very much for your thoughtful consideration. Kindly inform me of your thinking. On a personal note, I consider myself fortunate to have been mentored by Dr. John Caldwell, a Mississippi State *alumnus* and late Chancellor at Arkansas and at NC State where he was my chancellor in the late 1960's!

Sincerely,

cc Ms. Jennifer T. Poulakidas, APLU Vice President, Congressional and Governmental Affairs  
Mr. Eddie Gouge, Senior Associate Director, Federal Relations

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President Abraham Lincoln's Birthday, 2015

*file copy*

The Honorable John A. Boehner, Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
The Capitol H-232

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I respectfully request that the Congress of the United States consider favorably awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the Honorable Justin Smith Morrill (R) of Vermont, who served in both the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate for more than 44 continuous years. No doubt this posthumous recognition for Justin Morrill, whose legacy we know best from the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862 signed by President Lincoln, would be supported by both Democratic and Republican Members of Congress.

Justin Morrill's legislation, which contributed directly to a more democratic American society by giving millions of young men and women from poor and working families access to higher education, places him among the greatest Americans of all times. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and every territory have at least one land-grant university; some states have two land-grant institutions, the second being created as historically-black universities by the 1890 Morrill Act; and some western and plains states now have land-grant Native American tribal colleges created in 1994.

By the time of Senator Morrill's death on December 28, 1898, he had been elected six terms in the United States Senate (1872-1898) following five terms in the House of Representatives (1854-1869) where he chaired the most important Committees of Finance (Senate) and Ways and Means (House). Morrill introduced House Joint Resolution 66 (1864) which created National Statuary Hall from the Old Hall of the House of Representatives. As Senator he also chaired the Committee on Buildings and Grounds and served as a principal advocate for construction of the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, for inviting Frederick Law Olmsted to design the present landscape of the Capitol, and for planning the location of the US Supreme Court Building. In calling for the Supreme Court to be located in close proximity to the United States Capitol and the Library of Congress, Morrill argued in his last speech---delivered in the Senate Chamber on December 13<sup>th</sup> just two weeks before his death from pneumonia--- that this location " would form a harmonious group of large public structures on Capitol Hill of unequalled grandeur, and will be appreciated by the American people forever." For more than a hundred years millions of American families, including ours, have shared in his vision.

Justin Morrill, himself the son of a blacksmith and farmer who later in life prospered as a merchant, believed as did President Lincoln in the right to rise economically as a fundamental tenet to the American dream. As Senator George Hoar of Massachusetts would later recall, Justin Morrill *knew in his youth the veterans of the Revolution and the generation who declared independence and framed the Constitution....He knew the whole history of his country from the time of her independence, partly from the lips of those who shaped it, partly because of the large share he had in it himself.*

As a son of a tobacco farmer in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, I was one of those young people given an opportunity for higher education at North Carolina State University because of Justin Morrill's visionary leadership. I encourage you and your colleagues to award the Congressional Gold Medal so as to honor and to recall the memory of United States Senator Justin Smith Morrill,

*A Statesman who did not give up to party what was intended for humankind.*

Respectfully submitted,

*RS*