

# Reps Danny K. Davis, Steve Cohen, & James Clyburn

## H.R. 8887, Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park Act

This bill would establish the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park to commemorate the incredible impact of the philanthropy of Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools.

The son of German-Jewish immigrants, Mr. Rosenwald helped make Sears, Roebuck & Company the powerhouse of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and used his fortune to enhance the lives of others. During the Jim Crow era, Mr. Rosenwald partnered with the Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. Washington, and 5,000 Black communities in the south to build schools across 15 states to address the lack of education for African Americans. During the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, one-third of all African American children – more than 600,000 students – were educated in Rosenwald schools. A 2011 study by two Federal Reserve economists concluded that the schools played a significant role in narrowing the education gap between Black and White students in the south.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Mr. Rosenwald's philanthropy established museums, community centers, and housing as well as assisted Jews in Europe and new immigrants to the U.S. The Rosenwald Fund supported the early NAACP cases that eventually led to the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, provided fellowships to African Americans in the arts and sciences – such as Jacob Lawrence, Marian Anderson, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes, and assisted multiple Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Fisk, Dillard, and Howard. Mr. Rosenwald improved the lives of those in Chicago as well, creating the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago and the Museum of Science and Industry among many other local initiatives.

The Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park Act would:

- **Establish the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park.** The multisite Park would commemorate the legacy of Julius Rosenwald, recognize the impact of the Rosenwald Schools and honor other important parts of Rosenwald's philanthropy.
- **Preserve a small number of representative Rosenwald Schools** including: the San Domingo School in Wicomico County, MD, a 3-teacher school built during the Tuskegee phase of the School Building Program; and two schools built during the Rosenwald Fund phase of the program - the St. George Rosenwald School, a six teacher school in St. George, SC, and the Woodville Rosenwald School, a 2-teacher school in Gloucester County, VA.
- **Disseminate more fully the story of Rosenwald and the Schools throughout the nation** by establishing a network within the National Park Service to connect the remaining Rosenwald Schools, as well as by including the interpretation of the story of Rosenwald and the Schools at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Illinois, which contains Rosenwald's boyhood home, and at the Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site in Alabama, founded by Booker T. Washington and at which architects designed the early Rosenwald Schools

This legislation builds on Rep. Davis's now enacted *Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools Act* that required the National Park Service to conduct a Special Resource Study of the sites associated with Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools. This bill is supported by 208 nonprofit organizations including the Rosenwald Park Campaign, the National Parks Conservation Association, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. To cosponsor, please contact [Jill.Hunter-Williams@mail.house.gov](mailto:Jill.Hunter-Williams@mail.house.gov) (Davis), [Craig.Dulniak@mail.house.gov](mailto:Craig.Dulniak@mail.house.gov) (Cohen), or [Elizabeth.Thomas@mail.house.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Thomas@mail.house.gov) (Clyburn).

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<sup>1</sup> Aaronson, D., & Mazumder, B. (October 2011). The Impact of the Rosenwald Schools on Black Achievement. *Journal of Political Economy*, 119 (5), 821-888, <https://doi.org/10.1086/662962>

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