

\$300,000 earmark to commemorate the 150th anniversary of John Brown's raid on the arsenal at Harpers Ferry National Historic Park

The omnibus contains a \$300,000 earmark to commemorate the 150th anniversary of John Brown's raid on the arsenal at Harpers Ferry National Historic Park to defray the costs of the extensive events that will surround the anniversary.

The purpose of the 150th Commemoration is for the John Brown 150th Anniversary Quad-State Committee, comprised of citizens from four states, to plan 65 events that will take place between April and December 2009. The Committee will spend the money to organize events consisting of re-enactments, dramatic productions, art exhibits, academic lectures, special tours, concerts, educational symposiums, scholarships, living-history programs, family and youth activities and ranger-conducted programs.¹ During this time of national economic crisis, any money for celebrations should be reserved for national priorities.

The commemoration already has ample funding available to it through state and local organizations

Sponsoring the commemoration are twelve organizations including the Jefferson County NAACP, Penn State University-Mont Alto campus,² which operates under the umbrella of a \$1.6 billion endowment³ and the West Virginia Division of Tourism.

While the historical event was certainly a turning point in our nation's history and well-worth our studies, this earmark is going to support tourism in these four states:

“The strategy is to attract tourists to the Quad-state region to visit historical sites and spend money on lodging, food, gas and sundries to help the region's economy. Studies have shown that heritage

¹ Official John Brown commemorative celebration website: <http://www.johnbrownraid.org/index.php>; The Journal: John Brown Sesquicentennial top tourist destination, January 14, 2009.

² Official John Brown commemorative celebration website: <http://www.johnbrownraid.org/links.html>

³ Penn State University, *The President's Report on Philanthropy 2007-2008*, <http://president.psu.edu/philanthropy/investment/>

tourists tend to stay longer and spend more money than the average tourist.⁴

"We look at the economic impact of tourism as extremely important, and with the 150th anniversary, we expect a bigger influx of tourists and more spending," said Tom Riford, president of the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau.⁵

If Congress wants to enhance tourism in the U.S., it should focus on policies that reduce financial burdens on the American people and allow them to keep more of their hard earned incomes to spend how they choose.

Congress should not spend money to promote tourism and other economic development in certain states when Americans across the country are struggling to make ends meet.

⁴ Quad-State Business Journal, Sesquicentennial Starts with John Brown <http://www.allbusiness.com/entertainment-arts/museums-parks-gardens-historical/11784454-1.html>

⁵ ibid