



## SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

May 14, 2024

The Honorable Joe Manchin III  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Energy and  
Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Energy and  
Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso,

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) writes to express its strong support for S. 4216, the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act. By creating the national park and preserve, this important measure would not only bring about Georgia's first national park but also better protect one of the most significant Native American historical and cultural sites and landscapes in the nation.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 5,500 members, the SAA represents professional and avocational archaeologists, archaeology students in colleges and universities, and archaeologists working at tribal agencies, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. The SAA has members throughout the United States, as well as in many nations around the world.

The area in question is part of the ancestral home of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. During the thousands of years of their presence in the region, they constructed the seven mounds at the core of the new national park to develop and express their religious, social, and cultural beliefs and practices. A number of other related structures, including trenches, were built near the mounds. These formations constitute some of the best-preserved precontact tribal cultural and historic sites in the United States. Establishing the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve will ensure that these resources and the landscape that surrounds them, critical to both the Muscogee people's identity as well as the broader public's understanding of our past, survive for generations to come.

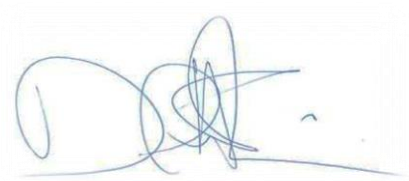
There is another important reason to support this legislation. For far too long, tribal opinions and values went unrecognized by federal and state policymakers when it came to historic preservation, even regarding sites, objects, and landscapes of importance to tribal history and culture. S. 4216 takes a different and beneficial approach, by establishing the Muscogee as co-managers of the park and preserve, thus ensuring that their voices and values are recognized in the preservation of the heart of their tribal homeland.

Finally, the establishment of a new national park and preserve could enhance the economic opportunities of the area. Historic tourism is a lucrative and growing part of the travel industry, and visitors to the

Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve will not only come to understand and appreciate the story of the Muscogee but also bring with them growth potential for the communities in the area.

The SAA congratulates the Georgia congressional delegation for its years of hard work on this issue and urges the House Natural Resources Committee to pass S. 4216 as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Sandweiss', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel H. Sandweiss, PhD, RPA  
President