



MLK Commission Work Group #1: Virginians on the Monument

**Senate Room 1, Capitol
Richmond, Virginia**

**Wednesday, May 17, 2017
2:00 P.M.**

SUMMARY

The Virginians on the Monument Work Group (the Work Group) of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission) met to begin the process of selecting finalists for inclusion on the Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument (the Monument) and to discuss the timeframe and process for holding public hearings. The Monument will feature images and brief biographical information honoring four African-American Virginians who contributed to emancipation before 1865 and four who contributed to the fight for freedom after 1865.

The Work Group reviewed the lists of nominees and Dr. Gregg Kimball of the Library of Virginia presented updates on the library's research. Work Group members were provided with written biographical information on each of the nominees, which the members reviewed.

The Work Group first discussed the 15 pre-Emancipation nominees. Senator Dance suggested that, in choosing finalists, members might consider the extent to which nominees' contributions benefitted others, rather than benefitting themselves. Members also discussed the need to ensure diversity in geographical representation, time periods, and occupations. Based on these considerations, each member chose nominees that best exemplified the Monument's purpose and determined a list of nine pre-Emancipation finalists: Mary Elizabeth Bowser, Henry "Box" Brown, Anthony Burns, William Harvey Carney, John Dabney, Gabriel, James Lafayette, Dred Scott, and Nat Turner.

In examining the list of 60 post-Emancipation nominees, members of the Work Group determined that categorical lists, sorting nominees by geographical region, occupation, and type of contribution, would be needed to contextualize nominees' contributions and allow members to better evaluate the candidates. Dr. Kimball agreed to sort nominees into categories prior to the Work Group's next meeting.

Members also discussed options for honoring the full list of nominees. The Commission plans to honor all nominees on the Commission's website, but members raised the possibility of additionally listing all names at the site of the Monument, if space and budget would allow and if the full Commission were to approve. The Work Group moved forward for the time being with the Commission's existing plans to honor eight individuals.

To receive public input on the selection process, public hearings will be held to allow members of the public to weigh in on the lists of finalists determined by the Work Group. Members tentatively planned to hold public hearings in Norfolk, Blacksburg, Alexandria, Danville, and Charlottesville, from late June through August of 2017, with dates to be determined based on members' availability and on the availability of host sites. In order that finalists may be selected prior to the public hearings, the Work Group agreed to meet again on Wednesday, June 7, at 2:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.