

Lawmakers Push To Rename ‘Negro Mountain’

Julia Craven: Huffington Post

WASHINGTON — Two Pennsylvania state representatives joined forces this month to petition the federal government to rename a controversially named peak in the Allegheny Mountains.

Rep. Rosita Youngblood (D), who is the first African-American woman to hold a leadership position in the state’s general assembly, said she didn’t believe it when her granddaughter and son told her years ago about Negro Mountain.

“I said, ‘There is no such thing as Negro Mountain in Pennsylvania,’” she told The Huffington Post Monday.

Their research proved otherwise. Negro Mountain is a 30-mile-long ridge that stretches from Maryland’s Deep Creek Lake to Casselman River in Pennsylvania. The peak got its [name](#) after a black man known only as “Nemesis” sacrificed his life to save soldiers during the French and Indian War in 1756.

Youngblood’s granddaughter told her she had to do something about the name of the mountain.

Youngblood began introducing legislation to [change](#) the ridge’s name to Nemesis Mountain [in 2007](#).

“[Nemesis] was a hero,” she said. “He served bravely in helping the white settlers. He gave his life, and I think it’s only fair. We treat all our other heroes when they come home from war, or if they’re in a battle ... equally, and I do believe the same thing should happen with him.”

Youngblood reached across the aisle this month and joined forces with Rep. Seth Grove (R), now a co-sponsor on the bill.

“This commonwealth has a long history of recognizing its heroes by name and Nemesis should not be an exception,” Grove [said in a statement](#). “It’s the 21st century. We should take steps to rename the mountain for the man — not the race of the man — who saved the lives of so many.”

Within the state legislature, there has been a jump in support for the new name. The resolution currently has over 30 supporters from both parties.

“There is growing support, more support than we’ve had in the past, on this resolution,” Youngblood spokesman Bill Thomas said. “The representatives consider the urging to be the first step from a statement perspective, from a support perspective that passing this resolution will send a message ... to move forward with the petition.”

The process to change the peak’s name begins with a petition to the U.S. Geological Survey via the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which is acting as a liaison, Thomas said.

After receiving the petition, the USGS would need to reach out the state of Maryland to enlist its involvement in the renaming process, Thomas said, since a portion of the ridge is within its borders.

Youngblood said she plans to reach out to a senator from Maryland and ask that they introduce a similar resolution in the state.

Some residents of Somerset County, Pennsylvania, where the peak is located, have pushed back against the name change.

“Even though the world around them has changed, their mindset has not changed,” Youngblood said. “And sometimes it takes something like this to change a person’s mindset so that they understand we’re now in the 21st century. We’re not back in the 17th century.”

Though she hasn’t succeeded in changing the peak’s name just yet, Youngblood said the promise she made to her family is what fuels her fight.

“I think about [how] I made a commitment to my son and my granddaughter that I would get the name changed, and that’s why I’m still working on this,” she said. “It’s important that they see that we can make some changes here in Pennsylvania.”