



# NEWS RELEASE

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## CONGRESSMAN BERRY INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO COMPLETE TRAIL OF TEARS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Congressmen Marion Berry (D-AR, 1<sup>st</sup>) and Zach Wamp (R-TN, 3<sup>rd</sup>) introduced legislation today that would encourage the Secretary of the Interior to complete the National Historic Trail of Tears from North Carolina to Oklahoma. The proposed routes include two trails in Arkansas where close to 2,000 Cherokee traveled after the U.S. government forced them to find new land in Indian Territory.

**“The lessons that lie along the Trail of Tears are more than a chapter in a history book. They are the lessons that teach future generations to celebrate diversity rather than to push it into the farthest corners of our country,”** said Congressman Berry. **“Only by experiencing this tragedy can we begin to understand why so many Native Americans died along this trail.”**

Congressmen Berry and Wamp were joined by the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation and the Vice Chief of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation this morning to announce the Trail of Tears Documentation Act. Lawmakers from every state along the trail also attended the press conference to express their support for the legislation.

The Trail of Tears Documentation Act asks the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a feasibility study of the additional trail segments, emigration depots, and land components currently missing along the historic trail. Once complete, individuals can travel the entire length of the trail and experience interpretations of that period in American history. Two of the proposed routes pass through the state of Arkansas. The Bell route heads up the Arkansas River from Tennessee through Little Rock and Fort Smith, and the Bengé route extends west from Randolph County to Washington County.

**“It is unacceptable that such a critical part of our history remains a patchwork of missing pieces,”** said Congressman Berry. **“As Americans, we need to capture this part of history so we never forget the stories of families torn apart at the hands of our country.”**

Congressman Berry introduced similar legislation during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. Today’s bill has 18 co-sponsors from eight different states. An interactive map of the proposed routes is available on the National Park Service website at:

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