


Gov.: Hampton U. President Harvey will decide fate of Ft. Monroe

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By Mariah McClain

RICHMOND, Va. – **Gov. Terry McAuliffe** stood on the Capitol Hill steps on Thursday, Feb. 12 as he proclaimed his intentions for **Virginia's historical landmark** Fort Monroe. He plans to make the fort a great unified national park that all Americans will love to partake in – and he said that Hampton University's very own President William R. Harvey is just the person to do it. 

The governor was speaking to the 30 Hampton University students who took part in the annual **Lobby Day** trip to Capitol Hill here. Students attending lobby day spent most of their day visiting house representative's offices lobbying for the bills that will support **Hampton University's Proton Therapy Center**.

Before taking lunch, students waited on the capitol's steps to meet up with McAuliffe, where he made the announcement during question-and-answer time with the students. What is the significance of McAuliffe identifying Harvey as his top choice to lead this Fort Monroe initiative? Fort Monroe has a long and prominent history making it what many now call "**Freedom Fortress**."

During the Civil War, Fort Monroe remained a part of the Union when most of Virginia was controlled by the Confederate States of America. In 1861, during the first days of the war, three enslaved soldiers with the Confederate Army: Frank Baker, James Townsend, and Sheppard Mallory, escaped at night by rowing across Hampton Roads Harbor to seek refuge at the fort. Union commander Gen. Benjamin Butler refused to return the slaves because Virginia was no longer a part of the United States and did not comply by its laws.

In this case, Butler refused returning the now ex-slaves by deeming them "contraband of the war." This ignited a mass exodus for thousands of slaves seeking freedom, and eventually prompted President Abraham Lincoln to produce the **Emancipation Proclamation** in 1863.

Fort Monroe is now an Army post that will be turned back over to the state. The push to make a national park for all to enjoy has been an on-going topic of discussion against a privatization effort.

President Barack Obama has indicated consideration of declaring the fort a national monument by the powers invested by the Antiquity Act, in order to avoid the usual slow process of the bill passing through Congress if legislators were to decide the fort's fate.

If Harvey takes over this national park, it would mean having a stake in over **400 years of history**. This honor would only add to the college president's management over lands filled with centuries of ground-breaking history – in

reference to the Hampton University where Mary Peake once read to the freed slaves under Emancipation Oak and where later, Abraham Lincoln would read the Emancipation Proclamation.

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