

JEB Stuart Preservation Trust, Inc.

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Dear Member of the Virginia Assembly,

The JEB Stuart Preservation Trust, Inc. strongly opposes House Bill 1699 and believes the bill was created out of malice and organizations named were manufactured viewpoint discrimination, as the JEB Stuart Preservation, Inc. offers free admission to a 70+ acre park open 365 days per year with hiking trails, a wide selection of historical value dating before the Revolutionary War including Native American artifacts, and the rail line from the dinky railroad era, community involvement & free meal, and to Patrick County and the great state of Virginia with contributions to tourism. Furthermore, the Board members of the JEB Stuart Preservation Trust, Inc. are on a volunteer-only basis to ensure all donations are used to increase personal enrichment, education, and health and wellness.

HB1699 is constructing and fabricating misinformation to named groups within the bill simply upon the name of the organization and can be argued as viewpoint discrimination. In 1995 Virginia Supreme Court held viewpoint discrimination as an egregious free speech violation.

In *Rosenberger v. Rectors and Visitors of the University of Virginia* (1995), the Supreme Court declared: "When the government targets not subject matter but particular views taken by speakers on a subject, the violation of the First Amendment is all the more blatant. Viewpoint discrimination is thus an egregious form of content discrimination. The government must abstain from regulating speech when the specific motivating ideology or the opinion or perspective of the speaker is the rationale for the restriction."

HB1699 is viewpoint discrimination considering our own and other organizations given protection under Article X, Section 6 (a)(6) of the Constitution of Virginia and further under Sections 58.1-3607 and 58.1-3651. JEB Stuart Preservation Trust, Inc. is tax-exempt under the Virginia constitution as "property used by its owner for religious, charitable, patriotic, historical, benevolent, cultural, or public park and playground purposes" (Article X, Section 6 (a)6).

The JEB Stuart Preservation Trust, Inc. strongly opposes House Bill 1699 for these reasons and demands to continue the current federal and state tax exemption for our non-profit organization.

Best regards,

Misha Fulton

Board of Director

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Fact List & Free Personal Enrichment

A quick fact lists the JEB Stuart Preservation Trust, Inc. currently offers the public

- The oldest known marked grave in Patrick County is at Laurel Hill and is the grave of William Letcher, great-grandfather of Maj. Gen. Stuart. He was killed in his own home by a British sympathizer in 1780. (Note: Radford University conducted an archeological dig at this site in 2004) The grave is maintained and preserved by the Jeb Stuart Preservation trust Inc.
- After archaeological digs by the College of William and Mary in 1993 and 1997, Laurel Hill was placed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places (1998).
- Laurel Hill is promoted by the Virginia Tourism Authority on its website, www.virginia.org, which is one of the most popular tourism agencies in America. This agency also publishes the Virginia Travel Guide, which shows Laurel Hill as a tourist attraction and Historical Site.
- Laurel Hill is a significant tourism attraction not only in Patrick County, VA but all of Southwest Virginia and neighboring North Carolina.
- It is conveniently located 7 miles from the popular Tourism Attraction, “Mayberry”, officially named Mt. Airy, NC, and home of famous movie and TV star Andy Griffith, the Mt. Airy Granite Quarry, the largest open face granite quarry in the world (which is a major Tourism Attraction.)
- We conduct volunteer activities routinely and throughout the year, to maintain and upgrade the property and keep it attractive. Recent improvements include a new Activity Pavilion at the Main Entrance, planting of native apple trees, and landscaping and hiking trail improvements.
- Tours as requested with various groups, including historical associations, school groups, senior tour groups, young professionals and many others.
- Other events that have been held at the site in the past have included Highland Games, Masonic Convention, Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours, Laurel Hill Day and park clean-up days. All of these events bring visitors to our site, to receive tours and gather historical information.
- The site is open daily for self-guided tours and receives many visitors on a drop-in basis. Interpretative signage is provided to help the general public's educational enrichment. Special features include William Letcher Grave, Stuart family cemetery, slave cemetery, Visitor Center, William Letcher Home site, Stuart Pavilion, Activity Pavilion, picnic tables, running water, electrical hookups, flag poles, gardens, walking trails, and viewing platform overlooking the Ararat River.
- We estimate that 5000 visitors frequent Laurel Hill throughout the year, representing national and international tourists.

- 3000-4000 visitors to the annual Civil War Reenactment and Living History each October for 2 full days of activities, including live music, battle scenes, 1800-era ladies fashion show, Civil War period sutlers, Civil War encampment, Historically accurate lectures, and much more. Our guests include people from all over the U. S. and many foreign countries.
- Laurel Hill is on the Civil War Trails map for the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Offers a free community meal every February to the community and open to the general public

Brief History of the Preservation History: William Letcher's grave is the oldest in Patrick County, VA. He was killed by a British Tory at his doorstep in 1780. He was the great-grandfather of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, who was born on the family farm called Laurel Hill. William Letcher was born in 1750 and married Elizabeth Perkins about 1778. The home was located on the Ararat River. At the height of the Revolutionary War, Letcher, a militia officer, was murdered at his home by one "Nichols", a local Tory sympathizer.

Again, The JEB Stuart Preservation Trust, Inc. strongly opposes House Bill 1699 and believes the bill was created out of malice and the organizations involved manufactured viewpoint discrimination, as the JEB Stuart Preservation Trust, Inc. has a wide selection of historical value dating before the Revolutionary War, community involvement, and contribution to Patrick County and the great state of Virginia with contributions to tourism.

As always we hope you have learned one interesting fact from this letter as our goal is to educate individuals.

Best Regards,

Misha Fulton