

## **Lawmakers renew call for steel historic site in Pittsburgh**

By The Associated Press

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Local preservationists and lawmakers have worked for more than a dozen years to get an area of the city known for its steel history designated a national historic site. Many believe this could be the year it finally happens.

U.S. Sens. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., and Bob Casey, D-Pa., have introduced legislation in the Senate and Rep. Mike Doyle has introduced a companion bill in the House that would designate the Steel Heritage National Historic Site in Pittsburgh. The area would include an old blast furnace, the site of a former steel mill and historic worker uprising, and a bridge over the Monongahela River that connects the two.

Matt Dinkel, a Doyle spokesman, said the Democrat believes that bipartisan support for the Steel Industry National Historic Site Act is strong, giving it the best chance in years to get approval. The House bill, now in committee, could move by the end of the month, he said.

"I think it's a really positive development for preserving a big part of Pittsburgh's history," Dinkel said.

Smoke-spewing mills lined the city's three rivers for generations, producing steel used in the Empire State Building and other iconic structures. In 1892, a labor dispute at the U.S. Steel Homestead Works turned deadly when striking workers battled armed guards, an ugly but pivotal episode in the history of the country's labor movement.

The city's economy revolved around steel until a collapse of the industry in the 1980s. Most of the mills are gone, replaced by office buildings, shopping malls and even a training center for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Efforts have been under way since the 1980s to preserve some of the city's steel past. In 1996, the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area was created by Congress to help preserve places related to the history of steel.

"There is no other place in the world that is as significant for steel history as Pittsburgh and the Mon Valley and Homestead," said August Carlino, president and chief executive officer of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area.

"There's no other place that (the story of steel) could be told. There's no other place actually that it should be told, either," Carlino said.

Last year, two blast furnaces at the 122-year-old Carrie Furnace in Homestead

were designated historic landmarks. Under the legislation pending in Congress, the blast furnaces, the site of the battle of Homestead and the Hot Metal Bridge would be a national historic site and eligible for federal funding.

Specter, in comments in the Senate on Wednesday, said federal protection of the sites needs to come soon.

"Today, the remaining buildings and sites devoted to steel production are threatened with further deterioration," Specter said. "Many of these sites are nationally significant and perfectly suited for the study and interpretation of this crucial period in our nation's development."

Carlino, who has been working for 17 years to get federal recognition of the area, said the designation would generate millions in revenue for rebuilding local communities and to honor those who built the steel industry.

"It's a testament to their work and their labor to make ... the U.S. steel industry the monumental power that it is," Carlino said. "That recognition is deserved."

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