



The Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, Inc.

P.O. Box 203, Mount Vernon, VA 22121-9998

<http://www.mvcca.org>

Redistricting Advisory Committee Renaming Committee

January 30, 2022

Subject: The Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA) resolution and comments regarding renaming Magisterial Districts and Voting Precincts.

The comments below, the letter from the President of MV Estate and the MVCCA's resolution are sent to you for your serious consideration regarding not renaming the Mount Vernon Magisterial District and Gunston and Hollin Hall Voting Precincts.

Considering the RAC's established criteria for renaming Magisterial Districts and Voting Precincts, the MVCCA categorically believes that no changes should be made to Mount Vernon Magisterial District nor Gunston and Hollin Hall Voting Precincts for the following reasons:

1. Changing Mount Vernon Magisterial District will have a financial negative impact on the Mount Vernon Estate, the coffers of Fairfax County and small businesses with the Mount Vernon District by potentially diminishing the millions of worldwide and national tourists who visit the Estate every year. These individuals use the services of locally owned Mount Vernon District restaurants, hotel accommodations and tourist buses, all of which bring revenue into the County of Fairfax and the local businesses.
2. Mount Vernon Estate and Gunston Hall present educational opportunities for visitors so they can learn about our founding fathers and their contributions to America and Virginia. These opportunities, especially at Mount Vernon Estate regarding slavery will ensure that the visitors, quoting from Winston Churchill "Those that fail to learn from the past are doomed to repeat it," are essential if we are to continue to grow as a Nation of well educated individuals.
3. Hollin Hall, Gunston Hall and Mount Vernon are places not individuals' names. Places no matter who owned them should not be changed. The place names Gunston and Hollin Hall are closely associated with George Mason, the author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and a major figure in the Revolutionary period. Neither place had a direct connection with the events of the Civil War era. Gunston Hall was Mason's primary

home, but he had substantial property holdings in other portions of what is now Fairfax County. Hollin Hall was one of his properties and it abutted Mount Vernon. Gunston Hall still exists as a tourist attraction in Fairfax County. What was once Mason's Hollin Hall home is now a private residence on Sherwood Hall Lane.

4. Names of individuals/leaders during the Civil War era that promoted secession and armed conflict against the United States should be changed because there's a conceptual difference between names associated with the Colonial/Revolutionary War era and the Civil war era, and that leaders and promoters of the Confederacy should not be commemorated.

Katherine Ward

Cochair

Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA)

Attached:

MVCCA Resolution Opposing Renaming Mount Vernon Magisterial District, and Gunston and Hollin Hall Precincts

Letter from MV Estate 2019 Annual Report by the President of Mount Vernon Estate

**Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA) General Council
Resolution 2022-01
Opposition to Renaming Mount Vernon Magisterial District, and Hollin Hall and Gunston
Voting Precincts**

Whereas, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) reappointed the Redistricting Advisory Committee (RAC) to take on the task of considering which Magisterial Districts and Voting Precincts should be renamed with a focus on racial and social equity;

Whereas, the RAC has identified the Mount Vernon Magisterial District, Mason Magisterial District and the voting precincts of Gunston and Hollin Hall, amongst others for name change consideration;

Whereas, the RAC members established the following evaluation criteria:—if the name violates the spirit or explicit meaning of the One Fairfax policy; is offensive to the community; is related to the Confederate past; is associated with segregation, Jim Crow, racism, discrimination, or slave ownership; is confusing to residents or is geographically representative of the district; is the name of historical significance or no longer reflective of life in that part of the county; does it help residents aspire to the best possible quality of life in the future and is there economic impact to the area if a name change is made;

Whereas, using the criteria noted above the RAC will recommend to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) by March 1, 2022, a list of those districts and precincts for the BOS to consider renaming;

Whereas, the RAC met on Jan 25, 2022, and heard from multiple citizens regarding their opposition to the inclusion of the Mount Vernon Magisterial District, and Gunston and Hollin Hall voting Precincts in their recommendation;

Whereas, opposition to the renaming of Mount Vernon Magisterial District and the Gunston and Hollin Hall voting precincts include but not limited to economic and financial impact on certain communities, businesses, tourism and the diminution of certain historic sites directly connected to the name Mount Vernon and the first president of the U.S.A;

Therefore, be it resolved, *The MVCCA* opposes any renaming of the Mount Vernon Magisterial District and Gunston and Hollin Hall voting precincts;

Further resolved, that the RAC remove these areas from any current and/or future renaming considerations.

APPROVED AT THE MVCCA GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING ON JANUARY 26, 2022

Letter from the President of Mount Vernon Estate in the 2019 Annual Report.

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has challenged Mount Vernon in 2020, but our mission remains as essential as it was when the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association rallied the nation to save the home of the father of our country. And as the country emerges from the challenges of fighting the pandemic, we will need the guiding example of George Washington's character, nonpartisan leadership, courage, and vision to continue to inspire Americans to serve and sacrifice to make our experiment in democracy flourish.

When George Washington became the first President, he noted as "an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened."

We are living in a period of low civic understanding. In some ways, this country is in a crisis of confidence. Faith in our institutions—in Congress, in the Presidency, in the justice system, in media, in universities—is polling at an all-time low. A recent poll conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of voting-age adults indicated that only 29% could name all three branches of government.

There has never been a better time for the moral leadership of George Washington than right now, and there is no place more suited to educate the public than Mount Vernon. In 2019, Mount Vernon welcomed more than 1 million visitors from across the nation and around the globe. Our commitment to education has never been more substantial; through our digital platforms, we reached 8 million people. Our George Washington Teacher Institute, this year in its 20th year, provides educators with the tools they need to teach students in the classroom.

We have seen the fruits of the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington produce a tremendous body of scholarly work that is making its way to the public through a record number of books published on Washington and the nation's founding.

We are in the golden age of the individual's pursuit of knowledge. With the abundance of information readily available to us, the need to study and know our history is more important than ever. Mount Vernon has not only become an icon of American preservation but a center for research and innovation. The vision of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association to save George Washington's home has enabled a place for learning, for understanding, and for debate. It's a place to re-discover the ideals of this great experiment of democracy.

I am excited for you to explore all of the achievements highlighted in this report. Mount Vernon's benefactors are patriotic Americans who believe in and support our mission through their membership, ticket purchases, and donations. From our recent restorations in the Mansion to our educational outreach, none of these accomplishments would be possible without their support.

Douglas Bradburn, Ph.D.
President & CEO