

MANASSAS WEEKLY GAZETTE

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MANASSAS VA
PERMIT NO. 171
Postal Customer

VOL. I NO. 4

Serving Manassas and Western Prince William County

Wednesday, October 12, 1988

Battlefield Victory

A Signature Away

By GORDON OVENS HINE

Weekly Gazette Staff

The Senate Friday night gave civil war preservationists a lot to smile about by voting for a federal takeover of William Center, bringing the save-the-battlefield movement within one hurdle of final victory.

The Senate passed an amendment which would use tax dollars to buy the 542-acre tract, a move that proponents say nearly

Cover Story

guaranteed a passing vote by the House yesterday and lessens the chance of a presidential veto.

"One more hurdle and then gold," said Annie Snyder, chairman of the Save the Battlefield Coalition. That hurdle, of course, is a Reagan signature. "We're contacting all the organizations that support us" to let the president know that he should support the measure, she said. If he does, the tract would then belong to the federal government, and it would be up to a court to decide the amount developer Hazel Peterson Cos. would receive for the property.

According to a report released by Citizens Forum for Truth and Progress — which includes citizens in favor of the development — the issue should be about building roads, not a shopping mall. The Manassas Battlefield

Park already has over 4,500 acres. Any additional land will be impossible for it to maintain, the report says.

Meanwhile, Prince William County desperately needs new roads, the report says, and nothing is being done about it. Up to \$250 million is too much money to spend for the expansion of a park, for reasons that can't be fully justified.

Yet, opponents of the shopping mall believe the Fair Oaks-sized facility would greatly desecrate the historical battlefield. A federal takeover, tax dollars or no tax dollars, is the proper action, they say.

Reagan administration officials have said the president would veto any bill that calls for federal purchase of the land. Yet, published reports have said combining the Manassas legislation with another unrelated tax bill could force him to change his mind.

What a great legacy it would be for President Reagan to leave office after passing the amendment, Snyder said. "We cannot imagine that the House won't support the amendment" after the Senate's overwhelming vote.

Snyder said she expects everyone associated with the save-the-battlefield movement to be holding their breath this week as the bill moves through the House and later faces the president. "What we should have added was praying," she said.