

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

May 22, 2023

Chris Sununu, Governor
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301
Sent via email to Sununu.Press@nh.gov

Dear Governor Sununu,

As a nonpartisan organization dedicated to freedom of speech, thought, and inquiry, the National Coalition Against Censorship is concerned by the State of New Hampshire's recent decision to remove a historical marker acknowledging the birthplace of leading labor and women's rights activist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn because of her Communist beliefs. While it is clear that a designated process had been followed for the creation of the marker, it appears that established procedures were not followed at the time of its hasty removal. We encourage you to reinstate the marker and ensure all visitors and residents to New Hampshire have the opportunity to learn about the relevance of Concord to important activist movements of the 20th Century.

Flynn, who was born in Concord, is a prominent historical figure whose ideas and work did much to advance women's rights and labor rights movements in the United States. Like many labor advocates at the time, she was also an avowed Communist. It is our understanding that a marker commemorating her connection to Concord had been requested by local community members in 2021, that the State ordered its production in 2022, and that the marker was installed in Concord in 2023, only to be taken down less than two weeks later.

New Hampshire's historical marker policy indicates that markers are eligible for review, removal, or revision, on the grounds of severe damage or wear to the sign itself, historical inaccuracies, lack of historical context, or inappropriate references, and typically pertain to markers that have been created decades ago. The policy also states that if the Department for Historical Review recommends the removal of a marker, that the "decision will be discussed and recorded at a State Historical Resources Council meeting in the official minutes of the meeting with appropriate documentation of the reason for retirement." Given the marker's removal almost immediately following its installation, and given the absence of official meeting minutes explaining the reason for the marker's retirement, we have reason to believe that the State of New

NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

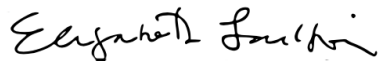
Actors' Equity Association
AICA-USA
American Association of
School Administrators
American Association of
University Professors
American Association of
University Women
American Booksellers for
Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Jewish Committee
American Library Association
American Literary Translators
Association
American Society of Journalists
& Authors
Americans United for Separation of
Church & State
Association of American Publishers
Authors Guild
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
Dramatists Guild of America
Dramatists Legal Defense Fund
Educational Book & Media Association
First Amendment Lawyers Association
Free Speech Coalition
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health
and Social Justice
International Association of Art Critics
United States (AICA-USA)
International Literacy Association
Lambda Legal
Modern Language Association
National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of
English
National Education Association
National Youth Rights Association
The News Guild-CWA
PEN America
People for the American Way
PFLAG National
Planned Parenthood Federation of
America
Poets & Writers
Project Censored
SAG-AFTRA
Sexuality Information & Education
Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers
& Illustrators
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ,
Office of Communication
United Methodist Church,
United Methodist Communications
Women's American ORT
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West

Hampshire has failed to follow its own policies on historical placemaking in the face of political pressure from outside entities.

State historical markers acknowledge significant people, places, and events in history, whether they are celebrated, notorious, or as is the case in most instances—complicated. Regardless of whether or not contemporary government leaders endorse the ideas of such recognized individuals, or agree with the actions that took place at certain historical events, these figures, sites, and events remain an important part of U.S. history. Acknowledging this is the purpose of such plaques.

If the historical marker for Elizabeth Gurley Flynn indeed has been reviewed according to stated procedures, we request the release of the meeting minutes which justify this decision. Otherwise, we call for the return of the marker so that state visitors and residents may learn about the relevance of Concord to important activist movements of the 20th Century.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Larison
Director, Arts & Culture Advocacy Program
National Coalition Against Censorship