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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-4209**

January 4, 2019

Governor-elect Bill Lee  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, State Capitol  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor-elect Lee,

I write to urge you to support removal of the Nathan Bedford Forrest bust from the Tennessee State Capitol and the renaming of Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park. Our state has a proud history, filled with notable contributions from many great Tennesseans such as Ida B. Wells, Howard Baker, Cordell Hull as well as many others. We have better people to honor than a Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), slave trader and someone responsible for a massacre of Union troops at the Battle of Fort Pillow, many of whom were African American.

In recent years, an increasing number of state and local governments, including the City of Memphis, have recognized that symbols matter, and made changes to public displays to better reflect our American values.

I saw your remarks about removing the bust, yet I hope you will reconsider. You have pledged to work to mitigate racial tensions in meaningful and substantive ways. Toward that end, I urge you to recognize the harm caused by statutes, busts, and parks which seek to memorialize leaders of the Confederacy and members of the KKK, and work to remove these symbols from government display. In Memphis, which is predominately African American, these symbols are an especially painful reminder of some of the worst times in our history.

I encouraged Governor Haslam to help with this issue and he did, and now I ask for yours as well. You have the opportunity, in one of your first acts as Governor, to demonstrate leadership on this important issue and show both the nation and the world that Tennessee has moved forward.

As always, I remain,  
Most sincerely,

  
Steve Cohen

Encl.

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- RANKING MEMBER  
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(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

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WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND  
COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

July 23, 2015

The Honorable Bill Haslam  
Governor  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, State Capitol  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam:

Thank you for supporting the removal of the Nathan Bedford Forrest bust from the Tennessee State Capitol. Your support does us proud as Tennesseans. Our state has a storied history, filled with notable contributions from many great Tennesseans. There are other citizens that might be honored instead who better reflect the values of our state than a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.

As you know, there is still a large statute of Nathan Bedford Forrest in Memphis. The Memphis City Council recently voted unanimously to remove the statue. As a former mayor, I know you understand that local elected officials have the best understanding of what local citizens want in their communities. Given that, as well as your stance against the Forrest bust in the State Capitol, I hope you will support Memphis's efforts by writing a letter of support for removal of the statue to the Tennessee Historical Commission.

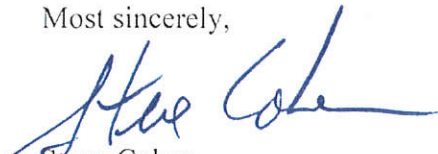
While many of us would have liked to have seen this statue removed earlier, I believe we now have an important opportunity to act. In the wake of the horrible tragedy in Charleston, South Carolina, there is finally a broad, bipartisan consensus to remove symbols indelibly linked to the Ku Klux Klan from places of public prominence.

I have also called for the renaming of Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park in Benton County, Tennessee, and I hope you will be supportive of this effort as well. Keeping the name on road signs promoting the park as well as signs inside the park and on maps does not convey the kind of welcome message we wish to provide to tourists. It gives the wrong impression of our state's priorities.

Your leadership on these issues is critical. I urge you to seize the moment-and help bring people together and show both the nation and the world why we are so proud to be Tennesseans.

As always, I remain,

Most sincerely,



Steve Cohen