

**STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. WHITESELL, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS, COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 2563, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE A WALL OF REMEMBRANCE AS PART OF THE KOREAN WAR VETERANS MEMORIAL AND TO ALLOW CERTAIN PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUND THAT WALL OF REMEMBRANCE**

**OCTOBER 4, 2011**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 2563, a bill to authorize a Wall of Remembrance as part of the Korean War Veterans Memorial and to allow certain private contributions to fund that Wall of Remembrance.

The Department opposes H.R. 2563 because it would significantly alter the character of the existing Korean War Veterans Memorial in a manner inconsistent with the Commemorative Works Act.

H.R. 2563 proposes to amend Public Law 99-572 to expand upon the original purpose and design of the Korean War Veterans Memorial. The bill adds new subjects for commemoration, Korean armed forces and other Korean military personnel, and would authorize the display of information not now displayed at the memorial about members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Korean Conflict. The bill would also enable the display of information about members of other-than-U.S. forces who served in the Korean Conflict.

The Korean War Veterans Memorial is located near the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, DC, in the Reserve, an area Congress has determined, in the Commemorative Works Act, that no new commemorative works shall be located. The Memorial commemorates the sacrifices of the 5.8 million Americans world-wide who served in the U.S. armed services during the three-year period of the Korean War. The Memorial also recognizes the participation of the 22 nations who served as United Nations contributors. During the Korean War's relatively short duration from June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953, 54,246 Americans world-wide died. Of these, 8,200 are listed as missing in action or lost or buried at sea. In addition 103,284 were wounded during the conflict.

The Korean War Veterans Memorial itself is a completed work of civic art in this special landscape, the Reserve. The Memorial was designed, constructed and completed by its legislatively designated sponsor, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board. It was dedicated on July 27, 1995.

The Memorial's design, and each of its features down to its plantings, are symbolic. The Memorial is the culmination of years of work by the ABMC, and careful reviews, followed by revisions, and ultimately approvals by the National Park Service and other federal entities including the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

This painstaking and public process began with the competition design, and resulted in the completed Memorial we know today. The Memorial should not now be changed to include the engraving of names of Americans who served in that conflict. The opportunity to mimic the design characteristics present at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was purposefully avoided when the design was requested during an open, international design competition.

The concept of engraving names at this Memorial was considered when the Memorial was being designed. The ABMC and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board with the Department's concurrence, advised against the incorporation of engraved names at the Memorial. Both agencies arrived at this decision upon reflection of years of experience with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As the Vietnam Veterans Memorial experience showed, there is not always agreement on those names to be included and those names that are not, and this has led to public contention and controversy. Choosing some names and omitting others causes a place of solace to become a source of hurt. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial honors all who served in that conflict, but only the names of the 58,272 killed within the combat zone are engraved on the Wall. This meant that those killed by a fire on a Navy ship just outside the zone were not eligible to have their names engraved on the wall - a difficult message for their survivors to accept.

The ABMC and the Department felt the lessons learned at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial must not be ignored, that a different type of commemoration must occur at the Korean War Veterans Memorial, and that the Memorial should be representative in design and not include individual names. As a compromise to the Korean War veterans who wanted the names engraved, ABMC created the Korean War Honor Roll, which is an electronic registry of names. Visitors have access to this registry from the Internet or at the kiosks at the Memorial. A kiosk containing the Korean War Honor Roll stands at the west entrance of the Memorial. It is serviced by a National Park Service ranger, who provides assistance to visitors. The Honor Roll computer contains the names of all military personnel who lost their lives during the Korean War, including the individual's name, service, rank, service number, date of birth, hometown or county of entry into the service, cause of death, date of death and, if the information is furnished to ABMC, the serviceman's unit, awards, circumstances surrounding the death or missing in action and photograph. The ABMC also has the names of those missing engraved at the Courts of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial.

Moreover, we cannot ignore the practical effect of this legislation. Essentially, the Memorial wall would be a second Korean War Veterans Memorial, effectively thwarting the intent of the Commemorative Works Act to prohibit new memorials within the Reserve and would be an addition that would significantly alter the character of the existing Memorial.

We feel very strongly that the Korean War Veterans Memorial, like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, exists to recall the exemplary service and sacrifice of outstanding Americans, and this memorial has already been completed and it stands today. The Korean War Veterans Memorial is a place of honor and dignity and we should avoid any intrusions which will become a source of contention or controversy.

That concludes my prepared testimony on H.R. 2563, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.