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Thursday, October 1, 2009

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Rahall, Hastings Bill Would Help Complete Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center

Washington, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) and Ranking Member Doc Hastings (R-WA) today introduced bipartisan legislation to provide an extended time frame to complete the construction of an underground visitor and education center near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Memorial) on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

“The black granite that comprises the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has become an internationally recognized memorial, and an enduring symbol of the sacrifice and timeless bravery exemplified by the heroic veterans of our longest war. The visitor center will serve to help carry on the process of healing promoted by the Memorial, and to educate future generations of visitors – many far removed from the war itself – on the true meaning of the Wall. The leadership of the House Natural Resources Committee, with jurisdiction over National memorials, has pledged to work together in a bipartisan fashion to ensure that this process of healing and acceptance can continue on,” **said Rahall.**

“Today, I’m honored to join Chairman Rahall in introducing legislation to provide America’s Vietnam Veterans with more time to raise private funds for the creation of a visitors and education center. Our bill will help Vietnam Veterans achieve their goal of educating more Americans about the Vietnam War, an important part of history, and the Wall, a testament to the thousands of men and women who bravely served our country,” **said Hastings.**

H.R. 3689 would provide a four-year extension to complete the work on the underground visitor and education center. The current authorization is set to expire on November 17, 2010; H.R. 3689 would extend the authorization to November 17, 2014.

In 2003, Rahall and then-Chairman Richard Pombo were original cosponsors of legislation that authorized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to construct the underground center near the existing Memorial. The authorizing legislation required that the center be

constructed in compliance with the Commemorative Works Act, which governs all monuments and memorials in and around DC and stipulates that such authorizations last seven years from the date of enactment.

Despite attempts by Rahall in the 109th Congress to expedite the construction of the center, securing the necessary approvals within the current authorization time frame has been difficult due to the sensitivity of the site and the Wall, making an extension necessary.

The Wall and the construction of the Center have been universally supported in the Congress and by the public. The Wall is among one of the most visited sites in our Nation's Capitol, and has proven to be a place of significant healing for veterans, family, and friends, and has served as an important educational tool about the war.

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